

Holy Humor Sunday  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8  
July 16, 2023 – Center Harbor Congregational Church, UCC  
Rev. Dr. Cathryn Turrentine

To everything there is a season – a time to weep and a time to laugh. Today is a time to laugh. A lot of churches have Holy Humor services, often on the Sunday after Easter, so we are not the first to try to figure out whether the pastor can do stand-up comedy. I imagine this will either be really funny because the jokes you submitted are so good, or it will be funny because I will turn out to be so bad at telling them. So, let's begin with a classic!

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A priest, a pastor and a rabbi walk into a bar and soon begin arguing over who's the best at what they do. Eventually they decide to have a contest. They will each go out alone into the woods and convert a bear to their own religion.

About a month later, they meet up at the bar and the priest announces, "I found a bear by the river and started telling him about the Eucharist and all the saints. I enticed him with incense and beautiful music. He liked it so much that he now comes to mass every week!"

The pastor says, "Well, I saw a bear in the clearing. I started reading him the Bible and singing songs of praise with him. He loved it so much that he is going to be baptized in our church this Sunday."

The priest and the pastor turn to the rabbi, who has a broken arm, a fractured collarbone, and several cuts and bruises. The rabbi says, "You know what, looking back... maybe I shouldn't have started off with circumcision!" ...

*[Ask me sometime why that particular joke is theologically interesting.]*

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But have you ever wondered what God's first name is? I heard it was Andy. You know, "Andy walks with me Andy talks with me..."

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You know, I like Old Testament humor. For instance, do you think Noah really brought two termites on the Ark? What was he thinking? ...

And the Bible says Noah lived for 950 years. How does that work? Do you go through a series of mid-life crises, or just the big one at 400? ...

And what do you say to someone who is 950 years old, anyway? "Noah, you look great! You don't look a day over 800!"

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But I like New Testament humor, too, of course. Here's another classic: What would have happened if it had been three Wise Women at the manger instead of three Wise Men? They would have

- arrived on time,
- helped deliver the baby,
- cleaned the stable, and
- brought a casserole.

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Can you imagine what it was like to raise Jesus? I mean, we already know that he drove his parents a little crazy when he was 12, when he stayed behind in Jerusalem to argue with the elders in the Temple instead of walking home with the crowd. But can you imagine what it was like for Mary to find a note from him a few

years later? "Hey Mom, not to worry. I'm going out to the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. I'll see you in 40 days."

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But the greatest source of jokes is really us, the church. We're a pretty funny crowd. For instance,

How many Christians does it take to change a lightbulb? It depends on the denomination:

If they are Charismatics – It only takes 1, their hands are already in the air.

How many Presbyterians does it take? – None – the lights will go on and off at predestined times.

How many Baptists does it take? – 5 – One to change the lightbulb, plus 2 to bring casseroles, and 2 to make dessert.

What about Unitarian Universalists - We choose not to make a statement either in favor of or against the need for a light bulb. However, if in your own journey you have found that light bulbs work for you, you are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your personal relationship with your light bulb, and present it next month at our annual light bulb Sunday service, in which we will explore a number of light bulb traditions, all of which are valid paths to illumination.

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The other day, a man came to see me in my office – not a member of the church, but someone from the community. He said that he lived alone with only a

pet dog for company. The dog had died, and he came to ask if I would do a funeral for his pet.

I said, "I'm so sorry for your loss! Sadly, we cannot have services for an animal in the church. But there is another church in town, and I have no idea what they believe. Maybe they'll do something for your pet."

The man said, "I'll go right away, Pastor. Do you think that \$5,000 is enough to donate to them for the service?"

I said immediately, "Goodness gracious! Why didn't you tell me your dog was a Congregationalist?"

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There was another UCC church whose building was badly in need of paint, but they couldn't afford to have the job done professionally, so the pastor decided just to do it himself. But all he had was one bucket of paint! So, he got a bunch of buckets and some water, and he thinned the paint until it was enough to cover the entire church. Then he spent all day painting. That night it rained – HARD! – and washed off all the paint.

The pastor was really discouraged and he cried out. "Why, God? Why did you let it rain and wash off all the paint?" From heaven came a booming voice, "Repaint! Repaint, and thin no more!"

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Sometimes churches find financial opportunities in unexpected places. One day an IRS agent called the church and asked the pastor, "Do you know Tim Brown?" "I do," the pastor replied.

"Is he a member of your congregation?" "Yes, he is."

Then the IRS agent asked, "Did Mr. Brown donate \$10,000 to your church?"  
After only a short pause, the pastor said, "Well, he will!"

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I never thought I would see a Bible Study joke, but Don Edwards sent one:  
Two guys were walking out of Bible Study one Sunday. "You know," said one, "I'm glad I'm getting to understand the Bible better. I always thought Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife!" "To be honest," his friend replied, "I thought the epistles were the wives of the apostles."

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We pastors are always good for a laugh. One pastor had sanitary hot-air driers installed in the restrooms in the church. The next month, however, he asked to have them removed. "Why?" asked one of the parishioners? "I liked them." The pastor responded, "I liked them, too, but last week someone put a sign above the hot-air drier in the men's room that said, 'For a sample of this week's sermon, push the button.'"

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In another church, a little boy told the pastor: "When I grow up, I'm going to give you some money."

"Well, thank you," the pastor replied. "But why?"

The boy said, "Because my daddy says you're one of the poorest preachers we've ever had."

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Let's end with this: Two pastors are in a car crash, and it's a bad one. Both of their cars are demolished, but amazingly neither one of them is hurt. After they

crawl out of their cars, the one says, "So, you're a pastor. That's interesting. I am, too. Wow, just look at our cars! There's nothing left, but we're unhurt. This must be a sign from God that we should meet and be friends." ...

The other pastor replies, "Oh yes, I agree. It's a miracle that we survived and are here together." ...

"And here's another miracle," says the first pastor. "My car is destroyed, but this bottle of wine didn't break. Surely God wants us to drink the wine and celebrate our good fortune," he said, handing the bottle to his new friend. ...

The other pastor nods in agreement, opens the bottle, drinks half of it, and hands it back to his friend, who puts the cap back on. "Aren't you going to have any?" asked the pastor. ...

"Not right now," he said. "I think I'll wait till the police have finished their report."

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There is a season for everything. A time to weep, but also a time to laugh. For joy and laughter, we give thanks to God. Amen