

You will need:

Narrator

Puppet operator, 1 puppet and puppet costumes - angel/ inn keeper and shepherd!

Clip from The Hallelujah Chorus (Handels Messiah)

Teach the congregation these trigger words before beginning the story

Sheep - Baaa

Animal - Choose an animal noise and do an action

The Birth of Jesus

Narrator : It was dark and cold. The moon glowed and stars twinkled in the shimmering night sky. There were shepherds looking after **sheep** on the green hills of Bethlehem. Nothing out of the ordinary, nothing strange, was going on. Just another slow, boring night in the life of a shepherd.

‘What a dull night,’ remarked one of the shepherds, ‘nothing to look at but **sheep** and grass.’

‘Yeah... and stars of course,’ said another.

To pass the time, the shepherds began listing every object, **animal** and plant they could see...

‘**Sheep**... fences... *[Enter angel puppet]* dandelions... a twig... ants... an angel... the moon... another twig... an angel... an angel... AN ANGEL!?’

[Press play on Handel’s Messiah snippet - puppet angel sings along!]

The stunned shepherds looked upwards. Their heads froze in position as each pair of eyes locked onto a huge, bright, glowing, angel.

Filled with utter terror, they took a long deep breath and in one loud voice they let out the most tremendous shout of fear...

‘ARRGGHH! AN ANGEL!’

The panicked shouting and screaming continued for some time as they ran around anxiously looking for a place to hide.

Puppet: WAIT! CHILL OUT GUYS! Don’t be afraid alright! I don’t look that scary do I? I’m bringing you good news of great joy that will be for everyone. Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. He is wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. I’d get over there if I were you... Bye.

[Exit angel Puppet]

Narrator: Awe-struck but excited, the shepherds left their **sheep** and set off through Bethlehem to find this astonishing thing that the Angel of the Lord had spoken to them about.

About nine months prior to this strange occurrence on the hills of Bethlehem, the Angel of the Lord had appeared to a woman named Mary. The Angel had spoken to her and said:

[Enter angel puppet and press play on Handel's Messiah snippet]

Puppet: 'Hi Mary, I'm here with good news. God is going to give you a baby. You are to give Him the name Jesus, He will be the Son of God and will save His people. How cool is that!'

[Exit angel puppet]

Narrator: Soon after this, Mary, and her husband Joseph, set off to Bethlehem to register their names for the Roman census that was taking place at that time.

However, arriving in Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph were faced with a bit of a problem...

Mary was heavily pregnant and so they needed somewhere to stay, and soon! They searched high and low until eventually they came across an inn.

And guess what? There was no room! The inn was full. The inn-keeper, seeing that Mary was pregnant, wanted to help them...

[Enter inn keeper puppet]

Inn keeper: 'Hello. I am the inn keeper. The keeper of the inn. The one who owns the inn that I keep. May I please tell you that there is a stable around the back of the inn. You're very welcome to stay there for the time being if you wish.'

[Exit inn keeper puppet]

Narrator: 'That'll have to do!' replied Mary and Joseph in desperation.

The stable was covered in **animal** stuff: **animal** hair, **animal** smells, **animal** dirt and **animal**... well 'stuff'. Was Mary really going to give birth to the Son of God in a stable?

It was certainly beginning to look that way.

Some time later Jesus was born. The baby Jesus, the Son of God, was now sleeping in an **animals'** feeding trough in a grubby stable, somewhere around the back of an inn. Not the most luxurious place for the Son of the Almighty Lord God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, to be born.

As Mary and Joseph tried to catch some well-needed sleep they were startled by a sudden knock at the heavy stable door and a voice spoke out.

[Enter shepherd puppet]

Shepherd: 'Hi, is this the place where we can find the baby Jesus, the Son of God?'

Narrator: Yes, this is the place,' answered Joseph.

Shepherd: Brilliant! An angel just told us to come here. I can't believe this! This is way more exciting than looking after the farm! Although it still smells like a far in here. You guys got no air fresher huh?

[Exit Shepherd puppet]

Narrator: One-by-one the shepherds bundled into the stable – the same group of shepherds that we heard about earlier, who'd cowered in fear as the angel appeared to them on the hills of Bethlehem as they looked after their **sheep**.

Making their way near to where the baby Jesus lay in an **animals** feeding trough, the shepherds bowed down and worshipped the one who was to be their King and Saviour.

It was dark and cold. The moon glowed and stars twinkled in the shimmering night sky. But the night was far from ordinary, or slow, or boring - it was the night that the Son of God had been born on earth: Jesus, the Saviour of the World.

[Enter angel puppet and press play on Handel's Messiah snippet]