



# ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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## A Christmas Tale of Two Dogs & Frog

Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016

*Dedicated to Jessica Ambrose, whose idea it was, and my youngest grandson, Ashten*

Once upon a time, long, long ago, in the hills just outside the little town of Bethlehem, there lived two little black dogs called Casey and Chloe. If they had been here in America they would have been called Scottish Terriers. But, back then, America hadn't yet been discovered and Scotland didn't exist because the people who lived in that part of the world were Picts not Scots. So the folks who knew Casey and Chloe just called them "little black dogs."

In any event, Casey and Chloe were hard working animals. They helped shepherds who lived in the hills to mind their sheep. They were just a wee bit too small to be sheepdogs. But as they had very loud voices, the shepherds let them work as guard dogs to warn when nasty animals, like lions and wolves, were sneaking up on the sheep.

It was interesting work and quite well paid, but Casey and Chloe had much bigger ambitions. They were very proud of their voices. Surprisingly perhaps, Casey, the larger of the two, had quite a high voice, while just as surprisingly Chloe, despite her small size, had a rather low one. And like so many young people, animal and human, they wanted become famous singers.

Getting on in the entertainment world is very difficult, especially for singers, so, like all professional entertainers, Casey and Chloe had an agent, Bob the Frog by name, to help them find work. Bob, being an animal himself, was an agent who specialized in animal acts. And he was particularly keen on helping Casey and Chloe as singing dogs are very rare in the world of entertainment.

"It's very good that your voices are so different," Bob told the two little dogs, "Your voices blend really well. If you practice hard, I am sure I can get you a booking to sing at the king's palace."

This pleased Casey and Chloe so much that they rehearsed every day by singing to the sheep they were guarding. The shepherds, who didn't have much of an ear for music, especially dog music, simply assumed the little dogs were working really hard to keep dangerous animals away from the sheep.

Then, one particularly cold day in December, Bob the Frog called them into his office. "I've got great news for you," he said, "I've booked you to sing at the royal palace tomorrow evening. Make sure you are there by seven o'clock sharp. King Herod likes to listen to music while he eats his supper."

The next evening Bob the Frog met them at the palace gate. He led them into an enormous dining hall. From the walls hung golden drapes that glittered in the light of a thousand candles. At the end of the hall, on a great golden throne, slouched King Herod, looking extremely grumpy. At the opposite end of the hall was a very small stage. "That's where you'll stand," Bob explained.

King Herod scowled when he saw Casey and Chloe. "They're very small," he complained, "I hope they can sing loud enough for me to hear them." Bob the Frog bowed: "Oh yes, your Majesty," he said, "They've got very loud voices. 'O come, O come, Emanuel' will be their first number." King Herod scowled even more. "Never heard of it," he snarled, "It better be good."

Casey and Chloe were terrified. But they swallowed hard, took a deep breath, and launched into the song. They had just finished the words “And ransom captive Israel” when King Herod let out a roar and hurled a plate at them, followed by his great golden goblet. “That’s the most dreadful noise I’ve ever heard,” he yelled, “Get them out of here and chop off their heads.”

“Run for it,” shouted Bob the Frog, jumping on Casey’s back. The two little dogs made a dash for the door. Soon they were in the street and heading for the hills. “What a nasty man,” exclaimed Chloe, when they paused for a breather, “Clearly, he doesn’t like good music.”

“I guess the trouble is that a dog’s idea of music is not quite the same a human’s idea of music,” observed Bob the Frog, “Still on the way out, I grabbed that big golden cup he threw at you. I’m sure it’s worth a lot of money. So the evening won’t be a total loss.”

Bob had no sooner spoken than the sky was filled with light and a vast angel choir burst into song: “Glory to God in the highest high. Peace on earth. Good will to all men.” The three animals were amazed. “What’s all the fuss about?” Casey asked an angel.

“We are singing to welcome the new born King,” replied the Angel. “I hope he’s nicer than Herod,” said Bob the Frog. “You bet he is,” the angel replied, “He’s the Savior of the World. His name is Jesus Christ the Lord. If you like, you can come to Bethlehem with the shepherds and visit him. There was no room for him at the inn, so he’s in a stable, sleeping in the manger.”

“May we sing to him?” asked Chloe. “Of course you may,” replied the angel, “In fact, why don’t you join in with us now? We’re going to sing ‘Hark the herald angels sing.’ The words aren’t difficult in dog’s language.” So Casey and Chloe threw back their heads and sang along with the angels: “Woof, woof, woof, woof, woof, woof ...” Even Bob the Frog managed a “rivet” or two.

Arriving in Bethlehem, they found the stable and the Holy Family surrounded by a huge crowd of people. But being quite small, all three managed to wriggle their way to the front without too much trouble. There they saw Joseph and Mary looking

after a beautiful baby boy who was asleep in the manger that normally held food for the animals who lived in the stable. Casey, Chloe and Bob the Frog were glad to see that the ox and the donkey whose home had been taken over by the Holy Family didn’t mind a bit.

Bob the Frog stepped forward and made an elegant vow to Mary and Joseph. The he presented Herod’s great golden cup to them. “Excuse me ma’am,” he said, “This a present for Jesus. You can give it to him when he grows up. But may my clients, Casey and Chloe, two of the most famous singing dogs in the land of Judah, also sing a song for him?”

“Yes of course,” Mary replied, “I’m sure we would all like to hear Casey and Chloe sing.”

The two little dogs stepped forward, coughed to clear their throats and began to sing “Hark the herald angels sing.” Next they sang “O come all ye faithful.” And after the last “woof” had died away, Chloe stepped forward. “I hope Jesus liked it,” she began nervously, “King Herod said it was a dreadful noise and wanted to chop our heads off.”

“Herod is a very nasty man,” Mary said, severely, “Of course Jesus liked it. It made him so happy he’s smiling all over his face.”

“So you really didn’t think it was a dreadful noise?” said Casey.

“Not at all,” Mary replied, “It was a very joyful noise. And the Bible says a joyful noise is a very good thing indeed. Just look at the opening words of the 66<sup>th</sup> Psalm. They read: ‘Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands.’ And Psalm 81 says the exactly same thing; so do Psalms 95, 98 and 100.

“You should feel very proud of yourselves because you’re doing exactly what God has told everyone in the world to do. It’s pity that so many human beings don’t take God’s commandments as seriously you three little animals.”

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