# Sharing the News

# A Light-Hearted Christmas Pageant

## Format

This short pageant takes the form of a televised newscast immediately following the birth of Jesus. The players are Anne Angel, A Shepherd, Lisa and Tony Lamb, and The King, all of whom are interviewed by reporter Mike Handler. The characters interviewed offer scripturally based accounts of what has happened, which also include common misconceptions about the Nativity story. The news anchor, Truth Checker, seems to know the actual details and offers small corrections.

The setting is not a specific time period or place―intentionally so, in order to be universal. The intention is to offer a light-hearted, contemporary take on the Nativity story and to offer correctives to the often-abridged version of it. In the end, however, the message of the pageant is that Jesus is not just born in a stable 2,000 years ago but also in our hearts, and in our lives, at all times.

This pageant was originally written for Advent 2017 and has been updated here to reflect some of the major concerns of 2020. Coincidentally, the field journalism format of the play lends itself well to online productions.[[1]](#footnote-1) Each interview could be conducted via Zoom and then stitched together with the anchor desk segments hosted by Truth Checker. Groups can have fun with extra touches like graphics and an intro/outro news music theme, but the characters are the real focus.

## Characters

Truth Checker (news anchor): upbeat Peter Mansbridge type with helpful information to offer

Mike Handler (on-scene reporter): enthusiastic and amused but genuine

Anne Angel: joyful, smiling, and friendly

A Shepherd: totally righteous surfer dude with occasional moments of seriousness

Lisa and Tony Lamb: well-dressed couple with thick New Jersey accents

The King: Elvis impersonator

The characters are drawn from contemporary examples and are definitely meant to be hammed up. Costuming can be minimal. Not all the players need to have acting experience, just a willingness to embody the character.

## Staging

The news anchor can be seated at a desk with interviews occurring “on location.” The scenes are meant to be run without breaks. However, accommodation within worship can be easily achieved by having each scene end with the news anchor’s correction of the details.

## An Eyewitness Advent

### Scene 1: Anne Angel

**News Anchor Truth Checker:** Good evening everyone. I’m Truth Checker, and this is Eyewitness News. Tonight, we bring you the mysterious story of a surprising event. Standing by is our roving reporter, Mike Handler, who has been on the scene getting the reactions of witnesses. We go now, live, to the scene. Mike?

**Reporter Mike Handler:** Thank you, Truth. A heavenly light, a choir of angels, wandering seekers, and the arrival of a king. It’s been a strange night, with even stranger stories to tell. One of the first witnesses to tonight’s events is with me right here, Anne Angel. Ms. Angel, can you tell us what has happened here?

**Anne Angel:** (*hands clasped with excitement, then stretched out wide with head tilted back*) Hallelujah! Yes I can! I bring you glad tidings of great joy! Tonight, in this town, is born to us a child who will change the world! His name is Jesus. Hallelujah!

**MH:** (*nervously chucking*) OK… (*regaining composure*) Uh, Ms. Angel, how do you know this child is so special?

**AA:** Because suddenly there was with me a great multitude of the heavenly host filling the sky―observing proper social distancing, of course―and singing, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favours!” And do you know what, Mike? That just doesn’t happen every day! *(joyful laugh*)

**MH:** (*smiling, enjoying the interview*) In addition to you, was there anyone else who heard this song who can confirm your account?

**AA:** Well, sure! They’re right over there. That’s the Shepherds! (*looking away, shouting*) Hey! Shepherds! (*to MH*) They were in the fields, abiding―and conducting contact tracing of all the sheep―when it happened.

**MH:** (*to camera*) This is definitely a first for me, Truth! Not just “an angel” but many angels! Singing! Wings and harps and all! I’m not sure what to make of it, but it’s a pretty fantastic story.

**TC:** Right. Of course, Mike, we can’t say for certain that these angels had wings and harps. After all, in the Bible an angel is simply a messenger of God, and often takes the form of a stranger who offers fresh insight and a comforting word.

**MH:** (*innocently*) So they don’t live on clouds and eat cream cheese?

**TC:** No, Mike. That’s just a commercial. (*pause*) Now, Mike, I understand you have a corroborating witness for Ms. Angel’s story?

### Scene Two: A Shepherd

**MH:** I do, indeed Truth. I’m joined now by A Shepherd. Mr. Shepherd, can you tell us what happened tonight?

**A Shepherd:** (*happy to be on camera, surfer voice*) Hi Mom! Hi Dad!

M**H:** Mr. Shepherd…?

**AS:** Oh! Yah, it was super cool! There was all this light, and those angels cranked the tunes, like “GLORIA!” (*suddenly serious*) And then, this really chill voice told us to come here to find a baby.

**MH:** A baby? Was this baby missing or hurt?

**AS:** Nah man, he was totally safe! He was just a little dude with a big heart, and when we saw him, man, we knew; we knew he was gonna’ *be* something.

**MH:** You say “we?”

**AS:** Oh, yah. Me, my sisters, my brothers, the whole Shepherd Family. We travel in our own righteous family bubble, dude! (*serious, but still in surfer voice, as though quoting scripture*) All the shepherds came to witness what the angels had foretold. (*keeps looking into distance, absorbed in thought*)

*PAUSE for effect. MH looks to where AS is looking, trying to see what he seems to be seeing.*

**MH:** (*getting back to reality*) Right. And where did you find this baby?

**AS:** Wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger!

**MH:** A manger? You mean, like a trough that livestock drink from?

**AS:** (*confused*) Yah...

**MH:** And his parents were there?

**AS:** (*certain, amazed thinking about it*) Yah...!

**MH:** Mr. Shepherd?

**AS:** Yah?

**MH:** His parents; can you describe them?

**AS:** Oh, sure! His dad, I mean, sort of his dad. Like, he was…but he wasn’t, and…I dunno’. Anyway, he was kind of an older dude, with gnarly hands, like he works with them a lot. His mom, though, she was all quiet and peaceful. We told her about the angels and stuff, and she looked a little tired, but she just kind of gently smiled.

**MH:** Well, I’m sure it’s been a strange night for everyone. Thank you, Mr. Shepherd.

**AS:** No problem, News Dude!

**MH:** (*to camera*) So, Truth, it seems that this special child wasn’t lost, but *was* found by the Shepherds in a manger―a rather odd place for an infant.

**TC:** Thank you, Mike. Of course, I remind our viewers that we know from archaeological and linguistic evidence that it is just as likely that this child was born in a cave and not in a stable. Mike, are there any other witnesses to tonight’s events who can add to the story that Anne Angel and A Shepherd have shared?

### Scene Three: Lisa and Tony Lamb

**MH:** As luck would have it, Truth, I’m standing by with a witness who says she can confirm these accounts. Ma’am, can you introduce yourself?

**Lisa Lamb:** (*strong New Jersey accent, chewing gum*) Yes, my name is Lisa Lamb, (*to camera*) L-I-S-A-L-A-M-B, (*bleating like a lamb*) *Laa-aa-mb*. I was there when the baby was born and the Shepherds arrived.

**MH:** And what was the mood?

**LL:** The mood? You wanna know the mood? It was crazy, of course!?

**MH:** So this was, in fact, a very special birth?

**LL:** (*sarcastically*) Well sure, if the word of God is anything to go by…

**MH:** And you, Ms. Lamb…

**LL:** Mrs.

**MH:** Pardon me?

**LL:** *Mrs*. Lamb. I’m *Mrs*. Lamb.

**MH:** Oh, I see; *Mrs*. Lamb. And is Mr. Lamb here tonight?

**LL:** Of course he is! How do you think I got here in this dress? (*summoning Tony from off camera, loudly but not angrily*) Tony! Tony! (*impatient*) Tony! (*insistent*) Tony!

**Tony Lamb:** (*worn out, equally strong New Jersey accent*) Right here, honey.

**LL:** Tell the man what we saw.

**TL:** Well, actually, I didn’t really see it, honey. My mask was riding up my nose and covering my eyes a bit… (*growing quiet under his wife’s disapproving glare*)

**LL:** (*unimpressed, sternly and flatly*) Then tell the man what *I* saw, Tony.

**TL:** It’s just like she said. A baby, the parents, shepherds, the whole bit.

**LL:** (*prompting*) And the king. Tell him about the king.

**TL:** (*disinterested*) Oh yeah. After a bit, some kings came.

**LL:** (*exasperated, bleating at Tony like a lamb*) Ba-aa-aa! You’re getting it all wrong. (*to MH*) There were three kings, from far away, somewhere in the East. Long Island, maybe? Anyway, one of them looked really familiar. I mean, at first I wasn’t sure, but then I knew. I was positive I knew him from somewhere…

**MH:** Well, Mr. and Mrs. Lamb, thank you for your time.

**LL:** Come on, Tony. Let’s go. This coat isn’t warm enough for the air.

**TL:** We could gather closer in the manger… (looking hopeful) It was peaceful and quiet in there, with the ox and the donkey…

**LL:** (*incredulous*) The ox and the donkey? Seriously, Tony. Sometimes I think you were in isolation a little too long this year.

**MH:** (*to camera*) There you have it, Truth. The Lambs can confirm that the special birth was attended by three kings from the East.

**TC:** Thanks, Mike. At this point I’d like to remind our viewers that it is pretty clear from the gospel accounts of Jesus’ birth that we can’t be sure when the wise people, or magi, who visited the baby came, but it was certainly a while after he was born. In fact, it’s also not clear that these visitors were even kings, how many there were, or even if they were all men. Mike, is there any way to clarify some of these points?

### Scene Four: The King

**MH:** Well, I do happen to have one more witness to tonight’s events who is willing to talk. (*smiling and chuckling*) Very willing to talk, in fact. (*to The King*) Sir, your name is…?

**The King:** (*Elvis impersonator, with sunglasses on*) I’m The King, baby.

**MH:** (*unsure*) OK… Mr. King, I…

**K:** Not *Mr.* King, baby. Just (*making big hand gesture indicating “name in lights”*) “THE KING.”

**MH:** Right…uh, The King, can you tell us where you were when all of this was taking place?

**K:** (*singing*) “Well, since my baby left me, I found a new place to dwell. It’s down at the end of a lonely street, and it’s called… (*dramatically, sadly*) Heartbreak Hotel.”

**MH:** (*quizzically*) Right. Perhaps you can tell us what you saw and heard?

**K:** First, I heard this singing, man (*tapping a heel and snapping fingers*), like, “Oooo! Oooo!” And then I saw this light in the sky, kinda’ movin’, you know? And then I just knew it was guidin’ me somewhere I needed to be. So, I jumped up and followed it, and where it stopped and stayed, I went into this tiny little room, and there he was. The King.

**MH:** You mean, another king?

**K:** Not just another king, baby. The real King.

**MH:** I don’t understand…

**K:** (*humbly, sincerely, removing sunglasses*) The real king, man. The king of our hearts. (*singing*) “Love me tender, love me true, all my hopes fulfill...” (*moved*) That kinda king.

**MH:** (*trying to wrap his mind around it*) So you’re saying that the baby who was born is…what?

**K:** Nothin’ less than the eternal love of God incarnated in beautiful human form, baby.

**MH:** That’s quite a handle for an infant born in a stable.

**K:** Sure is. But he’s not in the stable anymore. (*dramatically*) He has…left the building!

**MH:** And where is he now?

**K:** (*pointing to chest*) He’s in here, baby. He’s in our hearts.

**MH:** (*sincere*) That is very moving. Thank you. (*to camera, wrapping up*) It turns out that this is more than just a story about a baby born on one special night. It’s a story for people in all times and places, reassuring them of the love of God in their midst, and alive in every person.

(*noticing the King walking away*) The King, uh, (*stumbling*) sir, uh… Is there anything you would add to describe tonight’s events?

**K:** (*coming back, grabbing the microphone, singing*) “It’d be a blue Christmas without you…” (*to an invisible crowd*) Thank you, San Diego! Good night!

**TC:** Well folks, there you have it. The King has indeed left the building. The birth of this child, Jesus, is a gift from God; a gift that cannot remain in a stable, or on the pages of our scriptures, but a gift that must be shared with all the world; a gift of love that knows no borders or boundaries; a small but mighty gift, moving us to seek peace and justice for all.

That is our story tonight. May it be yours, as well. From all of us here, we wish you a good night, and God bless.

1. Productions shared online should give credit to the author, Rev. Andy O’Neill. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)