

All-age Sketches

for the Christian Year

20 easy-to-perform sketches
for major festivals and
popular celebrations



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Foreword by Paul Birch,
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Contents

Foreword	7
Introduction	8
Thinking outside the box	
A sketch for Advent	11
Who's been sleeping in my manger?	
A sketch for Christmas Day	18
Should auld acquaintance be forgot?	
A sketch for New Year's Eve and New Year's Day	25
Bearing gifts	
A sketch for Epiphany.....	36
When two or more	
A sketch for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	44
Candles in the bin	
A sketch for Candlemas	51
How clean is your mind?	
A sketch for Lent and Ash Wednesday	58
One for the ladies	
A sketch for Mothering Sunday	68
Dangerous donkey	
A sketch for Palm Sunday	76
Fair's fair	
A sketch for Good Friday	84

Won't you roll away the stone?	
A sketch for Easter Sunday.....	94
In for a penny...	
A sketch for Christian Aid Week	104
Up, up and away	
A sketch for Ascension Day	113
Gone with the wind	
A sketch for Pentecost	122
Three become one	
A sketch for Trinity Sunday.....	131
No such thing as a free supper	
A sketch for Corpus Christi	139
Fathers Anonymous	
A sketch for Father's Day.....	146
Knock, knock, knocking	
A sketch for Mission/Outreach Week	155
One rotten apple	
A sketch for Harvest Festival	164
Be the centre	
A sketch for Christ the King.....	174
Index of Bible references	184

Introduction

Welcome to this bumper book of drama sketches, which takes a journey through the Christian year, covering major festivals and events from Advent to Christ the King. Each of the short dramas is designed to be fun, fast and thought-provoking—taking a sideways look at each celebration and giving new insights and perspectives to age-old traditions.

These sketches are intended to complement rather than replace existing church ceremonies and customs and are flexible enough to be used on other occasions, at youth and outreach events, school camps, church weekends and entertainment evenings. Fun for all ages and suitable for a family audience, each sketch will delight children, won't embarrass teenagers, and will help adults to think about familiar events in a new way.

No more than four performers are required for each sketch, and many need just two. There are no elaborate costumes, sets, sound or special effects to arrange and the few props can be either found around the house or bought from a joke shop. Of course, this doesn't mean that the more adventurous performers can't go to town and organize a big show, with full sets, hired costumes, lights, sound, music...

In addition to the festivals of the Christian year, there are sketches for Father's Day and New Year, alongside popular events such as Christian Aid Week and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Traditional festivals such as Mothering Sunday, Corpus Christi, Candlemas and Christ the King are given new twists and fresh perspectives. So, if you've ever wondered what the wise men's camels discovered on their journey to Bethlehem, or what happened to Peter after he was arrested for being drunk and disorderly on the day of Pentecost, or how you can explain the Trinity using Jaffa Cakes, here's where you can find out.

The many celebrations at Christmas and Easter are covered in

full, and each sketch has a brief introduction with tips on performing, sermon ideas, and relevant references from the Bible.

This book is all you need to bring these celebrations to life and inspire the church to think about such subjects as fatherhood, world poverty, who really is king of your life. The sketches provide a wonderful way to dramatize the Christian year, and when you've reached the end you can simply go back to the beginning and start all over again!

Notes on performing

I've kept the stage directions to a minimum so that you can adapt each piece to the place where you are performing, such as in church, a school hall, a tent or the open air. This also means that anyone with great ideas for how to stage the sketches won't feel restricted by intricate instructions.

There are three stage directions to denote a pause. BEAT indicates a short pause, THINKS is a short pause when a character is contemplating something, and PAUSE is a slightly longer break. The length of each one should be worked out in rehearsal but, as these are light-hearted, fast-paced dramas, don't linger too long.

After a speech/line of dialogue, there is sometimes a long dash '—' which indicates that the speech has been cut off, usually by another character interrupting. In these instances, it's a good idea to have in mind some additional words to say in case the next character fails to interrupt!

Alternatively, there may be three points '...' (ellipsis) at the end of a line. This indicates that the character speaking the lines has 'trailed off' mid-speech. If the following speech starts with another ellipsis, this indicates that the second character is continuing the speech from where the first character stopped.

Before you perform the pieces, my advice is to rehearse as much as possible and, if at all possible, learn the lines. The sketches are designed to be *performed*, not read, so you will need to use your face and eyes (not hidden behind a script) and your whole body, without having to grapple with page-turning halfway through a speech.

Once you have chosen the cast, have a read-through of the script a couple of times (sitting in a circle), then do it again a few times with actions. Mark up the script with notes on the actions and any dialogue alterations or cuts, then go away and learn the lines. Meet up again and have a few run-throughs without scripts and with props (with the director prompting). Shortly before the performance, try the sketch with costumes (a dress rehearsal) and lights/sound (a technical rehearsal) and one or two last times as if it is a performance (a final run-through with no stopping or prompting). Then it's the real thing!

Of course, many of these stages may not be possible or necessary, particularly if it's a small event. For example, you may like to use a sketch in a small group as an icebreaker: in this case, just bring along the scripts, give out characters to people who are happy to read, and have a bit of a laugh.



Thinking outside the box

Curtain up

Depending on the year, Advent Sunday falls either on the last Sunday in November or on the first Sunday in December. However, this sketch could be used in the weeks leading up to Advent Sunday, or at any time during Advent.

Bible backdrop

LUKE 1:26–33

Advent is all about expectation and excitement—a countdown to an earth-shattering event. We can imagine Mary’s anxious last month leading up to the birth, after being told by an angel that her child ‘... will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel for ever, and his kingdom will never end.’

Sermon prompt

This sketch takes the idea of a countdown to the coming of Jesus as a baby from the perspective of a couple of chocolates in an Advent calendar. This approach should help children and adults to consider their Advent treats in a new way, and refocus the countdown to Christmas on the coming of Jesus.

It is no accident that the sketch shows the other trappings of Christmas—trees, presents, fairies, Father Christmas and so on—

being ‘stripped away’ as the chocolates are eaten, leaving only Jesus as a baby remaining. This could be used to open a discussion, or as the basis for a talk, about focusing on Jesus at Christmas time. But don’t be too negative about the other things: chocolate and presents are good, too!

Cast

Two performers: CHOC 1 and CHOC 2 (both male or female). Although they are sweets, give them lots of character and emotion—they are in a very scary situation!

Staging: props, costumes and effects

This set-up requires two large cardboard boxes, each large enough to contain one of the two performers, situated side by side. The boxes are open at the front, so that the audience can see the performers. The back of each box is cut out and the gap covered with tinfoil.

The performers should be dressed in black (black trousers and tops) so as not to reveal their identity. Alternatively, they could be costumed as the chocolates they represent, an elf and a fairy—but obviously this will take more time and organization.

There are a couple of sound cues (footsteps), which can be either recorded and played at the appropriate time or ‘performed’ off stage by a third performer on a suitably noisy surface and into a microphone to enhance the dramatic effect.



Thinking outside the box

Scene: Two cardboard boxes on stage side by side, each with a tinfoil back. Inside the boxes are two figures: CHOC 1 and CHOC 2. They cannot see each other.

Choc 1: *(Whispering)* Hello? Hello? Anyone there? Hello?
(Listens to box containing CHOC 2) Can anyone hear me?

Choc 2: *(Speaking through the side of the box)* Keep your voice down!

Choc 1: Thank goodness! I thought I was the last.
(Speaking through the side of the box) Where are you?

Choc 2: Next box along. Do keep the noise down—they'll be coming soon.

Choc 1: Already? Another day gone?

Choc 2: *(Excited)* Not long now.

Choc 1: *(Concerned)* How many of us are left?

Choc 2: You and me. And the other one—

Choc 1: The last three. I remember when there were dozens of us.

Choc 2: 24, I've been counting. 21 gone. Only us left.

Choc 1: All of our friends. Gone. I remember them well. Robin—such a chirpy fellow.

Choc 2: ... Good old Stocking. Full of surprises.



- Choc 1:** And Snowman. One minute he was there, the next he'd disappeared.
- Choc 2:** Perhaps he melted.
- Choc 1:** No. It's always the same. First the footsteps. Loud, booming, thundering!
- Choc 2:** Then the voices. Always excited. (*Mimicking*) 'What will it be today?'
- Choc 1:** Then the creaking—like a great door being opened.
- Choc 2:** Sometimes it's deafening. Other times it seems further away.
- Choc 1:** But always followed by a metallic rustling sound.
- Choc 2:** ... Tearing.
- Choc 1:** Then the voices again...
- Choc 2:** ... Even more excited.
- Choc 1:** 'What is it?' they shout. Then we realize which of us it's got. Yesterday it was Mr Cracker...
- Choc 2:** ... At least he went out with a bang.
- Choc 1:** But the novelty's worn off now. Whatever's happened to them... (*serious*) it'll be us soon. Next time they'll come for you or me, or the other one.
- Choc 2:** Exciting, isn't it? An adventure.
- Choc 1:** That's not what I'd call it.
- Choc 2:** It's what we've been waiting for—
- Choc 1:** Waiting? Or dreading...
- Choc 2:** But we don't know what it is...



Choc 1: Exactly. It's scary.

Choc 2: At least we know it's coming—

Choc 1: What's coming?

Choc 2: I don't know. But from the sound of the voices outside, it's terribly exciting. And we're part of it.

Choc 1: Part of what?

Choc 2: We'll find out. Maybe today, maybe tomorrow. And, if not then, definitely the day after that.

Choc 1: How'd you work that out?

Choc 2: Mathematics. There were 21 of us. But each day they've taken only one away. Only three of us left. So, in the next three days the mystery will be solved...

Choc 1: (*Resigned*) So that's it? In less than three days it'll all be over.

Choc 2: Or just beginning.

Choc 1: There must be a pattern here. Leading up to something—

Choc 2: There's a point to all this, that's for sure.

Choc 1: If only we had some clues.

Choc 2: Let's think what the other things are. The things that have gone.

Choc 1: There was Holly. Nice girl, if a little prickly.

Choc 2: There was that reindeer. Bit nosey, but all right once you'd given him a chance.

Choc 1: That big pudding's gone, too.



Choc 2: So has Father Christmas.

Choc 1: Christmas! Of course. That's what it all has in common.

Choc 2: I've just realized, I've no idea what you are—

Choc 1: I've no idea what you are.

Choc 2: We might as well tell each other.

Choc 1: You're right. It may be a clue, and we are the last ones.

Choc 2: OK. I think—and this is just a guess—but I'm pretty sure I'm a fairy.

Choc 1: Gosh. That's quite impressive.

Choc 2: So what are you, then?

Choc 1: Um. An elf. One of Santa's helpers...

Choc 2: An elf and a fairy? Some help.

Choc 1: There must be a clue there. We just have to think outside the box...

Choc 2: Maybe there is no explanation.

Choc 1: There's a pattern to all this. It's building up to something... or someone. Didn't you say there was another one still here?

Choc 2: Yes. I heard someone.

Choc 1: What did they say?

Choc 2: It wasn't really talking. It was more like crying.

Choc 1: Maybe they're scared, too.

Choc 2: (*Getting excited*) No, it wasn't that sort of crying. It was like a baby.



Choc 1: What's a baby doing here?

Choc 2: Maybe the baby is the answer—

Choc 1: (*Noise of footsteps*) Oh no! I can hear the footsteps.

Choc 2: Maybe all the things, the other things—crackers, presents, reindeer, trees, puddings, logs, Father Christmas...

Choc 1: What about you and me?

Choc 2: Yes! Even us—elves, fairies... Maybe we're all being stripped away—

Choc 1: (*Sound of footsteps getting louder*) They're getting closer. Why are we all being 'stripped away'?

Choc 2: So that it just leaves the most important thing until last—

Choc 1: A baby? But—

Choc 2: Shush! They're coming. I wonder which of us it will be...?

CHOC 2 suddenly bursts out through the tinfoil at the back of the box. Sounds of excitement are heard off stage. Then the sounds die down. CHOC 1 is alone.

Choc 1: Hello? Hello? Is anyone there? (*Pause as CHOC 1 listens*) Oh no! The fairy has gone now! I've still no idea what's happening. And I've a horrible feeling... This time tomorrow, it'll be me!

* * * END * * *

If you've ever wondered what the wise men's camels discovered on their journey to Bethlehem, or how you can explain the Trinity using Jaffa Cakes, here's where you can find out.

This book contains 20 fun, fast and thought-provoking drama sketches designed to throw a fresh perspective on popular celebrations and delight audiences from 4 to 94 and beyond! In addition to all the major Christian festivals, there are sketches for Father's Day and New Year, Christian Aid Week and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Each sketch includes a brief introduction, Bible references and background information, sermon ideas and useful performance tips. Lasting no more than ten minutes each, they provide a wonderful way to dramatize the Christian year—and when you've reached the end you can simply go back to the beginning and start all over again!



Audiences will enjoy the wit and imagination of these 20 mini-dramas but will also have some food for thought... This is an excellent drama resource.

FROM THE FOREWORD BY PAUL BIRCH

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