ADVENTUALLY

by Loretta Ross-Gotta
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Adventually

A reader’s drama for Advent

by Loretta Ross-Gotta
“For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness.”
—Galatians 5:5

CAST OF CHARACTERS

READER 1
READER 2
READER 3
READER 4
READER 5
READER 6
Drama has been a significant part of worship for centuries. Readers' dramas offer an engaging way for involving groups in the study of scripture and the celebration of faith. This drama is designed to be easily adapted to the varying needs and strengths of church settings.

In this script, the Readers are referred to as Wayghtes, which were small bands of common folk who went about the English countryside singing carols and telling stories at Christmastide. The word wayghtes appears in the Oxford English Dictionary among the entries for “wait” (and is thus pronounced “waits”). I found the word when doing research on waiting as I was writing this drama.

The script is presented for six readers; however, more or fewer readers may be accommodated at the director’s discretion. The readers sit on stools with their scripts on music stands.

The “funny hats” referred to in the script may be just about anything that suggests a character. Some possibilities include a graduate’s mortar board, a baseball cap, a yellow construction helmet, a straw hat, a lady’s high fashion hat, a football helmet, a feed cap like farmers wear, or hats for a police officer, fast food worker, nurse, etc. The possibilities are endless. The Readers may choose a hat and develop a character based on what the hat evokes for them.

The music cues are suggested for autoharp. Other instruments may be equally suitable. Although songs are suggested in the script, you may substitute freely using your church hymnal or other sources for Christmas carols.

Directors are encouraged to draw on the gifts of their casts and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to enhance the performances with music and movement, scenery, and special effects.
Prelude: “Born Is He, This Child Divine” (French carol)

Reader 1: We gather here as Christian folk
  Who humbly seek to win
  The favor of our Lord in heaven
  And of you, both friend and kin.

All: We be not seasoned players
  In partnership with Thespis’ muse,
  But simple country servants
  Proclaiming God’s good news.

Reader 2: In olden days such bands as we
  Were called the name of Wayghtes (“waits”).
  These rustic groups would play and sing
  To herald the birthday of the King.

Reader 3: In village inn, in field and glen
  The common folk would gather
  To hear again the tale of love:
  How Christ brought mercy from above.

Reader 1: For that which in our play might cause offense,
  We seek your pardon and ask no recompense.
  For that which edifies, instructs,
  Your heart raises,

Reader 4: We beg in gratitude that you give God your praises.

(Readers pantomime waiting. Reader 3 sighs, followed by a collective sigh from the other readers.)

Reader 5: What are you waiting for?

Reader 6: I am waiting to get out of high school.

Reader 1: For the water to boil.

Reader 3: For the light to change.

Reader 4: I am waiting for Prince Charming.

Reader 2: Miss America.

Reader 6: Santa Claus.

Reader 5: I am waiting for a faster computer.
READER 1: The weekend.
READER 3: My teenager to get off the phone.
READER 6: I am waiting to be discovered and to become rich and famous.
READER 5: For retirement.
READER 4: For the kids to leave home.
READER 2: For the mail to come.
READER 6: For the phone to ring. (Collective sigh)
READER 3: One year I fell in love with a doll in my father’s store and longed to have it. I imagined how it would be to hold it and dress it and carry it around and play with it. I would go to the store and look at it high on the display case and pine for it with every fiber of my being. I hoped and prayed that Santa would bring it for Christmas, and I waited in giddy anticipation. On Christmas morning I ran downstairs to find that Santa had brought me a little ironing board and toy electric iron that smelled like burnt rubber when it heated up. (Collective sigh)
READER 1: I remember waiting for a rabbit ... my brothers told me they had trapped it in a box down the alley. If I helped them fix the box, they would give me the rabbit. Just think — a rabbit — all my own! Back and forth they sent me to Dad’s workbench for nails, a hammer, bigger nails, a smaller hammer, the list seemed endless. Finally, when I thought I couldn’t stand to wait one more minute, my brothers slowly carried the box home and let me peek inside. It was empty. (Collective sigh)
READER 5: (Standing) Well, I don’t wait for nothin’ and nobody! That’s the trouble with the world, too many pansies and fools who expect their lives handed to them on a platter. You got to go after what you want. You have to take charge, be aggressive. The squeaky wheel is the one that gets oiled. You just waste your whole life waiting when you gotta grab for all the gusto you can —
you only go around once in this life, you know. *(Sits.)*

**READER 6:** Being able to wait is a sign of maturity.

**READER 5:** Bunk! Who are the waiters? Losers, servants, poor people, people without power are the ones who wait.

**READER 4:** Noah waited for the rain to stop and the waters to recede.

**READER 1:** Sarah waited for a child.

**READER 2:** The Hebrews waited forty years in the wilderness.

**READER 3:** Delilah waited for Samson to fall asleep.

**READER 6:** Job waited for an answer.

**READER 1:** Jeremiah waited in the bottom of a cistern.

**READER 2:** Jonah waited in the belly of a whale.

**READER 4:** Mary waited at the cross.

**READER 3:** The disciples waited in the upper room.

**READER 5:** Well, they didn’t know any better, didn’t have any other choice. But times have changed. We’ve come a long way since then, since the Bible. We know how to get what we need.

*(The following is done with lots of style, with phony smiles as in a TV commercial, and may be choreographed. Each READER puts on a funny hat depicting a profession and assumes that characterization.)*

**READER 2:** Ladies and Gentlemen, may we present ... *(Off-key trumpet blast)*

**ALL:** *(Beginning in a whisper, then building in volume, snapping fingers.)* *Instant pudding*

- Instant stew
- Instant coffee
- Instant glue
- Instant cocoa
- Instant curls
- Instant suntan
- Instant pearls
1 Instant noodles
2 Instant pie
3 Instant divorce
4 Instant high
5
6 Instant banking
7 Instant loans
8 Instant credit
9 Instant clones
10
11 Instant relief
12 Instant sheen
13 Instant photos
14 Instant protein
15
16 READERS 1, 5, 6: We can drop a bomb.
17 Destroy a city.
18 READERS 2, 3, 4: Make you calm.
19 Groom your kitty.
20 READERS 1, 5, 6: You can get waxed beauty.
21 Kill a cootie.
22 READERS 2, 3, 4: Have cleaner clothes.
23 Prettier toes.
24 READERS 1, 5, 6: Gleaming dishes.
25 Milk nutritious.
26 READERS 2, 3, 4: You can lose weight.
27 Get a date.
28 READERS 1, 5, 6: Grow big muscles.
29 Fly to Brussels.
30 READERS 2, 3, 4: You can learn to dance.
31 Have a romance.
32 READERS 1, 5, 6: Cure your neurosis.
33 Banish halitosis.
34 Stop smoking.
35 No joking!
ALL: All instantly! Noooo fuss! Noooo muss! Noooo waiting!

(READERS remove hats and bow.)

READER 2: But wait!

READERS 1, 3, 4, 5, 6: Wait?!

READER 2: Yes, wait. Some things are worth waiting for,
maybe even better for the waiting ... like ...

READER 1: Homemade soup.

READER 2: Hot bread from the oven.

READER 3: A grandbaby’s arms around your neck.

READER 4: The first tomato of the season.

READER 2: Waiting is a time of subtle simmering when
flavors blend and tough fibers become tender.

READER 3: Waiting is incubation, a time for hatching new
ideas, thoughts, theories.

READER 1: Inventions. Poems.

READER 6: And algebraic equations.

READER 4: Waiting is when thought goes underground and
weaves in the twisted passages of the psyche in minute
tendrils of anticipation.

READER 5: Tiny rootlets make intricate connections and
expand into dreams and visions.

READER 3: Coincidence and synchronicity.

READER 2: And then —

READER 1: And then —

READER 6: Shazam!

READER 5: Eureka!

ALL: (Together) I’ve got it!

READER 2: And the long wait is over.

READER 4: And things fall into place.

READER 1: The puzzle fits.

READER 3: The answer comes.

READER 6: The babe is born. (G chord on autoharp)

READER 1: Wait a minute! It’s not that easy ...

READER 4: What does “wait” mean?

READER 5: “To take up a concealed position in order to
make an unforeseen attack; or to be in readiness to
intercept one’s enemy or intended prey in passing, to
lurk in ambush.”

READER 3: “To keep watch or have under observation, to
look intently, to defer action, delay, to attend, to render
habitual obedience to, to serve ...”

READER 4: So one who waits is a waiter — a servant. (All
READERS except READER 6 turn their backs to the audience.
The chorus of “What Child Is This?” is played on the autoharp.)

READER 6: (Standing) And Mary said, “Behold, I am the
handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your
word” (Luke 1:38). (READERS turn to the front.)

READER 1: How to avoid waiting and pretend that
everything is all right: (READERS 3 and 4 softly whistle a
tune such as “Whenever I Am Afraid, I Whistle a Happy Tune”
under the following.)

READER 2: Tell yourself magic stories and deny the torture
of it with false cheerfulness.

READER 6: Read your horoscope. Buy a little something for
yourself.

READER 5: Sing jingles in bright voices. Turn up the TV.

READER 1: Consult your analyst, guru, stockbroker.

READER 2: Attorney, hairdresser, decorator.

READER 6: And buy a little something for yourself.

READER 5: Read books on how to get power and keep it.

READER 1: Dress for success.

READER 2: Have a martini — and buy something nice for
yourself.

READER 6: Smoke a cigarette.

READER 5: Buy something really big for yourself.

READERS 1, 6: Keep busy, keep active, keep the faith.

READERS 2, 5: Keep on keepin’ on. (READERS 3 and 4 stop
whistling.)

ALL: (Together) But by no means under any circumstances
ever stop (Pause) long enough to feel the terror and
anguish ... (All READERS except READER 1 turn their
backs. Chorus of “What Child Is This?” on autoharp.)
READER 1: I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me
according to your word (Luke 1:38).
READER 3: (Turning front) We hate to wait. The humiliation,
the solitude, the emptiness, the creeping doubts ...
READER 6: (Turning front) Maybe he won't come.
READER 2: (Turning front) Maybe I was wrong.
READER 4: (Turning front) Maybe my whole life is a mistake.
READER 1: (Turning front) Maybe I should just forget it.
READER 5: (Turning front) We hate to wait because we fear
we will not be justified, that it won't be worth it, that we
will be exposed as fools.
READER 2: O God, let me not be put to shame ... Let no one
that waits for thee be put to shame (Psalm 25:2-3, author's
paraphrase). (G minor chord on autoharp)
READER 6: Waiting is embarrassing.
READER 4: (Standing) You want to explain to people: Look-I-
am-just-waiting-here-and-he'll-be-along-in-just-a-minute-
and-everything-will-be-all-right-and-yes-I'm-just-fine.
(Sits.)
READER 1: Waiting is a dull, nauseous experience. Things
are drab and meaningless. You see how tied your
cheerfulness is to doing something — anything. Now
the sky is gray. Rain falls continuously. The world is as
bleak and barren as Sarah's womb. Everything tastes
like stale crackers. Nothing satisfies the aching
listlessness. (Pluck F string on autoharp.)
READER 3: The passivity of this waiting belies its inner
violence, the bloody struggle of the heart.
READER 2: Waiting.
READER 5: Accepting.
READER 4: Receiving.
READER 6: Serving.
READER 3: Such meek and mild activity is not for the
squeamish or the weak. The sweat and toil of this passivity is measured out in tears and anguish.

ALL: (Except READER 3. Gm chord on autoharp) I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in God's word I hope (Psalm 130:5).

READER 3: (D' chord) This waiting faces into despair, which gapes before one like an enormous canyon.


READER 3: (D' chord) This waiting casts the long, dark shadow of fear which threatens to devour the white light of hope.

ALL: (Except READER 3. Gm chord) My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning (Psalm 130:6).

READER 3: (D' chord) This waiting carries the heavy burden of depression which comes to sit on one's shoulders like cinder blocks until the weight of the accumulated years pushes one into the earth and the grave. Patience in Latin means “to suffer through.”

READER 2: About the last thing anyone wants to do is to wait. Yet it is the first thing God asks us to do. Waiting is premised on faith and obedience. We have to wait whether we want to or not. Our only freedom is our consent. “Waiting patiently with expectation is the foundation of the spiritual life,” wrote Simone Weil.

READER 3: (Chorus of “What Child Is This?” on autoharp) I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word (Luke 1:38).

READER 1: We detest waiting because to wait is to die to our self-importance, to our presumption that we are so important that we cannot be kept waiting.

READER 4: Waiting strips us of the nonsense of our conceit and pride and the absurd seriousness with which we take ourselves.
READER 2: Like it or not, we all wait; but in the meantime, and it is a mean time, a meager, cruel, harsh time, we mutter and chafe under the sentence of the present tense.

READER 1: We twiddle our thumbs and sit in creaking rocking chairs. "Now" is a blend of two words:

READER 5: No!

READER 6: And Ow!

ALL: (Chanted) I am the man who has seen affliction Under the rod of God's wrath;
God has driven and brought me
Into darkness without any light.
God has made my flesh and skin waste away
And broken my bones.
God has besieged and enveloped me
With bitterness and tribulation;
God has made me dwell in darkness
Like the dead of long ago.
Though I call and cry for help,
God shuts out my prayer.
I have become the laughingstock of all peoples.
My soul is bereft of peace,
I have forgotten what happiness is (Lamentations 3:1-2, 4-6, 8, 14, 17).

READER 3: It is a tortuous discipline to wait upon the Lord. Now is the hour, this ticking time ...
Whose soul is this that walks and paces in my skin
Who will not speak but rages out in sin?
Whose soul is this whose wearisome moaning
Strains and stretches taut my nerves?
Monotonous labor, this birthing, this tearing loose
Whose is this breaking free
Me free of soul
Or soul of me?

ALL: (Em chord, whispered) For God alone my soul waits in
silence (Psalm 62:1).

READER 6: Prayer in Greek is proseuche, which means “to hold to, be intent on, devote oneself to, pay attention to.”

READER 4: Attention in Latin means “to stretch.”

READER 5: Waiting stretches us toward God in prayer.

READER 1: To wait is to pull and stretch and strain and listen so very intently until one day ...

READER 2: One hears Christ praying in oneself.

READER 6: And like Elizabeth, the child leaps up in us to greet the coming Christ in another.

READER 5: Life quickens in us. We are ground for the seed of divine love.

READER 4: The seed lies in us and feeds on the rains of our lives’ sorrows and our sunny joys.

READER 3: As its roots run deep and twist in and out in intricate connections woven in mystery and silence while we heave and sigh our plaintive woes.

READER 1: Until quite unexpectedly in the bitter cold of a December eve, it bursts ...

ALL WOMEN: With immaculate tenderness ...

ALL: (Together) Into radiant blossom.

(Brief musical interlude)

ALL: (Together) An Advent story.

READER 6: It was the first Sunday of Advent, and the people gathered in small clumps, chatting and laughing before entering the sanctuary. Some sipped coffee while they caught up on the week’s events. Outside in the bright sun, the children were playing. A man with a yellow dog who was walking by the church stopped and asked the children for directions to the rail yards.

READER 1: The children invited the man into the church.

They tied his dog outside and brought it a bowl of water, and someone gave it a cupcake. They led the man
to the preacher, telling him that the stranger needed
directions and a little money for food.

READER 5: The preacher, tall and well-groomed in his black
robe and satin stole, looked at the man and caught the
smell of whiskey. He invited the man to worship and
said that afterward we’d see about some food.

READER 4: That Sunday amid the handsome suits and
stylish dresses, the shiny patent leather and mingled
designer fragrances, the neatly trimmed hair and
deo odorized bodies, sat a man in a torn jacket and baggy
pants, wearing shoes with cracked soles. The people
made a space for him in the back row.

READER 2: They had gathered on this morning to begin
their observance of Advent. They spoke and sang of
things to come, of waiting, of expectation, and of hope.
The minister admonished the people to be alert and on
the lookout, for Christ might come at any moment.
Afterward the people went downstairs for a potluck
lunch and an afternoon of games and songs and making
gifts for shut-ins.

READER 6: The man in the torn coat did not join them,
though he was invited. He sat on a gray folding chair
upstairs and talked about Jesus and wept. He said he
knew he had done bad, that he was just a bum. He rode
in empty boxcars across the country with his dog. Then
he said his father sold him when he was six for a case of
beer.

READER 3: The pastor was uneasy. He needed to go
downstairs to say the grace. Was the man’s story true?
How many other churches had he been to that
morning? He handed him a sack of food and drove the
man and his yellow dog to the rail yards.

READER 1: The children who had found the man asked
their teacher why he had no money and why he
wouldn’t stay with them and how could his father sell
him and wasn’t his dog wonderful and would he come again? “I don’t think so,” said the teacher.

READER 5: Christ entered our midst on the first Sunday of Advent wearing a torn jacket. His only follower was a yellow dog. There was whiskey on his breath. He saw quickly how the inn was full.

ALL: (Together) We told him politely as possible that we just didn’t have much room for folks who ride boxcars and have a problem with alcohol.

READER 6: Once a young student asked a rabbi how it was that no one ever saw God anymore. The rabbi responded: “Because nowadays no one is willing to stoop so low.”

READER 2: Think of the person you have most despised, whom you have found utterly repulsive and revolting. See that person in your mind. Recall your disgust. Now answer this question: Who did you think it was that needed to be loved, anyway?

(Through the next section, play autoharp on open strings creating a cacophony of dissonance. READERS stand and knock over their stools.)

READER 1: Once I dreamed I was in an earthquake. The floor shook and heaved and the walls crumbled and fell. Next I rode in the back of a truck along the street of a bombed-out city. Enemy soldiers rode behind the truck. Buildings lay in ruins. All was destroyed. It was end-time, apocalypse, and I mourned for my unborn children.

ALL: (Together, building in intensity and volume) For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places ... and brother will deliver up brother to death; and a father his child; and children will rise against parents and have them put to death ... and alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days! Pray