

“Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?” by David Kai ©2003

Introduction: This play, set in the middle of the 21st century, is a comedy with a serious message -- that we must not forget the reason for the season of Christmas in the years to come. This play was originally performed by members of the Church School for White Gift Sunday in Advent, and could be used anytime during the Advent/Christmas season. The play is designed to be staged easily with few props and little rehearsal.

Setting: Four chairs are placed in an arc on one side of the sanctuary or performance space. All characters speak from the arc, if microphones have been set up there. Grandma/pa and two children should have clip on portable microphones; a hand-held portable might be shared between the other actors. The narrators use a lectern for speaking.

Roles: A, B & C (children), Mom, Dad, Grandpa/ma, 2 narrators

Scene 1: A home in the not-too-distant future
(A, B, and C are sitting on chairs, writing on tablets/phones)

B: Do you have your letter finished?

A: Yeah. Listen to this: "Dear Cyber Claus, For Ex-mas, please bring me a new laptop computer. Everyone at school laughs at me when I tell them I only have a hundred gigabytes of RAM. Your friend, A." What do you want for Ex-mas this year?

B: I want that new game -- Immortal Kombat 26.1. It now comes with real freeze-dried gore. How about you, C?

C: I'm going for the Cyborg Turboman with functional laser sword.
(Mom and Dad enter.)

D: Well, kids, do you have your Ex-mas lists ready?

A, B, C: Yeah.

D: Then let's head over to the mall. You can drop off your letters to Cyber Claus and pick up your requests at the same time.

M: And we still have to pick up a Tickle Me Innards doll for your cousin. There are a lot of good Pre-Ex-mas sales on now.

C: Mom, if we're going to the mall, can I have \$500 to buy you an Ex-mas present?

M: But didn't I give you \$200 just a few days ago?

C: Yeah, but I went to McDonald's, remember? You don't get much back from a hundred these days.

M: Oh, all right. Here you go.
(transfers money using phone)

A: Is Grandpa/ma coming with us?

D: I don't think so. S/he doesn't like malls, especially around Ex-mas time.

B: Grandpa/ma seems a bit grumpy since s/he got here on Wednesday.

M: Maybe s/he's just tired.

C: Whatever it is, s/he's really not getting into the Ex-mas mood.

B: Yeah. The other day I asked him/her if s/he could buy me that new computer game, Mass Destruction, for Ex-mas, and s/he didn't say anything. S/he just sort of rolled his/her eyes and looked up at the ceiling.

M: Now remember, children -- Grandpa/ma can be a bit old-fashioned. Just try to humour him/her. S/he'll only be here for a few weeks.

D: Shhh! Here s/he comes now. (Grandpa/ma enters.)

A: Hi, Grandpa/ma. Did you have good nap?

G: (Stretching and yawning) Oh, yes. I had a nice rest.

B: Are you less grumpy now?

All: Shhh!!

M: What B means to say is that you seem a bit out of sorts this visit.

G: Well, I wasn't going to mention it, but since you asked, I'll tell you. (Sitting in an empty chair) It really gets my dander up to think that everyone has forgotten the real meaning of Christmas.

C: There are special shampoos for that kind of problem, Grandpa/ma.
(The others glare at C.)

A: Don't you mean Ex-mas, Grandpa/ma?

G: No. It's Christmas! I know that the stores started calling it Ex-mas a few years ago, but Christmas is the proper word. And you've all forgotten the real meaning of Christmas.

A: No, I haven't, Grandpa/ma. I never knew it in the first place.

G: Nowadays, all that anyone thinks about is getting and buying presents. But whose birthday is it, anyway?

B: Uh, Santa Claus's?

G: No, no. Think of the word. Christmas. Christ-mass. Christ's festival.

C: Is it Kris Kringle's birthday?

G: What? (Turning to Dad) I thought you said you were taking these children to church and Sunday School!

D: Well, we were going to start. But then the 3-D bowling league shifted to Sunday morning.

A: And so did my jet-skating lessons.

B: And then I got that part-time job at the megamall.

M: And to top it off, Sunday became our recycling day, as well as our gas rationing day.

D: Well, we did go to church once. But the service was so long.

C: Yeah. It must have been at least half an hour.

G: So none of you remember that it's Jesus' birthday that we celebrate at Christmas? That's shocking! And another thing. This time before Christmas -- it's called Advent, not Pre-Ex-mas. It's a time to prepare for the coming of the Christ child.

B: You mean, it's a time for shopping?

C: And making wish lists?

G: No. It's a time for preparing our hearts to receive God in a new way. At church, we used to count down the Sundays to Christmas with Advent candles -- candles representing Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. In fact, (this Sunday's candle is the candle of peace); people used to call Jesus the Prince of Peace.

A: The Prince of Peace -- that's a neat name.

B: This Jesus sounds like a cool dude.

C: But why is Jesus so special? Why would people celebrate his birthday?

G: Now sit right there, and listen to the story of Jesus' birth. It's about time that you heard it! Imagine a scene in a desert country more than 2050 years ago.

Scene 2: Bethlehem

(The players remain in place. Sunday School children come up to chancel and stand facing congregation. Narrator 1 (N1) and Narrator 2 (N2) come to the lectern. If desired, the actions described in the reading could be mimed by members of the Church School. Another alternative would be to have G retell the story briefly in their own words.)

N1: In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled...

N2: So all went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

N1: While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.

N2: And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

(Church School song e.g. "The virgin Mary had a baby boy")

N1: In that region, there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

N2: And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. But the angel said to them,

N1: "Do not be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. To you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you; you will find a child wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

N2: And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

N1: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill to all."

N2: When the angel had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

N1: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."