

A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing

By

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DEDICATION

This play is dedicated to my wife Susan, who always reads my plays and laughs, even though she thinks my sense of humor is childish.

STORY OF THE PLAY

A small church is eagerly awaiting the arrival of Will B. Goode, their new pastor. But Will is more interested in finding out what type of church he inherited than in making a good impression. Will switches place with a local homeless man so he can observe how the church treats strangers. What follow is a hilarious mix of mistaken identity, secret identity, and past secrets revealed as one church comes to learn not to judge a book by its cover.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Originally performed in 2006 by the Hawkins United Methodist Church in Vicksburg, MS. The play was done in a dinner theater format and raised about \$3,000 dollars for the annual Mexico Mission Trip.

The original cast included:

Narrator ... Candi Sikes
William B. Goode ... Bob Ford
Ernest Lee Soused ... Greg Gibson
Steve Crabtree ... Raymond Pierrer
Estelle Pitchford ... Dianne Gibson
Maxine Gophertree ... Debbie Tate
Marion Downs ... Delane Killgore
Barbara Pitchford ... Jennifer Tate
Juliette Johnson ... Holly Ford
Bob Johnson ... Mac Montgomery

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CAST

(5 m, 4 w, 1 optional flexible role)

WILLIAM B. GOODE: The new pastor.

ERNEST LEE SOUSED: A homeless guy with a secret.

STEVE CRABTREE: Music director.

ESTELLE PITCHFORD: Wealthy widow.

MAXINE GOPHERTREE: Elderly youth director.

MARION DOWNS: Head of programs.

BARBARA PITCHFORD: Estelle's daughter.

JULIETTE JOHNSON: Friend of Barbara.

BOB JOHNSON: Preschool steering committee member.

NARRATOR: Can be played by a separate actor, or doubled with any of the roles except William, Ernest, and Estelle.

SETTING

Time is current day, outside and inside a church in the town of Pottersville. Outside there is a door up center with church name painted on the glass, and some plants/shrubs on either side of the door. Inside the church reception/fellowship hall we can see the sign on the door glass is switched so it is backwards. The shrubs are removed and a small table of refreshments is on one side. There are some potted plants and pictures on the wall as well as decorations for the reception.

Scene 1

(NARRATOR enters and starts fussing with the buffet table, gradually noticing the crowd and turning to address them.)

NARRATOR: Oh, hi there. You must be here to meet the new pastor. You're a bit early; he should be here in a few minutes. I'm just finishing up some details on the spread here. Everything has to be perfect; new pastor coming and all.

I hope this new pastor works out. You know, we've had some trouble in the past; they never seem to stay long; they either leave or we have to make them leave. You just can't get good help these days.

It seems like only yesterday the last pastor came in here. Now that was a reception! I don't mean it was fancy or anything, just the usual food and decorations. But it was very different. It's hard to explain why, but it was something unexpected for everyone involved.

Yes, it seems like only yesterday he walked in here. He sure didn't know what he was getting into. And of course, we didn't know either.

(Glancing at the buffet.) Oh, what happened to the toothpicks? I thought we put them out. Well, I'll go get them while you watch the show. *(Exits.)*

(AT RISE: WILLIAM B. GOODE, the new pastor, enters with a suitcase. He looks around, then goes up to the door and tries it but it won't open. He then looks at his watch, sighs and sits down front center on his suitcase. A few seconds later there is a rustling of the shrubs and a moaning. Concerned, WILLIAM picks up his suitcase and goes over to the bushes where a MAN, obviously waking from an overnight binge, rolls out.)

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WILL: Sir...? Sir, can I help you? Are you okay? (*Looks around nervously.*) Can I get you a doctor or something? Are you hurt? (*Running back and forth on the edge of the stage.*) Help! Help! Is there a doctor in the house? Anyone, help.

ERNEST: (*Sitting up.*) What's all the racket? Can't a man sleep?

WILL: (*Kneeling by ERNEST.*) Are you okay? I thought you were hurt.

ERNEST: (*Looking the PREACHER over.*) You a doctor?

WILL: No...I'm the new pastor here. William Goode. When I saw you there I thought you were, uh, you know...

ERNEST: (*Staggering to his feet.*) I know, I know. You thought I was beggin'. Well, you don't have to throw me out, I know the way.

WILL: Oh, no. You've got me wrong. I'm not throwing you out. Sleep in the bushes all you like, I don't care.

ERNEST: Thought you said you was the parson here.

WILL: Pastor. But I don't mind you sleeping in the bushes. But...as soon as I get settled here, would you like me to find you a bed, or maybe a couch to sleep on?

ERNEST: That's right friendly of you. Mr. Glad.

WILL: That's Goode.

ERNEST: I think it's good too. Just said so.

WILL: No, no, the name is Goode. William Goode. And your name?

ERNEST: I'm Soused.

WILL: Well, sir, I'm not here to judge you, though drinking to excess is a serious problem that must--

ERNEST: No, my name is Soused. Ernest Soused. But most folks call me Lee, that's my middle name.

WILL: Earnest Lee Soused?

ERNEST: Yeah. (*Looking up.*) Sorta fits, don't it?

WILL: When was your last meal Mr. Soused?

ERNEST: Oh, I dunno. What day is it?

WILL: As soon as the church office opens in an hour, I'm gonna get in there and get you a meal, okay?

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ERNEST: You know, I been lyin' here lots of weekends. And usually on Mondays someone throws me out. This is the first time someone offered me a meal.

WILL: Sir, you are my neighbor. It's the least I can do.

ERNEST: (*Looking WILL over closely, trying to recognize him.*) My neighbor? You the guy that lives in that dumpster behind the Big Lots?

WILL: No, no, no...what I mean is, we're all neighbors. Like in the story of the Samaritan.

ERNEST: Sam who?

WILL: The Samaritan who found a man injured and helped him. He didn't help him because he knew him or was a friend of his, but because he needed help.

ERNEST: Hey, if you're the pastor here how come you don't have a key? Don't they trust you?

WILL: I just arrived in town today. They've never even seen me.

ERNEST: Well, they've seen me. I hope they treat you better. There's one guy who steps on my hand to wake me up. "This is a house of God," he says, "not a flop house." Then there's that old lady...

WILL: What does she do?

ERNEST: She just goes tsk, tsk, tsk and points her nose in the air. It's kinda insultin'.

WILL: I'm sorry to hear they are like that to strangers in need.

ERNEST: Oh, I wouldn't worry none if'n I were you. They'll treat you pretty good, seein's how you're the new pastor, all dressed up and all.

WILL: But that's the problem. You shouldn't judge people by appearances. You should remember that we're all brothers...

ERNEST: Thought you said we were neighbors?

WILL: Same thing...we're supposed to look out for one another, not judge. I mean, how do they know what I'm like? They've never met me. And yet they're planning a big reception, probably with lots of food and stuff. Just because the district assigned me; but they don't know anything about me. How do they know what I'm really like?

End of Freeview

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