

'ACTING THE BIBLE'

at

Beckley School

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

(Acts 8:26-40)

13 June 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!

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH Acts 8 v 26-40 June 2024

CAST: Narrator; Philip; Ethiopian; God; Charioteers; Chorus

NARRATOR: After Jesus had died and had risen again from the dead, and after the Holy Spirit had come with power to the apostles, it was a very busy time for all of them, but Philip, one of the apostles, was very surprised when God spoke to him one morning.

GOD: *(from behind the curtain to Philip center stage walking up and down with a mug in his hand)*

Philip! Philip! Get moving now. Go to that road which leads down from Jerusalem to the desert.

PHILIP: Go to a road? The desert road? Surely not!

CHORUS: Go to a road? The desert road? Surely not!

NARRATOR: Go to the desert road? In the middle of nowhere? Surely not, Philip thought. But even though he was surprised he was obedient. When God asked him to do something he did it and he did it straight away. And in no time at all he was striding along the road that went south from Jerusalem into the desert. It was a long, dry, stony road with few houses and even fewer people around.

Philip march purposefully to the hall door and back to the center stage

Ethiopian come from behind the curtain and go and sit in the chariot next to the curtain and pick up pretend reins.

CHORUS: Look, a huge and magnificent chariot is coming!

GOD: *(Behind the curtain)* Philip! Philip! Do you see that chariot coming up along the road? I want you to run over to it.

PHILIP: Run over to that huge and magnificent chariot? Surely not!

CHORUS: Run over to that huge and magnificent chariot? Surely not!

NARRATOR: What Philip did not know was that sitting in that magnificent chariot was a very important man, who had come all the way from Ethiopia in Africa to worship the Jewish Lord God in Jerusalem and was now on his way back home. This man was a slave but even so he was a great government minister, the royal treasurer, looking after all the Queen's money.

CHORUS: The man in that huge chariot looks VERY IMPORTANT!

NARRATOR: But even though the man was very important, travelling in a very special chariot, Philip obeyed God and ran as fast as he could to catch up with it.

(Philip run up to the chariot huffing and puffing)

To his amazement, as he came up to the chariot, Philip heard this man reading out loud something that he instantly recognized. It was a passage from the book of the prophet Isaiah in the Bible.

ETHIOPIAN: (reading to himself in a song-song manner) 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth.'

PHILIP: Excuse me, but I overheard you. Do you understand what you are reading?

ETHIOPIAN: No, I don't, I need someone to explain it to me. Do you know what it means?

PHILIP: You are reading the words of the prophet Isaiah. The prophet says 'Like a sheep about to be slaughtered and killed for a

sacrifice, like a lamb about to be put on its back and sheared, having all of its wool cut off without making a sound, he never opened his mouth to say a word.'

ETHIOPIAN: Thank you. Now I understand what the words mean. But who is the prophet talking about? Is it himself or someone else? Please explain!

PHILIP: The prophet is describing our Messiah, whose name is Jesus, and is foretelling what would happen when he died. I have been one of his special friends, I know all about him!

ETHIOPIAN: That sounds very exciting. Come up into my chariot and sit with me. I want you to tell me all about Jesus the Messiah!
(PHILIP climb into the chariot, the two bend over the open bible and start talking)

NARRATOR: So Philip climbed into the chariot with the Ethiopian and, studying the scriptures together, Philip explained that Jesus was sent from God to live with us. But instead of accepting him, the religious leaders hated him and had him put to death on a cross. This verse from the Bible was describing how, like a sheep being sacrificed and killed, when he was crucified for us, Jesus didn't open his mouth to resist or complain. Philip went on to tell the Ethiopian how Jesus had risen from the dead and how anyone who wanted to follow Jesus needed to show they believed by being baptized.

ETHIOPIAN: Oh, Philip what a wonderful thing, the Lord God sending his son Jesus to come to earth and then him dying as a sacrifice for us and rising from the dead. I want to follow Jesus.

PHILIP: If you really want to follow Jesus, you will need to be baptized.

ETHIOPIAN: Look here is a stream of water next to the road. What is there to prevent you from baptizing me now?

PHILIP: What, baptize you NOW?

CHORUS: What, baptize him NOW?

PHILIP: If you believe with all your heart, you may be baptized now.

ETHIOPIAN: I do believe in Jesus with all my heart.

NARRATOR: And with no more delay, this important man took off his beautiful royal robes and went down in the water with Philip to be baptized.

(pretend to get out of the chariot and Philip dip the Ethiopian in the water.

ETHIOPIAN: Now I am ready to go back to Ethiopia a new man, I am so full of joy.

Philip go quietly behind curtain whilst chorus and narrator talk.

CHORUS: Was that the end of the story?

NARRATOR: Not quite. You will never guess what happened next!

CHORUS: What happened next?

NARRATOR: Well, when the Ethiopian came up out of the water, Philip had disappeared!

ETHIOPIAN: What's happened to Philip?

CHORUS: What's happened to Philip?

NARRATOR: To everyone's surprise, the Holy Spirit had carried Philip away.

PHILIP: Well fancy that! How amazing! In an instant I'm in Azotus, 20 miles away!

ETHIOPIAN: Well fancy that! How amazing! The Holy Spirit has taken Philip away, but now I understand the good news about Jesus, I will go back to Ethiopia and share it with everyone I meet!