

The Song of Christmas

Created by Phil Barfoot
Arranged by Cliff Duren

Optional Dramatic and Narrative Scripts

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*****NOTE — We have provided two different dramatic scripts for you to choose from, along with one narrative script. This gives you three options for your performance. You may make as many copies as you need for your cast.**

The Song of Christmas

Dramatic Script by John Plastow

CHARACTERS

Tina Carlson	Married to a deployed soldier, so functions as a single mom
Abby Carlson	Older daughter. Typical 14 year old, highly tech savvy
Niki Carlson	Younger daughter. Nice little kid, inquisitive and eager to know more about Christmas
Grandma Whittaker	Tina's mom, widowed and now living with her daughter's family. She is forgetful, and totally doesn't understand current technology or social media. She has lost her husband George within the past year. (GW)
Archie	Male neighbor and friend who looks in on the family and tries to take care of them while the dad is away.
Preacher	The pastor of the Carlson family church. (Only one line) (PR)
Bill Carlson	Tina's deployed husband. (Non-speaking role)

STAGE SET UP

For the dramatic version

On one far side is the Carlson family room (see details below). On the other far side are a couple of church pews. Center stage, preferably raised, is the stable and manger in Bethlehem. This should look like a life-sized nativity set, just like the one seen on the table of the Carlson family room. The choir is split on either side of the stable, in between the stable and the two side stage settings (above).

SETTING

The dialogue takes place in the family room of the Carlson family. There is a chair, a small couch, a fireplace adorned with decorations and stockings, and a fully-decorated Christmas tree with presents. To one side of the tree is a table with a lamp. To the other side is another table with an empty nativity set structure placed on it. On the floor in front of the table is a box in which are the nativity set figurines. Also included in the setting is a floor lamp behind the chair, and Christmas lights in the garland across the mantle of the fireplace.

Technical Note: Each lamp, the mantle lights, and the Christmas tree lights are all functional and on separate circuits.

VIDEOS

It is expected that the publisher's video accompaniments can and will be used, in part, or in their entirety. Things to keep in mind are that you may not want to use the visuals when the live nativity scene is presented, and if the visual is used for "Christmas With Jesus," an attempt should be made for the actress playing Grandma to look as close to the grandma in the video as possible. Even just hair and outfit will be helpful.

ORDER OF SONGS

The song order is virtually the same as the narrative version, with one exception. "Christmas with Jesus" is moved to right after "Love Reaches 'Round the World."

The Song of Christmas

Dramatic Script by John Plastow

OPENING SONG: “We Have a Savior”

SCENE ONE

In the family room of the Carlsons, two days before Christmas

(Immediately following the opening song, Abby is sitting on the couch, fully involved in her smart phone. Grandma Carlson enters the room, not knowing that Abby is there. Grandma has a “clapper” lighting control gadget with her, and she goes to one side of the fireplace and plugs it into the wall jack, then plugs the table lamp into the clapper. She steps away and claps. The lamp turns on. She claps again and the lamp goes off. She repeats this process with the floor lamp. This time both of the lamps turn on and off. After this time, it is obvious that Grandma is pleased with herself. She goes through the process again, adding the mantle lights, turning them all on and off twice.)

GW (Speaking to her deceased husband) You see, George, I can do this! You should be so proud of me. (Chuckling, she adds the Christmas tree, turning everything on and off several times, even singing the “Clap on Clap off” jingle. After a few times, a pop is heard and all the lights go off. Grandma keeps clapping at the different lights, but they all stay off.) George? Did you do that? (She tries clapping again.) George? This is no time for jokes. Turn the lights back on! (She claps one more time, then sighs.) Oh, George, where are you when I need you? (She stands for a moment, then Abby, who has been watching all of this, speaks.)

Abby I think you blew a fuse, Grandma.

GW (Totally startled) Oh, Abby! When did you get here? You’re going to scare me to death!

Abby I’ve been here all along.

GW Oh, my. I was so intent on getting these lights to do what I told them to do, I didn’t see you.

Abby What was with all the clapping?

GW It’s just an old gadget, dear. Your grandpa used to use it every Christmas. He’d hook it up so that when I clapped, the whole house would come alive. I was trying to do that myself, now that he’s gone, but I think I did something wrong.

Abby Why don’t you download an app and hook it up through a mobile device?

GW An app?

Abby Sure. This time of year the app store has all kinds of cool remote access apps that you download to your smartphone so that you can turn on your Christmas tree from anywhere.

GW Smartphone?

Abby Yeah. They've got them for iPhone and Blackberry, or you can use your tablet or laptop.

GW Tablet?

Abby You know. Your Surface or iPad. Let me show you. (She pulls out a tablet. Grandma sits beside her and watches.) See, I go into the app store, and I search remote access Remote Christmas Lights. See? It shows me 25 of the most popular. I can scroll down through them and see which one I like best. (There is the SFX of an incoming text). Oh, that's my BFF with a text.

GW BFF?

Abby Yeah, kinda like you and me, except we're related. You're my grandma.

GW That's what I always call you, my BFF.

Abby Aw, thanks, Grandma. You, too.

GW Text?

Abby Yeah. I get hundreds of them.

GW (Realization) That's what that sound is. All day long I hear (She mimics the sound of the incoming text.)... I thought I was going crazy!

Abby Leslie wants to meet me at the mall later. Let me text her back. (She does.) Sure thing. What time?

GW So this text thing can turn on the Christmas tree?

Abby No, not a text, an app. We just have to find the right one. (SFX: incoming text) Oh, that's Leslie. (She texts.) Yeah, 4:00 is fine. Meet you in the FC.

GW FC?

Abby Food court.

(SFX: 3 incoming texts rapidly)

GW She must be hungry!

Abby We're on a group message. That's Trisha, Lynn, and Sophie all responding.

GW 4:00 at the food court. Are they all your BFF?

Abby No, Grandma, you can only have one BFF! But they're all Facebook friends. I IM them all the time and they show up in my news feed and on my timeline. But I can always delete a status update, or if they make me mad I can hide or unfriend them.

GW Can you do that with your BFF?

Abby Of course not, Grandma. If I did that, she's only be a BF, not a BFF.

GW (Confused) Of course.

(SFX: Sound of Facetime call)

GW What's that?

Abby It's Mom on Facetime.

GW Facetime?

Abby You know, kinda like Skype, but on your phone.

GW Right.

Abby (Looking into her phone) Hi, Mom. (If possible, the image of Mom out running errands shows up on the screens. In that case, this little bit of dialogue would need to be pre-recorded. If not, Tina's voice should be heard live.)

Tina Hi, honey. How's it going?

Abby Good. Grandma and I are just hanging out and looking for an app she needs.

Tina (Confused) Grandma needs an app? What for?

Abby For the Christmas lights. She needs to turn them on and off remotely.

Tina She does?

Abby Yeah, from her smartphone.

Tina Grandma has a smartphone?

Abby I think so. (To GW) You do have a smartphone, don't you, Grandma?

GW I have a phone. I don't know how smart it is.

Abby (To Tina) She does. Wanna say hi? (She swings her phone out and around to bring Grandma into the picture.) Say hi, Grandma.

GW Hello. (She waves.)

(Niki appears in the picture on the screens.)

Niki Hi, Grandma.

GW Hello, sweetie.

Niki We're Christmas shopping. Do you want to know what I got you for Christmas?

GW Not 'til Christmas, dear.

Niki Okay. You're gonna really like it.

GW I'm sure I will.

(SFX: Four rapid text messages)

GW Well, we're getting texts from our BFF, so I'd better go.

Niki Okay. Here's Mom. (She is off picture, but heard.) I didn't know Grandma had a BFF.

Tina I'll let you guys go.

Abby What did you call for, Mom?

Tina Oh, that's right. I'm losing my mind. Can you please pull the turkey out of the freezer and put it in the sink with some water? If we don't thaw it out, we won't have Christmas dinner.

Abby Sure. Hey, can I go to the mall later?

Tina Well, I've got some things I need you to help with.

(SFX: Four rapid texts)

Abby I've got texts coming in. Thanks, Mom.

Tina Hang on a minute.

Abby Love you. See you later. Say goodbye, Grandma.

GW Goodbye, Tina.

Tina We'll be home in a half an hour...

(Abby hangs up and the image on the screen goes dark. Abby texts back to her friends.)

Abby Okay, Grandma, let's find you an app. I remember seeing a good one on Instagram yesterday.

GW Insta-what?

Abby Instagram.

GW Oh, never mind!

Abby Here you go. But you'll need the hardware to make it work.

GW Do I get that at Home Depot? They have hardware.

Abby Not that kind of hardware, Grandma. The type to go with your software.

GW Do I get it at Bed, Bath, and Beyond?

Abby No! The hardware and the software work together through the app.

GW (Exasperated) I just want to turn on the Christmas tree lights.

Abby How 'bout this? When I'm at the mall, I'll pick up everything you need, then I'll get you set up.

GW Sounds good. In the meantime... (She walks to the wall jack, unplugs the clapper, and plugs the Christmas tree lights directly into the wall. The Christmas tree comes on.) There! Don't forget the turkey.

Abby Got it. I'll see you later, Grandma. (She runs out of the room.)

GW (Speaking to heaven) Oh, George, what have I gotten myself into?

SONG: "Come!" with "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

SCENE TWO

Split Scene

Carlsons' family room 30 minutes later
and the stable in Bethlehem

(As the scene opens, GW is standing in the dark, clapping and mumbling. Mom and Niki enter. GW doesn't see them.)

Niki Mom, why is Grandma clapping and talking to herself in the dark?

Tina Not sure, honey. Don't startle her.

Niki Grandma? (Grandma continues to clap and mumble.) Grandma? (No change. Niki goes in front of GW and speaks louder.) Grandma! (GW is greatly startled.)

GW (Yelps) Goodness gracious, what is it about this family that you always scare me to death?!

Tina Just wanted you to know that we're home.

GW Yes, I see that.

Tina How can you see anything in the dark here?

Niki Why are you in the dark, Grandma?

GW I had the lights on, then they all went out when I tried to hook everything up.

Tina It must be a breaker. I'll go check it out.

GW No, I've already called your neighbor.

Tina Really, Mom? I can handle it.

GW You have enough to handle with Bill in Afghanistan.

Tina I can handle a breaker.

GW But Archie is always saying, "What can I do to help?"

Tina I know. He and Bill are best friends, but sometimes Archie just tries too hard.

GW Well, let him help. Who knows when Bill will get to come home? It's good to have a BFF to lean on.

Niki Grandma? You know what a BFF is?

GW Well, of course dear. I wasn't just born yesterday. Hmm, well maybe a whole lot of yesterdays...

Tina I can fix my own breaker... (The lights come on.)

GW There, you don't have to. Archie to the rescue.

Tina I don't need to be rescued. I need my husband to come home.

GW But until he does...

(Archie enters.)

Archie So, is there anything else I can do to help?

GW Thanks, Archie. That's what we needed.

Archie You know, anything. Just ask.

GW Well, the snow in the driveway could use some attention.

Tina Mom, I can shovel my own snow. Hi, Archie. Thanks for helping.

Archie Hi, Tina. Whatever you need, you know that.

Tina Yeah, I know.

Archie When Bill was shipped out, I promised him I would take care of you.

Tina I appreciate it, I really do, but you have your own life to live and I don't need to be taken care of. We're doing fine.

Archie I know, but we all can use a little help, especially at Christmastime.

GW (Interrupting) And we appreciate it!

Archie Whatever I can do to help!

Tina Actually, I've got a trunk load of stuff I could use a hand with.

Archie Sure thing.

Tina Niki, why don't you stay here with Grandma while I unload, and I'll join you in a few minutes?

Niki Can I finally unpack the nativity set? It's still in the box and tomorrow is Christmas Eve.

Tina Well, your daddy always likes to set it up. You know how much he loves Christmas, so I was leaving it for him, just in case he is able to come home.

Niki But you said that you really didn't think Daddy would make it home for Christmas.

Tina I know, but...

Niki Don't you think he'd want us to put it up? (Tina is torn.)

GW Why don't you let us unpack it together? I'm sure Bill wouldn't mind.

Tina But leave out the baby Jesus. Bill's had that one since he was a child and it's his favorite. If he doesn't make it home, we'll put it out tomorrow after the church service on Christmas Eve.

GW That sounds good.

Archie (To Tina) You ready?

Tina Yeah. Be careful not to slip on the ice. (Tina and Archie exit.)

(Grandma and Niki go and start to sit on the floor in front of the table with the nativity set.)

GW Help me down, my dear, help me down! (They laugh as Niki helps and they start to pull wrapped figurines out of the box.) Slow down, you want to be careful.

Niki I'm just so excited to finally unpack these!

GW I know. Your mom has just been so hoping that your daddy will somehow make it home for Christmas, so she left these for him.

Niki Yeah, I miss him, too.

GW And I'm sure he misses you, and your sister, and especially your mom.

Niki Which one is the baby?

GW (Looking closely) I believe...it's this one. Let's leave this one wrapped up and we'll put it aside. Maybe, just maybe, we'll have a Christmas gift like no other, and he'll somehow make it home.

Niki I'd like that. Do you think he will?

GW 'Most anything is possible. (She is quiet for a moment.)

Niki Grandma, what are you thinking about? Are you okay?

GW Yes, I was just thinking about your grandpa.

Niki I bet you miss him this Christmas especially.

GW I do, sweetie, I really do. He loved Christmas, almost as much as your daddy does. But he's gone now and we'll have to do this Christmas without him. (Changing the subject) Okay, which one do you think is the angel, and where are the shepherds and animals? (As they unwrap the figures, Niki places them in the stable.)

Niki (Opening one) Here's a cow!

GW And here are a donkey and a little lamb.

Niki I think I found a shepherd.

GW And here's one of my favorites...the angel.

Niki Grandma, can you tell me that story you tell each year while we put these out?

GW But you've heard it all before.

Niki Please? Tell it to me again. I love the way you tell it.

GW Certainly, my dear. (Her tone changes to that of a storyteller.)

On one particular night, the fields were quiet. The night was dark, cool, and still. Shepherds were bedding down for the evening, and the flocks were ready for another night. Nothing was expected to be different; it was just another night. Then something changed...one bright star.

On one particular night, a small town named Bethlehem was wrapping up the affairs of the day. People were in their homes, weary from their day of toil. Visitors were crowded into the inns. Families shared an evening meal. Nothing was different; it was just another night. Then something happened...one bright star.

SONG: "The Night That Christ Was Born"

(As the song begins, Grandma continues to tell the story and they unwrap a piece or two. During the song, the stable is lit, showing Mary, Joseph, the animals, and the shepherds who have come to see the baby Jesus.)

Niki Tell me again, Grandma. Jesus was God's Son, right?

GW Yes.

Niki And He came to be with us on Christmas?

GW Yes.

Niki Why'd He do that?

GW People had turned from God. People followed their own paths and their own values, and they left the presence of God. They looked to themselves, thinking that they didn't need God.

Niki What happened when they did that?

GW They lost their hope. They lost their faith.
 And because of their sin, they lost their lives.
 Dark was the earth on that particular night.
 Dark...and still...and cold.
 Then...one bright star.

Niki I wish I could've seen it. I'm sure it was amazing!

GW (Full of energy) Suddenly the sky was filled with light.
 Like a thousand comets across the night sky.
 A brilliant light. A fantastic light.
 Angels rejoicing! Angels singing.
 Proclaiming peace.
 Proclaiming the love of God for all people.
 Proclaiming the birth of Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.
 One bright star was shining over the little town named Bethlehem.

SONG: "Let Heaven and Nature Sing"

(During this song, angels are added to the lifesize nativity set. This is a great opportunity to use a dance company for an angels feature dance.)

GW One bright star, whose appearance meant that things would never be the same again.
 Bethlehem would no longer be just a lazy little town.
 Shepherds would forever have the distinction of being the first to know of the coming Christ.
 Light had come to man's dark existence. Christ had come to save man from sin.
 (Pause)
 On one particular night, the fields were quiet. The night was dark, cool, and still.
 And then...one bright star.

Niki I love the way you tell that story, Grandma.

GW And I love telling it.

(Niki unwraps two more pieces.)

Niki Here's Joseph.

GW We'll put him over here. (She places him in the stable.)

Niki And here is Mary, Jesus' mom.

(Tina enters carrying a shopping bag and places it to the side.)

Niki Hi, Mom. Look, we've got most of the nativity set put out and Grandma's been telling me the story as we go.

Tina She's very good at that. She's been telling that story since I was a kid. I love the way she says (in Grandma's tone) "one bright star."

Niki Here's Jesus' mom. Do you want to put it in place?

Tina Sure.

Niki I wonder what she was thinking about that night.

Tina What do you mean?

Niki I mean, wouldn't it be something else to have a baby, and the next thing you see are angels and shepherds?

GW It might've been a little strange.

Niki A lot strange.

Tina You mean you don't think there were angels when you were born?

Niki Mom!

(They laugh.)

GW You might not have seen them, but I'm sure they were all around you when you were born.

Niki You know what I mean, Grandma!

GW Yes, I do. I'm sure the angels and the shepherds were amazing to Mary. But she already knew that this baby of hers was going to be very special. She knew that this would be the Son of God and not just an ordinary baby.

Niki How'd she know that?

Tina Because that wasn't the first time she had seen an angel.

Niki It wasn't?

Tina No. She was visited by an angel before she became pregnant with Jesus.

GW The angel appeared to her and said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end!"

Niki Wow! That's amazing.

GW Truly.

Tina Can you imagine what it was like to be the mother of Jesus?

Niki I can hardly imagine what it's like to be a mother at all. I'm only 8 years old!

Tina (Hugging Niki) Well, just to be a mom of anyone is a great and awesome privilege which God gives us, but to be chosen to be the mother of the Son of God is even more so.

Niki Did God ask Mary if she wanted to be Jesus' mom?

GW The Bible doesn't really talk about that, but it does say that when the angel visited her, she responded, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be according to your word."

SONG: "Magnificat"

(During this song, the focus is on Mary alone.)

SCENE THREE

Immediately following "Magnificat"

(Archie enters with a snow shovel.)

Archie Phew! That was a workout! The driveway is once more safe to walk upon!

Tina Thanks, Archie, but I would've done it.

Archie No problem, Tina. If Bill found out I let you shovel your own snow, he'd have my hide when he gets back.

Tina I do appreciate it.

Archie What are friends for? Besides, it's Christmas. We're supposed to do nice things for each other this time of year.

GW Christmas does have a way of bringing out the best in people.

Niki My teacher at church says that especially at Christmastime, we need to open our hearts and give of ourselves.

GW That's right, dear.

Niki But shouldn't we do that all year long?

GW Yes. We should always be willing to give of our time, our talents, and our treasure.

Tina Which is exactly why we took the time to go shopping to buy the things that we'll put in our Christmas treasure box for the children whose families don't have as much as we do and can use a little help. (She grabs the shopping bag that she brought in earlier, and they sit down.) Let's go ahead and put together your treasure box so we can take it with us to church tomorrow.

Niki Can we make two?

Tina Sure. I think we bought plenty of goodies to go inside.

Archie Can I make one?

Tina Why not?

Niki I'll make one for a little girl, and you make one for a boy.

Archie Who do these go to?

Tina Some to families here in town, some to children across the world, and some to children whose parents are away serving our country.

Nikie Like Daddy.

Tina Some children have both of their parents gone, Niki. These Christmas treasure boxes are especially needed for them.

SONG: “Love Reaches ‘Round the World *with* Silent Night! Holy Night!”

(The boxes are assembled during the song. At the end, Archie stands with a box in his hand.)

Archie Here you go. One boy’s Christmas treasure box ready to go!

Niki And one for a girl, too.

Archie I’d better get going. I need to shovel my driveway, too, before my wife gets home!

(As he says that and begins to leave, Abby enters.)

Abby Hey, I’m home! Grandma, I got all your stuff. (Bumping into Archie) Mom, did you shovel the walk? It’s awesome. I almost didn’t know how to walk on safe ground!

Tina You can thank Archie for that.

Abby You did that for us? Thanks! Did my dad threaten you before he left?

Archie Sort of. See you all at church tomorrow.

(They say goodbye.)

Niki What stuff did you get for Grandma?

Abby I’m bringing her into the 21st century.

Niki Really? But you’re always saying that she’s stuck in the 16th century. (Just as she says that, Abby puts her hand over Niki’s mouth)

Abby Well, now she’ll be right here with the rest of us.

GW Just wait, I’ll be all over twittergram; I mean pinbook... Ohh, I don’t know what I mean.

Tina Girls, before you do anything else, I need your help with dinner. We still have lots to do before Christmas Eve tomorrow.

N/Abby Okay, Mom.

Abby I’ll get you set up later, Grandma.

(They exit. Before Tina exits, she sees GW at the Christmas tree, reminiscing. She moves to her.)

Tina You okay, Mom?

GW Yes, Tina. I'm just thinking about your father. He gave you many of the ornaments on your tree over the years. I'm just missing him a little more each day as we get closer to Christmas.

Tina I know. I miss him, too. We all do.

GW I'll be all right. You go make dinner.

(Tina exits, leaving Grandma by the tree as the music begins.)

SONG: "Christmas with Jesus"

(Note – this is the only song that is in a different order than the narrative version.)

(This song can be done with or without the video images. If without, have Grandma do the same thing that the video character does. If you use the video, dim the lights out so that Grandma is not seen.)

SCENE FOUR

The next day, just before the family leaves
to go to church for Christmas Eve

(The scene opens with Grandma standing center holding either a smartphone or a tablet. As she presses the screen, different lights come on and off. She is pleased with herself.)

Tina (From offstage) Mom, are you ready to go?

GW Just about, dear. I'm finishing up here in the family room. Come here for a moment. (She turns everything off.)

(Mom, Abby and Niki enter.)

Tina What's up, Mom?

GW Watch this. (She presses the screen and all the lights come on, but not just on, they do a bit of a show first. Grandma chuckles.) What do you think of your grandma now?

(General approval)

Niki Awesome!

Abby You are my BGF for sure.

GW BGF?

Abby Best Grandma Forever!

(All in favor)

Tina We'd better go. The service will have started by the time we get there. Archie was going to save us some seats.

Niki (Picking up the wrapped baby Jesus) Shouldn't we open this now?

Tina Oh, sweetie, we don't have time. We will as soon as we get home from the service.

(Niki puts the wrapped figurine in the nativity. Grandma is the last to exit, and she dims the lights, except for the Christmas tree and the mantle. The lighting highlights the wrapped figurine for a moment before she exits and the music begins.)

SONG: "He's Here"

(This song reveals the church service in full swing. Archie has saved seats, and after a verse and chorus, the family enters and takes their seats in the pews on one side of the stage. They need to be sitting on the inside edge of the pew with other than family members on the outside. At the end of the first section of the song (prior to the reprise), the lights come up on the family room where Bill enters with a duffle bag. He looks around and realizes that they must be at the church. Before he exits, he sees the nativity set and takes the wrapped figurine with him.)

SONG: “He’s Here Reprise”

(At the end of the reprise, the preacher of the church takes center stage.)

PR For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Many of you have brought Christmas treasure boxes with you, and as an act of our worship, I invite you to bring your boxes forward. We will be taking them to local families tomorrow on Christmas Day. (Several of the congregation members in the pews, along with the Carlson family, bring their treasure boxes forward, with Niki bringing her own.)

SONG: “Worship You”

(As the intro of the song begins, Bill enters on the side of the pew where Tina is sitting, though she doesn’t see him because there are a few non-family members in between them. One by one, he moves past others until he is standing with just one other person between them. He hands the wrapped figurine to the person between them and gestures for them to give it to her. When they do, she takes it, though confused, and realizes what it is. She sees Bill and they hug, as does the family. As the choir begins to sing, Bill calms everyone down and gestures to worship together as a family.)

SONG: “Agnus Dei *with* O Come, all Ye Faithful”

Wrap up and prayer by Pastor or cast member

After prayer, optional narration by Pastor or cast member. (The emphasis should be on the reality of who Jesus is, the rest of the story, and why He came.)

Jesus’ birth was truly the beginning of the story, and many will say that His death was certainly the end. But because He rose from the grave, the end is merely another beginning for those who put their trust in Jesus Christ.

The same Christ who promised that we who believe in Him will have everlasting life, has given us the promise of heaven where we will “neither

hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd us and lead us to living fountains of waters. And where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.” (Revelation 7:16-17)

Yes, for those who believe in Christ, there will be an end of this life on earth, but it is only the end of the beginning of all eternity.

SONG: “End of the Beginning”

The Song of Christmas

Narrative Script by John Plastow

The narrative script is designed to be performed in place of the dramatic script by three narrators, preferably two women (1 & 2) and one man (3). They should be friendly, lighthearted, and sincere. They serve as guides and storytellers for the narrative presentation. Their narrative is sometimes conversational, sometimes presentational, as they guide the audience through the music in this collection. They can be blocked all to one side of the stage with the choir in the center and the stable/manger set on the other far side, or they can be blocked to be seen in any position on the stage with the stable/manger up center and the choir split, some on stage right of the stable and some on stage left of the stable. It all depends on if the narrators are reading or perform their lines fully memorized. This narrative version of the presentation is intended to be performed in conjunction with the videos on the DVD accompaniment.

PART ONE

Opening and Introduction

SONG: "We Have a Savior"

- 1 Merry Christmas to all and welcome to our celebration.
- 2 Yes, welcome. We invite you to join us in this time of discovery and worship of the One whom this season is about...
- 3 The reason for the season, Jesus Christ, born in a stable 2000 years ago to a simple carpenter and a virgin mother, two people who chose to put their lives and trust in God.
- 1 For the next few minutes we ask that you put the rest of the world away.
- 3 Forget about the shopping.
- 2 Forget about the list of things to do and the packages to wrap.
- 1 Forget everything except right here and right now as we focus on the telling of the old, old story in a new, new way.
- 2 For many, this will be familiar, for some brand new.
- 3 But in any case, the story we tell is the greatest love story that will ever be told, and the story today is really only the beginning.
- 2 The beginning of God's love for us...
- 3 The beginning of our eternity with Him...

- 1 The beginning of a relationship which only God could initiate with His children.
 - 3 Come on this journey as we tell the story.
 - 1 Come as we sing.
 - 2 Come as Jesus, the long-awaited One, beckons to us to draw near to Him.
- (Music begins.)

SONG: “Come! *with* O Come, All Ye Faithful”

PART TWO

Telling the Story of Jesus

(During this next sequence, it would be effective to have a keyboard pad underscoring the narration. The player should be aware of the highs and lows and the dramatic rhythms in the lines so that the keys add to the dramatic nature of the lines. Additional video images of Bethlehem, the stable, shepherds, etc. will also enhance the reading, particularly the star of Bethlehem appearing each time “one bright star” is spoken.)

- 1 On one particular night, the fields were quiet. The night was dark, cool, and still. Shepherds were bedding down for the evening, and the flocks were ready for another night. Nothing was expected to be different; it was just another night.
Then something changed...one bright star.
- 2 On one particular night, a small town named Bethlehem was wrapping up the affairs of the day. People were in their homes, weary from their day of toil. Visitors were crowded into the inns. Families shared an evening meal. Nothing was different; it was just another night. Then something happened...one bright star.
- 3 On one particular night, the earth was still.
On one particular night, mankind was lost.
On this night man's view was dark and dim, for the light had gone out.
Then something happened...one bright star.
- 1 People had turned from God.
- 2 People followed their own paths, their own values, and their own sin.
- 3 Mankind had left the presence of God.
- 2 They looked to themselves for provision.
- 1 They lost their hope.
- 2 They lost their faith.
- 3 And because of their sin, they lost their lives.
- 1 Dark was the earth on that particular night.
- 3 Dark...and still...and cold.
- 1 Then...one bright star.

(Pause)

SONG: “The Night That Christ was Born”

2 (Suddenly, full of energy) Suddenly the sky was filled with light.

3 Like a thousand comets across the night sky.

2 A brilliant light.

3 A fantastic light.

1 Angels rejoicing!

2 Angels singing.

3 Proclaiming peace.

1 Proclaiming the love of God for all people.

3 Proclaiming the birth of Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

2 One bright star was shining over the little town named Bethlehem.

(Pause)

1 One bright star, whose appearance meant that things would never be the same again.

2 Bethlehem would no longer be just a lazy little town.

1 Shepherds would forever have the distinction of being the first to know of the coming Christ.

3 Light had come to man’s dark existence.

2 Christ had come to save man from sin.

(Pause)

1 On one particular night, the fields were quiet. The night was dark, cool, and still.

3 And then...one bright star.

SONG: “Let Heaven and Nature Sing”

2 The star that shone over Bethlehem cast light on the baby who had been born to be the Savior of the world. Night was turned to day as all of heaven shone brightly down on the shepherds and the others who were there to witness Jesus’ coming to earth. The bright star shone on the stable and the animals, on Joseph, and on Mary, the mother of Jesus.

1 We can be sure the angels were amazing that night, heralding the birth of the King, and a wonder to behold for this simple peasant girl who said yes

- to God. But these were not the first angels she had seen. She already knew that this baby was special and from God. It was only fitting that angels would come to celebrate the birth.
- 2 She knew because she was visited by an angel before she became pregnant with Jesus.
- 3 The angel appeared to her and said, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end!”
- 1 Amazing!
- 2 Truly amazing!
- 1 Just imagine what it was like to be the mother of Jesus!
- 2 To be a mom of anyone is a great and awesome privilege which God gives to women, but to be chosen to be the mother of the Son of God is even more so.
- 3 The angel said Mary had found favor with God, and so was chosen.
- 1 Mary’s response was, “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be according to your word.”

SONG: “Magnificat”

PART THREE

Making the Connection to Modern Day

1 Popcorn chains wrapped around and around,
Tinsel, lights and the smell of fresh pine,
Presents nestled under the tree with surprises galore...
It's Christmas.

2 Cookies, candy and treats for all,
The smell of homemade pumpkin pie,
Mom's famous recipe, Dad's favorite song...
It's Christmas.

3 Bundle up the kids and caroling we go,
Visiting friends and family,
Singing the tunes, perhaps a bit off-key, but still...
It's Christmas.

1 No other time is quite like this.

2 No other time has the memories and traditions.

3 Christmas is special.

2 Christmas is magical.

1 Christmas is...Christmas!

2 Christmas carols, Christmas cards,
Ribbon, bows and string,
Toys and laughter, children and joy...

3 Christmas Eve is a special time –
Music and church and family.
At home, the last rush of wrapping presents...

1 The morning comes all too soon.

2 Will I get everything done?

1 Get the turkey in the oven.

2 Wake up Dad.

3 Gather at the tree...

1 Where's my coffee?

2 Gifts for everyone on my list.

(Pause)

- 3 Yet, some go without, or some are forgotten.
Some are away. Some are unknown.
- 2 The celebration goes on without them.
- 1 What can be done? What *should* be done?
- 3 What *must* be done so that the celebration is truly for all?
- 2 Gifts for all, not just at home.
Gifts for all, means everyone.
- 1 How can we reach past our own Christmas with the gift of Jesus?

SONG: “Love Reaches ‘Round the World *with* Silent Night! Holy Night!”

PART FOUR

Worship and Close

- 1 My home is warm, and smells of Christmas cookies baking in the oven. A fire burns slowly, and I sit for a moment, just a moment, to read a card from a friend. Such a happy time Christmas is.
- 2 The kids have decorated the tree with handmade ornaments far prettier than any from a store, and placed them ever so carefully on the limbs of the tree.
- 3 On the radio play the melodies with which I grew up. The music takes me back to so many joyful times in my life—times of childhood, times of love, times forever remembered.
- 1 My children huddle around to marvel at the colored lights.
- 2 To try to guess the content of the package shaken!
- 1 They sit and dream of the special morning to come.
- 3 Such a special time.
- 2 It is Christmas, a time like no other. It is the time for Christmas presence.
- 1 But presence unlike those under the tree.
- 3 Not those that are so beautifully wrapped and given to the ones we love.
- 1 Not the presents that we anticipate.
- 2 Or the ones we longed for as a child.
- 3 Not the presents so lovingly selected for that special person in our lives.
- 1 But the presence that is like no other.
- 3 The presence of God.
- 2 The presence of Christ.
- 3 Christmas presence, like no other could possibly be.
- 2 The presence that brings peace.
- 3 The presence that brings joy, and hope, and love to a world that is hurting and crying for salvation.
- 1 The presence that truly will be cherished.
- 2 The presence that will never be forgotten.

3 The presence that will never wear out...
2 ... or fall apart...
1 ... or be put away.
3 Christmas presence like no other.
2 The Christmas presence that comes from God.
3 Christmas presence.

(Pause)

1 But how do we open this Christmas presence?
3 Where is the ribbon to pull apart?
1 With such a gift, how can we be sure not to break it?
2 Where is this gift?

(Pause)

3 Only in one place can this presence be found.
2 Only from one Giver can this gift be obtained.
1 Only in a quiet moment can the Giver be heard.
1 Stop and listen. The Giver is speaking.
3 ... and the gift is for you.
2 Listen, and you can receive...
3 ... the greatest gift you could ever want.
1 Like no other... Christmas presence.
2 The Giver is here...

Song: "He's Here and He's Here reprise"

3 "For unto us a Child is born
2 Unto us a Son is given
1 And the government will be upon His shoulder
2 And His name will be called
3 Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God

- 1 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6)
- 2 He came. He lived. He died and rose again.
- 3 He came and He’s still here with us.
- 1 For all He’s done and for who He is, we worship Him.

(Music begins.)

All We worship Him.

SONG: “Worship You”

- 3 Tonight we have worshipped the Lord.
- 2 We have celebrated His birth with the angels and the shepherds.
- 3 We have smiled and laughed as we think of the traditions that are a part of our own family’s Christmas.
- 1 But even as we do all this, even as we celebrate the best time of year, let’s remember that there are those who have gone on to heaven before us. And even though they are with Jesus tonight, left behind are some of us who face a very different Christmas this year without those with whom we made our traditions, and who now live only in our memory. For all of us left, we must reach out to each other with the love of Christ and the joy of Christmas.

SONG: “Christmas with Jesus”

- 2 “Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.
- 3 Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’
- 1 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying:
- All ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’”(Luke 2:8-14 NKJV)

(Music begins.)

All "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.
You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things. And by Your will all things exist and were
created.
Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb, forever and ever."
(Revelation 4:8 & 11; 5:12 & 13)

SONG: "Agnus Dei *with* O Come! All Ye Faithful"

(In addition to a time of worship by singing, "Agnus Dei" can be used as visual worship by presenting a lifesize version of a nativity set.)

Wrap up by Pastor, elder, or narrators
(The emphasis should be on the reality of who Jesus is, the rest of the story, and why He came.)

- 3 Jesus' birth was truly the beginning of the story, and many will say that His death was certainly the end. But because He rose from the grave, the end is merely another beginning for those who put their trust in Jesus Christ.
- 1 The same Christ who promised that we who believe in Him will have everlasting life, has given us the promise of heaven where we will "neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd us and lead us to living fountains of waters. And where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes." (Revelation 7:16-17)
- 2 Yes, for those who believe in Christ, there will be an end of this life on earth, but it is only the end of the beginning of all eternity.

SONG: "End of the Beginning"

The Song of Christmas

Dramatic Script

by Karen Kleinschmidt and Margo Trueblood

CHARACTERS

Adult Males – 4

Dan (early 50's) Husband to Cindy, and father to David, Lauren, Grace and Josh
David (20's) Dan and Cindy's son who serves in the military
Jimmy (40's) Neighbor and friend of Dan and Cindy, and Susan's husband
Radio Announcer (any age)
Cole (20's) Jimmy and Susan's son who serves in the military – not seen, VO only

Adult Females – 4

Cindy (late 40's) Wife to Dan, and mother to David, Lauren, Grace and Josh
Susan (40's) Neighbor and friend of Cindy and Dan, Jimmy's wife
Mims (70's) Dan's mother and Pop's wife
Teacher (any age) Soloist in Scene 3

Teenage Females – 2

Lauren (17) Dan and Cindy's daughter and typical teenager
Grace (15) Dan and Cindy's adopted daughter (Asian or African) younger sister to Lauren

Young Boy – 1

Josh (8) Dan and Cindy's son and little brother to David, Lauren and Grace

Extras as needed

SYNOPSIS:

Dan and Cindy have four children; David who is in the service and stationed overseas, Lauren, a typical teenager who is constantly on her phone texting, tweeting, and taking selfies; Grace, an adopted daughter (Asian or African) who has a quirky but tenderhearted personality and always has a cause she is working on; and Josh, a much younger son who is enamored by films. He's constantly in character and costume reciting lines from his favorite movies.

Dan's mother, Mims, lives nearby and is very involved in the family. Mims is the epitome of a grandmother and very much the homemaker. She loves her cats and loves to hug her babies; and by babies, we mean everyone. Her husband, affectionately known as Pop, recently passed away.

Jimmy and Susan live next door to Dan and Cindy. They have only one son, Cole, who is stationed overseas with David, Dan and Cindy's son. Cole does not appear on stage, but is referenced. Susan is a follower of Christ, Jimmy is not, but he goes with her to church and they attend the same small group as Dan and Cindy.

SCENE OUTLINE WITH SONGS

Introduction:

SONG: “We Have a Savior”

Scene One

Location: Living room, Dan and Cindy’s home.

Set: Sofa and chair, a coffee table and some Christmas decorations.

Activity: It is a tacky Christmas sweater party. Guests are wearing outrageously decorated clothing in hopes of winning the title of “Tackiest Christmas Outfit.” The mood is festive.

Theme: Commercialism and chaos that have pushed in on Christmas.

SONG: “Come! *with* O Come, all Ye Faithful”

Scene Two

Location: Outdoors; small town Main Street shopping area.

Set: Street light with wreath and bow; a couple of benches and some evergreen trees with lights on them, perhaps flocking.

Activity: The general hustle and bustle that accompanies shopping. Extra characters walking past here and there carrying shopping bags and gifts. Grace is enlisting everyone’s help as she recruits family members to help her attain the gifts on her list.

Theme: Giving and generosity.

SONG: “The Night That Christ was Born”

SONG: “Let Heaven and Nature Sing” (sung during action)

Scene Three

Location: School auditorium.

Set: Benches or chairs set up for the audience; a stage area where children portray a live nativity scene.

Activity: Teacher invites people to bring up their shoeboxes and sings the adult solo as people approach the stage.

Theme: Giving; bringing the love of Christ to others at Christmas.

SONG: “Love Reaches ‘Round the World *with* Silent Night! Holy Night!”

SONG: “He’s Here and He’s Here reprise”

Scene Four

Location: Living Room, Mims’ home.

Set: Love seat, chair end table with lamp.

Activity: Mims and Cindy are wrapping Christmas gifts and Mims complains about contemporary Christmas music. She reminisces to Cindy about the good old days; she misses David but is grateful he has a friend (Jimmy and Susan’s son Cole) with him overseas; Mims remembers singing “Mary’s prayer” to him as a boy (setting up “Magnificat”)

Theme: Christmas memories; empowerment through love.

SONG: “Magnificat”

Scene Five

Location: Dining room, Dan and Cindy’s home.

Set: Dining room table and chairs, maybe a sideboard; some Christmas decorations.
(Same as scene one)

Activity: Family game night; typical arguments and competitiveness among siblings; Dan and Cindy remind the children that they should treat each other (and others) as Jesus would, with generosity and love, and by doing so, they worship Him.

Theme: Family time together; Christmas is about others; actions can be a form of worship.

SONG: “Worship You”

Scene Six

Location: Living room, Jimmy and Susan’s home.

Set: Sofa and chair, a coffee table and some Christmas decorations. (Same set pieces as used in scene four, but arranged differently and altered with different pillows and/or afghan throw, etc. to indicate a different home.)

Activity: Dan and Cindy bring a meal to Jimmy and Susan’s home after hearing of the death their son, Cole, overseas. Jimmy is angry with God and expresses his lack of faith, Susan is heartbroken but grateful David was with Cole and shared Jesus with him before he died.

Theme: Hope in the midst of heartache; being the love of Jesus to others.

SONG: “Christmas with Jesus”

SONG: “Agnus Dei *with* O Holy Night!”

Scene Seven – Several Months Later

Location: Living room, Dan and Cindy’s home.

Set: Same set pieces as in scenes 1 and 5 but without Christmas decorations to indicate a different period of time.

Activity: All are together, including Mims, Jimmy and Susan. They welcome David home from the service. Jimmy shares with David how grateful he is that David shared Christ with Cole; this gives him peace knowing (now that he is also saved) that he will see Cole again one day. He begins to tell a story about his recent business trip which sets up the song “End of the Beginning.”

Theme: Life on earth is only the beginning of our eternal life with Jesus Christ.

SONG: “End of the Beginning”

SONG: “We Have a Savior”

SCENE ONE

DAN and CINDY are greeting guests who are wearing outrageously decorated clothing in hopes of winning the title of “Tackiest Christmas Outfit.” JIMMY and SUSAN have already arrived. The mood is festive. DAN sizes up JIMMY’s outfit.

Dan *(Laughing under his breath)* Man! Did you come up with this all on your own?

Jimmy *(Somewhat embarrassed)* Are you kidding me? Susan made me wear it.

Dan Well you definitely deserve this. *(DAN hands JIMMY an elf-on-a-shelf doll and then turns his focus on SUSAN.)* You did a great job on his outfit. *(He pauses to look at SUSAN’s outfit.)* So, are you two entering as a couple?

Susan Absolutely not! I’m too competitive for that. I want my own prize.

Dan In that case, hold on to this. *(He hands her an elf-on-a-shelf.)*
(The doorbell rings. DAN goes to answer it.)

Dan Mom! Come on in, it’s cold out there.

Mims My baby! Let me give you a hug! *(She gives him a big bear hug.)*

Dan *(Peeling her away)* Here, let me take your coat. *(He helps her off with her coat, revealing her sweatshirt with a cat image on it.)*
Mom, it’s supposed to be a tacky Christmas sweater, not a cat sweatshirt.

Mims Well, you’re right, it isn’t a sweater... but it’s a sweatshirt... and it IS a Christmas sweatshirt. See? *(Pointing to the cat)* He’s wearing a Santa hat *(Ring a jingle bell)* and there’s a little bell on his hat... isn’t that cute!? I love cats, don’t you?

Dan Yeah, he’s cute, Mom... *(changing the subject)* come on in. You know everybody. I think Cindy’s got some cookies over there if you want some.
(DAN continues to mingle with his guests as GRACE runs over to greet MIMS.)

Grace Mims! *(gives her a big hug)* Merry Christmas!

Mims *(Squeezing GRACE tightly)* My baby.

Grace *(Standing back to admire MIMS’ shirt)* Oooh, look... how cute!

Mims Do you like it?

Grace Yes! When you're finished with it, can I use it?

Mims I suppose so. What are you going to use it for?

Grace I'm starting a "save the animals" campaign.

Mims I thought you were working on a project to save the environment?

Grace I am, see? *(Motioning to her outfit)* I'm wearing vintage gogo boots, originally made in the late 1960's. I've repurposed Mom's Christmas tree skirt into a skirt for myself and I'm borrowing Lauren's angora sweater, *(whispering loudly)* but don't tell her that!

Mims *(Confused)* And that's going to save the world, how?

Grace No, Mims, not the world... the environment. By recycling and repurposing my wardrobe, I can reduce my carbon footprint by at least ten percent!

Mims But you don't have large feet, dear.

Grace No, Mims, my CARBON footprint.

Mims *(Thinking she understands)* Oh, oh, carbon paper! I used to have to use that before they made copying machines... very messy.

Grace *(Laughing sweetly)* Mimsy, you're so cute. *(She kisses MIMS on the cheek and twirls away.)* Love you!

Mims Oh... There she goes!

CINDY carries a tray of cookies over to the coffee table and is interrupted by JOSH who is wearing a fluffy pink bunny suit with a zipper in the front and horn rimmed glasses.

Josh *(Holding his chin up)* Can you fasten the hook for me? I can't get it.

Cindy *(Laughing to herself, she puts the tray down and then fastens the hook.)* What are you wearing? It's supposed to be a Christmas party, not an Easter party. Where did you get this outfit anyway?

Josh It IS a Christmas outfit! Don't you remember in A Christmas Story where Ralphie gets a bunny outfit from his Aunt for Christmas?

Cindy If you say so.

Josh It's a classic, Mom. *(JOSH grabs a cookie and runs off, swooshing past LAUREN who is texting on her phone.)*

Lauren Josh! Watch it!

Josh *(Shouting back)* Sorry!

Lauren You'll put somebody's eye out with those rabbit ears! (*Tweeting on her phone*) My brother is a rabbit. Hashtag, get me out of here!

Cindy Lauren, honey, can you get me some more cookies from the kitchen?

Lauren Sorry, Mom. Gotta go. Tracy's waiting for me. (*LAUREN takes a quick selfie pic at the door and then tweets again.*) Escaping the madness. (*she exits*)

Cindy (*Searches for DAN; they make eye contact. She motions that her tray is empty.*) A little help, please?

Dan Got it. (*DAN exits, weaving through guests as he goes.*)

Cindy (*Greeting MIMS*) I see you're wearing your cat sweatshirt... again.

Mims Oh, no, this is my Christmas sweatshirt, see? (*She rings the jingle bell that is on the cat's Santa hat.*)

Cindy (*Calling out*) Dan!?

DAN weaves his way back through the crowd with a tray of cookies and puts them down on the coffee table.

Dan Alright. Who's ready for the Tacky Christmas Outfit competition? (*Everyone cheers*) Okay, now, if you received an elf-on-the-shelf from me earlier this evening, come forward and make a line right here.

DAN goes to each contestant and holds up their arm to let the guests (or audience) cheer for their favorite. After all have been voted on, DAN selects a winner based on the loudest cheers.

Dan And the winner is...

DAN holds up the hand of the winner and everyone cheers.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: *The contest that takes place can be just the cast, or it can be incorporated so that the audience participates in the judging by way of applause.*

SONG: "Come! with O Come, All Ye Faithful"

SCENE TWO

Shoppers hustle and bustle through Main Street carrying shopping bags and gifts. GRACE is roller-skating through the crowd enlisting everyone's help as she recruits family members to help her attain gifts on the list for the Operation Christmas Child campaign. MIMS and Cindy are sitting on a bench; LAUREN is standing nearby texting on her phone. GRACE skates up to MIMS and Cindy holding a pencil in one hand and her list in the other.

Mims You shouldn't be skating with a pencil in your hand, dear. It's very dangerous. You could put your eye out!

Grace *(Ignoring MIMS' comment)* Okay, so Mom, did you get yours?

Cindy Sure did. *(Searching through her bags)* Two dolls, a coloring book with crayons and some earmuffs with matching mittens.

Grace *(Checking things off her list)* Mims?

Mims Well, I have three teddy bears, one Spiderman and some fluffy white slippers.

Grace Great! Where's Dad?

(DAN enters with hot cocoa and coffee.)

Dan Here we go. *(Handing hot chocolate to MIMS and coffee to CINDY)* One hot chocolate for you, Mom, and one Venti Skinny, mocha, caramel, latte with whip and a pinch of cinnamon for you.

Cindy Wow, you're quite the barista!

Dan Thank you very much. *(He sits)*

Grace So, Dad, did you get yours?

Dan Yep, one iPod Nano, with carrying case and an iTunes gift card.

(JOSH enters wearing a Buddy the Elf costume and carrying a bag of toys.)

Lauren *(To JOSH)* Toys R Us called and they want their costume back.

Josh *(Handing the bag to GRACE)* It's all there... two transformers, a model kit for the USS Enterprise, a slinky and Thor's battle hammer. *(Pause)* Hey, Dad, what does a slinky DO, exactly?

Lauren It provides hours of entertainment for dweebs like you.

Josh Like your phone does for you?

Lauren Whatever. *(Tweeting)* Hashtag moron.

Dan Lauren! Apologize to your brother.

Lauren He's wearing an ELF costume!

Cindy Lauren...

Lauren Hashtag, sorry.

Josh *(Noticing something off stage and getting excited)* Look! It's Santa! I know him! *(He runs off stage.)*

Cindy So, Grace, how's the list coming?

Grace Thanks to all of you, it's almost finished! I just want to get some recycled Christmas cards so I can write a note to put in each of the boxes. Back in a flash! *(GRACE skates off.)*

Cindy *(To DAN)* That reminds me, did you get that card to send to David in the mail? You know how long it takes to get a letter to the guys in service overseas.

Dan I did. Sure wish he could be with us for Christmas.

Mims My poor baby, so far away from home. Reminds me of when your father was serving during Christmas. I missed him so... kind of like I do now, God rest his soul.

Dan *(Putting his arm around MIMS)* I miss him too, Mom.

GRACE skates back in pulling a wagon behind her with a box of cards in it.

Grace Okay, everybody, put your gifts in the wagon so we can get them home and packaged up before Christmas!

SONG: "The Night That Christ was Born"

SCENE THREE

MIMS, DAN, CINDY, LAUREN, JIMMY and SUSAN (each holding a shoe box) are seated on chairs watching children dressed in Biblical costumes load the stage as in a Christmas pageant portraying Bethlehem the night Jesus was born. The shepherds surround Mary, Joseph and Jesus.

Josh *(JOSH is dressed as a Shepherd boy, reciting Luke 2:8-12 while the Biblical characters are loading the stage.)* And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shown around them, and they were very afraid. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for I bring you good tidings of great joy that will be for all people. Today, in the city of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

SONG: “Let Heaven and Nature Sing”

(During the song, more shepherds and Biblical townspeople fill the stage.)

Teacher I’d like to thank you all for coming tonight. I know many of you have been helping us with our Operation Christmas Child campaign. *(Motioning toward a stack of white shoeboxes on the side of the stage)* As you can see, we’ve received an incredible response so far, and I know many of you have brought your shoebox with you here tonight. So at this time, we’d like you to bring your shoebox up to the stage as we remember the night of Jesus’ birth, and worship Him by bringing the joy of Christmas to children throughout the city.

SONG: “Love Reaches ‘Round the World *with* Silent Night! Holy Night!”

(During the song, MIMS, DAN, CINDY, LAUREN, JIMMY and SUSAN, approach the nativity scene, one by one with their boxes. They place their boxes in such a way that they create a sculpture in the shape of a cross.)

DIRECTOR’S NOTE: If the church is involved in a charitable program of some kind such as Operation Christmas Child, this would be a good time for the audience/congregation to bring gifts or offerings to the stage.

SONG: “He’s Here and He’s Here reprise”

SCENE FOUR

SFX: Radio playing secular Christmas music in the background (i.e. Jingle Bell Rock, Frosty The Snowman, Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer, etc.) MIMS and CINDY are in MIMS' home wrapping Christmas gifts. MIMS is having a bit of trouble getting a bow to look just right.

Cindy Here, Mims, let me help you with that. (*CINDY ties the bow on the package, then holds it up to admire it.*) There! How's that?

Mims Oh that's lovely, dear. I never could get the bows right. That was Pop's department. He was the creative one in the family.

SFX: Radio announcer

Anncr (OS) Hey folks, don't forget you only have a couple days left to do that Christmas shopping! And we're here to keep you in the Christmas spirit with non-stop Christmas music! Stay tuned for a new version of Jingle Bells sung BACKWARDS! Right after these messages...

Mims They call that Christmas music? I don't hear them mention Jesus, do you? (*Becoming melancholy*) So much has changed over the years. (*Pause*) Pops had a lovely voice. He would sing Christmas hymns... they were so beautiful.

Cindy I remember.

Mims I think that's what I miss the most.

Cindy My favorite is when you two would sing together. You had such harmony. Do you suppose that had anything do with the fact that the two of you had the perfect marriage?

Mims It would have been our 50th anniversary last month if he hadn't passed away.

Cindy Not many people can say that. (*They have a quiet moment as CINDY puts the gifts they've just wrapped under the tree. CINDY pauses as she holds one last gift in her hand. MIMS notices that CINDY's mood has changed.*)

Mims How much time is left on David's tour of duty?

Cindy Six more months.

Mims He won't be home for Christmas?

Cindy (*Shaking her head no, fighting back tears*) I miss him so much.

Mims (*Putting her arm around CINDY*) There, there.

Cindy (*Pulling herself together*) At least Cole is with him.

Mims Cole? Do I know him?

Cindy Sure you do. He's Jimmy and Susan's boy.

Mims Oh, that's right. The short little boy who lives next door?

Cindy That's him. And funny. (*Cheering up*) He always makes David laugh.

Mims It's good that David has someone with him who can remind him of home.

Cindy It is... I can't help but worry about him though.

Mims You're a mother, dear, that's what we do.

Cindy I remember the day he was born. I couldn't believe I was going to have a Christmas baby. He was the best Christmas gift ever. You sang to him, remember?

Mims I remember.

Cindy As a mom, every Christmas I think of the emotions that Mary must have felt carrying the Son of God and bringing him into this world!

SONG: "Magnificat"

SCENE FIVE

It's family night at DAN and CINDY's home. LAUREN and JOSH are seated at the table; LAUREN is texting on her phone. JOSH is wearing a white dinner jacket and bow tie. GRACE is lighting candles all over the room. DAN sits and begins shuffling cards. CINDY enters with a bowl of popcorn and puts it in the center of the table. JOSH reaches for some popcorn and bumps LAUREN as she is taking "selfies" on her phone.

Lauren Watch it! (*Shoving the phone in his face*) Look what you made me do! It's all blurry!

Dan Come on guys... this is family night. (*He begins to deal the cards.*) Let's act like a family.

(JOSH picks up his cards and begins to sort through them. After lighting the last candle, GRACE goes to the light switch on the wall and turns it off.)

STAGE LIGHTS DIM

Josh Hey! I can't see my cards! What's up?

Grace (*Sitting down at the table*) We're conserving energy tonight. If everyone in the country reduced the amount of light bulbs they used each day, a billion dollars in energy costs could be saved each year.

Lauren (*Holding her illuminated phone in JOSH's face*) Here, does this help?

Josh Stop it!

Dan Hey, what did I say?

Lauren What, Dad? I'm doing what you said... I'm just trying to be a helpful. (*to JOSH*) Who are you supposed to be this time?

Josh Humphrey Bogart. (*Impersonating Humphrey Bogart*) Of all the joints in all the world, you had to come into mine.

Lauren It wasn't by choice, believe me. Hashtag: prisoner.

Cindy Here, Lauren, have some popcorn... and do you think you could put your phone down for just one night?

Lauren One night?! Do you know how much I would miss in just one night?

Cindy Okay, one hour then. (*Holding out her hand*) Give it here.

Lauren Mom! (*Giving up, she makes a last tweet.*) Hashtag: oppressed. (*She reluctantly hands her phone over.*)

Cindy You're not being oppressed.

Grace There are over 25 countries in the world where 50% or more of the population is oppressed.

Cindy Come on, let's just play the game and have some fun.

Dan *(Finished dealing the cards)* Okay... the name of the game is... drum roll please... *GO FISH!*

Josh Yes!

Lauren We played that last time.

Grace Did you know that many of Jesus' disciples were fishermen?

Lauren Everybody knows that.

Dan Not everybody, Lauren. Josh, do you have any threes?

Josh Nope. Go fish.

Dan Believe it or not, there are still a lot of people around the world, and right here in our own country... our city... even our neighborhood who don't know that. Some of them don't know anything about Jesus. Or His disciples.

Josh Mom, you got any fives?

Cindy Oooh. You got lucky... *(She hands him two cards.)* That's why it's up to us to share the Gospel with them, so that they can know who Jesus is, and how He wants them to be with Him as brothers and sisters in His family... the family of God.

Grace Dad, any aces?

Dan *(Hands her a card)* And believe it or not, the way most people see Jesus is by the way we, as Christians, behave... whether it's how we behave with our neighbors or our coworkers, and, yes, even how we behave as a family... it all reflects on him.

Grace I never thought of it that way, Daddy.

Lauren Mom, any tens?

Cindy *(Exaggerating to make a point)* Why yes I do. And I give them to you cheerfully.

Lauren *(Returning the exaggeration)* Why, thank you. You are very kind.

Cindy If you think about it, the way we treat each other, especially at Christmas, is a gift we can offer up to God. Because it's a choice we make. A choice to honor Him and present our actions toward others as a form of worship. By treating others with compassion and understanding, we are showing them and anyone who may be watching, the way God treats us. Dan, do you have any fives?

Dan *(Reacting poorly)* Ohh! *(He hands over 3 cards to CINDY.)* I've been robbed!

Lauren Now, Dad, was that a very kind and loving way to react?

EVERYONE REACTS

Dan Ya got me! But now you understand what we're trying to tell you.

Lauren I guess so.

Cindy *(Putting her last card down on the table)* I'm out!

Josh Already?!

Dan How did that happen?

Grace Mom always wins.

Cindy *(Kissing GRACE on the forehead)* In more ways than one, sweetie.

Dan Movie time! Grace, it's your turn to pick.

Grace Miracle on 34th Street.

Josh Which one?

Grace Miracle on 34th Street.

Josh *(JOSH begins rattling off movie trivia.)* I know, but there were two. The first one was made in 1947 with Maureen O'Hara playing the lead and Natalie Wood playing the role of Susan, her daughter, but then there was a remake in 1994. *(GRACE and DAN exit while JOSH follows, still rambling.)* The remake starred Elizabeth Perkins, and Mara Wilson played Susan...

Meanwhile, CINDY is clearing the table when LAUREN approaches.

Cindy Oh, sorry, I forgot. *(She reaches into her pocket and hands LAUREN her cell phone.)* Here.

(LAUREN takes the phone but puts it down and helps CINDY clear the table. They make eye contact, smile at each other, and continue to clear.)

SONG: "Worship You"

SCENE SIX

JIMMY and SUSAN are sitting in their living room. SUSAN is holding a letter in her hand and crying on JIMMY's shoulder. CINDY and DAN enter. CINDY has a covered casserole. JIMMY gets up to greet them, SUSAN starts but CINDY interrupts.

Cindy *(To SUSAN)* Don't get up. *(She sets down her dish and then sits next to SUSAN.)* Honey, I am so sorry. I don't know what to say. *(SUSAN begins to cry and CINDY consoles her.)*

Dan *(To JIMMY)* When did you find out?

Jimmy The guys from the Corps were here this morning.

Dan Man, I'm so sorry. Did they say how it happened?

Jimmy Something about getting caught in enemy crossfire... I, I don't know... to tell you the truth, I can't even remember what they said. All I heard was that our Cole was dead... No warning, no *(getting emotional)* goodbye...*(breaks down)*

Dan Hey, man. I'm here for you.

Jimmy *(angry)* Do you think I care about that!? You're here! But Cole isn't! Do you think that makes me feel BETTER somehow?!

Dan No, I know it hurts.

Jimmy Do you! Do you really? YOUR son's still alive!

Susan Jimmy, calm down. It's not Dan's fault.

JIMMY sits down and buries his face in his hands.

Dan *(Sitting next to JIMMY)* Jimmy... I know I can't make it better. I can't even tell you how I would feel because this hasn't happened to me... it's happened to you. I just want you to know that I'm here to help you in any way I can, to run errands for you, to give you a ride, just talk... pray for you.

Jimmy Pray for me!? That's all I've heard from the both of you for the last nine months... "you're praying for the boys". Well guess what? It might have worked for your son, but it didn't work for mine!

Susan Jimmy, that's not fair.

Cindy No, Susan, it's alright. From the outside, it looks just like that. Everyone's view of life... of things that happen... good or bad, are simply what we see from our own perspective. But I have to

believe that from God's perspective, there is a plan and a purpose that He wants to accomplish and Cole was part of His plan.

Jimmy A plan!? A plan is something that makes sense, but this doesn't make any sense. What sort of purpose or plan could there possibly be for sending our sons, yours and ours, off to a desolate country full of hate for everything we stand for?

Susan I think I know. (*JIMMY stops his rampage and suddenly looks at SUSAN. He is bewildered at her comment. She hands him the letter.*)

Jimmy (*Looking at the letter for a moment before speaking out loud*) Dear Mom and Dad. They have us write these letters so we can have our chance to say our goodbyes or tell you something in case anything happens. So, I guess if you're reading this letter, something has happened and I won't be coming home. At least not to any home I've ever seen before... but I will be going home. I'll be in Heaven. (*Lights fade*)

Cole VO (*Continuing to read the letter*) Now I know this may come as a surprise to you, especially you, Dad, but what you don't know is that a few months ago, I gave my life to Jesus. David and I have been talking about it for a while, but over here it just seemed to click. David explained that because of sin, we all fall short of God's best and that's why Jesus did what He did. He took our sin on His shoulders in order for God to see us as pure and holy in His sight. And that His forgiveness was a gift, not something I had to earn, but something I only had to receive, and by confessing my sin and turning away from it, I would inherit God's kingdom and live with Him forever, along with all the others who believe in Him. (*pause*) Mom, I know you believe this because you tried every day of my life to help me see it, but for whatever reason, it just didn't take until I heard it from David. Maybe it's because I wanted to be just like you, Dad. You didn't need any of that, so why did I? But Dad, this is what I want to share with you... don't be sad or angry that I'm gone, be happy that the one true meaning of life finally sunk in and I heard it before it was too late. And I want you to hear it too. I've always looked up to you, Dad. You're my hero. But heroes need Jesus too. Where do you think they get their super strength? I love you, Dad... and you too, Mom. I'll see you both on the other side. Love, Cole.

CINDY and MIMS on opposite sides of the stage on phones

Cindy Oh Mims, I can't believe this has happened...

Mims I know. That poor family, losing a child is just so tragic. I can't imagine.

Cindy I'm sorry, this must be a hard reminder for you too, missing Pop.

Mims I will miss him everyday until I am with him again, but I'm thankful for the life we had together, and I'm thankful that he had

given his life to Jesus, and that Pop is with Jesus right now.
There's no better place I would want for him to be, and when my
heart is overcome with moments of grief, I remember where Pop is
and I have hope.

Cindy I sure love you, Mims.

Mims I love you too, dear.

SONG: "Christmas with Jesus"

SONG: "Agnus Dei *with* O Holy Night!"

SCENE SEVEN

It is several months later and MIMS, JIMMY and SUSAN are visiting DAN and CINDY in their home. LAUREN and GRACE are hanging up a sign that says "Welcome Home David." JOSH is videotaping the activity.

Josh Okay, now move the sign just a little to the left... now turn this way and look at me... emotion, people, emotion! You're welcoming home a war hero! Let's look like we mean it!

Lauren Josh, why don't you put that thing down and give us a hand over here.

Josh I can't. This is going to be my directorial debut... a documentary about soldiers coming home.

Cindy *(Bringing in food and putting it on the table)* Why don't you help your sisters, Josh? David will be here any minute and we need everything to be perfect. You'll have plenty of time for that after David gets here.

(JOSH reluctantly puts down his camera and takes a couple of snacks from the table just as David walks in.)

David Hi, Mom.

Cindy *(Twirling around in surprise)* You're home! *(CINDY rushes over to DAVID and gives him a big hug. EVERYONE cheers.)*

Dan Glad to have you home, son... really glad.

Mims *(Hugging him tightly)* My baby! It's so good to have you home! *(Looking up at him and pinching his cheek)* Where you belong.

Josh David! David! You're back!

JOSH runs over to hug DAVID. LAUREN and GRACE join him. Cheers and tidings all around. DAVID notices JIMMY and walks over to him and holds out his hand.

David Sir. *(They shake hands)* I really wish Cole were here with me.

Susan *(Crossing over to hug David)* He is here. *(Pause)* We're just so glad you made it home.

David Thank you, ma'am.

Jimmy I appreciated all you did for my son over there, David. *(Trying not to get choked up)* We, uh... we read the letter he wrote and he said you shared with him about Jesus Christ.

David Yes, Sir.

Jimmy Well, I didn't want to accept it at the time, but I can see now how God did have a plan... even though Cole had to die in order for it to be accomplished.

David Sir?

Jimmy You see, David, I never went for all that stuff about Jesus growing up. My family didn't believe there was anything to it. But after reading Cole's letter and hearing what you told him about the love God has for us, and how He gave up His son in order to accomplish it, I got to thinking that God really does understand me. He knows what it's like to watch His son suffer and even to die *(pause)* So, thank you. Because of you, I know now that I'll see my son again and that gives me a real peace and a purpose to go out each day and share that good news with everybody I can.

David I'm glad to hear that.

Dan *(Calling out from the other side of the room)* So who's ready to eat?

Cindy *(To David)* I bet you're starved!

David All I could think of all the way home was, I wonder what Mom's got for dinner!

Cindy Well come sit down and find out.

(EVERYONE sits down at the table and take hands to pray.)

Dan Lord, we thank you for this very special day. We thank you for bringing our son home to us, and for bringing Cole to you so that we could all know Christ and have assurance of eternity in Heaven with you. Bless this food. Bless our family and friends, and may we never take your blessings for granted. Amen.

Everyone Amen.

(They start passing around the food.)

Jimmy *(Excited)* So, Dan, did I tell you about this guy I met at the conference I went to last week? He was just like me... lost, but didn't know it. I told him about Cole and David and said, "Man, when I finally figured it out and asked Jesus to forgive me, it wasn't the end of all the so-called fun I thought I would be giving up... it was just the BEGINNING of an eternal life that I never imagined could be so good...

SONG: "End of the Beginning"