

FIRST CHURCH OF CONVENIENCE

by Robert A. Allen



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First Church of Convenience

by ROBERT A. ALLEN

A series of satirical skits
on the modern-day church

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First Church of Convenience

Abel Boddy is shopping for a church and checks out the First Church of Convenience. A comedy skit with a stinger: Is church a place to serve or to be served?

CAST

Rev. I. M. D. Clerk

Abel Boddy

Ethyl Octane

PRODUCTION NOTES

First Church of Convenience takes place in what looks like a typical corner convenience store. A glass counter displays food and snack items. Upstage Center is a set of shelves with more food items as well as newspapers, magazines and video tapes. Boxes and cans should be labeled to represent all of the items purchased during the skit. These would include:

Canned sermons; sermon capsules in plastic containers; five video boxes; two microwave dinner boxes; carton of communion kits; compact disc.

Rev. Clerk and Abel Boddy should wear suits and ties. Ethyl Octane should be dressed in casual sportswear with a large hat to protect her from the sun at the beach. She should also carry a large shopping bag.

- 1 **SCENE:** The check-out counter of the First Church of Convenience,
2 a new concept in churching. Behind the counter is REV. CLERK,
3 the proprietor. At curtain, ABEL BODDY enters from left.
4
- 5 **CLERK:** Good morning. Welcome to the First Church of
6 Convenience.
- 7 **BODDY:** Thank you. A self-service church, huh?
- 8 **CLERK:** I'd say, "What can I do for you?", but around here we
9 like to say, "What can you do for yourself?"
- 10 **BODDY:** I like that. Creates a real positive self-image.
- 11 **CLERK:** We call it YO religion.
- 12 **BODDY:** YO religion?
- 13 **CLERK:** Right. Yourself first, others last. YO. If you say it a
14 couple of times it will come back to you.
- 15 **BODDY:** YO! YO! I see what you mean.
- 16 **CLERK:** Right now it's the biggest thing in the neighborhood.
17 Of course, like every other church it has its ups and
18 downs.
- 19 **BODDY:** How does it work?
- 20 **CLERK:** At your convenience. If it's not easy, it's not
21 convenient.
- 22 **BODDY:** Mind if I look around?
- 23 **CLERK:** Not at all. Be your guest. (*ABEL turns to the shelves*
24 *as ETHYL enters.*)
- 25 **ETHYL:** Rev. Clerk, it's so good to see you again. And I see we
26 have a visitor.
- 27 **CLERK:** Good morning, Ethyl. This is . . . I don't believe I
28 caught your name.
- 29 **BODDY:** Abel. Abel Boddy.
- 30 **ETHYL:** I'm Ethyl Octane. Are you finding everything all
31 right?
- 32 **BODDY:** Well . . .
- 33 **ETHYL:** I just stopped in to pick up one of those delightful
34 thirty-second devotionals. We're off to the lake again.
- 35 **BODDY:** Thirty-second devotionals?

- 1 **ETHYL:** Absolutely delightful. A hop to Mark, a skip to
 2 Luke, a jump to John and it's said and gone.
- 3 **BODDY:** Do you get anything out of them?
- 4 **ETHYL:** Of course! They're over before you can possibly go
 5 to sleep.
- 6 **CLERK:** Top shelf on the sermon aisle. They're the canned
 7 ones.
- 8 **ETHYL:** You might want to try the capsules too. They're so
 9 easy to swallow.
- 10 **BODDY:** Very convenient. How about Sunday school?
- 11 **CLERK:** On the video rack. We call it Intendo.
- 12 **BODDY:** Intendo?
- 13 **CLERK:** Interactive toys kids tend to do. Kids think they're
 14 toys. Parents "intendo" for them to learn.
- 15 **ETHYL:** I can't tear my kids away from church history. Why,
 16 yesterday, Elizabeth killed 57,000 Saracens and
 17 recaptured Jerusalem for Richard the Lionhearted.
- 18 **BODDY:** Sounds rather violent.
- 19 **CLERK:** We have videos for adults, too. The manager's special
 20 this week is a musical about prophecy and the
 21 reunification of Europe.
- 22 **BODDY:** That sounds exciting.
- 23 **CLERK:** It's called "Jamming Between the Toes of the Great
 24 Image."
- 25 **ETHYL:** It really digs into the Scripture. And besides, we
 26 needed *something* to replace those church business
 27 meetings. (*CLERK hands BODDY a videocassette.*)
- 28 **CLERK:** Then there's this one on how to build your own boat
 29 to the exact dimensions of Noah's. (*BODDY reads the box.*)
- 30 **BODDY:** "Creators of the Lost Ark." But what do you do with
 31 it after it's built?
- 32 **CLERK:** Use it during the last crusade.
- 33 **BODDY:** During the last crusade?
- 34 **CLERK:** Sure, for overflow seating. (*ETHYL hands BODDY a*
 35 *videocassette.*)

- 1 **ETHYL:** I like this one, myself.
- 2 **BODDY:** "Sin Flies in Thirty Days?"
- 3 **ETHYL:** It's a tape on spiritual exercise.
- 4 **BODDY:** This is all very convenient, but what about
- 5 fellowship?
- 6 **CLERK:** Fellowship?
- 7 **BODDY:** You know. Sunday school picnics, committee
- 8 meetings, potluck dinners . . .
- 9 **CLERK:** Right behind you. Frozen fellowship dinners. Just
- 10 pop them in the microwave.
- 11 **ETHYL:** Great variety, too. Everything from Instant Gossip
- 12 wrapped in a flaky shell of Prayer, to Roast Preacher,
- 13 burned to perfection.
- 14 **BODDY:** Wow, you folks really know how to make a fellow
- 15 feel at church.
- 16 **CLERK:** We do your best. Serve yourself and you'll never be
- 17 overlooked.
- 18 **ETHYL:** Well, I must be running. What do I owe you?
- 19 **CLERK:** Let's see . . . ten thirty-second devotionals at ten
- 20 dollars apiece would be exactly one hundred dollars.
- 21 **ETHYL:** Wonderful!
- 22 **BODDY:** One hundred dollars for three minutes of preaching?
- 23 Isn't that rather expensive?
- 24 **CLERK:** Not three minutes of preaching, Mr. Boddy. Three
- 25 minutes of convenient listening. You can't put a price tag
- 26 on convenience.
- 27 **BODDY:** But at my other church I never gave more than ten
- 28 dollars for a one-hour sermon.
- 29 **CLERK:** It's a paradox. The less you give, the more you get.
- 30 **ETHYL:** Exactly. Rev. Clerk has some One Second Sermons
- 31 too, but I can't afford those.
- 32 **CLERK:** Have a good day at the lake, Ethyl.
- 33 **ETHYL:** Thank you, Rev. Clerk. I feel so much better having
- 34 come to church first. (*ETHYL exits.*)
- 35 **BODDY:** Well, I think I'm ready to go, too. (*BODDY sets several*

1 *items on the counter.)*

2 **CLERK:** All right. Let's see what you have here. One bottle of
3 capsulized sermons, easy to swallow. A good choice.

4 **BODDY:** Thank you.

5 **CLERK:** One carton of "Do-It-Yourself Communion Kits. Type
6 N-A."

7 **BODDY:** Type N-A?

8 **CLERK:** Nonalcoholic. One compact disc of preludes and
9 postludes.

10 **BODDY:** Catchy title: "From Bach to Rock and Bach Again."

11 **CLERK:** Two frozen fellowship dinners.

12 **BODDY:** Single serving size.

13 **CLERK:** And a Sunday school video.

14 **BODDY:** "The Introvert: His Own Best Friend or How to
15 Counsel Yourself Out of Loneliness."

16 **CLERK:** Comes to a grand total of \$969.99.

17 **BODDY:** \$969.99?

18 **CLERK:** Right. Remember, around here it's what you don't
19 get that you pay for.

20 **BODDY:** Heavenly Express?

21 **CLERK:** Don't leave church without it. (*BODDY hands him a*
22 *credit card.*)

23 **BODDY:** Be your guest.

24 **CLERK:** It's not easy if it's not convenient. (*CLERK returns the*
25 *card and his statement.*)

26 **BODDY:** YO! (*BODDY turns to leave.*)

27 **CLERK:** YO!

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First Church of Trivia

Rev. Earnest Pursuit is the master of ceremonies on the weekly game show "First Church of Trivia." His contestants display a tremendous knowledge of trivia and absolute lack of knowledge concerning truth. A reminder for the church on just how important it is to pass the truth on to the next generation.

CAST

Rev. Earnest Pursuit

Sam Boddy

Ethyl Octane

PRODUCTION NOTES

First Church of Trivia takes place in a television studio. Rev. Pursuit stands behind a tall lectern at Center Stage with Sam Boddy on his right and Ethyl Octane on his left. The contestants also stand behind lecterns. Their first names, written in large letters, hang on the front of their lecterns. The center lectern is decorated with the words "First Church of Trivia."

Rev. Pursuit wears a bright shirt and tie with a red sportcoat and checkered slacks. Sam Boddy wears a gaudy sportcoat with a bow tie. Ethyl Octane is dressed in a pink floral outfit with several necklaces and bracelets as accessories.

Ask someone to play the piano for the theme music — something trivial like "Chopsticks."

- 1 **SCENE:** At curtain, all actors are in position and the theme music
 2 (something trivial like "Chopsticks") is playing.
 3
- 4 **PURSUIT:** Welcome to the First Church of Trivia. I am Rev.
 5 Earnest Pursuit and it is my privilege to welcome you
 6 today on behalf of the entire staff here on the ultimate
 7 church quiz game. We have two contestants in our studio
 8 today whom I would like you to meet at this time. First
 9 of all — Ethyl Octane! (*PURSUIT applauds.*)
- 10 **OCTANE:** That's right. (*She points at her name tag.*) Ethyl
 11 Octane. I'm a secretary at one of the major elementary
 12 schools here in town.
- 13 **PURSUIT:** That sounds like a noteworthy job.
- 14 **OCTANE:** May I say hello to someone?
- 15 **PURSUIT:** Certainly. If we get into our game too soon we'll
 16 have to give away more money.
- 17 **OCTANE:** Hello, Someone.
- 18 **PURSUIT:** And now let's welcome our second guest, Sam
 19 Boddy! (*PURSUIT applauds.*)
- 20 **BODDY:** Thank you, Rev. Pursuit. I'm with one of the major
 21 unemployment bureaus in this area.
- 22 **PURSUIT:** Wonderful. I bet unemployment really keeps you
 23 busy these days.
- 24 **BODDY:** It's a full-time job.
- 25 **PURSUIT:** Is there someone you would like to greet?
- 26 **BODDY:** I'd like to say hello to my second cousin, Abel Boddy;
 27 my great-aunt, Pheoble Boddy; my nephew, Wide Boddy
 28 and my maternal grandfather, Sir Boddy of Tradition.
- 29 **PURSUIT:** Is that everybody? (*A beat*) Then let's begin our
 30 game. Ethyl Octane and Sam Boddy have survived a
 31 rigorous screening process to become contestants on our
 32 show. They have consistently displayed the greatest
 33 knowledge of church facts and have defeated many
 34 others in order to become part of the First Church of
 35 Trivia. You are all familiar with the rules — so let the

1 **games begin.**

2 **SFX:** Theme Music: Something trivial like “Chopsticks.”

3 **PURSUIT:** *(Cont.) And now for our first question. Give the*

4 **average height of church pulpits in the state of Texas.**

5 *(For the questions that SAM or ETHYL knows the answer to both*

6 *should hit the lectern in front of them simultaneously.) Ethyl?*

7 **OCTANE:** Forty-eight and seven-sixteenths inches.

8 **PURSUIT:** Correct. The tallest pulpits of any state in the

9 **union. Here’s our next question. At what time on Sunday**

10 **evening does the church bell ring in Two Dot, Montana?**

11 *(Both respond.) Sam?*

12 **BODDY:** 8:07 p.m.

13 **PURSUIT:** Correct. To signal the start of the eight o’clock

14 **service. Next question. In the average church library,**

15 **how many books have been added since 1945? (Both**

16 *respond.) Sam?*

17 **BODDY:** One.

18 **PURSUIT:** I’m sorry. That is incorrect. Ethyl?

19 **OCTANE:** Two.

20 **PURSUIT:** You’re right. Mr. Boddy must have forgotten my

21 **book, *Pursuit of the Trivial Mind*, which was sent free to**

22 **every church library in the nation. That puts Ethyl**

23 **Octane in the lead, two to one. Here’s the next question.**

24 **Who is the central figure of all history? (There is a long**

25 *pause as both contestants think, but neither one hits the lectern.)*

26 **Time’s up! We don’t seem to know the answer to that**

27 **question. Here’s another one. In churches with a**

28 **membership over 173, what is the most popular color of**

29 **the pews? (Both respond.) Sam?**

30 **BODDY:** Mauve.

31 **PURSUIT:** Correct. We have a tie. Let’s get right on to our

32 **next question. Give the name and location of one**

33 **contemporary missionary. (No response.) Another tough**

34 **one. Well, let’s see how we do on the next one. What song**

35 **is sung more often in Sunday school than any other? (Both**

1 *respond.*) Ethyl?

2 **OCTANE:** "Happy Birthday to You."

3 **PURSUIT:** Exactly right. I think it is so uplifting to remember
4 that no matter what kind of day you are having, it is
5 somebody's birthday. Here's another question about
6 music. What was the last year in which a truly spiritual
7 song was written? *(Both respond.)* Ethyl?

8 **OCTANE:** 1748.

9 **PURSUIT:** Absolutely correct. That puts you in the lead,
10 four to two. Mr. Boddy, you're going to have to get the
11 answer to this next question if you don't want Miss
12 Octane to speed away from you. Here it is. Who was the
13 king of Israel who killed a lion and a bear with his bare
14 hands, faced Goliath with a slingshot, was known as the
15 "Sweet Singer of Israel" and wrote most of the Psalms?
16 *(No response. Finally BODDY brings his hand down hesitantly.)*
17 Sam?

18 **BODDY:** Was it Winston Churchill?

19 **PURSUIT:** Oh, Sam. That was so close. You just had the wrong
20 country. Better luck next time. Are you ready for the next
21 question? What is the average golf score for preachers who
22 have completed three or more years of seminary training?
23 *(Both respond.)* Sam?

24 **BODDY:** Sixty-eight.

25 **PURSUIT:** Correct. Just one stroke better than the average for
26 lawyers who have defended televangelists against the IRS.
27 That puts you back in this exciting race, Mr. Boddy, so let's
28 get right on with our next question. How many pennies
29 are given in missionary offerings during the course of a
30 year? *(Both respond.)* Sam?

31 **BODDY:** Fifty-nine million, nine hundred sixty-nine
32 thousand, seven hundred and two.

33 **PURSUIT:** And once again we are tied. That is exactly correct.
34 The Department of Commerce estimates that the church
35 is the leading institution in the country for keeping pennies

- 1 in circulation. Isn't this an exciting game?
- 2 **OCTANE:** Yes, exciting.
- 3 **BODDY:** I'm sure all my relatives are watching.
- 4 **PURSUIT:** Our contestants have proved just how knowledge-
 5 able they are in church facts. The answer to the next
 6 question is very important because it will determine the
 7 winner. We must remind our studio audience to be
 8 absolutely quiet in order to make this completely fair for
 9 our contestants. Are you ready for the final question?
- 10 **OCTANE:** Ready, Rev. Pursuit.
- 11 **BODDY:** All set. *(They both raise their hands in the air, ready to*
 12 *respond to the question.)*
- 13 **PURSUIT:** Name one of the twelve apostles. *(No response.)*
 14 Time's up. Let's try again. For the grand prize on today's
 15 show — name one of the major doctrines of the church.
 16 *(No response.)* Well, it seems the research team has gone
 17 out of its way to discover trivial questions for us. Let's
 18 try again. Name the missionary who was saved on the
 19 road to Damascus, took three great missionary journeys
 20 and wrote over half of the books of the New Testament.
 21 *(No response.)* No answers? Can't you just feel the tension
 22 building? Who will be our winner? Are you ready for
 23 another question? Name the village in Israel where Mary
 24 and Joseph were staying when Jesus was born,
 25 immortalized by the Christmas carol, "Oh, Little Town
 26 of . . ." *(No response. Finally OCTANE hits the lectern slowly.)*
 27 Ethyl Octane. A right answer here and you will be our
 28 new champion on First Church of Trivia.
- 29 **OCTANE:** Is it *(A beat)* Kalamazoo?
- 30 **PURSUIT:** Oh, so close! You must have mixed up Lake
 31 Michigan with the Dead Sea. Mr. Boddy, if you can answer
 32 the question correctly you will be our new champion.
 33 *(Long pause.)*
- 34 **BODDY:** Bethlehem?
- 35 **PURSUIT:** That's right! That's right! We have a champion.

1 **Sam Boddy is our new champion on First Church of**
2 **Trivia. What an exciting day this is. I can hardly contain**
3 **myself. Ethyl, thank you for being our guest today. You**
4 **put up a good fight.**

5 **OCTANE: Thank you, Rev. Pursuit. I have learned so much**
6 **from just being here.**

7 **PURSUIT: We know you were not our big winner, but we do**
8 **have a parting gift for you — my own thirty-six volume**
9 **encyclopedia of church trivia.**

10 **OCTANE: Thank you, Rev. Pursuit.**

11 **PURSUIT: Now, Sam, come up here and share a word with**
12 **our audience. (*BODDY comes to the lectern where PURSUIT***
13 ***is standing.*)**

14 **BODDY: This is absolutely the most exciting day of my life,**
15 **Rev. Pursuit.**

16 **PURSUIT: Well, it ought to be. The new champion of church**
17 **trivia. Tell us, how did you ever come up with the answer**
18 **to that final question?**

19 **BODDY: Well, it was a guess, really. I knew he had been born**
20 **in Pennsylvania, but I wasn't sure if it was in**
21 **Philadelphia or Bethlehem.**

22 **PURSUIT: And there you have it, folks. On the inside it's a**
23 **whole different story. Be sure to join us next Sunday**
24 **when two more contestants compete to become the**
25 **champion on First Church of Trivia.**

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First Church of Lethargy

Rev. I. B. Laidback is the pastor of the First Church of Lethargy. His congregation is so comfortable that even when their building catches fire, they simply pass a resolution to the effect that they are not going to let it disturb them. The lesson for the church is that it needs to respond to the very real dangers it is facing.

CAST

Rev. I. B. Laidback
Pheoble Boddy
Ben Faithful

PRODUCTION NOTES

First Church of Lethargy takes place on a church platform. Two rocking chairs are located at Center Stage.

Pheoble Boddy and Ben Faithful should wear Sunday clothes. Rev. Laidback should wear a suit. No other properties are necessary.

- 1 **SCENE:** At curtain, Pheoble Boddy and Ben Faithful sit in rocking
2 chairs awaiting the arrival of Rev. Laidback and the start of
3 the service.
4
- 5 **BODDY:** How long has it been, Ben?
6 **FAITHFUL:** How long has what been, Phoeble?
7 **BODDY:** How long has it been since we found this church?
8 **FAITHFUL:** I don't know. Does it matter?
9 **BODDY:** Exactly! *(A beat)* It's such a comfortable church.
10 **FAITHFUL:** Yes — a comfortable church.
11 **BODDY:** I can wait for the service to start.
12 **FAITHFUL:** Right! It will be long now.
13 **BODDY:** Wonderful. *(There is silence while BODDY and*
14 *FAITHFUL continue rocking.)*
15 **FAITHFUL:** Pheoble?
16 **BODDY:** Yes, Ben?
17 **FAITHFUL:** Did you read the newspaper this morning?
18 **BODDY:** I quit reading anything except the Good News
19 seventeen years ago.
20 **FAITHFUL:** Good for you. *(A beat)* There's been another
21 famine in Africa.
22 **BODDY:** How sad.
23 **FAITHFUL:** Over four million dead this time.
24 **BODDY:** May they rest in peace.
25 **FAITHFUL:** You're so right.
26 **BODDY:** It's probably the first peace most of them have ever
27 known. *(Silence, while both rock.)*
28 **FAITHFUL:** Another mugging in Central Park.
29 **BODDY:** What was that?
30 **FAITHFUL:** Another mugging in Central Park.
31 **BODDY:** Not that. That!
32 **FAITHFUL:** What?
33 **BODDY:** Listen! *(They rock and listen.)*
34 **FAITHFUL:** Are you squeaking again?
35 **BODDY:** So you hear it too. I have asked that sexton to oil

- 1 my rocking pew a hundred times.
- 2 **FAITHFUL:** Just can't get good help these days.
- 3 **BODDY:** Right! Not like the old days.
- 4 **FAITHFUL:** We knew what it was to work.
- 5 **BODDY:** Absolutely.
- 6 **FAITHFUL:** Not like those deadbeats out in front of the
- 7 church.
- 8 **BODDY:** Terrible, isn't it? Nothing better to do than walk a
- 9 picket line.
- 10 **FAITHFUL:** Nothin' better to do. *(They rock.)*
- 11 **BODDY:** What do they want, anyway?
- 12 **FAITHFUL:** Our building.
- 13 **BODDY:** For what?
- 14 **FAITHFUL:** They want to turn it into apartments.
- 15 **BODDY:** Apartments? Our church?
- 16 **FAITHFUL:** Forty-seven of them. For the homeless.
- 17 **BODDY:** But what about us? Me and you, Ben Faithful.
- 18 **FAITHFUL:** That's right. We have. All these years.
- 19 **BODDY:** Don't they care about us?
- 20 **FAITHFUL:** Nope. They don't think about a Pheoble Boddy.
- 21 **BODDY:** How sad. *(They rock.)*
- 22 **FAITHFUL:** Rev. Laidback won't let them do it.
- 23 **BODDY:** He'd better not. Apartments, indeed.
- 24 **FAITHFUL:** Why, it's unthinkable. Blasphemous, even.
- 25 **BODDY:** The church body would have no place to worship.
- 26 **FAITHFUL:** Neither would I.
- 27 **BODDY:** You been faithful, too.
- 28 **FAITHFUL:** It would be detrimental to the memory of all
- 29 those who have fallen asleep in the First Church of
- 30 Lethargy. *(The two rock while REV. LAIDBACK enters and*
- 31 *stands between the chairs.)*
- 32 **LAIDBACK:** Be watchful and strengthen the things which
- 33 remain . . .
- 34 **BODDY:** Amen.
- 35 **FAITHFUL:** Amen.

- 1 LAIDBACK: Which are ready to die.
 2 BODDY: Amen.
 3 FAITHFUL: Amen.
 4 LAIDBACK: The worship service of the First Church of
 5 Lethargy will now commence. (*BODDY and FAITHFUL*
 6 *rock, and there is a pause before they respond.*)
 7 BODDY: Amen.
 8 FAITHFUL: Amen.
 9 LAIDBACK: A funny thing happened on my way to the
 10 pulpit today.
 11 BODDY: Amen.
 12 FAITHFUL: Amen.
 13 LAIDBACK: I encountered a man coming into the church.
 14 BODDY: With a can of oil for my rocking pew, I trust.
 15 FAITHFUL: A visitor?
 16 BODDY: Probably one of those protestors.
 17 FAITHFUL: You didn't let him in, did you?
 18 LAIDBACK: He told me the church was on fire.
 19 FAITHFUL: On fire? Not this church.
 20 BODDY: The only fire around here is when we fire our
 21 sextons.
 22 LAIDBACK: He claimed that lives are in danger.
 23 FAITHFUL: An alarmist. (*BODDY and FAITHFUL rock while*
 24 *LAIDBACK falls asleep.*)
 25 BODDY: Did he happen to mention whose lives were in
 26 danger?
 27 LAIDBACK: Ours.
 28 FAITHFUL: That's interesting.
 29 BODDY: You don't say.
 30 LAIDBACK: He exhorted me to do something about it.
 31 FAITHFUL: Exhorted? I'd almost forgotten that word.
 32 (*BODDY and FAITHFUL rock. LAIDBACK falls asleep.*)
 33 BODDY: I suppose you should do something about it.
 34 FAITHFUL: I suppose we all should. (*BODDY and FAITHFUL*
 35 *rock while LAIDBACK slowly wakes up and thinks.*)

- 1 LAIDBACK: Well, what shall I do?
2 BODDY: You're the preacher.
3 FAITHFUL: That's what we hired you to know.
4 LAIDBACK: Well, should I warn you about the fire?
5 FAITHFUL: Oh, pastor, you wouldn't do that, would you?
6 BODDY: We're so comfortable.
7 FAITHFUL: I suppose there must be some less drastic action
8 to propose.
9 BODDY: Something to prepare us for the inevitable without
10 disturbing us.
11 FAITHFUL: Amen.
12 LAIDBACK: Could we pass a resolution or something?
13 FAITHFUL: There's a good democratic idea. (*They rock and*
14 *think.*)
15 BODDY: We could resolve that nothing be allowed to
16 disturb the sweetness of our spiritual worship.
17 FAITHFUL: Beautiful. Just beautiful.
18 LAIDBACK: An excellent choice of words. I couldn't have said
19 it better myself. All in favor say Amen.
20 BODDY: Amen.
21 FAITHFUL: Amen.
22 LAIDBACK: And now, let us continue our worship by standing
23 and singing, "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning."
24 FAITHFUL: Couldn't we just remain seated?
25 BODDY: And hum? It's so much more comfortable.
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First Church of Substance

Rev. I. M. Fuller presides over the continual feast at the First Church of Substance. As he "fattens his congregation for heaven," their attention is attracted only momentarily to a nearby table where people have no food at all. Choosing to ignore their neighbors, his members grow large at their banquet table. The lesson for the church is that the purpose of spiritual feasting ought to be spiritual work.

CAST

Rev. I. M. Fuller

Ernestina Ample

Wide Boddy

PRODUCTION NOTES

First Church of Substance takes place around an eight-foot table, covered with a white paper tablecloth. The actors sit far apart so they have to reach in order to pass items back and forth. Dishes, glasses, trays, bowls, cake pans and serving utensils cover the table, but all are empty. These are passed back and forth during the play and the actors must use them as if they were loaded with food items.

Rev. Fuller wears a black suit, white shirt and tie. Ernestina Ample is arrayed in a loose-fitting tent dress. Wide Boddy wears a suit, but has taken off the jacket and loosened his tie.

- 1 **SCENE:** At curtain, the actors are sitting at the table and chatting.
 2 They are at a church dinner featuring spiritual food.
 3
- 4 **FULLER:** How about another helping of this delicious
 5 Revelations Roast, Mrs. Ample? (*FULLER passes a large*
 6 *platter to AMPLE.*)
- 7 **AMPLE:** Thank you, Rev. Fuller. Never before have I seen
 8 such a delectable display of the Apocalypse.
- 9 **BODDY:** A veritable feast of Stuffed Prophecy.
- 10 **AMPLE:** I just relish the thought of sinking my teeth into
 11 that beast like a lion.
- 12 **FULLER:** The one like a calf is my favorite. The red meat of
 13 the Word.
- 14 **BODDY:** For me, the greatest delicacy ever served in the
 15 First Church of Substance is your Seven Seal Steak, Rev.
 16 Fuller.
- 17 **AMPLE:** Washed down with the contents of the seven vials,
 18 as only you can pour them. (*BODDY wipes his mouth.*)
- 19 **BODDY:** I can truly say that I have never gone hungry once
 20 since I found your church, Rev.
- 21 **FULLER:** Well, Mr. Boddy, we don't call it First Church of
 22 Substance for nothing, you know.
- 23 **AMPLE:** I, too, have grown tremendously.
- 24 **FULLER:** Greatly, Mrs. Ample. (*A beat*) I mean, that's great.
- 25 **BODDY:** It's been a veritable spiritual smorgasbord.
- 26 **FULLER:** Yes, we like to say, "Feast at our table and you'll
 27 get *Fuller* all the time."
- 28 **AMPLE:** Nowhere else have I observed so much meat on the
 29 dry bones of Ezekiel.
- 30 **FULLER:** Thank you. I was afraid I would have to offer
 31 spareribs that day.
- 32 **BODDY:** And the way you carved up Ham, Shem and
 33 Japheth.
- 34 **FULLER:** The secret there is to keep them in hot water until
 35 they "No - ah" better.

- 1 **AMPLE:** Oh, Rev. Fuller, such a turn of phrase. I just love
 2 what you do with the Old Testament. Look at this table.
 3 **Spicy Sayings from Solomon.**
- 4 **BODDY:** Sweet and Sour Kings.
- 5 **AMPLE:** Choice Cuts from the Church Fathers.
- 6 **FULLER:** I like to use that one just before business meetings.
- 7 **BODDY:** Fish a la First Peter.
- 8 **FULLER:** End of Pastoral Epistles.
- 9 **AMPLE:** Roasted to a "T". (*FULLER, AMPLE and BODDY sit*
 10 *back and sigh, rubbing their stomachs. Then they begin eating*
 11 *again.*)
- 12 **BODDY:** Pass that Fruit of the Spirit Salad over here, would
 13 you, Ernestina?
- 14 **AMPLE:** Certainly. I'll trade you for the Minor Prophet
 15 Goulash.
- 16 **FULLER:** Don't miss the Apocryphal Crab Meat. It tastes
 17 just like the real thing.
- 18 **BODDY:** Have you ever thought of televising our church
 19 dinners so that others can see what they are missing,
 20 Rev. Fuller?
- 21 **FULLER:** I've thought about it. But I'm just so busy preparing
 22 tasty truth and saucy substance that I don't have time
 23 to become the Galloping Gospel Gourmet.
- 24 **BODDY:** I guess it wouldn't really have to be television.
 25 There's a table right over there where the people don't
 26 have anything to eat.
- 27 **AMPLE:** Don't look at me. On Sunday, I get fuller on Fuller.
 28 Monday I attend a film series on "Living a Spiritually Fat
 29 Life in a Spiritually Skinny World." Tuesday is Waist-
 30 Watchers. We give prizes for the one who has grown the
 31 most spiritually during the previous week. Wednesday I
 32 return to church to "Fuller-up" again. Then Thursday,
 33 Friday and Saturday I sleep—to get ready for the
 34 Sunday feast here at First Church of Substance. When
 35 would I have time to feed anyone?

1 **FULLER:** You have a good point there, Mr. Boddy. It's a real
 2 shame that more people aren't here to enjoy this feast.
 3 But you could say it's their own fault for sitting at the
 4 wrong table.

5 **AMPLE:** It certainly is, Reverend. You can't blame yourself.
 6 Just the aroma should be enough to bring them in.

7 **FULLER:** I've always thought so. But maybe we do need to
 8 install fans so people all over town could smell us.

9 **BODDY:** I don't think that's necessary. I think they smell us
 10 already.

11 **AMPLE:** Isn't that wonderful? To think that we are known
 12 all over town by our aroma.

13 **BODDY:** But couldn't we at least offer them a doggie bag?

14 **FULLER:** Don't you remember the words of Christ? "It is not
 15 fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."
 16 (*Matt. 15:26, RSV*) I feel that it is my responsibility to feed
 17 you, Wide Boddy, and Ernestina Ample here. I like to
 18 think of my task as pastor of First Church of Substance
 19 as fattening you up for heaven.

20 **AMPLE:** What a succulent thought. Would you pass that bowl
 21 of Mashed Parables, please?

22 **FULLER:** Oh yes, and don't forget the Gospel Gravy. It's
 23 just full of bits and pieces of truth which are easy to
 24 digest.

25 **BODDY:** Well, I suppose you are right. It would be difficult to
 26 leave the table long enough to share with them. I might
 27 miss out on the Judge's Shish-ka-bob.

28 **FULLER:** That's a fiery series.

29 **BODDY:** Almost as hot as the one from Daniel on the Three
 30 Baked Hebrews.

31 **AMPLE:** Or the one from Acts where the Apostle Paul was
 32 grilled before King Agrippa.

33 **FULLER:** Don't forget the Sodom and Gomorrah Fricassee.

34 **BODDY:** Complete with a Lot of salt shakers.

35 **AMPLE:** Not to mention the desserts. A plate of Proverb Tarts.

1 **BODDY:** Some of them really sting.
2 **FULLER:** Or Mincemeat Malachi Pie.
3 **AMPLE:** Oh yes, I've never known anyone who can make
4 mincemeat out of Malachi like you can, Rev.
5 **BODDY:** Doctrinal Upside-down Cake.
6 **FULLER:** One of my specialties.
7 **BODDY:** You're right. There's so much to eat, I'm just going
8 to have to put all my energy into eating more.
9 **AMPLE:** Now there's a spiritual statement if I ever heard
10 one.
11 **FULLER:** Wonderful! Just wonderful! Have another glass of
12 milk, Wide. Like I always say, "Drink the milk of the
13 Word, it does a Boddy good!"
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