

‘ACTING THE BIBLE’

at

Beckley School

THE ASCENSION

(Mark 16:19-20,

Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:6-11)

18 April 2024

Joint Benefice of

**The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley St. Nicolas, Forest Hill with Shotover
St. Barnabas, Horton-cum-Studley St. John the Baptist, Stanton St. John**

The Four Parishes 'Acting the Bible' team (previously known as 'Open the Book') leads assembly once a fortnight in Beckley School. The team take stories fresh from the pages of the Bible, and make them into mini dramas, to be acted out by themselves, together with Beckley schoolchildren. Through this, it is hoped that the Bible stories are brought alive, and remembered by the children, especially as they too are involved in the acting.

The team is led by Betty Dye, a Licensed Lay Reader, and includes members from Forest Hill, Stanton St John and Beckley. They meet once a fortnight to write the scripts, with the aim of adhering as closely as possible to the original Bible texts. This often involves comparing different Bible translations and even reading the New Testament in the original Greek!

ACTING THE BIBLE Summer term 2024 THE ASCENSION

Cast LUKE; PETER; JAMES; JOHN; JESUS; ANGEL 1; ANGEL 2;
MATTHIAS (non-speaking); JOSEPH BARSABBAS (non-speaking);
CHORUS

LUKE, carrying pens and paper, walk on, sit down at table and desk, start to write and then look up.

LUKE: My name is Luke. I love writing, and for my great friend Theophilus I wrote a whole book. Later on, it was called the Gospel according to Luke. It was all about the birth, life, death and resurrection of the man Jesus of Nazareth. Then I wrote another book for my friend Theophilus, about all the things that the followers of Jesus did after he was crucified and rose from the dead. I called this book 'The Acts of the Apostles'.

CHORUS: What does 'The Acts of the Apostles' mean?

LUKE: Acts are all the things that people did.

CHORUS: But what are 'Apostles'?

LUKE: The Apostles are the friends of Jesus who followed him and carried on with his teachings after he died and rose again. We are going to hear the story that I wrote in the first chapter of my book. But before that, here is Peter, who is going to tell us something important. Here comes Peter, with James and John.

PETER, JAMES, JOHN walk on from hall door, chatting quietly.

PETER: James, John, you both know that after everything that happened when Jesus was crucified, I felt really upset! I couldn't forget that, when Jesus was on trial, I said I hadn't even MET him! But now I know that Jesus has forgiven me. Do you remember when we were out fishing this morning and we saw someone standing on the beach?

JOHN: We had been fishing all night and we hadn't caught anything.

JAMES: He told us to throw the net over the other side and we caught 153 fish!

PETER: I just knew it was Jesus, so I jumped in and waded across to him. He invited us all to have breakfast with him. Then he spoke to me on my own:

JESUS walk in from behind the curtain and addresses PETER.

JESUS: Peter, Simon Peter, do you love me more than these others do?

PETER: Yes, Lord, you know I do.

JESUS: Feed my lambs. *(pause)* Simon Peter, son of John, do you love me?

PETER: Yes, Lord, you know I love you.

JESUS: Look after my sheep. *(pause)* Simon Son of John, do you love me?

PETER: Lord, you know everything! You know I love you.

JESUS: Feed my sheep. It will not be easy for you, and you will often face danger for my sake. *(pause)* Follow me!

JESUS go back behind the curtain followed by PETER, JAMES and JOHN

LUKE: My book starts soon after this, when Jesus appeared to his followers again. This time he had something to say to all of them.

JESUS come in from behind the curtain followed by PETER, JAMES and JOHN, right into the centre.

JESUS: Peace be with you, Peter, James, John, my friends. I want you all to stay here in Jerusalem and not go back to your homes.

PETER: Jesus, are you going to free us from these Roman rulers? Are you going to set up your own kingdom here in our country NOW?

JESUS: It is not for you to know the answer to these questions. Now listen, I have to go back to my Father in heaven, but don't be sad. Just wait here until the Holy Spirit comes to you with power. Then you will be able to tell the people here in Jerusalem, and everywhere else, all about me. Now, let us go together to the Mount of Olives.

All walk in a big circuit, ending up next to the curtain. JESUS only go behind the curtain. PETER, JAMES, and JOHN suddenly stop, stand still, AND STARE UPWARDS INTENTLY through a space in the curtain.

JOHN: Look! What is happening to Jesus!

PETER: He is being taken from us and returned to heaven. Watch! Now he is covered by a cloud!

JAMES: He is lost from our sight!

**CHORUS: What is happening?
Has Jesus gone?
Will he come back to us?**

2 ANGELS in white come from the hall door and walk very quietly up behind them. PETER, JAMES, and JOHN don't notice, until the Angel speaks, then they spin round.

ANGEL 1: Jesus has ascended into heaven.

ANGEL 2: Friends, why are you looking up into the sky?

ANGEL 1: You have seen the ASCENSION of Jesus! This Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will, one day, come back in the same way as you have seen him go.

2 ANGELS, PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN all walk slowly off to hall door.

LUKE: Peter, James, and John returned to Jerusalem and went to join the other followers of Jesus, who were staying together in the same house.

PETER, JAMES, JOHN, MATTHIAS, and JOSEPH BARSABBAS walk on and sit in a semi-circle near to the Chorus.

PETER: Friends, we have seen the ASCENSION of Jesus, who has been taken up to return to his father in heaven. Before he went away, Jesus told us to stay here in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes to us with power, and we are praying for that to happen soon.

Jesus chose 12 of us to be his disciples, but Judas has left us because he betrayed Jesus, so now we are only 11. God is telling us through prophesy that we need to choose a replacement.

JOHN: There are only 2 people who have been here ever since we first met Jesus. We must choose between Joseph and Matthias!

CHORUS: But how will we choose?

PETER: We will ask Joseph and Matthias to draw lots, and God will choose.

JAMES: Here is a bunch of straws. Joseph and Matthias must each pull one out. The one who takes the short straw is the one who is chosen.

Peter offer the straws (tell Matthias beforehand which to pull out).

PETER: Who has the short straw? (*hold up straws*) It is Matthias! The Lord has chosen you to join us. Now we must all wait here in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes to us with power.

Everyone freeze, Luke scribble away then get up from desk and walk forward pen and paper in hand.

LUKE: It was an anxious time! They all stayed in one place and prayed and waited, prayed and waited....

All of this I wrote in my book, 'The Acts of the Apostles', so that my friend Theophilus would know just what was happening.