



The Tale of the Drowsy Shepherd **Kick Off Tips, Rehearsal Tips, Activities, and more!** ***By Susan Eernisse***

Kickoff/First Night of Choir

Decorate the space with items you might include in your set – a pastoral scene: stuffed sheep shepherd’s staff(s), a backdrop with grassy hills and clear sky. As an alternative, you could have the space decorated for Christmas with carols playing as children arrive, a craft station for children to create sheep ornaments to decorate the tree, a snack area with Christmas cookies and punch. Write the memory verses for the Scripture Memory Challenge on posterboard and display them around the room. Give an overview of the musical – perhaps teaching the first song: “The Drowsy Shepherd”. End the time at the snack area.

Weekly Rehearsal Tips and Activities

1. Use a fun sheep-counting warm-up. Draw sheep faces on white paper plates and number them 1 to 8. Display these vertically in a prominent location with the sheep 1 on the bottom and sheep 8 on top. Create scale patterns to sing in the key of C for warm-ups using the sheep for a visual reference. You point – they sing!

Examples:

1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1

1-3-5-3-1

8-7-6-5-6-7-8

Allow children to suggest other patterns.

You can use this as an early arriver activity by having children play the patterns on bells, xylophone bars, or Boomwhackers®.

2. Shepherd's Staff PowerPoint

For early arrivers or as a purposeful brain break, download the Shepherd's Staff PowerPoint slide show to review/introduce reading notes on the treble clef staff.

3. Shepherd's Staff Limbo

Perform a limbo-like dance using a shepherd's staff instead of a limbo pole. Do this as an energizer or while waiting for parents to arrive at the end of rehearsals. Play tracks of the songs they are learning as the activity is played.

4. Floor Staff Sheep Notes

Here's another brain break activity. Use paper plates to create some additional sheep heads. Create a floor staff with painter's tape, making the spaces large enough to fit the plates. Have children work in teams to spell words on the staff for the other teams to identify. (ACE, CAB, BABE, DECADE, etc.)

5. Mystery Guest of the Week

Feature a Special Guest each night of rehearsal – have them talk about their “calling” – how they live their faith in the context of their career; include someone in the real estate business if possible.

6. Scripture Memory Challenge

Use the suggested verses for the children to memorize. As they arrive each week, allow them to recite a verse from memory to an adult helper. You can use these scriptures, or substitute others, using the Bible translation of your choice. (All of these are from the New Revised Standard Version.)

Week One

Psalm 23:1-2 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters.

Week Two

John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Week Three

Matthew 19:26b “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”

Week Four

Isaiah 9:6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders' and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Week Five

Luke 2:13-14 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

Week Six

Jeremiah 29:11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Week Seven

Colossians 3:23 Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters.

Week Eight

I Corinthians 16:13 Keep alert, stand firm in your faith be courageous, be strong.

BONUS: Offer a Super Challenge for highly motivated children to memorize all of Psalm 23 or Luke 2:1-20.

Ideas for Mixed Ages

Feature the older children as the speakers. Divide longer speaking parts as needed to include more children. Dress the youngest children as sheep using white or black sweatpants/shirts.

Accessorize with coordinating mittens and socks and inexpensive ears, masks, or simple “sheep” makeup.

Extend the Musical

If you want to extend the length of the musical to fill an entire worship service, here are some ideas to do so:

1. Add an audience participation carol-sing at the end by reprising “On a Starlit Night” and “Who Is This Child?” Audience members can join in on the familiar carols “Silent Night” and “Away in a Manger”.
2. Include a testimony from one or more of the Special Guests who visited rehearsals.
3. Insert some of the scripture memory verses throughout the performance. This will allow more speaking parts for a larger choir.

Promotional Ideas

Since musicals aren’t performed on a regular basis, whenever they are performed, they’re an event. And events generally bring out more people to see them than a regular worship service (if they’re promoted correctly). The “un-churched” or “seekers” who don’t attend your church or any other often attend a musical. Especially when children sing. In addition to immediate family, extended family and friends of children often attend who might not otherwise.

Although this may be the 50th Christmas musical your church has presented, if the promotion of it is approached with fresh enthusiasm and new ideas, you’re bound to have more people than

ever before to experience it. That the life-changing, Christ affirming message of this musical be heard by as large a group as possible is certainly a prime objective for any organization presenting it, while offering the opportunity for the experience to impact the lives of those who are presenting it.

Musicals require a certain commitment of time and energy, so it's a shame if it isn't very well-attended after the effort that goes into preparing and presenting one. To reach all the people described above (let alone your regular church members) requires a two-pronged approach: vehicles that reach within your church walls and beyond them.

Internal Church Promotion

1. Post an announcement on the church website and/or Facebook page.
2. Have children from the musical visit Bible study classes/groups to tell those present something about the musical, personally invite those in the classes and encourage them to invite others.
3. Sing an excerpt and/or perform a scene from the musical in a regular worship service.
4. Put posters up around the church (see reproducible poster below).
5. Post an interview with the director with quotes from cast members on the church website and/or Facebook page. Ask questions about the production, how and why this musical was selected for presentation, what it means to the children involved, etc.

External Church Promotion

1. Write a press release on church stationery and send it to your local newspaper. All cities have local newspapers which have online versions in addition to remaining printed versions. Encourage the paper to feature the release in one or both versions.
2. Create a Public Service Announcement (PSA). A wonderful free method of receiving media exposure (television and radio) for your production is using PSAs. Most radio and television stations are required by law to devote airtime to these announcements, so why not have them mention your production! Keep your blurb short: 3 – 4 sentences will be best. Make sure you include the name of the musical, date(s) and time(s) of the performance(s) and a website address for more information.
3. Enlist 10 – 20 church members to call 5 – 10 of their friends who aren't part of your church and invite them to the musical.
4. Consider scheduling an extra performance "on the road" at a local senior citizens center as an extension of your music ministry and the musical. Once the musical has been performed at

least once it's easy to perform it again (as long as too much time doesn't pass between the last performance and your senior center performance, therefore keeping it all fresh). Senior adults in such communities enjoy the energy and enthusiasm of children performing.

The Program

The program is an important part of the production, though unfortunately sometimes a last-minute effort. This should not be the case, and a little advance planning can help. The program not only helps the audience keep track of what song is being sung next and which character is which, but credits those who have worked on the production (in front of and behind the scenes). It is also a means to say "Thank you" to the numerous "unsung heroes" who supported the production otherwise. However, the most important part of the program is that it serves to preserve an historical account of the musical. Make sure you print extra programs as souvenirs for all who want a copy as a keepsake. (See reproducible program below).

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The Tale of the Drowsy Shepherd

A Christmas Musical for Children

by MICHAEL and JILL GALLINÁ



Alfred Sacred

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DATE: _____

TIME: _____

PLACE: _____

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