THE PARSON - Preview information

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Director’s Notes

**Casting:** There are 29 characters in the play, but it is possible for actors to play more than one role. Some roles can also be eliminated if necessary (e.g. Sophie or a couple orphans).

**Staging and sets:** Approximately every other scene (those labeled “stage left”) is intended to be performed to the side of the stage or in front of a curtain while the set is changed for the next scene. This allows for a smooth pacing of the production. Music can be played underneath those side scenes; if the set is not quite ready when the scene is over, the music can continue until the stage is set.

Most scenes require merely some arrangement of tables and chairs. You can get more elaborate if you have the resources to do so, but much of the setting can be mimed by the actors.

Many scenes involve someone entering through a door. In our production, a student built a stand-alone door that could be rolled around the stage to where we needed it. One side was painted nicely; the other looked older and more run-down. It was a great set piece for this production and I highly recommend it if you have the resources – but again, a door is not necessary.

**Costumes:** The play is set in the Depression era. All characters would wear old-fashioned, country-style clothing. The orphans should be shabbily-dressed in the first scene and have better clothes later in the play.

**Music:** Blue-grass music clips are perfect for scene changes and to start and end the play.

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ACT I

Scene 1: *The church potluck*

Sarah: Good evening, ladies.

Ladies: Good evening! Hello, Sarah! Etc.

Ruthie: Why, Sarah, I do hope that’s your famous potato salad!

Sarah: Yes, it is. I hope I made enough. I was considering bringing cole slaw this time…..

Anna: Oh, no, you couldn’t have! Why, it just isn’t a church potluck without Sister Sarah’s potato salad, you know. (*everyone agrees*)

Sarah: Oh, you all are much too kind. So, have you seen him yet?

Anna: No, he hasn’t arrived.

Caroline: I declare, I’m just as anxious as a body could *possibly* be!

Ruthie: I am, too. I mean, a new parson!

Rachel: And a young, *single* man! Whatever was the Bishop thinking? Why, old Rev. Peters . .

All: (*sigh*) God bless his weary soul!

Rachel: . . . he served our congregation for more than fifty years before he went to his reward last winter. Here in Stillwater County, we’re used to a learned man with lots of pastoral experience. Why, I heard that our congregation is this young man’s first appointment out of seminary!

Caroline: Oh! Whatever was the Bishop thinking?

Rachel: And you know how those seminaries are getting these days. He’s probably full of all sorts of new-fangled ideas about the Bible and preaching and ministry and what not. Well, no matter – it’ll all come out right in the end, I’m sure.

Gertie: (*entering group*) So, have you seen him yet?

Anna: No, and I declare, I’m just as anxious as . . . (*women fade upstage, men wander downstage*)

Nat: So, my wife did some dusting and sweeping at the parsonage while I was fixing the screen on that window. I think the place is all in good order now, Elder Harkins.

Harkins: Wonderful! Thank you so much for your service, Brother Nathaniel!

Nat: Not a problem at all. Happy to be a part of the Lord’s work. Oh, and Thomas here spent some time getting the garden plot in shape.

Harkins: Well, thank you, Brother Thomas.

Thomas: Mm-hmm.

Nat: I assume the new parson’ll be wanting to get some vegetables started in there pretty soon.

Harkins: Well, I wouldn’t be so sure about that, actually. I’m not certain Rev. Lucas is much for gardening and farming and such.

Nat: Not much for farming?

Harkins: Oh, I don’t mean he has anything against farming. He’s just more of an intellectual city type. Don’t quite picture him getting his hands dirty in the ground, you know?

Nat: You don’t say…..

Thomas: Mm-hmm.

Joseph: (*entering with Rev*) Elder Harkins?

Harkins: Ah! Here they are now. (*crosses to greet them*) Welcome! Welcome, Rev. Lucas! Thank you, Joseph. (*to crowd*) Attention! Attention, everyone! I’d like to welcome you all to our all-church potluck fellowship! (*applause*) And as always, let’s give a warm thank-you to the faithful women of our hospitality committee for making all the arrangements here today. (*applause*) And, of course, I’d like to introduce you to our guest of honor, the reason for our assemblage this evening: our new parson, Rev. Paul Lucas! (*applause*) Now, I’m sure we all want to do everything we can to make the Reverend feel most welcome to our congregation, so let’s be sure we all introduce ourselves and give his hand a good shaking before we leave, alright? (*laughter and applause; girls run up to front corner*)

Lily: That’s . . ?

Julia: . . the new Reverend?

Sophie: Oh, my golly! He’s . .

All: . . soooo handsome!! (*squeal a little; fade back*)

Ruthie: That’s the new Reverend?

Sarah: He’s pretty young . . .

Caroline: And pretty citified . .

Anna: Well, I’m just as astonished as a body could be. (*fade back*)

Nat: So, that’s the new Reverend.

Joseph: That’s him.

Thomas: Mm-hmm.

Nat: Things are gonna get interesting around here, I’m guessin’.

Joseph and Thomas: Mm-hmm. (*fade back*)

Harkins: Rev. Lucas, let me introduce you to Mr. Josiah Lynde, and his wife Rachel.

Josiah: (*nods in greeting*) Reverend.

Rachel: (*steps in front of Josiah*) Why, Rev. Lucas , it’s so good to welcome you to our little community! And do let me know if there’s anything I can do to help you get settled in.

Rev: Well, thank you, Mrs. Lynde. I appreciate your offer.

Rachel: I’m sure you’ll be wanting to visit the Orphanage and take care of matters there right away. (*sees his look of confusion)* Oh, didn’t the Elders tell you about the Orphanage? Oh, well—no matter—it’ll all come out right in the end, I’m sure. But you won’t want to put that off any longer than necessary, of course.

Rev: Of course, no, I’m sure I won’t . .

Caroline: Rev. Lucas, I’m Mrs. Joseph Platz. We’re so happy to have you here in Stillwater County.

Rev: Thank you, Mrs. Platz.

Caroline: And please let me introduce you to my lovely daughter, Lily.

Anna: (*interrupting*) I’m Mrs. Nathaniel Foley, Rev. Lucas, and you really must meet my Julia. She serves our congregation as the organist on Sunday morning. Such a wonderful musician she is!

Caroline: Oh, yes – she provides very competent accompaniment to my Lily’s lovely solos with the church choir.

Anna: Reverend, have you tried the puff pastries? They’re my Julia’s specialty!

Rev: Well, no, but I would love to . .

Caroline: They’ll whet your appetite for a piece of my Lily-girl’s fabulous apple pie!

Ruthie: Ladies! Ladies! Give the man some room here! I’m Ruthie Harkins, Reverend, and I’m SO sorry for this shameful behavior. (*glares at the other women*) I’m sure you’re hungry after your long trip.

Rev: Yes, that food is smells wonderful!

Ruthie: Of course it does. My daughter Sophie will be happy to lead you to the food table. (*Sophie takes his arm and leaves, smirking at the other girls; they follow angrily; the moms all glare at each other*)

Nat: And it begins.

Josiah: Yup.

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Act 2

Scene 1: general store

(*Nat is watching Josiah and Thomas playing checkers; Josiah and Thomas almost never look up from the board. Fred is at the counter with Samuel*)

Nat: Fine sermon Reverend preached yesterday, wasn’t it?

Thomas: Yup.

Nat: One can’t ever hear too much about the grace of God.

Josiah: Mm-hmm.

Samuel: Anything else for you today, Fred?

Fred: No, that’s all that’s on Mr. Claussen’s list. Thanks, Sam.

Samuel: See you next week!

Nat: Hullo, Fred!

Fred: Hullo, Nat. Thomas. Josiah.

Thomas/Josiah: (*nod*) Fred.

Nat: Claussen ‘bout done with his harvesting?

Fred: Pretty close.

Nat: I suppose you’ll be needing some work then, huh?

Fred: Actually, Mr. Claussen’s keeping me on for the winter. He’s having a harder time getting around these days, you know.

Nat: Well, I’m sorry to hear that about Pat, but glad to hear you’ll be staying around for the winter!

Fred: Yep. Stillwell County’s a good place to be. See you boys next week! (*exits*)

Nat: Have a good day, Fred!

Josiah/Thomas: (*nod*) Fred.

Nat: (*to Samuel*) That Fred’s a good man.

Samuel: That’s a fact.

Nat: Pat’s lucky to have him around, with his arthritis acting up like it is.

Samuel: Sure is. I think he’s glad he took the risk on him. (*John enters*)

Nat: Yep. You just never know about a fella.

Josiah: Mm-hmm.

Thomas: Yup.

Nat: So, what’s the count here – you up by three games, Josiah?

Josiah: Yup.

Samuel: (*to John*) Can I help you, sir?

John: Yeah – I’m needing a knapsack of some kind. What do you have?

Samuel: Well, let’s see here . . . would this work for you?

John: (*looking it over*) Yeah. That should do the job. How much?

Nat: Come on, Tom. Don’t let the old man walk all over you here! You’re the checkers king in this county, aren’t you?

Thomas: Mm-hmm.

Samuel: (*taking John’s money*) So, are you traveling through?

John: Yeah, maybe. Looking for work, if I can find it. (*takes off jacket and starts to stuff into sack*)

Samuel: Well, good luck with that. Harvest is wrapping up now, so work is going to be a little harder to come by.

John: Yeah, so I figured. (*Nat notices John’s tattoo on neck*) I don’t need anything long-term, though. Just need some cash to get me by when I get back on the road again to the city.

Samuel: Not hanging around long, eh?

John: Naw. Getting back to my friends. Not interested in farm life.

Samuel: Well, there were some big storms around here last week. I reckon there’s some places got damage that needs fixed. If you’re handy about such things, you just might find be able to pick up a buck or two. (*Nat whispers into his ear*)

John: Yeah, I can do that stuff. That’d be good. Say, you got a little jerky? I haven’t had anything to eat since last night, and that wasn’t much.

Samuel: (*hesitant now*) Well, I don’t know. I think you’d best be moving along.

John: Well, you have anything else I can eat while I walk?

Nat: He said to move along, mister.

John: What’s your problem? I’ve got money to pay for it. (*puts it on the counter*) All of a sudden, you don’t want my money?

Samuel: (*pause; takes money and puts some jerky on the counter)* There you go. Now you better move on to the next county. No work around here.

John: But you just said . . (*all are staring at him now*) . . alright, then. I’m goin’. Thanks for so “graciously” accepting my business. (*he exits*)

Nat: Did you see it? On the back of his neck on the right side.

Samuel: Are you sure that’s what it was?

Nat: I’m sure. My uncle had a friend who was in the state pen. Had the same tattoo.

Samuel: Wow. We’d better keep an eye on him.

Nat: Yeah. Make sure he doesn’t hang around here very long.

Josiah/Thomas: Hmmm….

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