

THE UNEXPECTED GUEST

by Candyce A. Petersen



CHRISTIANPUBLISHERS

Copyright Notice

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Christian Publishers. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Christian Publishers. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Christian Publishers. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Christian Publishers.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Christian Publishers.***

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Christian Publishers.

THE UNEXPECTED GUEST

By Candyce A. Petersen

CAST

J.R.

ASSISTANT

SALLY

GEORGE

ANNABELLE

THREE GEMS

Ruby

Diamond

Pearl

OLIVE

POP

GREEDY

DEPRIVED

HARRY

DEPRESSED

GOD

(Off-stage voice)

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Unexpected Guest is a humorous look at the type of members found in many of today's churches. It is important to remember that all the characters in the play are basically good Christian people who have fallen prey to the commercialism and hustle and bustle that surround this holiday season.

As in any play, timing and pauses are important in getting across the message. Also, the more refined each character, the more successful the production. Each actor should understand his character as much as possible and then speak, move, dress, and react as this individual would do.

For instance, J.R., the producer, is a fast talker and quick thinker. He is slightly conceited as his show is quite a success. He would dress informally — perhaps in jeans and a sweatshirt. He might even wear a beret or goofy hat. He strides when he walks, and gestures with his hands. His assistant (female or male), on the other hand, is timid and in awe of J.R. He dresses simply, and basically stays out of the limelight.

Sally, like most talk show hosts, is friendly and confident. She is a caring person and likes most people. She is usually in control, but when she isn't, her expressions and voice give her away. She probably wears a stylish suit or tailored dress and heels. Of course, her make-up and hair are flawless. She might even carry a clipboard (with a script for prompting, if necessary).

Annabelle Adams is a woman concerned with convincing others that her life is happy and fulfilling. But deep down, she knows her life lacks purpose. A sensitive woman, Annabelle used to be active at her church until others began criticizing her. As a result, she has shied away from God, the church, and the people who make her uncomfortable. Well-to-do Annabelle "hides" under lots of make-up, jewelry, and fancy clothes. She may even wear a fur.

George, an easy going, quiet, retired guy, is not only Annabelle's husband, but also her best friend. He knows his Annabelle has her faults but has discovered over the years that life is much more easy and pleasant when Annabelle makes all the decisions. Besides, George enjoys having Annabelle brag about what a wonderful, caring husband he is. George, also a fancy dresser, never makes a move until Annabelle does.

Ruby, Diamond, and Pearl are three older women whose lives

revolve around the church. These three are the valuable women volunteers found at most churches who see that “things” get done right and proper. Sometimes they become frustrated when “lesser” members don’t share their enthusiasm for church projects. Sometimes they are so concerned with perfection that they offend other people in order to obtain their desired result. When on-stage, the three should operate as a team. Their lines should flow together, as if they are presenting a choral presentation. They might wear heavy make-up (rouged cheeks), clunky shoes, glasses, hats, and midcalf baggy dresses. Their hair should be short or pinned up. They should walk like older (but not crippled) women. Once on-stage, they stand together — straight and still — a pillar of strength.

Reverend “POP” Wagner loves his job and God, but is frustrated and exhausted from trying to motivate, inspire, and pull together his scattered flock. He should wear a clerical collar and dark pants or a suit. (POP might even be a female pastor if short on male actors — simply have Sally be surprised that POP is a female, then have POP explain what “P-O-P” stands for.) POP wrings his hands and/or shakes his head when telling of his woes.

The middle-class Normal Family is a good, but very busy, Christian family. Harry is a hard-working man concerned with his family’s financial security. He wears a cheap tie and an unpressed shirt as Olive has no time to iron. His speeches about money are cliché-ridden. He frequently stands, shakes his fist, and points as he speaks, in a vain attempt to get someone’s attention.

Olive is a modern-day working mother. She often feels guilty — wondering if she is neglecting her twins and knowing she is neglecting her church responsibilities. Her walk and facial expressions are a constant reminder of how exhausted she is. At times, Olive appears confused, overwhelmed by all she has to do. She dresses simply and wears little or no make-up. Her hair is slightly mussed.

Depressed is a moody teenager at a rebellious stage in her life. She wears the latest obnoxious teen fashions and crazy hairstyle. She may wear lots of make-up and fingernail polish. She rolls her eyes, acts bored, and walks as though the world owes her a living. But underneath it all, Depressed is a frightened and confused youth. She knows Christmas is supposed to be joyful and satisfying, yet she has already experienced many Christmases that left her feeling empty. It is her very, very important line, “I HATE CHRISTMAS!” that finally grabs everyone’s

attention. Depressed dares to put into words what many of us feel sometimes, but are unable to admit publicly.

Greedy and Deprived are two children who believe Christmas was created to satisfy their every desire. The twins may be played by either boys or girls. They should be about the same age and dress as similar as possible. They should wiggle, giggle, and push and shove, then later settle down as the action begins.

All characters (particularly children) need to be reminded to stay in character the whole time they are on-stage. They need to be reminded to speak loudly, clearly, and slowly. This is particularly important for the individual speaking the words of God.

As for this individual, select a man with a deep, powerful voice. As God is not seen, this actor need not memorize his lines — but his message must be strong and clear. Speaking off-stage through a microphone connected to a public address system will achieve this effect. Dimming lights at this time also adds to the dramatic effect. Of course, those on-stage should remain as still and quiet at this time as possible.

PROPS

One large poster with the word "APPLAUSE" printed in large letters; "Lights! Camera! Action!" clapboard; clipboard for Sally with notes on it; Christmas packages/bags for George to carry; purse for Olive with three Christmas cards in it; Greedy's Christmas list.

SETTING

See diagram for suggested stage setting. Keep groups of characters clustered together (The Adams' family, the GEMS, the Normals). Place groups at different heights. The GEMS at Center Back should be at the highest level, as they symbolize the angels often found in many Christmas plays. You might use steps, platforms, standing, sitting, and kneeling positions to achieve a balanced, organized look. Feel free to adjust positions of characters to achieve desired effect.

Stage is set with four chairs: two at Stage Right; two at Stage Left. (See x's on diagram.) Big sign with globe saying "The World Today" is at Stage Right Back. Christmas garland drapes sign, signifying Christmas Season. All characters (except J.R.'s assistant) wait Off-stage Right with Sally.

Sign — "The World Today"

Ruby, Diamond, Pearl

George & Annabelle

Harry and Olive

x x

x x

Depressed

Assistant
with
"Applause"
sign

Sally

Greedy and Deprived

Reverend "POP" Wagner

MUSIC

The piano should be positioned off to one side of the performing area. You will need a pianist who can play some light, secular Christmas songs as the audience is being seated, then "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" (page 1, line 18), and finally "Joy to the World" at the end (page 9, line 20).

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Page 6, line 30 — Psalm 46:10 (RSV).

Page 7, lines 21-23 — Mark 12:30 (RSV).

Page 7, line 24 — Mark 12:31 (RSV).

Page 7, lines 25-27 — Matthew 25:35-39 (author's paraphrase).

Page 7, lines 28-29 — Matthew 25:40 (author's paraphrase).

All Scripture quotations with references marked (RSV) are from the Revised Standard Version, © 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

1 *(Medley of light, secular Christmas music is played while*
 2 *audience is seated. Music stops. J.R. enters; goes to Center Front.)*

3 **J.R.:** Good morning *(evening)*, folks. Welcome to this episode
 4 of our highly acclaimed television show, "Our World
 5 Today." My name is J.R. and I am the producer. My job
 6 is to find the extraordinary guests for our show and to
 7 make sure that everything runs smoothly.

8 Now being a member of our studio audience is very
 9 simple. Off to my right is my assistant. *(ASSISTANT*
 10 *waves.)* All we ask is that you respond with your generous
 11 applause whenever she *(or he)* holds up the sign. Let's try
 12 it. Assistant? *(ASSISTANT holds up sign; audience applauds.)*
 13 Very good, audience. Let's begin.

14 **ASSISTANT:** All set, J.R. Lights! Camera! Action! *(Claps*
 15 *clapboard.)*

16 **J.R.:** And now, live and in person, direct to you from
 17 *(Hometown, state)*, we bring you that world-famous talk
 18 show hostess, Miss-Sally-Asks-It-All! *(Music plays — "It's*
 19 *Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas."* After a few bars,
 20 ASSISTANT holds up applause sign. SALLY, carrying
 21 clipboard, rushes onto stage.)

22 **SALLY:** Good morning *(evening)*, ladies and gentlemen. As
 23 most of you know, each day our show, "Our World Today,"
 24 focuses on a current problem in the world around us. We
 25 then ask that day's authority how to solve the problem.
 26 But not today. No, today is different! Today we are not
 27 going to discuss a problem. Today we are going to discuss
 28 that wonderful season of the year known as Christmas
 29 and what it means to each of us. Our guests are from a
 30 local church. Let's meet our first couple — a retired
 31 twosome, George and Annabelle Adams. *(ASSISTANT lifts*
 32 *applause sign. They enter and take places beside SALLY.*
 33 *GEORGE is loaded down with packages.)* Season's greetings,
 34 George and Annabelle. Might I ask the name of your
 35 church, George?

1 **GEORGE:** Sally, we belong to the First World Apathetic
2 Church.

3 **SALLY:** The — the Apathetics? I—I don't believe I'm
4 familiar with them.

5 **ANNABELLE:** Say, Sally, how long's this going to take?
6 **Banner Mattress'** (*Insert a local business*) **Sale to End All**
7 **Sales ends tonight! Isn't that right, George?**

8 **GEORGE:** Yes, dear. You're right, dear.

9 **SALLY:** (*Surprised*) Uh, we'll try to hurry, Annabelle. Please
10 sit down. (*SALLY gestures to their seats. To audience:*) Moving
11 on . . . I would now like to introduce three wonderful
12 ladies. They are all active members in their church. The
13 first is Miss Ruby, a jewel of a volunteer (*RUBY enters*),
14 her friend, Diamond — a woman whose performances are
15 flawless, I'm told (*DIAMOND enters*), and their friend,
16 Pearl, so nicknamed for her "pearls of wisdom." (*PEARL*
17 *enters. ASSISTANT raises applause sign. RUBY, DIAMOND,*
18 *and PEARL stand beside SALLY, arms linked together.*)
19 Ladies, you have my greatest admiration for all the work
20 you do. I understand you are known as the "Three Gems"
21 of the First World Apathetic Church.

22 **THREE GEMS:** (*Nodding, then bowing together*) That is correct,
23 Sally.

24 **SALLY:** Ladies, please take your assigned places. (*They*
25 *position themselves Center Back, standing.*) Our next group
26 of people is a happy Christian family — the Normals.
27 We have father Harry (*HARRY enters, grumpy*), mother
28 Olive (*OLIVE enters, exhausted*), the twins, Greedy and
29 Deprived (*GREEDY and DEPRIVED enter, pushing and*
30 *shoving*), and their lovely teenage daughter, Depressed.
31 (*DEPRESSED enters, primping. ASSISTANT holds up*
32 *applause sign. The NORMAL family takes their places beside*
33 *SALLY. SALLY looks at clipboard.*) I'm sure it says *happy*
34 *family here somewhere. (NORMAL family forces smiles out*
35 *at the audience.)*

- 1 **OLIVE:** (*Trying to be cheerful*) **We just love your show, Sally!**
- 2 **SALLY:** **How kind of you to say so, Olive. Could you please**
 3 **take your places?** (*Parents sit on chairs; Twins sit on floor in*
 4 *front of parents. DEPRESSED stands to the side, hand on hip,*
 5 *looking bored.*) **Our last guest is a pastor. Please welcome**
 6 **Reverend Wagner, lovingly known by his congregation**
 7 **as “Pop Wagner.”** (*POP WAGNER enters. ASSISTANT raises*
 8 *applause sign.*) **Welcome, Pop. Could you tell us just a little**
 9 **about yourself and your church?**
- 10 **POP:** (*Sighing*) **First of all, Sally, let’s straighten out this**
 11 **matter about my name. “Pop” is not a loving nickname.**
 12 **I spell it “capital P, capital O, capital P.” It stands for**
 13 **“Pooped-Out Pastor.” I am Pooped-Out Pastor Wagner**
 14 **from the First World Apathetic Church. Any more**
 15 **questions?**
- 16 **SALLY:** **Oh? Just one. I’ve never heard of the Apathetics. Are**
 17 **there very many of you?**
- 18 **POP:** **You’d be surprised, Sally. Our number is growing daily.**
- 19 **SALLY:** (*Thoroughly confused*) **I — I see. Could you take your**
 20 **place, Pop?** (*To audience, trying to smile*) **Now that you’ve**
 21 **met all our guests, folks, let’s begin. Our question today:**
 22 **“What does Christmas mean to each of you?” We’ll begin**
 23 **with you, Reverend Wagner.**
- 24 **POP:** (*Standing tall, gesturing with right arm*) **Christmas *should***
 25 **be a time of reflection.**
- 26 **RUBY:** (*Imitating POP’s gesture*) **Christmas means Love!**
- 27 **DIAMOND:** (*Both arms up*) **Christmas means Peace!**
- 28 **PEARL:** (*Imitates POP’s gesture, but uses left arm.*) **Christmas**
 29 **means Joy!**
- 30 **GREEDY and DEPRIVED:** (*Clenching fists, wiggling*) **Christmas**
 31 **means lots and lots of presents — presents just for us!**
- 32 **HARRY:** (*Standing up, shaking his finger*) **I’ll tell you what**
 33 **Christmas means. Bills! Lots and lots of unpaid bills!**
 34 **There’s Massive Charge, Rude Discovery, and American**
 35 **Expense — all charged up with things we don’t need or**

- 1 even want!
- 2 **ANNABELLE:** My George lets me spend all the money I want.
- 3 Don't you, sweetheart?
- 4 **GEORGE:** Yes, dear. Whatever you say, dear.
- 5 **OLIVE:** (*Standing, sighing*) Christmas means work! More
- 6 work than I can handle! First I work forty hours a week,
- 7 then I come home and work a second shift. (*Counting off on*
- 8 *her fingers*) There's shopping! Baking! Cleaning and
- 9 decorating, too! (*Looking pointedly at DEPRESSED*) It
- 10 would be nice if *just once* I could get some help around
- 11 the house.
- 12 **ANNABELLE:** Ease up, Olive. Your daughter is still just a
- 13 child. I never made my children do any work around the
- 14 house. Aren't I right, George? That child doesn't need
- 15 work; she needs *presents!*
- 16 **DEPRESSED:** Look, lady, I don't need presents, and I
- 17 certainly don't need your help.
- 18 **GREEDY and DEPRIVED:** Oh, but we need presents. We
- 19 need lots of presents!
- 20 **GREEDY:** Want to see my list? (*Pulling it out*) I carry it where-
- 21 ever I go — just in case someone should ask, you know.
- 22 **DEPRIVED:** I hate you, Greedy! You always get more toys
- 23 than I do!
- 24 **HARRY:** (*Standing again*) Quiet, kids! Your mother wants to
- 25 speak.
- 26 **OLIVE:** (*Pulling three cards from purse, standing up with HARRY*)
- 27 Those darn Christmas cards! Each year the list grows
- 28 longer. Of course, one must never, ever forget one's
- 29 dearest, closest friends. Say, Harry, (*Opening cards, one at*
- 30 *a time*) who are the Andersons? And the Petersens? Is
- 31 Cousin Gertrude your cousin . . . or is she mine?
- 32 **HARRY:** (*Grabbing head*) Who knows? Who cares? All I know
- 33 is that every charity has its hand out at Christmas time!
- 34 Surely they must know that "Charity begins at home!"
- 35 **GREEDY and DEPRIVED:** (*Holding hands out and giving each*

- 1 *other "five") All right! Presents! Presents! We need lots and*
 2 **lots of presents!** (*OLIVE puts her hands over her ears and*
 3 *HARRY rolls his eyes as they sit.*)
- 4 **THREE GEMS:** (*Together, looking smug*) **Christmas means**
 5 **church work. Lots and lots of church work. We're the**
 6 **ones in charge!**
- 7 **RUBY:** *I am in charge of potlucks.*
- 8 **DIAMOND:** *I do the children's programs.*
- 9 **PEARL:** *I am wise; I am wonderful. I am president of*
 10 **everything.**
- 11 **THREE GEMS:** (*Together*) **We are a team.**
- 12 **RUBY:** **If we can't bake it or cook it,**
- 13 **DIAMOND:** **Surely we can pickle it.**
- 14 **PEARL:** **We make crafts from anything that is free.**
- 15 **DIAMOND:** **People come from far and wide for our bizarre**
 16 **bazaars.**
- 17 **RUBY:** (*Clearing throat*) **However . . . things are not always**
 18 **done our way!** (*Hands on hips, she stares at ANNABELLE.*)
- 19 **PEARL:** **Some women never do their share.** (*Hands on hips,*
 20 *she stares at OLIVE.*)
- 21 **DIAMOND:** (*Sighs.*) **It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do**
 22 **it. Our church must be perfect for the holidays. After all —**
- 23 **THREE GEMS:** (*Together, smiling*) **Christmas comes but once**
 24 **a year!**
- 25 **POP:** (*Raising hands to heaven*) **Once a year, yes, thank you,**
 26 **Lord! And forgive me, Lord, but yes! Yes, I'm sooo grateful**
 27 **your Son was an only child!**
- 28 **DEPRESSED:** **I hate Christmas!** (*All catching their breath in*
 29 *horror*) **Everyone is so touchy! Everything's so**
 30 **commercial! Yes, Mrs. Adams, I do get presents. So why?**
 31 **Why, when it's all over, do I feel so empty inside?** (*Turning*
 32 *to audience*) **Don't you? Haven't any of you ever asked**
 33 **yourself, "Is this all there is? Is this all there is to**
 34 **Christmas?"**
- 35 **OLIVE:** (*Taking this as a personal insult*) **Of course I'm touchy,**



Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:

UNEXPECTED GUEST

by Candyce A. Petersen.

*For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script,
please contact us at:*

CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS

P.O. Box 248 - Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-844-841-6387 - Fax (319) 368-8011

customerservice@christianpub.com