Christmas Eve Dramatic Reading of John 1:1-14

The Rev. Jeffrey D. Bergeson '14

Setting:
During a Christmas Eve worship service, the pastor reads a passage of scripture, and two friends sitting in a pew next to each other discuss what is being said, while a "good religious person" tries to "shush" the disruptive pair. All four characters are facing the congregation/audience.

Cast of Characters:
Pastor/Reader of scripture (R): standing at the pulpit or music stand. R freezes when not talking.
Questioner (Q): sitting in a "pew" next to A. Q is an earnest but comedically curious character.
Answerer (A): sitting in a "pew" next to Q. A is a good friend with Q, joyfully answering them.
"Shusher" (S): sitting immediately behind and slightly to the side of Q&A. Annoyed with Q&A.

Script:

R: The final reading for tonight comes from the Gospel according to St. John, chapter 1, verses 1-14. Listen now for the Word of the Lord.

R: (continuing): In the beginning...

Q: Like, "once upon a time?"

A: Not exactly.

Q: Like, "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away…"

A: No. Try again.

Q: Hmmmm, (thinking/muttering) in the beginning...

A: (leading) "In the beginning_____"...???

Q: Oh, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

A: Now you've got it! "In the beginning."

Q: "In the beginning"

R: In the beginning was the Word

Q: Wait, what's... "the Word"?

A: Wrong question

Q: What?

A: No, not “what”? Wrong question.

Q: “Not what”? (thinking/muttering) Not what. Wrong question. Oh! How about “why?”

A: Not “why” either.

Q: Okay, how ‘bout “who”?

A: Bingo!

Q: Okay, so what’s... I mean, who is the Word?

A: Why are we here tonight?

Q: It’s Christmas Eve!

A: And tonight we celebrate...?

Q: Santa!!!

A: (shaking head, smiling) No.

Q: What?!

A: All of the hymns and carols we’ve been singing tonight, who are they about?

Q: Oh...baby Jesus!

A: Right!

Q: Soooo...it’s his birthday!?

A: Sort of, but it’s more than just a birthday celebration.

Q: Why?

A: Because of who Jesus is!

Q: Because he’s...the Word?

A: Yes.

Q: (excited at first) Oooohhh.... (furrowing brows) I don’t get it.

A: Listen…

R: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

Q: Okay, so the Word was God.

A: Yes.

Q: And the Word is Jesus.

A: Yes!

Q: Thaaat's...a little confusing.

A: Good! "Great is the mystery of faith!" Think: Trinity.

Q: Oooohh

S: (quiet, gentle) Shhh!

R: All things came into being through him...

Q: (whispering) Which Him? The Word?

A: (whispering) Yes.

R: And without him not one thing came into being that has come into being.

Q: (starting off quietly, but then getting to normal volume) Okay, so let me get this straight: God created everything...

A: (affirming) mm-hmm

Q: and everything exists only because of God, (A: nodding) and we all have life only because God gives it (A: nodding)... and God created everything through the Word, (A: nodding) who was also with God before creation itself.

A: Yup, that's what John is saying!

Q: (Looking at the pastor, confused) I thought the pastor's name was _____?

A: No, no, no...the author of this book of the Bible. John, one of Jesus' disciples.

Q: Oh...right. Sorry.

R: In him was life and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Q: Now I'm lost...

A: In Scripture, Life and Light go hand-in-hand.

Q: Gotcha. So, Life equals Light, and the Word is Light and Life for people.

A: Yeah, and remember, "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Q: ummm… we already did that part.

A: Yeah, I know, but what comes next? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth…" (hand motion for "keep going") And...?

Q: Oh! "And the earth was without form and void, and darkness..." oh, I think I see where this is going…

A: "And darkness was upon the face of the deep"

Q: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

A: "And God said…"

Q&A: (loudly together) "let there be light!"

S: (loudly) Shhhh!

A: (whispering) and...?

Q: (whispering) "and there was light!"

R: And the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

Q: (whispering) John the disciple and author?

S: (glaring)

A: (whispering) No, John the Baptist.

Q: (silently nodding and giving "OK" sign)

R: He came as a witness to testify to the light…

Q: (whispering) Uh oh, a witness. Did he get in trouble?

A: (whispering) Well...actually yeah.

Q: (whispering) Wait, are you talking about John or Jesus?

A: (whispering) Both! But what it means here is that John was like a witness for Jesus, testifying to people, telling them the truth about who Jesus is.

Q: ("connecting the dots" in the air while talking) So God sent John as a witness to tell people the truth about the Light

A: (continue "connecting the dots") And the Light is the Word of God, so John the Baptist testified to the Light...

R: So that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light but he came to testify to the light.

Q: Because the Light is Life.

A: Yeah, and God wants us to have Life! Life abundant! Eternal Life!

Q: Well, that sounds good!

R: (with joyful anticipation) The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

Q: Oh, this is getting exciting! It's like...it's...it's just like... Christmas!

A: (smiles, laughs lightly, nodding)

R: He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet... the world did not know him.

Q: Whoa! What?

R: He came to his own, and his own people did not accept him.

Q: What?! But I thought…

R: BUT to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the power to become children of God,

Q: So to believe in him is to receive him?

A: Right, sorta like a gift!

Q: Wow, it really is like Christmas!

A: Yup, and becoming a child of God is a gift you won't want to return.

Q: (smiles, nods...then looks confused) So, how do you become a child of God?

(S: becoming genuinely interested in their conversation)

A: By receiving God's gift of grace.

Q: No, no, no. But what does that mean?

A: God is always giving us grace… life itself is grace. It's a gift...

Q: (sort of confused) Okay…

A: But usually we think of life as our right. Like we deserve to exist…

Q: (still trying to understand) Okay…

A: And when we do that, we're really trying to live without God.

Q: So we should all live good religious lives?

A: No! Religion is all about trying to prove to God—prove to the world and yourself—that you deserve to have life. It's refusing to receive life as a gift. It's trying to take it for ourselves, like Adam and Eve. (S: becoming concerned, very attentive!) It's us saying we want life without God. (Q: brows furrowed, nodding)

A (continuing): BUT...life without God is impossible. As much as we want to, we can't live on our own… AND God does not leave us on our own. That's the message of Christmas! Immanuel is God with us! God loves us and wants to be with us. God loves us and gives life to everyone, and when we acknowledge that, and trust God with our life, through Jesus we receive the gift of new life! When we try to live life without Jesus, it's like living as runaways. We make orphans of ourselves. But when we receive Jesus—the Life and Light of the world—we see God for who God truly is, and we see who we truly are in his Light. We see that God loves us, and when we believe that, we stop trying to prove ourselves and stop running from God, and we run to God, because God has already come to us in Jesus. That's what it means to receive him, to believe in the name of Jesus, and when we do that, we're adopted into God's family, we're made new, given new life, and we become God's own beloved children.

R: who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

S: (Quite loudly) Thank you, Lord! (surprising Q&A)

R: And the Word became flesh…

S: (Grabbing Q&A and saying with excitement) That's Jesus! The Word of God, who was in the beginning! The Light and Life! He came for me!

A: (surprised laughingly) Yes!

S: He came for you!

Q: Amen!

S: He came for us!

R: and lived among us,

S: Amen!

R: and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son

Q: Thank you, Jesus!

R: full of grace and truth.

Q, A, & S: Amen!

R: This is the Word of the Lord!

All: Thanks be to God!