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.

Funny Bone: ‘n Musikale blyspel wat die Liggaam van Christus uitbeeld. Hierdie musiekblyspel kan vir onderrigdoeleindes gebruik word. Dit ondersoek die eenheids- en konflikaspekte in verband met die Liggaam van Christus. Dit is gebaseer op 1 Korintiërs 12:12-27 en die karakters van die toneelstuk beeld die verskillende liggaamsdele uit soos deur Paulus genoem in sy opdrag om die verskillende evangeliebedienings en funksies van die kerk te erken. Deur humor en sang te kombineer, volg die toneelstuk die voetspore van ’n antieke Middeleeuse sinnebeelding en illustreer bybelse onderskille op ’n hedendaagse wyse.

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...
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. It also employs a literary methodology and a canonical perspective in examining 1 Corinthians. 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’s’ produce, not calamity, but prosperity and happiness. 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.

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 (Mc 4:21), 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. Whilst 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.

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 members of the Body of Christ, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. 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. Foot and Head are probably played by men and Unpresentable Parts and Heart by women. 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, Foot 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. Eye may bring oversized eyeglass and Hand may wave a gigantic mitt.

Set

The setting is a nice but fairly bare room. The stage has an assortment of comfortable chairs. A bar table with bar stools is downstage 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 concentrates on two of Osmer’s (2008:4) guidelines regarding practical theological interpretation: it incorporates theatre art and presents a particular situation in Corinth in a contemporary way.

‘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.

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’.

Additional information

The service for the Lord’s Day (1984:7). Additionally, Funny Bone concentrates on two of Osmer’s (2008:4) guidelines regarding practical theological interpretation: it incorporates theatre art and presents a particular situation in Corinth in a contemporary way.

http://www.indieskriflig.org.za
doi:10.4102/dvs471i1.113
contains levels that permit effective staging. The characters enter through an aisle in the audience.

**Atmosphere**

There’s general good will and busy talk amongst the members of the Body of Christ as they enter. They ad lib at will. 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. Everybody smiles frequently. Until reprimanded, Nose does pick his nose!

**Opening scene**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unpresentable Parts:</th>
<th>How are you, Foot?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foot:</td>
<td>Great! I’m glad to see you again, Unpresentable Parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand:</td>
<td>Give me five, Foot! [They slap hands.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear:</td>
<td>I’ve heard good reports about you, Nose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nose:</td>
<td>Thanks, Ear! It’s so good to see everybody again. I’m looking forward to hear what’s been happening to my friends in the Body of Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head:</td>
<td>Right! We haven’t had a meeting for a long, long time!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye:</td>
<td>We need to get together! I’ve missed seeing each of you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart:</td>
<td>Eye, what have you been doing? What’s the Lord doing through you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 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.

25 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 Balthasar (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 a teaching tool 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 bibilodrama. A bibilodrama 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 directly addresses 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’.

34 The characters exhibit a pride that Paul sees as destructive (1 Cor 11–14; Loader 2007:80).

35 Paul shows that the Eye wants ‘to be independent of the other parts of the body’ (Kistemaker 2002:435).

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 Eislinger (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 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.

40 If the Corinthian congregation contains those who are high-status society members, they may look down on members like Unpresentable Parts which they deem lower class. Paul emphasises that these members, who may be an embarrassment, must be clothed and seen with dignity and honour (Hays 1997:215–216). A 1 Corinthians theme is the lack of charity toward the poor on the part of the rich (see Ramelli 2011:145).


42 Nose states another textual theme: the passage talks about the Body – not the church – of Christ, an unexpected wording (see Fisk 2000:79).

43 Dilany (2008:923), writing on the essential nature of characters, states that characters bring a play to life.

44 Funny Bone, an attractive character, smiles, worries about nothing, prays about everything and relaxes (see Swindoll 1991:199–201).

45 Studies find that humour and ‘the telling of stories and jokes occur with almost equal frequency and are human characteristics shared by both sexes’, write Peter and Dana (1982:115). Funny Bone displays what Arbuckle (2008-2) calls ‘laughter of the heart’ – an interior peace and joy.

**Eye:** [Proudly.] Well, I was used so greatly recently by the Lord. I want to tell everybody about it! So was I! The Lord worked miracles through me! I’m not called Hand for nothing?

**Head:** What you say reminds me of my own ministry experience, Hand and Eye. Oh, let me tell you about it! I knew just what to do! My study during a sabbatical certainly paid off! I was so very proud. Are you ready with a joke?

**Eye:** Yes! Greetings, Funny Bone! Let’s hear a joke! Funny Bone, bless us with a joke!
Conflict is expressed as rudeness and confrontation. Conflict, a significant aspect of life, can arise between individuals or opposing forces. Arbuckle (2008:8–9, 23) says negative laughter includes irony which is saying one thing and meaning another, mockery and scoffing, and calling someone else preside.246

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).

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?246

Head: [A bit nasty.] Like you, for instance?246 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!246

60.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).

61.Anderson (2006:9–10) believes there are two ways to approach a study of the Bible: academically in a classroom, and as an attempt to stand with the Bible and look out at the world through the window of biblical faith (italics Anderson’s). Funny Bone uses the latter.

62.Echoing is a tool in bibliodrama (see Pitzele 1998:47).

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 about yourselves, 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.  

Head: I’ll sing it again! I’m more than ready!  

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 Head  
Tune: Russian Hymn (‘God the Omnipotent’)  

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: [ Misinterpreting the acclaim. ] Well, I guess Head starts!  

Unpresentable Parts: [ Sarcasically. ] Yes, quite formal and bows profusely. The other body parts mimic or guffaw.  

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  
We appreciate you and thank you.  

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

Ear: [ Sarcasically. ] Yes, quite formal and bows profusely. The other body parts mimic or guffaw.  

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

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

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!  
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Let me introduce myself.  

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

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!
One foot then the other
Trusting with each step
Marching behind Jesus,
Gracious Priest and King.87

Head: 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, Jess 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 restlessness 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 love.100
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
91.Words reveal the characters’ motivations, attitudes, cover-ups, hopes, fears, loves
and hates (see Dihanni 2008:901).
92.Foot is responsible for his behaviour and happiness (see Swindoll 1991:71).
93.Robinson’s advice (2001:80–79) for good preaching applies to good teaching:
present concepts clearly.
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.
99.The tune to ‘Row, row, row you 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 glossophobia!

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.

[She hands the box to Unpresentable Parts who is very pleased.

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 and 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).

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

109. A mentor gives someone younger in the faith meaningful opportunities to express faith (McNabb & Mabry 1990:180).

110. Via Unpresentable Parts, Paul encourages the congregation’s privileged members ‘to respect and value the contributions of those members who appear to be their inferiors’ (Hays 1997:213).

111. The tune to ‘Mine eyes have seen the glory’ is in the public domain (Pilgrim Hymnal 1966:443, 554).

112. See Psalm 30:3; 40:2; 103:4.


114. Eye’s elitist behaviour illustrates Paul’s point that diversity – not uniformity – is essential for a healthy church (Fee 1987:583).

115. Paul disdains Eye’s and Head’s independent attitudes (see Kistemaker 2002:435). Perhaps the great error Paul seeks to correct is an arrogant self-sufficiency and the demeaning way of thinking: ‘I do not need you’ (see Fee 1987:612–613).
[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’

Lord Jesus Christ, your body is not unified.123 We fight and hate and show you no respect. We tear and wound each other with impunity. 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 you And may our Eyes behold your lovely, lovely face.

[Heart, Foot, Hand, and Eye all appear sad. Nose’s song convicts them of sin.]125

Eye: [Reflectively.] You’re right, Nose. All I want to do is to see the lovely face of Jesus. I’m sorry for my arrogance, Body of Christ.

Foot: [Admitting guilt.] Thank you, Nose, for your song. It gives me courage for what I must confess.127 Yes, I went into a bar.

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.128 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,129 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 about this about me: ‘The heart is deceitful above all things.’130

[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: 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.131

Head: Proceed, Ear.

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

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. [Foot looks contrite and ashamed.]

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. [Foot looks contrite and ashamed.]

http://www.indieskriflig.org.za
doi:10.4102/ids.v47i1.113
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 eaves dropper! 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 reassured. A general discussion commences. There is a pause for dialogue, rebuke, repentance, and forgiveness.

Heart: [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.]

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

Praise 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!

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!

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 6:7).


137. See Proverbs 20:19.

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

139. Whist 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 22:24–17). Jesus corrected them by introducing the paradox that serving leads to greatness in his new world order (see Trueblood 1964:87–88).
Very sadly.

Suddenly taking charge and

Truly, all of us have

Trueblood (1964:92) observes that some hard problems – whether in exegesis or

Here the members of the Body of Christ childishly fight – openly showing their

Funny Bone does not like the qualities she sees the Body of Christ expressing.

Corinthian women may have abandoned modest dressing and may even have

what they had known and realized to be true to inform their on-going Christian

Characters may or may not appeal to us, and may or may not remind us of

we are. But the purpose of seeing our sin is to become free of it.

That’s why the Lord Jesus came!

That’s the gospel!

seeing our sin is to become free of it.

Well, yes, we are. But the purpose of

That’s why the Lord Jesus came!

We have just shown the whole world

I know I am full of jealousy and pride.

We surely do tear and rend each other.

that, Nose!

I’m gonna punch you in the nose for

Unpresentable Parts:

Nose: You’re untruthful. Boorish!

Head: A gossip! You’ve a big bully!

Unpresentable Parts:

Hand: Pushy, pushy!

Foot: You promote yourself!

Nose: You’re untruthful. Boorish!

Nose: You’re untruthful. Boorish!

General confusion and mayhem abounds. Funny Bone separates the

Other insults volley back and forth. Pillows from the sofa also sally

They take up a boxing stand and fisticuffs almost begin.

Stop it!

Ear, I think you have something more to say.

Unpresentable Parts:

Hand: Quit pushing me!

Foot: You stepped on my toe!

Ear: Arrogant! Conceited.

Unpresentable Parts:

Nose: Keep yourself out of my business!

Foot: Foot kicked me!

Hand: Hand, keep your hands to yourself. Sit over there. Foot, march to that corner!

Nose: You promote yourself!

Foot: You stepped on my toe!

Head: I’m gonna punch you in the nose for that, Nose!

Unpresentable Parts:

Head: Pull your dress up to your shoulder, Unpresentable Parts! Use the shawl I gave you!

Unpresentable Parts: Nobody tells me what to do!

Nose: Head, you’re so arrogant and obnoxious!

Heart: You have too many opinions!

Nose: You have too many opinions!

Heart: How can you judge me when you don’t see yourself clearly?

Heart: You have too many opinions!

Unpresentable Parts:

Head: How can you judge me when you don’t see yourself clearly?

Heart: You deserved it!

Head: How can you judge me when you don’t see yourself clearly?

Heart: A gossip! You’re a big bully!

Unpresentable Parts:

Heart: You have too many opinions!

Foot: You stepped on my toe!

Head: I’m gonna punch you in the nose for that, Nose!

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Stop it!

Stop fighting! Stop biting, kicking and

They take up a boxing stand and fisticuffs almost begin.

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Heart: You deserved it!

Unpresentable Parts:

Hand: Quit pushing me!

Foot: You stepped on my toe!

Head: I’m gonna punch you in the nose for that, Nose!

Nose: You deserve it!

Hand: Hand, keep your hands to yourself. Sit over there. Foot, march to that corner!

Nose: You deserved it!

Heart: How can you judge me when you don’t see yourself clearly?

Heart: A gossip! You’ve a big bully!

Foot: You promoted yourself!

Nose: You’re untruthful. Boorish!

Head: I’m gonna punch you in the nose for that, Nose!

Unpresentable Parts:

Head: I’m gonna punch you in the nose for that, Nose!

Unpresentable Parts:

Hand: Quit pushing me!

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Head: A gossip! You’re a big bully!

Unpresentable Parts:

Head: Pull your dress up to your shoulder, Unpresentable Parts! Use the shawl I gave you!

Unpresentable Parts: Nobody tells me what to do!

Nose: Head, you’re so arrogant and obnoxious!

Head: I’m gonna punch you in the nose for that, Nose!

[They take up a boxing stand and fisticuffs almost begin.]

Eye: You’re full of pride!

Foot: Obnoxious! Rude!

Ear: Arrogant! Conceited.

Unpresentable Parts: Narcissistic!

Hand: Pushy, pushy!

Foot: You promote yourself!

Nose: You’re untruthful. Boorish!

Heart: A gossip! You’re a big bully!

[Other insults volley back and forth. Pillows from the sofa also sally through the air.]

Unpresentable Parts:

Hand, quit pushing me!

Ear: Foot, you stepped on my toe!

Head: Nose, keep yourself out of my business!

Unpresentable Parts:

Hand, stop pinching me!

Eye: Head, you have too many opinions!

Nose: Foot kicked me!

Foot: You deserved it!

Head: How can you judge me when you don’t see yourself clearly?

[General confusion and mayhem abounds. Funny Bone separates the various feuding parties and then stands on a chair and starts to shout.]

Funny Bone: [Funny Bone commands order.] Stop it! Stop fighting! Stop biting, kicking and shoving! Stop it! Everybody stops.

Funny Bone: Hand, keep your hands to yourself. Sit over there. Foot, march to that corner! Head, come down out of the clouds. You, Nose, mind your own business and be sure to use a handkerchief! Eye, nobody likes it when you raise your eyebrows. Heart, calm down; remember your blood pressure! Unpresentable Parts, put yourshawl around your shoulders. All of you, stop gossiping! All of you, stop thinking ugly thoughts about each other.150

Unpresentable Parts: [Reflectively.] I think we really do like each other – but by the way we act, you’d never know it! [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. Ryhne (1990:175–176) writes that ‘though the Corinthians may be spiritual, their disunity/unity, each member’s importance and the absurdity of ‘going it alone’ infants rather than grown-ups in Christ’.

157. Themes organise a play (see DiYanni 2008:934).

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).

147. Corinthian women may have abandoned modest dressing and may even have dressed as men (Leader 2007:82).

148. Funny Bone does not like the qualities she sees the Body of Christ expressing. Characters may or may not appeal to us, and may or may not remind us of ourselves (see DiYanni 2008:922).

149. Here the members of the Body of Christ childishly fight – openly showing their divisions (see 1 Cor 3:1–3). Paul chides his beloved Corinthians for failing to allow what they had known and realized to be true to inform their on-going Christian life (Francis 1980:57).

150. Trueblood (1964:92) observes that some hard problems – whether in exegesis or in life – are ‘soluble only in the acids of humor’. [Chagrined, they obey. They act contrite as they mill around. There ever 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: I agree! But I also must commend you. Thanks to everybody for stopping your fighting – and biting, kicking, shoving, and talking ugly! Hand, would you like to say something?

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 yokelfellows
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!

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

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.

Nose: [Laughing 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!

Head: We all belong to Christ.

All: Right! Here, here!

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

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. [Unpresentable Parts raises her hand.] Yes, Unpresentable Parts?

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

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

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

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

[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.

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.

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

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

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160. The tune to ‘Sweet Betsy from Pike’ is in the public domain; see PD Info (n.d.).
161. See Philippians 4:3.
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.
Ear: [To Eye.] And if I should say, ‘Because I’m not an eye I don’t belong to the body’, yet as the ear, I could not and would not cease to be part of the body. 177

Eye: Hey! If the whole body were like me – an eye … 178

Ear: [Interrupting.] Then how could we hear? And if the whole body were like me – an ear … 179

Nose: [Interrupting and carrying on.] Where then would the sense of smell be? 180

Head: [Kindly.] Yes, everybody needs a nose. 181

Nose: Thank you, Head.

[Nose boos. Laughter and good will suddenly prevail.] 182

Heart: That’s a good motto!

Funny Bone: [Laughing, pleased.] 183 Right! Good insights! We can trust that God has arranged you, parts of the body, just as he wanted you to be! 184

Eye: I get it! There are many parts, but one body. Hand, I need to apologise to you. I certainly said and thought this: ‘I don’t need you!’ 185 I was ugly and wrong. I’m sorry. 186

Head: [Stiffly, and clearing his throat.] Foot, I likewise owe you an apology, for I commented on your ugly toenails and said I didn’t like you or need you! 187 But hey, you’re changing!

Foot: You’re the dude! Hey, I like your haircut!

Funny Bone: [Laughing.] 188 And Paul goes on. And those parts that are weaker turn out to be indispensable, he says. 189 And those parts we think of as less honourable, we 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. 190

[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. 191

All: How good and kind is our God! 192

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. 193

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! 194 We’re not supposed to be divided! 195

[As the members break out of the huddle, they are very pleased.]
She sets 202

Whilst writing the rap, I bore in mind Childers' (1998:80) view that the foundation of a careful, skilled oral performance (whether for preaching, teaching or acting) contains four elements: rate, pitch, volume and pause. Proper emphasis transforms a dead reading or a dead performance into an enlivened event (see Childers ibid:84).

Foot: Well, since our last meeting I sprained my ankle badly and was on crutches for two weeks.

Hand: And I cut my finger almost to the bone.

Head: My head aches all the time.208

Eye: I have eyestrain from studying too much.

[Unpresentable Parts, Heart, and Nose show concern in all this.]

Unpresentable Parts: [Sighing.] If one of you suffers, I suffer.199

Nose: So do I! Paul said that and I agree!200 We all rejoice! Mmm. Let me teach you from Scripture.200

Head: Let's give her a beat.

Foot: [Laughing joyfully.] Right! Paul writes that there should be no division within the Body of Christ. The goal is equal concern of one for the other.207

Hand: See 1 Corinthians 12:26b.

Head: My head aches all the time.208

Eye: I have eyestrain from studying too much.

[Unpresentable Parts, Heart, and Nose show concern in all this.]

Unpresentable Parts: [Sighing.] If one of you suffers, I suffer.199

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Eye: I have eyestrain from studying too much.

Rap: Chanted by Funny Bone (All and Head break in)206

[Rap rhythm can be like this: Beat, Beat, Shhhhhhhhhhhhhh. Or like this:

Beat, Beat, Beat, Beat Beat Shhhhhhhhh. Or like this:

Beat, Beat, Beat, Beat. This is probably the easiest rhythm. It allows for rests. For example, 'Seek to do good' is in three beats plus a rest; 'Just as God' has two beats and two beats of rest. The downbeat for the 4/4 beat is on the first word in each line of the rap. Funny Bone can walk in time, snap fingers, take the whole stage, dance, et cetera.]

Head: Let's give her a beat.

Foot: [Four 'snappers' come forward. They can be, for example, Hand, Eye, Nose, and Head. They form a 'back up' group like 'doo-ah' singers following a lead crooner. A simple snapping beat is one, two, three, et cetera.]

Hand: Great! I'll give you the tempo! [She sets the beat she finds comfortable. This beat continues throughout her rap.]

Foot: [Laughing joyfully.] Right! Paul writes that there should be no division within the Body of Christ. The goal is equal concern of one for the other.207

Head: See 1 Corinthians 12:26a. Kistemaker (2002:438) says this passage 'describes the effect genuine care can have on members in the Christian church'.

Foot: By love, by love, By love serve one another.208

Head: All: By love, by love, By love serve one another.208

Hand: Seek to do good

Foot: Seek to do good

Head: Especially to those

Hand: Especially to those

Foot: What does love cover?

Head: What does love cover?

Foot: A multitude of sins!

Head: A multitude of sins!

Foot: Love covers

Head: Love covers

Foot: A multitude of sins!

Head: A multitude of sins!

Foot: By love serve one another.

Head: By love serve one another.

Foot: As I have loved you

Head: As I have loved you

Foot: Paul added this.

Head: All: Paul added this.

Hand: Funny Bone

Foot: Funny Bone

Head: Funny Bone

Foot: All: By love, by love, By love serve one another.

Hand: All: By love, by love, By love serve one another.

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Head: Funny Bone

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Foot: A multitude of sins!

Head: A multitude of sins!

Foot: Love covers

Head: Love covers

Foot: A multitude of sins!

Head: A multitude of sins!
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, oooeeeooow!
Bee bop, oooeeeooow!
Ephesians four, thirty-two
Ephesians four, thirty-two!

[General applause, laughter.213 Funny Bone bows.]

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’217

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
Meeeeeee moderate decisively!

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

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

Eye: 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!’

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 (2x). 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, Hilariter; Our God most high, our joy and boast, Alleluia, Alleluia! 213. Laughter, as Funny Bone shows, is individual and social, physical 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. A prop like a rug helps ‘the where’ of a scene (see Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:31).

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).
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: [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!

[Unpresentable Parts.]

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

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.’

Foot: 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.]

Unpresentable Parts: [Smiling.] Most certainly.

Ear: [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 engaging in ordinariness. Funny Bone falls in their creative category.

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’.


226 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\textsuperscript{232}
Tune: ‘Of the Father’s love begotten’\textsuperscript{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 Unpresentable 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.\textsuperscript{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 wheniced with humour, dance and song. Bumps in the road – ‘hicups’ 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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