

FIRST CHURCH OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

by Robert A. Allen



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First Church of Political Correctness

by ROBERT A. ALLEN

More satirical sketches on church life

*All Scripture is taken from the **KING JAMES VERSION**.*

INTRODUCTION

The mobility of the American populace approaches historic proportions at the end of the twentieth century, and with that mobility comes the need for a church shopper's guide to the universe. No longer will it be common for a person to walk the same aisle on her wedding day which her mother and grandmother walked before her. Seldom will a person be baptized, married and buried in the same sanctuary. Instead there is a strong mathematical possibility that the average individual will attend 66.67 churches, more or less, over the course of a spiritual lifetime, provided they attend while on vacation, of course.

The following sketches, written as a follow-up to the *First Church of Convenience* collection, run about ten minutes each. Included with each sketch is an inciting question to focus the audience's attention on the theme so that they may apply the lesson to their own spiritual life. Individual production notes are also included.

These sketches are offered as a service to today's church shopper. At least after visiting these churches, you'll know where you *don't* want to attend. So have fun, and don't be discouraged. These churches don't really exist (as far as we know).

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First Church of Political Correctness

Do we change the Word of God to fit our culture or seek to influence our culture by means of the Word of God?

CAST

Dr. Miltie Cultural
Ms. Ivy League
Ms. Tempest T. Pott

PRODUCTION NOTES

The sermon oversight committee of the First Church of Political Correctness meets in the official boardroom. The three sit around a large conference table. The members are dressed in contemporary attire, bordering on the casual, but with a definite sense of style. These are people who identify with the downtrodden politically, but not materially.

Props needed include a pad of paper and pen for Miltie and three lists of politically correct sermon titles for Ivy.

- 1 IVY: I want to begin by thanking you for taking the time to
 2 meet with our committee today, Dr. Cultural.
- 3 MILTIE: My privilege, let me assure you.
- 4 TEMPEST: We've seen your schedule and know how busy
 5 you are, but I'm sure you'll agree that there is no issue in
 6 our day more important than political correctness.
- 7 MILTIE: Oh, absolutely. I couldn't agree more.
- 8 IVY: Of course, Dr. Cultural, we want it clear from the
 9 beginning that we are not trying in any way to hinder
 10 your freedom of speech.
- 11 TEMPEST: Or to tell you what you can and cannot say.
- 12 MILTIE: I understand and sympathize completely with your
 13 agenda.
- 14 IVY: That smokescreen about freedom of speech is just
 15 something those right-wing, neo-Nazi, ultra-fundamentalist,
 16 academic rabble rousers have invented to sway the minds
 17 of the non-thinking public.
- 18 TEMPEST: Absolutely. And they ought to be silenced, every
 19 one of them.
- 20 MILTIE: I understand and sympathize completely with . . .
- 21 IVY: *(Interrupting)* Actually, Dr. Cultural, Tempest and I feel
 22 you have made some real progress since our last visit with
 23 you.
- 24 TEMPEST: A few weeks ago when you spoke about Eglon,
 25 the king of Moab, who some Bible versions still refer to
 26 as a very fat man, you showed such sensitivity by calling
 27 him differently sized.
- 28 IVY: And the following week when you told that story about
 29 the Ephraimites who were discovered and killed because
 30 they couldn't pronounce the word Shibboleth? How
 31 refreshing it was to hear them described as speech-
 32 impaired.
- 33 MILTIE: Thank you. I have been trying to raise my sensitivity
 34 index.
- 35 IVY: But now to the present situation. We still have far to go

- 1 before we completely eliminate offensive language and
 2 replace it with the purity of politically correct speech.
- 3 **TEMPEST:** Until we silence the radicals and liberate
 4 everyone to enjoy the freedom of totally inoffensive and
 5 therefore totally free speech. Free because it liberates us
 6 from those false notions foisted upon us by the white male-
 7 dominated and Eurocentric society in which we have been
 8 raised.
- 9 **MILTIE:** I understand and sympathize completely . . .
- 10 **IVY:** (*Interrupting*) Now for our analysis of last Sunday's
 11 sermon: Samson and Delilah.
- 12 **TEMPEST:** First of all, Samson should not have been
 13 described as strong. He was strength-advantaged.
- 14 **IVY:** And Delilah was not beautiful. Beauty is an invention
 15 of males designed to divert women from constructive
 16 activity to a contemplation of exterior and transient
 17 qualities. Delilah was a Lookism Survivor.
- 18 **MILTIE:** (*Scribbling rapidly*) Lookism Survivor.
- 19 **TEMPEST:** Samson did not judge Israel during a period of
 20 peace. He presided over a temporary cessation of
 21 hostilities.
- 22 **MILTIE:** (*Scribbling*) . . . hostilities.
- 23 **IVY:** Samson definitely did not visit a harlot at Gaza. Such
 24 language is totally unacceptable when referring to women.
 25 He took advantage of a self-employed entrepreneur
 26 operating a small, independent business.
- 27 **TEMPEST:** And the way he teased Delilah when she
 28 questioned him about his strength? That was a clear case
 29 of verbal sexual harassment.
- 30 **MILTIE:** My, what insight that sheds upon a difficult passage.
 31 I had often wondered why such a story had even been
 32 inscripturated.
- 33 **IVY:** We're not finished. You know that incident about tying
 34 together the tails of foxes? They were not beasts, as you
 35 so insensitively described them. They were free-roaming

- 1 protectors of the ecosystem until Samson so wickedly
2 brutalized them.
- 3 **TEMPEST:** Do you even understand the point of this story,
4 Dr. Cultural?
- 5 **MILTIE:** Not anymore.
- 6 **TEMPEST:** The theme of this story is that a male-dominated
7 society, represented by Samson, must be bound and
8 fettered before the women and animal companions of this
9 world can ever gain true freedom.
- 10 **MILTIE:** I've never seen it that way before.
- 11 **IVY:** That's why we're here. Now, we have prepared a list of
12 politically correct sermon titles which we are certain a
13 person like yourself who is increasingly sensitive to
14 political correctness will want to use in the near future.
15 (*IVY hands one list to MILTIE, one to TEMPEST, and keeps*
16 *one for herself.*)
- 17 **MILTIE:** (*Reading from the list*) David and Goliath.
- 18 **TEMPEST:** (*Reading*) The Vertically Challenged Boy and the
19 Height-Advantaged Man.
- 20 **MILTIE:** The Queen of Sheba Visits King Solomon.
- 21 **IVY:** The Income-Advantaged Head of State Engages in
22 Cross-Cultural Communications with the Gifted and
23 Talented Head of State.
- 24 **MILTIE:** Peter on the Day of Pentecost.
- 25 **TEMPEST:** A Monoculturalist Challenged by Ethnic Lan-
26 guage Diversity.
- 27 **MILTIE:** Daniel in the Lion's Den.
- 28 **IVY:** A Displaced Person Experiences the Challenge of
29 Diverse Animal Companions.
- 30 **MILTIE:** Noah and Family Leave the Ark.
- 31 **IVY:** Greenism Survivors After the Destruction of the
32 Ecosystem.
- 33 **MILTIE:** Jesus Heals the Man Born Blind.
- 34 **TEMPEST:** Jesus Corrects the Physical Dysfunctioning of a
35 Person's Genetically Inherited Visual Impairment.

1 **MILTIE:** Very good! Excellent input. Those titles certainly
 2 capture in a succinct fashion the verbal profusity of
 3 political correctness. I will certainly try to address myself
 4 to all of them. Now, if I might share with you a portion of
 5 my upcoming message.

6 **TEMPEST:** Very well.

7 **IVY:** All set.

8 **MILTIE:** The His and Herstory of Adam and Eve.

9 **IVY:** Catchy title.

10 **MILTIE:** Thank you. Genesis 1:26-27 as translated for the
 11 politically correct. The Being who possesses charac-
 12 teristics of both motherhood and fatherhood and therefore
 13 should not be defined by gender description said, "Let us,
 14 after thoroughly considering the environmental impact of
 15 our actions, make personhood in our image of both
 16 motherhood and fatherhood, after our likeness which
 17 should not be defined by gender description, and ascribe
 18 to these personages ecological responsibility, requiring
 19 them to peacefully co-exist with all free-roaming denizens
 20 of the earth — their animal companions of the air, their
 21 domesticated co-workers of agriculture, and their
 22 orthopedically impaired friends who creep upon the
 23 earth."

24 **TEMPEST:** Very good! Very good! That was wonderful, Dr.
 25 Cultural.

26 **MILTIE:** But that was only the first verse. Here's verse twenty-
 27 seven. "So the Being who possesses characteristics of both
 28 motherhood and fatherhood and therefore should not be
 29 defined by gender description created personhood in his
 30 and her own image. In the image of the Being who
 31 possesses characteristics of both motherhood and
 32 fatherhood and therefore should not be defined by gender
 33 description created the Being personhood with the
 34 characteristics of both motherhood and fatherhood and
 35 therefore should not be defined by gender descriptions.

- 1 **Person and person created the being them."**
- 2 **IVY:** Delightful! Such eloquent prose. Dr. Cultural, you are
- 3 to be commended.
- 4 **TEMPEST:** What comes next?
- 5 **MILTIE:** Nothing. That's it.
- 6 **IVY:** You mean you haven't finished preparing the sermon
- 7 yet?
- 8 **MILTIE:** No, I mean that's all I will need.
- 9 **TEMPEST:** All you will need?
- 10 **MILTIE:** Sure. It's one of the very best things about political
- 11 correctness. It saves me all kinds of time. The language is
- 12 so filled with verbosity that by the time I finish the
- 13 Scripture reading, everyone will have fallen asleep. So I
- 14 will let them rest for about twenty minutes, say "Amen"
- 15 real loud, and send them home. I've tried it before, and
- 16 you wouldn't believe how many people tell me it's the best
- 17 service they've attended in years.
- 18 **TEMPEST:** But is that fair to your congregation? After all,
- 19 they're paying you to preach.
- 20 **MILTIE:** Actually, as little as most of them attend church,
- 21 they've been paying me not to preach for years. It really
- 22 doesn't seem to offend any of them.
- 23 **IVY:** I think it's wonderful. Politically correct silence. It
- 24 doesn't discriminate against the hearing impaired since
- 25 no one is listening.
- 26 **MILTIE:** It doesn't discriminate against the visually
- 27 handicapped since no one is looking.
- 28 **TEMPEST:** And it doesn't discriminate against the
- 29 educationally disadvantaged since no one is listening.
- 30 **IVY:** Dr. Cultural, you are a genius. Complete theological
- 31 equity. And to think that it happened right here in the
- 32 First Church of Political Correctness.
- 33
- 34
- 35

First Church of Contention

Do we go to church to provoke one another to love and good works or just to provoke one another?

CAST

Dr. Contra Bass

Miss Clara Net

Mr. Monty Cello

PRODUCTION NOTES

The worship committee of the First Church of Contention has met to discuss plans for future services.

The three members of the committee sit around a large table, as far apart from one another as the table will allow. Dr. Bass sits in the middle.

The men are dressed in suits. Miss Net wears a stylish dress with a large, flowered hat.

1 BASS: The duly-elected worship committee of the First
2 Church of Contention will come to order. Let's get right
3 down to business.

4 CELLO: Right! The business of worship.

5 NET: Oh, how exciting! Do you men know that this is the first
6 time I've ever served on a committee here at the church?
7 Well, except for the refreshment committee, which doesn't
8 really count because all of the ladies serve on the
9 refreshment committee — even Mrs. Applebutter, who
10 couldn't make a proper cup of decaffeinated coffee even
11 if her eternal destiny depended on it — which it doesn't,
12 of course.

13 BASS: First time on a committee?

14 CELLO: Never served before?

15 NET: That's right. I was nominated once for the sermon
16 oversight committee. My, wouldn't that have been
17 exciting. Imagine being on a committee in charge of
18 putting words into the pastor's mouth. But I wasn't elected.
19 Missed it by only one vote. My cousin Edgar was one of
20 the tellers and he told me. Of course, that's not why they
21 call them "tellers," but he did.

22 CELLO: What do you think, Dr. Bass?

23 BASS: It's obvious she must be told.

24 CELLO: And it's obviously up to us to tell her.

25 BASS: *(Clearing throat)* Miss Net.

26 NET: Oh, call me Clara. All my friends in the wind family do.

27 BASS: Very well. Miss Net, you must realize first of all the
28 committee creed of the Church of Contention.

29 NET: Oh, how thrilling. Alliteration makes me feel so
30 spiritual.

31 CELLO: This has been the creed of every committee at the
32 Church of Contention since the conception of the
33 congregation.

34 NET: Ooooooh! More Cs. How creative.

35 BASS: Here it is.

- 1 **BASS/CELLO:** *(In unison)* If we can't get ahead, at least we'll
2 get even. *(There is a long pause while BASS and CELLO look*
3 *at NET expectantly.)*
- 4 **CELLO:** Well?
- 5 **NET:** *(Confused as to what response is expected)* Well?
- 6 **BASS:** Are you willing to live by that creed? It's very
7 important, you know.
- 8 **NET:** But I'm not certain I understand it.
- 9 **CELLO:** Is that all? I thought maybe you had a serious
10 problem.
- 11 **BASS:** No one understands creeds. They just memorize them
12 if they want to impress their Sunday school teachers.
- 13 **NET:** Well, I guess I can live by it — if it's biblical.
- 14 **CELLO:** Of course it's biblical. Didn't Jude exhort us to
15 contend earnestly?
- 16 **BASS:** Absolutely! And Paul said to fight the good fight.
- 17 **CELLO:** There's nothing I like better than a good fight.
- 18 **NET:** I'm sure I never thought of it that way. So how do we
19 start? With a debate between the liberals and the
20 fundamentalists?
- 21 **BASS:** No, Miss Net. I'm afraid you still don't understand.
- 22 **NET:** Understand contention? I am a member of the church,
23 you know. How about a tag team wrestling match between
24 the creationists and the evolutionists? In this corner the
25 Rowdy Reverends — and in the far corner, the Ultimate
26 Biological Warrior and his Gorgeous Gorilla. That would
27 really draw a crowd.
- 28 **CELLO:** The purpose of this committee is not to draw a crowd.
- 29 **NET:** No, you're probably right. A good fight draws a crowd
30 to every place except a church.
- 31 **BASS:** The purpose of this committee is to elevate its members
32 to a place of preeminence. Preeminence is the true genius
33 of a contentious spirit.
- 34 **CELLO:** True genius. If we can't get ahead . . .
- 35 **BASS/CELLO:** *(In unison)* . . . at least we'll get even. *(The two*

1 *men give each other a high five.)*

2 **NET:** You mean I can use my position on this committee to
3 gain honor and prestige and distinction? A good name,
4 high repute, celebrity status, renown and illustriousness?
5 Are all the members of the worship committee exalted,
6 enshrined, preeminent and respected?

7 **CELLO:** Well, maybe not respected, but . . .

8 **BASS:** *(Interrupting)* Exactly! We are the self-appointed pillars
9 of the church.

10 **CELLO:** The trumpeters of our own perfection.

11 **BASS:** The lions of the congregational community.

12 **CELLO:** The choice and master spirits of the age.

13 **NET:** *(Getting into the spirit of self-aggrandizement)* We are the
14 blaze in the church's fading glory.

15 **BASS:** First fiddle in the orchestra of life.

16 **CELLO:** Time-honored.

17 **BASS:** Honorific.

18 **NET:** Notorious.

19 **CELLO:** Honorable.

20 **BASS:** Eminent.

21 **NET:** Proud. *(There is a long pause as the two men stare at NET.)*

22 **CELLO:** Oh, no, Miss Net. Not that!

23 **BASS:** Pride would be a fault, and in this business of
24 contending, it's death to admit to a fault.

25 **NET:** I'm sorry. I promise never again to be proud of what
26 we are doing.

27 **BASS:** Very good! Now, let's get to work. We need a song
28 leader for next Sunday morning. Last Sunday it was
29 Brother Lyric.

30 **NET:** Yes, and didn't he do such a good job?

31 **CELLO:** Too good! He's a hard man to get ahead of. I move
32 that we assign him the job of patrolling the lower parking
33 lot for cars whose owners have left their engines running
34 with the doors locked.

35 **BASS:** Right! And I'll lead the singing.

1 **NET:** But why?
 2 **BASS:** If we can't get ahead . . .
 3 **BASS/CELLO:** *(In unison)* . . . at least we'll get even.
 4 **BASS:** Next item of business: we need a soloist for Sunday.
 5 **CELLO:** I nominate Mumbles Monotone.
 6 **NET:** But Mumbles can't find middle "C" with a power speed
 7 boat.
 8 **BASS:** Perfect! He won't be hard to get ahead of the following
 9 week. I second the motion.
 10 **CELLO:** Passed! Now, we need someone to read Scripture. I
 11 think it's those verses about being contentious with such
 12 things as you have.
 13 **BASS:** No. This week it's the passage about learning in
 14 whatsoever state I am, therewith to be contentious.
 15 **NET:** If that's the case, I nominate both of you. You certainly
 16 qualify.
 17 **BASS/CELLO:** *(In unison)* I second my nomination.
 18 **NET:** Passed!
 19 **BASS:** But we can't both read Scripture.
 20 **CELLO:** No way. He reads faster than I do. He'll get ahead.
 21 I'll have to leave something out of the Scripture to get even.
 22 **NET:** That shouldn't be any problem for you.
 23 **BASS:** If we both read this week, we'll have to have another
 24 person join us next week to get ahead of this week's
 25 performance.
 26 **CELLO:** Right. And then another and another. Before you
 27 know it, the entire church will be reading the Scripture
 28 in unison.
 29 **NET:** In unison? What a terrible fate for the First Church of
 30 Contention.
 31 **BASS:** It could make a total mockery of our creed.
 32 **CELLO:** It could threaten our very credibility and contenders.
 33 **NET:** Then one of you must be willing to step aside and allow
 34 the other one to read Scripture this week. It's the only
 35 way to preserve the church. *(There is a long pause as the two*

1 *men gaze at each other, each reluctant to make the first move.)*

2 **BASS:** All right! I nominate Monty Cello to read Scripture.
3 I'll get ahead next week.

4 **CELLO:** Oh no you don't. I nominate Contra Bass. I'm not about
5 to do anything this week that you're just going to try to
6 top in the week to come. *(The following two lines are shouted*
7 *at the same time.)*

8 **BASS:** I second my nomination of Monty Cello.

9 **CELLO:** I second my nomination of Contra Bass. *(Both men*
10 *turn and look at NET, expecting her to break the tie.)*

11 **NET:** I wonder if there's still an opening on the diaper-
12 changing committee for the nursery. . . .

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First Church of Reminiscence

Are we eager for God to do a work in our church today, or are we content to simply repeat the memories of his past blessings?

CAST

Rev. Woodry Member

Sister Disry Member

Brother Ira Member

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play takes place in the main auditorium of the First Church of Reminiscence. Rev. Woodry Member is taping a broadcast of the yearly church testimony meeting. He sits in the center of a table with a microphone in front of him. Sister Disry Member and Brother Ira Member sit on either side of him. They should all speak with "old geezer" voices as they reminisce about "the good old days."

All three should wear out-of-date clothing (from the '40s or thereabouts.). Ira should have a hanky in his pocket.

For the theme music, ask a pianist to play an old-fashioned tune, such as "Precious Memories." This song may be found in the *Reader's Digest Songbook of Faith and Joy*, copyright © 1975 by Reader's Digest Association, Pleasantville, NY.

1 *(Theme music is played.)*
 2

3 **WOODRY:** A special welcome to all of you out there in
 4 radioland. This is Reverend Woodry Member coming to
 5 you from the beautiful auditorium of the First Church of
 6 Reminiscence, the church that has dedicated itself to
 7 perpetuating all that was good in Christendom. It is our
 8 heartfelt conviction that only the best should be the
 9 experience of the believer, and so we have chosen for you
 10 the best out of every age of the church.

11 Here at the First Church of Reminiscence, we sing
 12 only the hymns of Watts, Cowper, Tersteegen, Faber and
 13 Newton. Our hymnal doesn't even contain those new songs
 14 by the likes of Ira Sankey and Fanny Crosby. No, we praise
 15 God best by singing the old songs like "Not All the Blood
 16 of Beasts" and "Ephraim Repenting."

17 Here at the First Church of Reminiscence, we expect
 18 our members to wear only spiritual clothing. In order to
 19 help them make correct choices, we have settled on the
 20 1940s *(Or time of your choosing)* as the best period for style.
 21 Men looked like men and women looked — *(He glances at*
 22 *DISRY and clears throat)* well, anyway . . .

23 Here at the First Church of Reminiscence, we have
 24 retained the best in church architecture. White paint,
 25 brown wood and green carpet. No cranberry or chartreuse
 26 or mauve. No padding on our pews — they're hard like
 27 God intended them to be. Why, they're so hard you'll feel
 28 like you're under conviction before the sermon ever starts.

29 Here at the First Church of Reminiscence, we seek
 30 to provide the best in spiritual literature. You'll be happy
 31 to hear that there are only books in our church library —
 32 no cassettes or videos or comics. And we have chosen the
 33 best books. There are only five, but they're so good you'll
 34 want to read them over and over and over.

35 Welcome to the First Church of Reminiscence. We

1 hope you'll stay tuned for our exciting broadcast. By the
2 way, you won't find us on television. Radio is much more
3 spiritual. (*Theme music is played.*) We're glad to have you
4 with us today as we celebrate an anniversary. This is the
5 fiftieth edition of our annual testimony service. Once again
6 on today's broadcast, you will hear exciting testimonies
7 of what God has done in the lives of our members. We
8 have with us today Miss Disry Member. Say hello to our
9 listening audience, Disry.

10 DISRY: Thank you, Reverend Woodry. I've just been sitting
11 here envisioning that vast audience out there in radioland,
12 glued to their receivers by the sound of our dulcet tones.
13 What a thrill it is to waft over the airwaves the story
14 of what God is doing here at the First Church of
15 Reminiscence.

16 WOODRY: Thank you, Disry. We also have with us today Mr.
17 Ira Member. Ira, do you have a word of greeting for our
18 loyal listeners?

19 IRA: I certainly do, Reverend Woodry. Why, I remember the
20 very first time I was ever on the radio. My mother set me
21 up there to change my diaper. She didn't want to miss one
22 moment of the broadcast, and it really cut down on the
23 static and interference if something — or someone — was
24 sitting on top of the radio. Since that time, I've been on
25 the radio many times, though not in the same way, of
26 course. On the radio, but not on the radio, if you get what
27 I mean.

28 WOODRY: Thank you, Ira. And now that you've met our
29 special guests, let's get right into our program. Every year
30 at this time, we invite members of our church to meet with
31 us and share what we like to call "Great Moments in the
32 Life of the Church." We ask them to scan their memories
33 and cull their brains for those great events which prove
34 beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is at work in the
35 First Church of Reminiscence. Our first topic for today is

1 Sunday school. Disry, let's begin with you.

2 DISRY: Sunday school. Let's see. I believe it was in 1936. No,
3 1937. President Roosevelt was already into his second term
4 so it had to be '37. My uncle Able received his pin for 936
5 weeks of perfect attendance in Sunday school. When they
6 fastened his pin to the lapel of his jacket along with all
7 his other Sunday school awards, it was so heavy it jerked
8 his head forward and broke his neck. Made quite an
9 impression on me, I promise you.

10 WOODRY: I'm sure it did, Disry. I'm sure you've never
11 forgotten that memorable day in Sunday school. Ira, how
12 about you?

13 IRA: In 1830 they were going to scrap "Old Ironsides." Now
14 I can't say I actually remember the year, but I remember
15 the pennies we collected to preserve her. Made a line from
16 the front door of the building all the way to the county
17 courthouse. That was our goal, to get to the county
18 courthouse. Of course, that was before the courthouse
19 moved to its present location. In fact, it was before the
20 church moved into the suburbs. I guess it would seem
21 rather impossible to lay a line of pennies from the present
22 location to the county courthouse. But it seemed rather
23 impossible for us back then, too. Those were tough years
24 for everyone.

25 WOODRY: Isn't it wonderful how even in the tough times we
26 remember the things we do for others? And now we move
27 right on to our next topic: outreach. Ira, let's begin with
28 you on this one.

29 IRA: Well, I remember the time a temperance evangelist came
30 to town. Greatest revival this community has ever seen.
31 Split the town right down the middle between the wets
32 and the dries. When the dries won the election, they closed
33 down every booze joint inside the city limits. The sheriff
34 hauled all the bottles in town down to the Mississippi and
35 dumped them while we rallied in the tabernacle and sang

1 **“Shall We Gather at the River.”**

2 **WOODRY:** Heady stuff, these memories. Disry, how about
3 you?

4 **DISRY:** The theme of outreach brings back to me one of the
5 most touching memories from my many years as a member
6 of First Church of Reminiscence. Thirty-six years ago, in
7 response to a message preached right here in this
8 auditorium, I enclosed a Gospel tract in a letter I sent to
9 my long-lost brother in Australia. Five years later, I
10 received a letter in return from his wife. We didn't even
11 know he had married. She said the tract had arrived just
12 before he died and had been a great comfort to him in his
13 time of need.

14 **WOODRY:** How exciting to know that God could use even a
15 simple tract in such a powerful way.

16 **DISRY:** Isn't it? I've really never gotten over the thrill of it. I
17 could tell that story every day and never get over the thrill
18 of receiving that letter from a woman I didn't even know,
19 only to discover that my brother had married her and had
20 died with my letter in his hand. It was a miracle.

21 **WOODRY:** Which brings us to our next topic: miracles. What
22 is the greatest miracle you've experienced? Disry?

23 **DISRY:** Besides the one I've just shared with you? Well, it
24 would have to be the time God answered our prayer for
25 the end of World War I.

26 **WOODRY:** Your prayers resulted in the end of the war?

27 **DISRY:** Well, we've never taken total credit for it of course,
28 but during the first week of November in 1918, my sister
29 Emmy prayed at the dinner table that her older brother
30 Ezra, the one who later moved to Australia and became
31 our long-lost brother until my letter found him on his
32 deathbed, could be back in time for her eleventh birthday
33 which was coming up in April of 1919. And on the eleventh
34 of November, the armistice was signed. Now if that's not
35 an answer to prayer, I don't know what is.

1 WOODRY: Amazing. Ira, can you top that one?

2 IRA: I could have.

3 WOODRY: What do you mean, you could have?

4 IRA: This is one sad story. Sixty-seven years ago, I
 5 experienced the greatest blessing a man could ever have.
 6 It was so wonderful, so miraculous, so life-changing, that
 7 I sat down immediately and wrote it out so I would never
 8 forget it. Then I put it into a safety deposit box at the bank.
 9 Twelve years later the bank building burned to the
 10 ground, taking my blessing with it. I just know I'll never
 11 again have another blessing like that one. (*Wipes tear from*
 12 *eye.*)

13 WOODRY: I'm so happy you shared that story with us, Ira.
 14 It may be that somewhere, someone else has experienced
 15 a similar loss, and their burden rests just a little lighter
 16 today knowing they are not alone in their grief. If that is
 17 the case, please write us here at the First Church of
 18 Reminiscence. Your cards and letters are what keep us
 19 on the air — not to mention the money you enclose. Just
 20 write to Reverend Woodry Member, First Church of
 21 Reminiscence, Number 10, Memory Lane, Deja Vu,
 22 Louisiana. And now for our final memories of the day.
 23 Disry, please tell us about your most recent memory of
 24 God's work in our church.

25 DISRY: Recent?

26 WOODRY: You know. Something within this half of the
 27 century, perhaps. Something to assure our younger
 28 listeners that God can meet their needs in the same
 29 dramatic fashion in which he has met the needs of you
 30 and Ira.

31 DISRY: Well, it wasn't really in this half of the century, but
 32 it was 1949. Is that close enough?

33 WOODRY: 1949? Perfect. Absolutely wonderful. What
 34 happened in 1949?

35 DISRY: Well, that was the year my cousin Mabel went to the

1 mission field. The only young person from this church ever
2 to go to a foreign field. The reason I remember that is
3 because Mabel is retiring this year and coming home. I
4 had almost forgotten her, it's been so long, but it will be
5 so wonderful to see her again. I'm sure she'll really be
6 excited to rejoin our fellowship here.

7 WOODRY: I'm sure she will. It will be a real thrill for her to
8 realize that she has been remembered after all these years.
9 What was the name of the field where she served?

10 DISRY: You can't expect me to remember everything. It was
11 difficult enough just to remember 1949.

12 WOODRY: Right you are. I guess we can ask her that after
13 she gets back. I'm sure she'll be glad to tell us. Ira, how
14 about you? What qualifies as your most recent memory?

15 IRA: Well, I expect that would be 1967.

16 WOODRY: 1967?

17 IRA: That's right. One Sunday morning in 1967 I walked into
18 church and someone was sitting in my pew. I always sit
19 on the end of the last row of pews on the organ side, you
20 know.

21 WOODRY: You certainly do. That's how I know you're there.

22 IRA: Well, this particular Sunday morning there was someone
23 sitting in my pew, so I knew he was a visitor.

24 WOODRY: We had a visitor in 1967? Why didn't someone tell
25 me?

26 IRA: Well, it turned out it was a mistake. He was looking for
27 the mortuary and our church was so dead he thought he
28 had found it.

29 WOODRY: So what did you do?

30 IRA: Well, I just said, "Maybe we are a little stiff at times, but
31 we really believe worship to be a grave matter, and if you
32 want to join us for what remains of the service, we'll wake
33 you when it's over." But he left and I never saw him again.

34 DISRY: Did he say whose funeral he was attending?

35 IRA: As a matter of fact, he did. He said it was God's, but I

1 didn't believe him.

2 **DISRY:** Of course not. Why, our memories have just
3 demonstrated that God is still alive.

4 **WOODRY:** Well, folks. This brings us to the close of another
5 broadcast service from the First Church of Reminiscence.
6 Please join us next week for another exciting service from
7 the church dedicated to preserving all that was good in
8 Christendom. *(Theme music is played.)*

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First Church of Fortune

Do we view the Christian life as a gamble, or do we really place our trust in a God of design?

CAST

Rev. Win D. Raffle

Havanna Luck

Hap Hazard

Ida Riskit

Voice of Fate

PRODUCTION NOTES

First Church of Fortune looks like a television game show set. Reverend Raffle stands to one side behind a lectern directing questions to Hap and Ida, who also stand behind lecterns high enough for them to write on easily. Havanna stands beside a large easel on the same side of the stage as Reverend Raffle.

Reverend Raffle wears a suit. Havanna wears a glitzy gown. (If a teen-age girl is playing this part, she could wear a prom dress.) Hap and Ida wear brightly colored, stylish clothes and name tags.

The response cards should be prepared ahead of time so that they are easy to read. The actual writing of the responses will be pantomimed by the actors. The Voice of Fate should be performed from an Off-stage microphone.

1 **FATE:** Welcome to America's most-watched church service,
 2 **First Church of Fortune.** Today our contestants, chosen
 3 at random from our studio audience, will once again
 4 compete for thousands of years of good luck and fortune.
 5 And now — please welcome the host and hostess of First
 6 Church of Fortune — Reverend Win D. Raffle and
 7 Havanna Luck. (*HAP and IDA applaud.*)
 8 **RAFFLE:** Thank you! Thank you!
 9 **HAVANNA:** Thank you!
 10 **RAFFLE:** Welcome to America's most-watched church
 11 service . . .
 12 **FATE:** I just said that.
 13 **RAFFLE:** Right! And now let's meet our contestants. From
 14 Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, please welcome Hap
 15 Hazard. (*Applause*) Hap comes to our program today by
 16 the luck of the draw. We ran into him at a cartoonists
 17 convention.
 18 **HAP:** That's right, Reverend Raffle. I feel so fortunate to be
 19 here. Why I'd rather be here in church than in the most
 20 comfortable hospital in town.
 21 **RAFFLE:** And from Last Chance Gulch, Montana — welcome
 22 Ida Riskit. (*Applause*) Just by chance we ran into Ida on
 23 Interstate 90.
 24 **IDA:** A fortuitous accident, wasn't it? I'm so happy to have
 25 come to church unintentionally today.
 26 **RAFFLE:** The rules here on First Church of Fortune are very
 27 simple. I will announce a prize, and then each of you will
 28 write your wager on a card from the stack in front of you.
 29 As you know, we have programmed into our computer a
 30 random sampling of answers provided by the rest of our
 31 studio audience. If your card matches the card Havanna
 32 turns over — the prize is yours. Now you both know how
 33 to play church, so shall we begin?
 34 **IDA:** I'm ready to chance it, Reverend Raffle.
 35 **HAP:** Venture forth!

- 1 **HAVANNA:** Good luck!
- 2 **RAFFLE:** And now, with our first prize of the day, the Voice
3 of Fate.
- 4 **FATE:** Thank you, Reverend Raffle. Our first item up for bids
5 today is one entire year of freedom from earthquakes. This
6 prize not available to residents of California. (*HAP and*
7 *IDA pantomime writing answers.*)
- 8 **RAFFLE:** There you have it. Freedom from earthquakes. Now
9 what do you think the members of our audience were
10 willing to wager to gain that prize? I see that both of our
11 contestants have completed their answers. Ida, let's begin
12 with you.
- 13 **IDA:** (*Turning card over*) Well, my insurance policy calls
14 earthquakes an act of God, so I put "Trust in God."
- 15 **RAFFLE:** A good answer. Hap?
- 16 **HAP:** (*Turning card over*) Well, I took a clue from that statement
17 about California, so I put "Location."
- 18 **RAFFLE:** Very good! Trust in God or trust in our location.
19 For freedom from earthquakes — what did our studio
20 audience say?
- 21 **HAVANNA:** (*Turning card around*) Trust in God!
- 22 **RAFFLE:** Ida Riskit wins our first round. Ida, tell us,
23 whatever compelled you to put "Trust in God"?
- 24 **IDA:** Pure speculation, Reverend Raffle. I took a risk on
25 "Trust in God" and it paid off.
- 26 **RAFFLE:** Well that's certainly something to think about. Let's
27 move right on and discover what's at stake in our next
28 prize.
- 29 **FATE:** The next prize in today's lottery — ten years of
30 protection from debilitating disease. (*HAP and IDA*
31 *pantomime writing answers.*)
- 32 **RAFFLE:** An awesome prize. What will our contestants risk
33 on protection from disease? Hap, it's your turn to go first.
- 34 **HAP:** (*Turning card over*) This was an easy one. There's only
35 one solution to the problem of health care in this country.

1 I put "Broccoli."

2 RAFFLE: A good answer. Ida?

3 IDA: (*Turning card over*) Well, I didn't have room to write it all
4 down, but I went with the "Three I Don'ts."

5 RAFFLE: The Three I Don'ts?

6 IDA: Right! I don't smoke and I don't chew and I don't go
7 with the guys that do.

8 RAFFLE: A good formula for protection from disease.
9 Havanna, let's see how our studio audience responded. Is
10 it "Broccoli" or the "Three I Don'ts"?

11 HAVANNA: (*Turning card over*) They said "Broccoli."

12 RAFFLE: Broccoli it is. The latest medical studies show that
13 a young person can eat broccoli every day and still grow
14 up to be the President of the United States. Our game is
15 tied, so let's move right on to the next exciting prize.

16 FATE: Very well, Reverend Raffle. Our next prize on First
17 Church of Fortune is twenty years of happy family life.
18 (*HAP and IDA pantomime writing answers.*)

19 RAFFLE: Can you believe these prizes? Why, some people
20 would kill for a happy family. Ida, is your answer ready?

21 IDA: (*Turning card over*) Absolutely. I put "Winning the
22 Lottery."

23 RAFFLE: A very appropriate answer. I can see you're
24 hedging your bets, just hoping our audience will agree
25 that money brings happiness. Hap?

26 HAP: (*Turning card over*) I put "Winning the Lottery."

27 RAFFLE: What a coincidence. What is the theory of
28 probabilities on this happening three times in a row?
29 Havanna, what did our studio audience say?

30 HAVANNA: (*Turning card over*) Winning the Lottery.

31 RAFFLE: It's a sweep. Everyone is willing to risk their family
32 happiness on winning the lottery. I guess that means
33 there's one chance in 55 million of a family having twenty
34 years of happiness. Well, we're still tied, so let's hear about
35 our next prize.

1 **FATE:** For our next winner on today's program, we have a
 2 very special prize. An all-expenses-paid trip to the Super
 3 Bowl, *plus prior knowledge of who will win.* (*HAP and IDA*
 4 *pantomime writing answers.*)

5 **RAFFLE:** Just think of that. The Voice of Fate is offering you
 6 a chance to be involved in the greatest Sunday event in
 7 modern history: betting on the Super Bowl. Hap, are you
 8 ready?

9 **HAP:** I certainly am. Football has always been my favorite
 10 Sunday activity. And prior knowledge? Why, I can clean
 11 up with the Las Vegas bookmakers — and give a large gift
 12 to the church, of course. I'd be willing to risk just about
 13 anything for that prize. (*Turning card over*) I put
 14 "Anything."

15 **RAFFLE:** "Anything." I knew we came up with a great prize
 16 this time. Ida, what did you write down?

17 **IDA:** Well, I've never cared much for football, although it does
 18 make Sunday a day of rest. My husband turns on the game
 19 and promptly falls asleep. But he would love this prize.
 20 (*Turns card over.*) So I put "Everything."

21 **RAFFLE:** "Anything" and "Everything." To break a tie and
 22 determine the winner on today's show — Havanna, what
 23 did our studio audience say they would risk on a trip to
 24 the Super Bowl?

25 **HAVANNA:** (*Turning card over*) "Almost Everything."

26 **RAFFLE:** Ohh! Too bad! Apparently the members of our
 27 audience didn't place quite the same value on this prize
 28 as our contestants. Well, we had a little bad luck on that
 29 round, but sometimes if it weren't for bad luck you'd have
 30 no luck at all, right? But don't feel bad. There's always
 31 more to be won here at First Church of Fortune. Fate,
 32 what's our next prize?

33 **FATE:** Well, Reverend Raffle, we have one prize remaining.
 34 This is the winner-takes-all sweepstakes prize, so listen
 35 closely. The winner of this prize will experience weariness

- 1 and pain, hunger and thirst, sorrow and suffering and
2 perils in the city. His own people will consider him a fool.
3 He will suffer the loss of all things, including life itself,
4 but through it all he will possess a calm assurance that
5 God is in control. He will know peace. (*HAP and IDA*
6 *pantomime writing answers.*)
- 7 **RAFFLE:** This is it, folks. The greatest prize ever offered at
8 the First Church of Fortune: peace in the midst of the
9 storm. And as luck would have it, it's a toss-up between
10 Hap Hazard and Ida Riskit. Hap, I see that you're ready
11 to go.
- 12 **HAP:** Well, to tell you the truth, Reverend Raffle, I'm not
13 willing to risk very much on this prize. It just seems to me
14 like a leap in the dark. But I did come up with an answer.
15 (*Turns card over.*) I think most people would be willing to
16 risk "One Hour" a week for peace with God.
- 17 **RAFFLE:** "One Hour" a week. If you are right, Hap, you are
18 our grand-prize winner for today. But first let's see what
19 Ida has risked.
- 20 **IDA:** Basically I'm with Hap. I'd venture to say there aren't
21 many who would go for the odds offered in that prize. I
22 really wouldn't want to risk anything at all, but I did come
23 up with an answer. (*Turns card over.*) I put "Grace."
- 24 **RAFFLE:** "One Hour" and "Grace." Havanna, let's see what
25 our audience was willing to risk on suffering and sorrow
26 with the peace of God.
- 27 **HAVANNA:** (*Turning card over*) They said "Grace."
- 28 **RAFFLE:** "Grace" it is. Ida Riskit, "Grace" has won you peace
29 with God. Tell us, how did you come up with that winning
30 answer?
- 31 **IDA:** Well, like I said, I didn't think people would risk very
32 much, what with the sorrow and suffering included. But
33 I figured they would at least be willing to risk praying
34 before meals. So I put "Grace."
- 35 **RAFFLE:** Thank you, Ida. And congratulations.



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