Funny Bone finds a home: A musical featuring the Body of Christ

This play is a teaching tool and examines the concepts of unity and disunity in the Body of Christ. Based on 1 Corinthians 12:12–27, the play contains characters the body parts mentioned by Paul in his instruction on the need for honouring different ministries and functions in the church. Combining humour and song, the play follows in the steps of ancient medieval allegories and illustrates a biblical teaching in a contemporary way.

**Introduction**

1 Corinthians 12:12–27, a text about the Body of Christ, teaches biblical principles through humour. An appropriate response is laughter. Actually, humour may well be a fundamental theme in both testaments. By making characters of the body parts, this play takes Paul literally and carries on his use of imagination. Funny Bone herself is an imaginary character and takes her name from the recognised body part located at the end of the elbow.

This play approaches 1 Corinthians with a light touch, for after all, the letter is addressed to a congregation Paul loves. The musical employs imagination, a God-given gift, for the text (whether read or heard) invites readers and hearers to engage it and to participate in it.

I come to the biblical text from the reformed tradition. My heritage is the Presbyterian Church, a denomination that combines trained, learned preaching from the clergy and active congregational involvement. Preaching in the presbyterian tradition emphasises both order in worship and liberty within worship. It acknowledges the ability and need of the congregation to participate in the service. My training is that of a biblical scholar for a classroom rather than as a preacher for a pulpit ministry. I serve the academy and church by teaching. I write and publish plays, because I find my students learn by doing and memorising. As a biblical scholar, I seek to present thoroughly researched plays based on sections of Scripture in thoroughly engaging ways.

This is my fifth such

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1. Funny Bone is a Christian drama containing humour and music. 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 contains humour because of its incongruities (see Arbuckle 2008:2). Edyeven (1970:18–19) writes that Christian drama presents ideas like human responsibility, Christ’s centrality, confession, forgiveness, fellowship and hope.

2. See Arbuckle 2008:19. Iverson (2011) believes that, whilst we laugh at Jesus’ disciples who forgot to take bread on the boat even though they had witnessed a miraculous feeding of four thousand (Mk 8:1–21) and clearly the joke is on them, ‘we end up laughing at ourselves as well’.

3. Theology contains sacred experiences that are ‘accessible to the contemporary heart and mind’ (Wells 2004:35–36). I agree with McNabb and Mabry (1990:22) who state that a Bible teacher’s job is to present the text in an understandable way. Funny Bone follows Loader’s (2007:xa) lead in pausing to reflect on the 1 Corinthians 12 text with imagination whilst remaining within its parameters.


5. Brueggemann (2005b:21) argues that preaching can provide an ‘alternative imagination’; Funny Bone certainly does that.


7. John Chryostom outlined principles for preaching, including being straightforward, biblical and down to earth (see Stott 1982:20–21). Funny Bone employs allegory and is a straightforward teaching tool.

8. The book of common worship (1946vi) notes that ‘the Presbyterian Church has always emphasised its liberty and has left its ministers free as to the form and order of worship’. A suggestion is to have the passage taught in a traditional sermon during the morning worship and then explained in Funny Bone that evening. A minister could open the service by reading 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 and thereby introduce the play.

9. The book of common worship (1946vi) notes that people in congregations want a more active participation in Christian worship, ‘which was the custom in the Early Church and is the heritage of the Protestant Reformation’.

10. In this, I follow Stott (1982:180) who notes that there is a freshness and vitality about every sermon borne of study.
play; four others have been published by academic journals (Branch 2004:4(1), 57–69; 2010b:44(1), 229–258; 2013a:47(1); 2013b:47(1). I like and employ Brueggemann’s (2005a:51) insight that a musical like Funny Bone can serve as a teaching tool to ‘summon and nurture an alternative community with alternative identity, vision, and vocation, preoccupied with praise and obedience toward the God we Christians know fully in Jesus of Nazareth’ (italics Brueggemann’s). The church at Corinth is an alternative community.

This musical uses the standard elements of a play.11 It also employs a literary methodology and a canonical perspective in examining 1 Corinthians.12 Funny Bone differs from a drama or tragedy in the sense that, as a comedy, it intends that reversals, errors and our all-too-human ‘booboo’ produce, not calamity, but prosperity and happiness.13 I wrote Funny Bone with a smile to show our common human foibles with kindness. I also wrote it with a sense of adventure, because studies indicate that people today do not trust the old church modes.14

The Christian classic The Humor of Christ (Trueblood 1964) strongly influences my teaching, thinking, Bible reading and playwriting. Trueblood (ibid:15) believes that we fail to see not only the wit and humour of Jesus, but also his expectation that we should laugh. I see Paul’s writings like this passage from 1 Corinthians in this vein. We are intended to laugh at the absurdity of nonchalantly not needing a hand (1 Cor 12:21). Arguably, Jesus and Paul could not have influenced people without being enjoyable to be around. Humour as well as sound teaching draws people together. With this in mind, I encourage my students to laugh at a literal interpretation of a big old camel squeezing itself through an itsy-bitsy needle (Mt 19:24), the absurdity of a homeowner putting a lamp under a bed (Mk 4:21),15 and the bumbling suitor who means well when he likens his sweetheart’s hair to a flock of goats (Can 6:5). Similarly, Paul’s skilful analogy of body parts combines good teaching with humour; it makes me laugh. My musical puts Paul’s teaching on stage.16Whilst writing this play, I took seriously Trueblood’s (ibid:32) observation that ‘any alleged Christianity which fails to express itself in gaiety, at some point, is clearly spurious’. Throughout this play’s research, writing and productions, I prayed that it would serve as a teaching tool for the academy and church to strengthen all concerned in their union with Christ and to engage them in ministry.17

Setting the stage

Characters

Head, Foot, Ear, Nose, Unpresentable Parts, Hand, Eye, Heart, Piano Player, and Funny Bone.

With the exception of the last three, these are recognised members18 of the Body of Christ, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27.19 Heart is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:5. The funny bone is a body part located on the end of the elbow and is associated with mirth and laughter.20 Foot and Head are probably played by men and Unpresentable Parts and Heart by women.21 Eye may bring oversized eyeglass and Hand may wave a gigantic mitt.

Costumes

The characters wear T-shirts with their names across the front, or they dress in a contemporary fashion. If the latter, Head probably wears a business suit or a fashionable golf outfit. Foot is in sandals. Unpresentable Parts is in layered tank tops, leggings and a short skirt. Funny Bone can be a bit outlandish with a wild tie, khakis, suspenders and a hat if played by a man, or a fun, long skirt, big belt, sandals and bright top with long sleeves if played by a woman. If T-shirts are chosen, individuality comes from the undershirts, caps, shoes or sandals, skirts, pants and wigs the characters may then include.22 Eye may bring oversized eyeglass and Hand may wave a gigantic mitt.

Set

The setting is a nice but fairly bare room.23 The stage has an assortment of comfortable chairs. A bar table with bar stools is downstream right in front of a piano. A sofa with pillows is upstage, centre stage. Houseplants decorate throughout. A rug is centre stage — this is where the huddles take place. A box of tissues is on an end table. The setting could well be the front altar area of a church, for an altar area usually

11. A play’s standard elements include plot, character, dialogue, setting, staging and theme. The musical acknowledges symbolism, irony and repetition as well as teaching and writing tools (DiVanni 2008:920–935).

12. Hill and Walton (2000:575) note that a literary analysis focuses on character development and features like the use of motifs, vocabulary, syntax and literary elements. It excludes avenues like historical and archaeological background. I view the text in its final canonical form, its composite whole, and consider it Scripture (Hill & Walton ibid:575).


15. Armbuckle (2008:33–34) provides a helpful list of humour as a teaching method Jesus employed, which includes this and other insights, like a parent giving his child a stone instead of bread (Mt 7:9).

16. I agree with Scott’s (1982:9) belief that good preaching is essential to the healthy growth of a healthy church, and I add that good teaching is essential too. Scott (ibid:138) mentions a difficulty preachers face: the rift between the biblical and modern world. I wrote Funny Bone as a way of putting Paul’s teaching, which I hold to be inspired, in a contemporary setting. As a teacher, I know that songs help my students memorise. So I included songs as another teaching tool. A good sermon has variety; so does a good musical.


18. ‘Our bodies have members’, writes Dever (2011:94). Membership is basic to human communities. The character Funny Bone served her apprenticeship as a volunteer with the established members of the Body of Christ.

19. All Scripture verses are from the New International Version, with the exception of Proverbs 17:22 which is the King James Version. In this 1 Corinthians passage, Paul ‘takes in the totality of the individual members, refers to the body, and demonstrates its basic unity’, Kistemaker (2002:429) writes. Smalley (1968:431) adds that 1 Corinthians 12 covers spiritual gifts ‘not in isolation but in relation to the church as the body of Christ’.


21. Funny Bone, with its cast of allegorical characters, continues a tradition of Christian drama that includes the Dorothy Sayers’ radio play The man born to be king (Brown 2008:174).

22. An actor recreates the author’s character with gestures, tone, pauses and costumes [see Von Balthasar 1988:284]. In Funny Bone, each character at times stars, leads and commands centre stage.

23. A minimal stage allows the writer to verbalise a scene (see Fitzale 1988:39). Nine people and a piano crowd the stage; furniture should be of good quality, sturdy and in levels, like a bar table and two high chairs.
contains levels that permit effective staging.\textsuperscript{24} The characters enter through an aisle in the audience.\textsuperscript{25}

Atmosphere

There’s general good will and busy talk amongst the members of the Body of Christ as they enter.\textsuperscript{26} They 	extit{ad lib} at will.\textsuperscript{27} Heart carries a nicely wrapped package which she puts on an end table on stage. Funny Bone nods and smiles, but doesn’t take part in the banter.\textsuperscript{28} Everybody smiles frequently.\textsuperscript{29} Until reprimanded, Nose does pick his nose!

Opening scene

\begin{table}[!h]
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\hline
Unpresentable Parts: & \textit{How are you, Foot?}\textsuperscript{30} \\
\hline
Foot: & \textit{Great! I’m glad to see you again, Unpresentable Parts.}\textsuperscript{31} \\
\hline
Hand: & \textit{Give me five, Foot! [They slap hands.]}\textsuperscript{32} \\
\hline
Ear: & \textit{I’ve heard good reports about you, Nose.}\textsuperscript{33} \\
\hline
Eye: & \textit{Thanks, Ear! It’s so good to see everybody again.} \textsuperscript{34}I’m looking forward to hear what’s been happening to my friends in the Body of Christ. \\
\hline
Head: & \textit{Right! We haven’t had a meeting for a long, long time!} \\
\hline
Eye: & \textit{We need to get together! I’ve missed seeing each of you!}\textsuperscript{35} \\
\hline
Heart: & \textit{Eye, what have you been doing? What’s the Lord doing through you?} \\
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\end{tabular}
\caption{Unpresentable Parts:}
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I agree with Long (2001:44) who views a worship service as a play performed in a kind of community theatre, with God as the audience and the worshipers as actors.\textsuperscript{24} Long (2001:43–44) acknowledges the controversies surrounding dramas’ role in worship. Worship is not a spectacle (Long ibid,44), but inherently a participatory event with willing and joyful assemblers. Good teaching, like good preaching, seeks to honour and engage the audience, and combine ideals and reality (see Stott 1982:10, 29).

26.Von Balteshar (1988:343) writes that ‘dramatic action is possible and meaningful only within a given situation’ and setting. Funny Bone follows Brueggemann’s (2005b:19) view that the audience ‘interprets the text in the here and now of the members’ lives; the text does not operate in a vacuum’.

27.The play permits ad libbing. Through improvisation, actors may put themselves into the story (see Anderson 2006:15).

28.Funny Bone follows this idea presented by Bolte and McCusker (1993:5–6): A play provides a snapshot on an issue and is a good teaching tool for youths and adults.

29.Smiles increase one’s ‘face value’ (see Swindoll 1991:17). I agree with McNabb and Mabry (1990:21) who see the Bible not only as a positive book, but also as containing lots of fun.

30.Paul affirms that congregation members are equal, wanted and needed (see Kistemaker 2002-440).

31.Funny Bone may also be considered a bibliodrama. A bibliodrama begins with the ability to read the text creatively and to see that ‘the text is given a voice and answers me back’, Pitzele (1998:26, 28) writes.

32.Drama concentrates on actions, but comedy directs attention to gestures (Bergson 1924-143).

33.McNabb and Mabry (1990:21) maintain that the Bible needs to be seen not as a tool that keeps people from having fun, but as a way of discovering in community ‘the greatest news ever heard’.


35.Head, Ear and Heart’s evangelism stories indicate pride in themselves more so than joy in spreading the Gospel message. Bailey (2011:344–345) outlines several aspects of Paul’s view of evangelism in 1 Corinthians 12:22–24: evangelism involves personal relationships, needs a long-term commitment and must be motivated by love.

36.Loader (2007:70) invites readers to imagine Paul as he wrote the letter’s drafts that included attacks on idolatry and hypocrisy, and also the self-righteous pride that Eye introduces here.

37.Hand presents not only a theatrical moment, but also a theological truth based on experience. Vanhoozer (2005:79–80) sees several benefits to ‘knowing God theatrically’, including reinvigorating ‘our anemic imaginations’ and seeing the ordinariness of daily life as a window for God’s intervention.

38.Eslinger (2005:175) writes that most first-person stories in a sermon do not serve their intended purposes of demonstrating solidarity with the congregation or making a point immediately.

39.Baby states that he has been used so greatly by the Lord, that he can’t tell you the places. He brought the Gospel to a mountain valley at 10 000 feet. I can’t tell you the country, because it is officially closed to the Gospel. But I was faithful to give the Good News to all, including the poor.

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Conflict is expressed as rudeness and confrontation. Conflict, a significant aspect of life, is often seen as a healthy way to resolve differences and strengthen relationships. Aristotle in *Poetics* (335–322 BC) defines drama as a form of art that can provide instruction and moral instruction through the representation of actions. Laughter and imagination form tools for training a congregation in the faith (see *Stonehouse 1998:158*). Laughter and imagination can help us to look out at the world through the window of biblical faith (italics Anderson’s). Traffic congestion and the pace of life can be disruptive and stressful, but laughter can help us to find joy in the midst of these challenges.

**Foot**

Foot and the others resent Head for misusing his gifts of leadership and influence. Foot gets up and goes over to the bar stool.

**Head**

[Laughing.] Yes, the back door! Thank you, Funny Bone! Well, it’s time for the meeting to come to order. Find your places, Body of Christ. As usual, I’ll take charge.

**Foot**

Why is it always you? Why can’t someone else preside?

**Head**

[A bit nasty.] Like you, for instance! You step all over people! Like Heart? A softie in community decisions?

[Head and Foot glare at Head. Head looks sad, and Foot looks mad.]

**Head**

No, no. I’m the best choice. I’m always chosen.

[The other members of the Body of Christ do not look pleased. They scatter around the stage. Funny Bone stands by a bar stool.]

**Head**

[Very business-like.] Yes. Yes. Well, let’s get going. I have a golf game to go to! Evangelism on the golf course, you know. Yes. Yes. [Looking at Funny Bone.] Well, this meeting has been called because of you, Funny Bone. Funny Bone wrote to me asking for time to talk to all of us.

**Hand**

Welcome to you, Funny Bone.

**Ear**

We’re glad you’re here. You always make us laugh with your jokes.

**Unpresentable Parts**

Yes, she does! But they’re always nice jokes! Do you have one right now? We seem to have some ruffled feathers and need a little diversion!

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46. Laughter makes a person human. Aristotle in *Poetics* defined man as ‘a rational animal capable of laughter’ – suggesting that man is the only animal who does laugh (Welsh 1967:95).

47. Arbuckle (2008:8–9, 23) says negative laughter includes irony which is saying one thing and meaning another, mockery and scoffing, and calls (ibid:9) caricature ‘risky’ and urges caution when using it. Satire criticizes, sarcasm expresses ridicule, and parody impersonates with exaggeration (Arbuckle ibid:10–13). On the positive side, wit makes subtle plays on words and humour serves as a ‘lubricant’ for social situations and enables people to learn concepts in a successful way (Arbuckle ibid:13, 16).

48. Von Balthasar (1988:436) writes that ‘laughter is as much a part of life as weeping’.

49. Foot and the others resent Head for misusing his gifts of leadership and organisation, and for overlooking others’ gifts. Wells (2004:36) comments that the unwritten patriarchal social experience of the winners, the men in charge, has ‘inhibited women’s freedom, experience, voices, ministries, lives’.

50. Conflict is expressed as rudeness and confrontation. Conflict, a significant literary tool drawn from the plot and the central idea, occurs when competing or opposing forces collide (Lostzacco & Willerson 2008:19). Reading canonically, conflict appears throughout the New Testament. Consider Jesus’ conflict with the chief priests and elders over authority (Mt 21:23–27), Saul’s conflict with the early church (Ac 9:1–2) and divisions in Corinth regarding whom to follow (1 Cor 1:10–17).


52. The audience will laugh frequently throughout the play. It is well-known that the fuller the theatre, the more the laughter (Bergson 1924:6–7).

53. Arbuckle (2008:iii, 40) argues that humour pervades the Bible because of God’s pursuing and forgiving love ofickle humanity.


55. Multi-faceted laughter can be an act of reflection, occur spontaneously, comment on something in a tit-for-tat fashion, and/or punish recognisable human failings (Bergson 1924:197–198).

56. Laughter has many helpful by-products. Cousins (1979:86–87) used laughter to combat an illness and was ‘convinced that creativity, the will to live, hope, faith, and love have biochemical significance and contribute strongly to healing and to well-being’. Laughter and imagination form tools for training a congregation in the faith (see Stonehouse 1998:136).

57. Funny Bone’s request forms the central idea of the drama. Lostzacco and Willerson (2008:1) say that a story’s central idea ‘reveals the author’s point of view on some aspect of life’.

58. The characters’ reaction is consistent with Scripture, for Paul’s use of the human body and its comparison with Christ is a surprise. One expects Paul to compare the human body and the church (Kistemaker 2002:429).

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63. Throughout *Funny Bone*, keep in mind what Wells (2004:61) calls a ‘creative fidelity’ to the text.
Unpresentable Parts: Funny Bone, I'll tell you right now that I want you to be recognised!

Funny Bone: Thank you so much, Unpresentable Parts!

[Funny Bone bows and Unpresentable Parts curtsy.

Song: Sung by Funny Bone
Tune: ‘Home on the range’

Oh, give me a home in the Body of Christ
For I am Funny Bone
I'll make you laugh with my silly gaffes
For chuckles add years to your life.

I am Funny Bone
Stick with me and you'll be tickled!
For smiles and mirth make you many friends
And get you out of a pickle!

All: [Clapping enthusiastically.] Thank you! Well sung! [Funny Bone laughs with them and bows.]

Head: You state your case well, Funny Bone. Now, let us introduce ourselves to you and tell you about our roles in the Body of Christ. The apostle Paul likened the church to a human body with various parts. Paul named each of us here in 1 Corinthians 12 and elsewhere. Our job descriptions are based on Scripture. After we tell you about ourselves, you can see if you really want to join us, and we'll discuss it if you really do fit in.

Funny Bone: Great! I'll listen with much interest.

64. Draper (2011:98) defines formal membership as a commitment of Christians in the name of God to one another.
65. The tune to ‘Home on the range’ is in the public domain; see Robert McEwen, Esq (2009).
66. Berryman (1999:358) comments that laughter is a legitimate use of power in religious education. As a teacher, I find that my students learn more when smiling.
67. Funny Bone makes laughter a habit. The Orthodox Church believes Easter should be a day of laughter and hilarity, for it showcases God's triumph and sets it aside as such (Copenhaver 2007:15, 17).
68. Copenhagen (2007:17) correctly writes that comedy is closer to the deep springs of the Christian religion than is tragedy.
69. Funny Bone is intended to be sung and enjoyed (see Murfin & Ray 1997:286).
70. Welsh (1967:102) finds 250 biblical references to laughter and varieties thereof in the biblical text.
71. Stevenson-Moessner (2008:20) writes that in the 21st century there is a wider acceptance of new and different culture voices, like, for example Funny Bone's.
72. Great theatre means that the actor experiences a kind of self-forgetting. The actor becomes so absorbed in what he or she says that the hows and whys of the performance recede (Childers 1998:96).
73. Theology can be studied as a range of sacred experiences 'accessible to the contemporary heart and mind' (Wells 2004:35–36). Funny Bone looks at Paul’s theology and arguments in 1 Corinthians 12 with honour, honesty and humour. Church tradition includes such open discussion (see Ac. 15).
74. In 1 Corinthians 12:21 Paul turns to personification. Those who view themselves as superior see themselves as being able to get along without others (see Fee 1987:612).
75. Jesus identifies himself completely with the church; see Acts 9:4 (Kistemaker 2002:429).
76. Using their imagination and knowledge of Jesus, Rice and Yaconelli (1987:7) posit that the Master may have used skits especially to illustrate parables.

[Funny Bone walks stage right. During the singing, Funny Bone walks naturally all over the stage. Gradually, Funny Bone’s face becomes more and more concerned. Throughout the play she actively listens.]

Ear: [Sarcastically.] Well, I guess Head starts!

Head: Of course. I’m always the first in any line. Let me introduce myself.

[Head is quite formal and bows profusely. The other body parts mimic or guffaw.]

Song: Sung by Head
Tune: Russian Hymn (‘God the Omnipotent’) 80

Greetings to all of you. I am the Head.
I am not the tail.
I am always the first.
You look to me – as well you should –
For I plan ahead for the common good!

[Head bows. There is lukewarm applause. Head continues bowing.]

Head: [Misinterpreting the acclaim.] I'll sing it again! I'm more than ready!

Eye: No, no! We get the message!

Unpresentable Parts: [Kindly.] We all know your work, Head. We appreciate you and thank you.

Foot: I'll go next. I'm more than ready. I'll tell you about myself. Head started. But I'm where the rubber meets the road! There's an old saying that an army is only as good as its feet!

Song: Sung by Foot
Tune: ‘Onward, Christian Soldiers’

One foot then the other
Following where He leads
Faithfully He guides us, meeting all our needs

Jumping, walking, running-
Do what 'ere He says
Forward, backward, sideways
Never be dismayed!

77. McHabb and McHabry (1990:177–180) outline a mentor's qualities as listening, not needing to be perfect, guiding and loving a person younger in faith or experience toward Christian maturity.
78. Bergson (1924:4) writes that comedy contains an absence of feeling, because laughter needs indifference; laughter's greatest foe is emotion.
80. The tune to ‘God the Omnipotent’ is in the public domain (Pilgrim Hymnal 1966:446, 554).
82. Bergson does not see his own arrogance. Bergson (1924:146–147) comments: ‘Profoundly comic sayings are those artless ones in which some vice reveals itself in all its nakedness: how could it thus expose itself were it capable of seeing itself as it is?’
83. The words and actions of the Body of Christ show the members' good and bad attitudes (see Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:28).
84. Laughter, joy and kindness are all attitudes of choice – ones a wise person selects in all its nakedness: how could it thus expose itself were it capable of seeing itself as it is?'
One foot then the other
    Trusting with each step
    Marching behind Jesus,
    Gracious Priest and King.87

All:    Well sung, Foot! We need you in the Body of Christ, Foot! Here! Here!
Nose:    Just change your socks more often! [Agreement and laughter.]
Unpresentable Parts:    And cut your toenails!88 Ugh!
Hand:    Hey, Foot! Didn’t I see you going into a building that …89
Foot:    [Interrupting strongly.] No, you did not! Let’s change the subject!90
Ear:    Come to think of it, I remember hearing something, too. Oh, tell us where you went! We want to know!91
Nose:    Come on Foot, fess up! We know you’re prone to wander from time to time.
Foot:    [Folding his arms and walking away.] I go where I want! I’m not accountable to any of you! I don’t have to tell you a thing!92 Humpf!
[General outrage and disagreement come rapidly after Foot’s statements.]
Eye:    How arrogant!
Head:    Preposterous!93
Unpresentable Parts:    Well, I never!
Heart:    Such pride! How could Foot say that!
Nose:    What an attitude!
Head:    Order, order, everybody! Foot is right! He doesn’t have to say where he’s been, although we would like to know. But Foot needs to remember that our individual reputations as members of the Body of Christ reflect on us all.94
Heart:    But it’s more important that we remember that whatever we do reflects on our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we seek to honour him.
Ear:    What do you say to that, Foot?

[Everybody looks to Foot. He shrugs his shoulders. There’s an uneasy standoff between Foot and the other members Funny Bone, neutral and observant, ponders this.]

Hand:    [Breaking the uncomfortable silence.] I think I may have the solution. The Epistle of Jude says this: ‘Let the Lord rebuke you.’95 Let’s just leave the matter of where Foot may have gone to the Lord. Let’s trust that the Lord – if necessary – will discuss the matter with Foot.
Ear:    Good idea, Hand.
Nose:    Yes, thank you, Hand. [Turning to Funny Bone.] Funny Bone, we need another joke!96
Funny Bone:    [Rising to the occasion.] Well, let’s change the subject. Here’s a bit of humour about a first grader who was sent to the principal by her teacher, because she disturbed other children. The little girl explained her behaviour to the principal this way: ‘I guess I have restless in my blood!’97
[General laughter.]
Heart:    Thank you, Funny Bone. Your humour helps us, as usual. I’ll go next. I’m brief and concise.98

Song: Sung by Heart
Tune: ‘Row, row, row your boat’99

Heart, Heart, Heart I am
Beating every day
My mercy, compassion, forgiveness and love100
Come from God above.

Eye:    That was so good, Heart, that you need to repeat it.
Heart:    Sure thing! Follow me!

[The members of the Body of Christ fall in line behind Heart in a march. Some skip. Some dance. They all sing.101]

Song: Sung by All (repeated twice)
Tune: ‘Row, row, row your boat’

Heart, Heart, Heart I am
Beating every day

87.Foot ends strongly with an emphasis on Jesus as King (see Wright 2004:159).
88.Rough, earthy humour in drama can bring understanding smiles at our shared humanity. For examples of this from Scripture, see Brown (2008:163).
89.Steuernagel (2003:103) points out that theology begins with unexpected encounters often set in the messy confines of our day-to-day lives.
90.Head, Foot and Eye face uncomfortable truths about themselves, showing that theatre succeeds when a spectator is compelled ‘to face the concrete dramatic dimensions of his own life’, writes Von Balthasar (1988:265).
91.Words reveal the characters’ motivations, attitudes, cover-ups, hopes, fears, loves and hates (see Difanni 2008:901).
92.Foot is responsible for his behaviour and happiness (see Swindoll 1991:71).
94.Here I show that Foot’s behaviour addresses a theme in 1 Corinthians: some in the congregation ‘have used their new sense of freedom to live in ways which seem to ignore moral values and the need to let faith affect the way’ that they live (Loader 2007:81).
95.See Jude 9.
96.The play shows that the Body of Christ knows that Funny Bone chooses joy and cultivates a sense of humour (Swindoll 1991:77).
98.ESlinger (2005:176), writing on the efficacy of concrete images in good preaching, notes that they are helpful for a communal identity. Funny Bone’s characters clearly portray both strengths and weaknesses and are therefore good teaching tools.
99.Tune: ‘Row, row, row your boat’ is in the public domain; see Public Domain Information Project (PD Info) (n.d.).
100.Biblically based theatre helps open people’s ‘hearts to the good news of the scandalous love of God for his people’ (Cloninger 1999:11).
101.Heart, with a military step, leads a disorganised line through the audience. Bergson (1924:29) notes that ‘attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine’ (italics Bergson’s).
My mercy, compassion, forgiveness and love
Come from God above.

[General laughter and good will from the members of the Body of Christ.]

Unpresentable Parts: Oh, Heart, everybody loves you. I wish I were like you! Everybody wants to follow you!

Heart: [A bit smugly.] Yes, I know I’m loved.

Nose: Thank you, Heart. Unpresentable Parts, you have to sing, too!

Unpresentable Parts: Well, all right! It’s the highest form of courage to stand in front of a group! I’m overcoming my glossoephobia!

Head: [Informing everybody.] Glossophobia – if you don’t already know – is the fear of speaking before a group.

Unpresentable Parts: Thank you, Head.

Song: Sung by Unpresentable Parts
Tune: ‘Tenting tonight on the old camp ground’

I am well-known in the Body of Christ
As Unpresentable Parts
Sometimes I embarrass the gently bred
With my immodesty
But I don’t know what to do, my friends,
With all my energy
I need help controlling my hormones
And must shun immorality!

Unpresentable Parts! Unpresentable Parts!
I am my own problem
Lord, I cry to you! Show me how to serve
And bless your Holy Name!

Ear: [Thoughtfully, thinking aloud.] God has given us a great gift in our sexuality, but sometimes how we use our sexuality creates problems!

Foot: [Kindly.] Thanks, Unpresentable Parts, for talking with us about your struggles.

Heart: [She takes the wrapped present from the end table.] Unpresentable Parts, this seems like a good time to give you the present I bought for you.

Unpresentable Parts expresses unexpected joy at Heart’s gift (see Arends 2008).

Head: [Taking charge again.] That was a very nice gesture, Heart. Thank you. Let’s move on, everybody. Time is money! Money is time! Eye, you’ve been looking mighty smug through all this. What do you have to say for yourself?

Eye: Plenty! I’m ready and sharp! My vision is clear. Call me 20/20!

Song: Sung by Eye
Tune: ‘Mine eyes have seen the glory’

[Eye begins slowly. As the song progresses, the tempo increases. Eye, quite dramatic, may march around the stage.]

I am the Eye and function in the Body of Christ
I spy, I peer, I look, I gaze to see the path ahead
And I alert you all so that you can be led Away from the miry pit!

I am more than essential
I am quinte- quintessential
I am more than essential
I am the Eye! Amen!

Hand: My goodness, Eye. You call yourself more than essential! Probably some of us disagree! You sound full of pride to me.

Foot: To me, too!

Eye: Humph! Well, I know my value. Try functioning without me and see how much I’m needed! [Eye pulls out a blindfold.] Here! Let me tie this on you! [Hand backs away.] Come here, Foot! You’ll fall in a ditch without me! See how far you get in the mountains without me! [Foot also backs away from being blindfolded.]

Heart: Careful, Eye. Your attitude sounds over the top!

Eye: No, it is not! I know my value! I don’t need you!

102. Robinson (2001:60) encourages reading, teaching and preaching 1 Corinthians 12–14 in context. Love, as Heart indicates, is central to Paul’s teaching (1 Cor 13).

103. Arends (2008:74) writes that laughter resembles a glue ‘that attaches us to the goodness that inhabits this world and to the gladness that hints of the world to come’.

104. Head certainly shows no fear of public speaking. The Corinthians may have taken sides in judging who was the best public speaker amongst Peter, Paul and Apollos (Loader 2007:81).

105. The tune to ‘Tenting tonight on the old camp ground’ is in the public domain; see PD Info (n.d.).

106. Because Unpresentable Parts shares her struggles, shows emotion, extends gracious acceptance, displays anger and at times reflects on the words and actions of the other characters, she is what Lostracco & Wilkerson (2008:13) call a dynamic character.

107. Paul makes the point that both modesty and decency should be Christian characteristics (see Kistemaker 2002:437).
[A general bad feeling prevails against Eye as it did first against Head and then against Foot.]

Nose:
[Talking to everybody.] Hey, let's be civil.116 We're commanded to act with humility and to esteem others as better than ourselves.117 Jesus commanded us to love one another as he loves us.118 We're all acting puffed up.119 What do you think Jesus thinks of all this?120

In general, the members of the Body of Christ want to continue fighting. They turn their backs on an extended hand from Nose. They shake their heads when he comes to them.]

Nose:
[Very discouraged.] All I can do is pray.121

Song: Sung by Nose
Tune: ‘Danny Boy’122

Lord Jesus Christ, your body is not unified.123
We fight and hate and show you no respect.
There is no health amongst us anymore.124
Lord Jesus, come and turn our Heart again to you.
Oh, set our Feet along your narrow path
And may our Hands be lifted high in praise to you125
And may our Eyes behold your lovely, lovely face.

Foot:
[Protesting.] You're right, Nose. All I can do is pray.121
I had too many drinks and did not represent Jesus well because of things I said and did there. I said suggestive words to a woman and got into a fight.
The police were called, but luckily I was not arrested. I am ashamed of myself. I did not honour Jesus. I know that my actions also reflect on you, for I am part of the Body of Christ. In addition, my attitude showed arrogance and pride.

Hand:
[Reflectively.] I think, Foot, I speak for all of us in forgiving you. [Hand looks around and members of the Body of Christ nod.] But Nose, your song, also spoke to me.126
The choice for me is always between doing things for myself or doing things for Jesus. You see, I can make things like a building or an airplane. I can write things like a book or a poem. I can hold a child or shoot a gun. I have such amazing power. But when I lift my hands in praise to Jesus, I surrender my pride. I am asking for his direction. I am praising him.

Heart:
[Nodding.] Right. Hand. I must guard against deceiving myself. Scripture says this about me: 'The heart is deceitful above all things.'121

[There's a general quiet for a moment or two. The characters are not so much sad as reflective. This meeting is becoming deeper than they thought! It certainly is raising issues. Funny Bone senses this and moves around the characters giving encouragements like a pat on the shoulder, high-fives and sideways hugs.]

Ear:
[Reflectively.] What you say, Nose, has cut me to the quick. I, too, have a confession to make to you, my fellow members in the Body of Christ.121

Song: Sung by Ear
Tune: ‘I've been workin’ on the railroad’122

I've been listening to all of you.
In this discussion
I've been listening to all of you
And will share my findings.

First, I must confess that
As the Ear I have sinned
I have liked to dis' the dirt on you
Over and over again!

116. The cycle of discontent that seems prevalent in the congregation at Corinth prevails today. After an initial welcome wears off, a member may express envy and jealousy, and carry grudges (see Kistemaker 2002:434).

117. See Philippians 2:3.

118. See John 15:12.

119. See 1 Corinthians 4:18, 19; 8:1.

120. Peter and Dana (1982:113) write that ‘adding a ridiculous element, such as an exaggeration, is often a way to express empathy with another’, as when Nose extends his hand and receives rejection.

121. Bonhoeffer (1954:84–85) comments that we pray, guided by Scripture, asking for preservation from sin, growth in sanctification, and faithfulness in our work. Nose’s prayer concentrates on sanctification.

122. The tune to ‘Danny Boy’ is in the public domain; see PD Info (n.d.).

123. Via his song, Nose leads the Body of Christ in worship, a dramatic corporate event (see Long 2001:43). Von Balthasar (1988:25) adds that drama illuminates human actions (people), temporal events (time), and their specific contexts (place) in relation to God's purpose (italics Quash’s).

124. Freedom in Christ is also a 1 Corinthians theme. The Corinthians understood this (erroneously) to mean, as Allard (2010:400) writes, a freedom from all restraints. They thought they were free to eat meat dedicated to idols (1 Cor 8:1–13) and engage in sexual liaisons with prostitutes (1 Cor 6:15), that a man could have sexual relations with his father’s wife (1 Cor 5:1), that women could disrupt a service (1 Cor 14:34) and that women need not wear veils (1 Cor 11:2–16; Allard ibid:400). Nose correctly sings: ‘There is no health amongst us anymore.’

125. Nose clarifies Paul’s message of freedom: believers are set free to serve their neighbours, for ‘service is the motif of the gospel’ (see Allard 2010:401–402).

126. Quash (2005:3–4) provides some valuable insights that apply to Funny Bone’s tone: ‘Drama displays human actions and temporal events in specific contexts. Theodramatics concerns itself with human actions (people), temporal events (time), and their specific contexts (place) in relation to God's purpose’ (italics Quash’s).

127. See James 5:16; 1 John 1:19; Proverbs 28:13.

128. Paul mentions that a person who has received the gift of healing (which often is done by the laying on of hands), cannot say to the rest of the body: ‘I have no need of you’ (see Kistemaker 2002:436).

129. See 1 Titus 2:8.

130. See Jeremiah 17:9.

131. Ear, Eye and Head are pretentious and therefore ‘inherently humorous’, as Trueblood (1964:83–84) observes.

132. The tune to ‘I’ve been workin’ on the railroad’ is in the public domain; see PD Info (n.d.).
Please forgive
Please forgive
Me for my sin, my sin, my sin!
I repent
I repent
Over and over again!

[Members of the Body of Christ collectively gasp. Ear hangs his head. A general discussion commences. There is a pause for dialogue, rebuke, repentance, and forgiveness.]

Head: What did you say about me? I'd like to know.

Foot: You're an eavesdropper! You're a gossip! We should box your ears!

Hand: Or cut them off!

Eye: Libel! I'll slap you with a lawsuit!

Foot: A gossip separates close friends. A gossip betrays a confidence.

Unpresentable Parts: You have no right talking in an ugly way about us! How dare you! How dare you spread around what I told you as a secret!

[A general commotion occurs. The members of the Body of Christ are outraged!]

Heart: Hey, everybody! Hush and listen to me! [Everybody calms down a bit and is eventually quiet.] We have to forgive Ear. Ear has repented and that means Ear won't 'dis' the dirt' on us. We have to forgive Ear. If we don’t forgive Ear, our heavenly Father won’t forgive us our sins. [Heart looks around.]

Hand: Right. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, one of the parts of that famous prayer is ‘forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us’. 

Nose: Jesus told us to forgive seventy times seven times!

All: We don’t want to. But we have to. [Pouting.] Okay. We forgive you, Ear.

Ear: [Very much relieved.] Thank you, everybody in the Body of Christ. From now on, when I hear something about you, I won’t repeat it all over everywhere. I’ll discuss it with you privately first. I’ll look for the good in each of you and speak well of each of you. I’ll pray for you. If you find me in what you think is sin, or if I find you in what I think is sin, let’s talk about it privately and see if we can’t resolve our issues.

All: Agreed! That's a good idea. That's what Scripture says.

Ear: Thank you. Now I’ll finish my song. Yes, I am prone to gossip, but I hate that sin so much that, with the Lord Jesus’ help, I’ll change! I’ll tell you what I see in us. [Ear resumes singing.]

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**Song: Sung by Ear**

**Tune: ‘I’ve been workin’ on the railroad’**

Now I’ll share what I’ve seen in us
It is not pretty
Be prepared for a rebuking
That just might bring liberty!

Eye, you’re quick to see a scandal!
Head, you’re always first!
Hand, I’ve caught you vandalizing
Eye, you’re quick to see a scandal!

Pride is here, you know
Jealousy also
Arrogance and selfishness, I see!
Pride is here, you know
Jealousy also
Arrogance and selfishness.

[Here, all the members of the Body of Christ start shouting and fighting. They are mad at Ear.]

Foot: That was not very nice, Ear!

Heart: And after we forgave you!

Head: I don’t like to be around you, Ear!
Actually, I don’t like any of you!
I’d rather be out playing golf with unbelievers!

Eye: Nose, stop picking your nose!

Hand: Foot, you smell like a locker room! Wash your feet more often!

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133.Ear incorporates a basic principle of worship, namely confession. Confession and pardon fulfill the idea of the reality of sin in personal and communal life (see The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit 1993:35).

134.Lawsuits between and amongst believers in the Corinthian community are an issue (1 Cor 6:1–11; Grams 2011:12). Paul condemns this, saying that ‘the very fact that you have lawsuits amongst you means you have been completely defeated already’ (1 Cor 6:7a).


137.See Proverbs 20:19.

138.Ear repents, an action showing change. This play, an accompaniment to traditional preaching, may well empower godsly change in some lives (see Brueggemann 2005b:25).

139.Whilst Heart recommends forgiveness, Paul asks instead: ‘Why not rather be wronged, why not rather be defrauded?’ (1 Cor 6:7; see Grams 2011:12).

140.According to Von Balthasar (1992:150), the highest qualification of Jesus who said these words, is that he is the Son of God and the Father’s beloved Son.


142.See Matthew 18:22.

143.See Matthew 5:23–24.

144.Bureaucrats, like Head and Hand, ‘do not appreciate having their nonresponsiveness exposed to the public eye’ (Peter & Dana 1982:141).

145.Members of the Body of Christ often insult each other. If an insult cannot be ignored, it must be topped; if it cannot be topped, it must be laughed at; if it cannot be laughed at, then probably it is well-deserved (see Peter & Dana 1982:151).

146.Members of the Body of Christ bicker the same way the disciples jealously disputed who would be the greatest (Lk 22:24–27). Jesus corrected them by introducing the paradox that serving leads to greatness in his new world order (see Trueblood 1964:87–88).
Suddenly taking charge and [Chagrined, they obey. They act contrite as they mill around. There even is some general courtesy talk like ‘You go first. After you. Please sit here. I’m sorry I yelled at you. I didn’t really mean what I said’, et cetera.]

Funny Bone: That’s better. Everybody sit down. [Everybody finds a spot. All are touchy and don’t want much contact with the others.] Ear, I think you have something more to say.

Ear: Yes, I do. My song really summed us up. I am included in my own song, for I know I am full of jealousy and pride. We have just shown the whole world our arrogant attitude! [Very sadly.] Oh, what are we to do?

Unpresentable Parts: [Very sadly, too.] Truly, all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.152 We’re all pretty rotten!

Funny Bone: Well, yes, we are. But the purpose of seeing our sin is to become free of it. That’s why the Lord Jesus came!153 That’s the gospel!154 Jesus seeks to set us free from ourselves, from sin, from the power of Satan and the power of Satan’s demons.155 [Suddenly taking charge and feeling hopeful.]

Head: We surely do tear and rend each other.156

Heart: [Crying and sincerely sad.] Call me heartbroken!

Nose: [Rubbing his nose.] We’re wounded! And bloodied!157

Eye: We don’t see anything good about each other.158

Foot: We get sick and sore. We do not like or honour the parts who we think are weak.159

Unpresentable Parts: [Reflectively.] I think we really do like each other – but by the way we act, you’d never know it!160 [Hand’s hand goes up.]

151. See Romans 3:23.
152. Instead of boasting of our accomplishments, we should boast of ‘preferment of one another in love’, Francis (1980:57) observes.
155. Anderson (2006:100, 104) correctly sees the Bible as an unfolding story of our lives and God as the great dramatist and storyteller.
156. Rhyne (1990:175–176) writes that ‘though the Corinthians may be spiritual, their behavior reflects an unspiritual approach to the faith […] They are acting like infants rather than grown-ups in Christ’.
157. Themes organise a play (see DiYanni 2008:934). Funny Bone’s themes are disunity/unity, each member’s importance and the absurdity of ‘going it alone’ without others.
158. Biblical examples of those who are weak but essential and even invaluable to the body are Dorcas/Tabitha (Ac 9:32–43), the woman who befriended widows in Joppa and was raised from the dead by Peter. She was also the woman who anointed Jesus at the home of Simon the leper (Mk 14:1–9), a prophetic act Jesus commends.
159. Unpresentable Parts believes members of the church are joined together (see Fisk 2000:81).
Unpresentable Parts raises her Hand and says, "Yes! If I as the Hand of the Body of Christ come before you and say something, would you like to say something, too?"

Hand: Yes, I would! I believe I can add something positive to our discussion.

**Song: Sung by Hand**

**Tune: ‘Sweet Betsy from Pike’**

I am the Hand
And I raise it right now
I stand before you
And give you a bow
Let's all work together
And not pull apart
Paul called us yokefellows.

We need to start

[Hand dances during the bridge between verses.]

To build God’s Kingdom
Is our great call
The right hand of fellowship
Binds us all
His wisdom will guide us
His love is the glue
Through times of sunshine
And days when we’re blue.

All: [Applause.] Well done, Hand!

Eye: You’ve got the right idea!

Hand: Thank you, Body of Christ! Let’s listen as Funny Bone teaches us about how we are part of God’s Kingdom and how we join with God in building it.163

All: [Excited!] Oh, Funny Bone, please teach us!164

Funny Bone: With pleasure! Let me remind you what the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12. Let’s start with the easy section. The body is made up of many parts. And though you are many parts, you form one body.165

Nose: [Laughter and breaking the tension.] Yeah. I like being part of the body. I’ll even laugh at your silly jokes about me!

Funny Bone: That’s the spirit! That’s a good attitude, Nose!166

Head: We all belong to Christ.

All: Right! Here, here!

Funny Bone: We were all baptised by one Holy Spirit.167

All: Right! Here, here! Yes, we were!

Funny Bone: We were all baptised into one body – whether we were slave or free, Jews or Greeks.168 [Unpresentable Parts raises her hand.] Yes, Unpresentable Parts?

Unpresentable Parts: Could we also in this modern age say male and female,169 employed and unemployed, rich and poor, old and young, Black and White, and Brown or Red or Yellow?170

Funny Bone: [Smiling broadly.] I think we can, Unpresentable Parts. I think you’ve understood the broader meaning of Paul’s words.171

Hand: Okay. It’s obvious and established that the body is not made up of one part, but of many.172

All: That’s right. All for one and one for all.173

[Laughter and high-fives abound.]

Foot: I’m getting it, I think. I’m remembering Paul’s words.

Hand: We have to be reminded again and again.174

Foot: [Continuing. To Hand.] Yes! If I as the foot say, ‘Because I’m not a hand I don’t belong to the body’, I would not cease to be part of the body.175

Hand: Right! We’re stuck with you, Foot! We’re stuck with each other, actually.176

[Hand and Foot go around with locked arms and in lockstep.]

161. The tune to ‘Sweet Betsy from Pike’ is in the public domain; see PD Info (n.d.).

162. Jefferson (1924:285) writes that Paul ‘possessed the joy of feeling that he was working with God. God has far-reaching plans, and Paul is helping him to carry them out’.

163. Hand recognises Funny Bone’s gifts of teaching and friendship. Jefferson (1924:283–284) writes that Paul experienced ‘the full joy of friendship’ and that Paul ‘feasted on the joy of helping others’.

164. Childers (1998:45, 49), observing that preaching and theatre are events, adds that performance in preaching is a valuable exegetical tool.

165. See 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. Funny Bone, as she begins to teach, follows Stott’s (1982:182–187) advice that preaching entails an open-minded, comprehensive and expectant approach to looking at a text.

166. See 1 Corinthians 12:12.
Where Paul sees the body in a new way. The Body’s more significant, visible members are to treat them with more honour. And those parts we call unpresentable, we give even greater honour and make sure to let them have a special modesty.\[180\]

[All bow. Unpresentable Parts smiles modestly and shows she likes her new shawl. She adjusts it to cover more of her shoulders.]

Unpresentable Parts: I see that God has combined us as members of the Body of Christ and even given special honour, even greater honour to parts that lacked it.\[181\]

All: How good and kind is our God!\[182\]

Funny Bone: Yes. That’s all true. But, Body of Christ, why is this so? Think about why God does this.

[They all walk around talking aloud. The following are quickly spoken.]

Eye: Because he wanted to.\[183\]

Foot: Because he’s good.

Nose: Because he’s just.

Heart: Because he loves us all equally!

Ear: Because it’s his plan for the church.

Hand: Because Jesus commanded us to love one another.

Head: Funny Bone wants one reason. Let’s get in a huddle, and let’s remember what Paul wrote.

[They get in a huddle. Funny Bone smiles and gives them space.]

[Murmurs from the huddle include the following comments that are quickly given.]

Hand: I can’t remember.

Nose: I wasn’t very good in school about memorising.

Foot: Isn’t it something about unity?

Unpresentable Parts: Hey, I thought it was division.

Eye: That’s it. I’ve got it! I remember! It’s so that there’s no division! We’re not supposed to be divided!\[184\]

[As the members break out of the huddle, they are very pleased.]

Head: How good and kind is our God!\[185\]

Foot: I can’t remember.

Nose: I wasn’t very good in school about memorising.

Eye: That’s it. I’ve got it! I remember! It’s so that there’s no division! We’re not supposed to be divided!\[186\]

All: So that there’s ‘no division’ in the body.\[187\]

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180. See 1 Corinthians 12:22–23. The weaker body parts present a surprise: they are indispensable (Fisk 2000:80).

181. See 1 Corinthians 12:24.

182. The kindness of God leads to repentance (Rm 2:4; Tt 3:4; Eph 2:7).

183. Robinson (2001:243) provides a good rule for writing a sermon or play: let supporting material restate, repeat and explain a pericope’s parts.

184. The Greek word perichoresis describes the happy fellowship of the Father, Son and Spirit. Arends (2008) likens the word to being worn out with gladness.

185. The passage emphasises unity. Anderson (2006:81) writes that the biblical text, in contrast to Greek dramas that think of history in terms of cycles, moves toward an end in which God’s purpose will be realised (see 1 Cor 15:24–28).

186. See 1 Corinthians 12:25a; 3:1–9. One division was ‘parties’ – some claimed to belong to Paul or Cephas or Apollos or Christ (1 Cor 3:4–5; see Rhyn 1990:174).
See 1 Corinthians 12:26a. Kistemaker (2002:438) says this passage 'describes the members of the Body of Christ as clothed in splendour and honour. They are also present in the Body of Christ. The goal is equal concern of one for the other."

Ramelli (2011:146) notes that 'disease and death can be understood in a spiritual sense' and indeed are understood in this way 'by most ancient exegetes'.

Dever (2011:97) writes that we are indeed ‘obliged to love one another’.

Dever (2011:97) writes that we are indeed ‘obliged to love one another’.
Funny Bone:
Be kind, one to another
Compassionate
Forgiving each other
Just as God
Just as God
Just as God in Christ
Just as God in Christ
Has forgiven you
Has forgiven you.
All:
Bee bop, oooeeeoo!
Bee bop, oooeeeoo!
Ephesians four, thirty-two
Ephesians four, thirty-two!

[General applause, laughter.]

Head:
Hear, hear! This is all well and good. But Funny Bone, it is now time to consider your request. Body of Christ, this is important! Body of Christ, to the huddle!214

[Head starts singing and directing. The characters gradually assemble toward the centre rug.215 They huddle.216 Funny Bone goes to the side respectfully.]

Song: Sung by Head
Tune: ‘Yankee Doodle Dandy’

This song starts with the tune from ‘Yankee Doodle Dandy’ that starts with this line: ‘Father and I went down to camp.’ [When told by Head, Funny Bone goes upstage on cue with a bow. She prays:]

Hurry up now, Body of Christ
Get into formation
Funny Bone, excuse yourself218
And so avoid confusion
Let us all be orderly
Let us all be civil
Let us all debate and see
Meeeeeeeee moderate decisively!

212. In a performance, I encourage my actors to stress the fun of this rap and the joy of being forgiven. The Pilgrim Hymnal (1966:194) contains a Percy Dearmer hymn: The whole bright world rejoices now. Notice its emphasis on hilarity: ‘The whole bright world rejoices now, Hilariter, Hilariter; The birds do sing on every bough, Alleluia, Alleluia. Then shout beneath the racing skies, Hilariter, Hilariter. To him who rose that we might rise, Alleluia, Alleluia! And all you living things make praise, Hilariter, Hilariter; He guideth you on all your ways, Alleluia, Alleluia! He, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Hilariter; Our God most high, our joy and boast, Alleluia, Alleluia!"

213. Laughter, as Funny Bone shows, is individual and social, physiological and psychological as well as caused and causative (Welsh 1967:96).

214. Again, Head takes charge, but Troupe (2008:44) asks: ‘Who decides who should be the head?’

215. A prop like a rug helps ‘the where’ of a scene (see Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:31).

216. I incorporated the idea of a huddle from church polity. This huddle is a congregational meeting. Although enacted with humour, it nonetheless conveys the sense of discussing the issue that is before the Body of Christ. Making 1 Corinthians 12 a musical comedy has several advantages including the following (cf. Clark, Brubaker & Zuck 1986:545–546):
• Enacting a story makes it more real and gives the actor, via imagination, insights into another person.
• A drama may show honest feelings.

217. The tune to ‘Yankee Doodle Dandy’ is in the public domain; see PD Info (n.d.).

218. Funny Bone involves entrances and exits, characters and plot, scenes and settings, tone and dialogue, pauses and monologues (see Vanhooser 2005:41).

[The members shake their heads at Head’s pomposity, but follow his directions.]

Head:
Well, what do you think, Body of Christ? Should Funny Bone be recognised?

Ear:
She certainly is wise. She straightened us out!

Eve:
She’s a good teacher. She makes us laugh.219

Heart:
Did you notice that she was always smiling? Her eyes twinkled when she fussed at us.220

Unpresentable Parts:
Because of what she said, I am not jealous of you all anymore, and I am not ashamed of who I am. Even I am needed in the Body of Christ.

Nose:
She helped us remember Paul’s words. We had forgotten them!

Hand:
But admitting Funny Bone has to be based on Scripture, not just because we like her.

Head:
Or that she makes us laugh.221

Nose:
Jesus certainly had a sense of humour.222 So did Paul.223

All:
You’re right about that!224

Heart:
Well, the reason we’re in the Body of Christ is that we’re mentioned in Proverbs and Psalms or elsewhere in the Bible.

Foot:
Right. There are lots of verses in which I figure prominently. Consider Psalm 1:1: ‘Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.’ Here’s a verse about protection. Psalm 121:3: ‘He will not let your foot slip.’

Hand:
I like this one about me. Psalm 47:1: ‘Clap your hands, all you nations! Shout to God with cries of joy!’

219. ‘The church can afford to take the risk of the humorous and ephemeral, because the joke is God’s and the laughter is divine,’ Wells (2004:69) writes. Laughter keeps Funny Bone involved with people (Swindoll 1991:125).

220. Eye and Heart appreciate Funny Bone’s ability to fuss at them with a twinkle in her eye. Trueblood sees the same in Jesus. He [Trueblood 1964:15] writes: ‘Anyone who reads the Synoptic Gospels with a relative freedom from presuppositions might be expected to see that Christ laughed, and that He expected others to laugh, but our capacity to miss this aspect of His life is phenomenal!’

221. Here are some meanings of humour present in Funny Bone (Arbuckle 2008:2):
• Humour, or the comic, helps us cope with the vicissitudes of life.
• Humour is negative when it degrades a person. Humour is positive when it respects a person’s dignity.
• Positive humour evokes two types of laughter. The first response is audible – you can hear a laugh. The second is an interior laughter – a laughter of the heart, if you will, which manifests itself in joy and peace.

222. Trueblood (1964:47) calls Jesus’ humour ‘deliberately preposterous’; that phrase applies to portions of Funny Bone that exaggerate to make a point.

223. Jefferson (1924:280–282) links Paul’s character and joy: ‘The church and its people may be preoccupied with salvation, but the joy of faith is the driving force. The joy is not to be found only in the garden of Eden; it is present in the present. The Church and its members shake their heads at Head’s pomposity, but follow his directions."

224. In the outer courts of his soul there is often pain and sometimes agony, but in the inner court there is always the sound of music and dancing. Underneath the surface of his letters there runs a strain of deep and solemn gladness. Again and again it is hidden from the eye and ear, but it keeps breaking through. … He knew the joy of hope. Hope always wears a radiant face.
Heart: This is my favourite verse about me. Proverbs 4:23: ‘Above all, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life’.

Head: I love this verse about me. David is speaking of the Lord, his shepherd. Psalm 23:5: ‘You anoint my head with oil.’

Eye: In Luke 11:34, Jesus calls me the lamp of the body. Jesus says, ‘When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light.’

Unpresentable Parts: A whole book is written about me, or at least it seems to be! The Song of Songs is red hot and ready! Listen to parts of chapter 4. [She recites or reads. A Bible on a lectern may be part of the stage props.]

‘How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone. Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate. Your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse amongst the lilies … All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you.’

All: [Applause.] That was lovely, Unpresentable Parts.

[Unpresentable Parts bows.] 226

Ear: Here’s a good verse about me. Isaiah 30:21: ‘Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, “This is the way, walk in it.”’

Nose: Scripture often describes sacrifices as sweet savours to the Lord. Here’s a description from Genesis 8: ‘Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma.’

Head: But are there Bible verses about Funny Bone or things Funny Bone does?

Hand: How about this: laughter is the best medicine.

Head: That’s a good start. But it’s practical wisdom. It is not in the Bible.

Heart: I’ve got it, Body of Christ! I’ve got a verse about Funny Bone, about what Funny Bone does! [Heart whispers the scripture in the huddle.]

Nose: That’s good! Let’s all say it.

[They turn from the huddle. Funny Bone looks up from prayer and stands waiting.]

Eye: Heart, you’ve hit a home run!

Head: [Shouting.] Funny Bone, we’ve decided. Come back in!

[Funny Bone enters.]

Heart: Funny Bone, on behalf of the Body of Christ, we value you and invite you to fully participate in the Body of Christ as a named member. You belong. You’re needed. 227 Here’s the scripture verse to prove it:

All: ‘A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.’ Proverbs 17:22. 228

[General goodwill prevails. The sincerity is in marked contrast to the forced, strained good will at the entrance.]

Ear: Here’s another scripture: Isaiah 61:3 says that the Lord gives ‘a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair’. And Jesus told his disciples many things on the night he was betrayed. Why did he do this? John 15 recounts Jesus’ words: ‘I have told you this so that my joy maybe in you and that your joy may be complete.’

Funny Bone: Thank you, Body of Christ! I am thrilled to be part of you! My favourite scripture about me is this from Nehemiah 8: ‘The joy of the Lord is your strength!’ [Good will prevails.] 229

Unpresentable Parts: Well, another song is required, don’t you think? 230

Ear: [Smiling.] Most certainly. 231

[Everybody groups downstage centre stage and starts singing. They pause and bow as their names are mentioned. Funny Bone sings the first entry of ‘And Funny Bone is with us now too’. All sing the last two lines.]

227.McNabb & Mabry (1990:164) categorise teaching as promoting creativity or purposeful experiences, like acting, produce a 90% retention rate (McNabb & Mabry 1990:42).

228.Cousins (1979:83) gives his own version of this verse: ‘a merry heart works like a doctor’.

229.Funny Bone was written for enjoyment and teaching purposes. A spectator’s pleasure in watching a play ‘remains a reference to that delight that underlies and sustains all life’s seriousness, a delight in being privileged to share in existence’, writes Von Balthasar (1988:267).

230.Studies show people retain 10% of what they read and hear, but that ‘direct purposeful experiences’, like acting, produce a 90% retention rate (McNabb & Mabry 1990:42).

231.Duckworth (1999:5) correctly writes that a ‘skit can brighten a worship service with humor and, at the same time, drive home a serious point’. See Song of Songs 4:1–7. Brueggemann (2005b:25) challenges preachers (and playwrights) to see a text in a new way that is ‘credibly and evocatively of a new humanness, rooted in holiness and practiced in neighborhood’. DiYanni (2008:921) writes that a playwright arranges incidents. For example, each character’s song allows for smiles and a relaxation of intensity, but the church fight of shoving and poking may cause some uncomfortable feelings in the audience.
Song: Sung by All†232
Tune: ‘Of the Father’s love begotten’†233
Of Christ’s Body now in unity
We will function in harmony
For we love and honour Jesus
As our life and liberty
Of Christ’s Body we are Hand, Foot, Head, Ear, Heart, Eye
Nose and Unrepresentable Parts
And Funny Bone is with us now, too
And Funny Bone is with us now, too
And Funny Bone is with us now, too.234

Conclusion

Funny Bone ends with unity within the believing community. Bonhoeffer (1954:21) writes that ‘Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.’ Bonhoeffer (ibid:21) explains that an individual Christian ‘needs others because of Jesus Christ’. Funny Bone’s cast of 10 certainly learns this. They speak God’s word to each other and return to their foundation: the centrality of Christ in their lives. The play began by showing a misplaced pride and lack of community commitment. These traits produced disunity, or what Bonhoeffer (ibid:23) aptly calls ‘discord between God and man and between man and man’. Bonhoeffer (ibid:24) rightly says that the cast’s unity can continue ‘only by way of Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ are we one, only through him are we bound together.’

Funny Bone ends happily – as musicals do. Yet, as a realist and cradle Presbyterian, I realise that unity is temporary – even when iced with humour, dance and song. Bumps in the road – ‘hiccups’ as life’s trials are humorously called in South Africa – are normal. However, when things go awry, this musical provides a template for public confession and forgiveness, and a model for communal discussion of problems.

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