## PLAGUE TO PLENTY: THE MUSICAL, A DRAMA OF BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS

**Setting:** The drama unfolds on a Saturday morning at South Quirksville United Evangelical Lutheran Church (SQUELCh), where SQUELChers are preparing for the funeral of their recently deceased minister, Pastor Methuselah Liepenauer, (pronounced *lee'-pen-now-er*) who passed away the previous Sunday at the age of 103.

**Cast**

**Henry Roundtwitter**, Property Committee Chairman of the South Quirksville United Evangelical Lutheran Church, anchor of the choir's bass section, and 7th generation SQUELCh-er

**Eliza Lebensmoody**, (pronounced *lay'-benz-moody*) President of the Church Council, soprano soloist, and Upteenth th generation SQUELCh-er

**Helen Hilfrich**, Church Secretary

**Intern Ida Hopewell**, Third year Gettysburg Seminarian assigned for her internship to South Quirksville United Evangelical Lutheran Church

**Notes:**

**Props:**

- **"Frogs" can be represented by green balloons (<u>not</u> helium-inflated), tied with string to chancel furnishings**, eg, altar, pulpit, font
- Eliza Lebensmoody carries a large manila envelope containing two copies of the song, There's a hole in pulpit
- Intern Ida carries a small Bible and a bushel basket

Sound effects:

- A recording of frog sounds, "ribbeting," will play softly at times in background, and louder, as seems appropriate—should not be constant and should not compete with dialog.

Pastor Methuselah Liepenauer's Funeral Anthem, "There's a hole in our pulpit"

- See pages 8-9

**PLAGUE TO PLENTY: THE MUSICAL…THE SCRIPT**

**Henry**: Eliza, we got a… situation in the chancel. Come see!

*Henry and Eliza go into the church and approach the chancel where frogs cover the altar table, font, and pulpit (represented by green balloon tied to these furnishings. Ribbeting can be heard).*

**Eliza**: Oh, Henry!!! Where did all these frogs come from??!! They're everywhere!!!

**Henry**: Well, not everywhere. Just on the pulpit, the altar and in the baptismal font…

*(As Eliza and Henry take stock of the situation, the church secretary, Helen Hilfrich, enters walking toward the chancel, followed by Ida Hopewell, the church's new seminarian intern. Ida is carrying a bible and a bushel basket)*

**Helen**: (*calling out as she approaches)* The new Seminarian Intern has just arrived! Here she is!..... Oh, my! What are all those frogs doing in the chancel?! The funeral bulletin doesn't mention anything about frogs! *(Helen circles disapprovingly around the frog-invested area a few times and exits the way she came in).*

**Intern Ida**: Funeral? Who died? And where's Pastor Liepenauer?

**Henry**: Eliza, didn't anyone tell the Seminary?

**Eliza**: Oh, I knew there was something I forgot! I forgot to call the Seminary and tell that Pastor Liepenauer died. I'm so sorry. *(To Ida)* What's your name?

**Intern Ida:** Ida. Ida Hopewell. *Intern* Ida Hopewell….

**Eliza**: Oh, Intern Ida, I don't know how to break this to you—Pastor Liepenauer died last Sunday, at the end of the 11 AM service. His funeral is supposed to be this afternoon…But as you can see, we have a…

**Henry**: ..a situation…

**Eliza**: Actually it's more like ….an infestation! I'm sorry, forgive me, Ida, but…. what are you carrying?

**Intern Ida**: A Bible, NRSV, The New Revised Standard Version. I hope that's okay, I mean I have other versions, NIV, NEB, TEV…

**Eliza**: No, Ida, not the Bible. What's *that* for? *(pointing to the basket)*

**Intern Ida:** It's bushel basket. I got this note from Pastor Liepenauer a couple weeks back telling me to meet him here today, with a bible and a bushel basket. He said the basket was for… gleaning.

**Henry:** Gleaning?

**Intern Ida**: Yes, at the Intern-Supervisor team building workshop at the Seminary, I'd told him about how much Seminary was costing and how much I had to take out in loans, and he got very excited and said that he had a very practical skill he could teach me that might help me in ministry over the long haul—gleaning.

**Henry**: Well, whaddya' know! Pastor Liepnauer did always say that he owed his vigor in his advanced age to lots of fresh air, exercise and a steady diet of fresh fruits and vegetables!

**Eliza:** Well, again, I am so sorry you came all this way without knowing about Pastor Liepenhauer's passing. And I'm even sorrier that you find us in this….situation….up to our SQUELCHer elbows in frogs!!!

**Intern Ida:** (softly) Dear Lord, grant me non-anxious presence….non-anxious presence…

**Eliza:** I'm sorry, Ida, What was that?

**Intern Ida**: I was just remembering something I learned at Seminary…about being a non-anxious presence during a crisis.

**Henry:** That's fine advice. Sounds like you've had some good teachers. You didn't also happen to learn anything about frogs, did you?

**Intern Ida**: As a matter of fact…In Dr. Marty Stevens' course on the Book of Exodus, we did learn that when Moses goes to the Egyptian Pharaoh and tells him that God says, Let my people go!, and the Pharaoh ignores him, so God uses frogs to get the Pharaoh's attention…

**Eliza**: God uses frogs…to get attention…..hmmmmm.

**Intern Ida**: And in Dr. Stevens' Hebrew class we learned that the Hebrew word for frog in the Old Testament is made up two different words: one that means "to leap" and another that means "to know." So we could say that a frog is one who knows…oh, my!...who knows when to leap, like a leap-….

**Eliza:** (finishing Ida's sentence)…-knower……..

*(Eliza, suddenly deep in thought, wanders off to the side and opens the envelope, and pulls out the music Pastor Liepenauer selected for his funeral anthem)*

**Intern Ida**: Isn't that a coincidence.! Leap-knower…Pastor Liepenauer….Maybe that explains why I liked him right off the bat. And of all the books in the Old Testament, Exodus is my favorite. Let my people go! God as liberator of the enslaved…I can hardly wait to be one of God's proclaimers of liberation from enslavement—enslavement to grief, to despair, to injustice…

**Henry**: (getting caught up in Intern Ida's enthusiasm)…Yes! freed from injustice! Freed from poverty!

**Intern Ida:** (deflating) Well, yes, but…*poverty* is exactly what I'm afraid *I'll* need liberation from…in fact, I'm not even sure that I can keep studying at the seminary after this internship year. I'm really worried about being enslaved to my education-debt…until *I'm* 103! (Looking at the bushel basket thoughtfully). But, I shouldn't be so self-centered. I am so sorry for you and the congregation losing Pastor Leipenauer...

(Eliza rejoins the Ida and Henry, considerably brighter)

**Eliza:** Oh, Ida, it's not your fault. And...I'm not even sorry that I forgot to call the Seminary. Because, Intern Ida, had I called then you wouldn't have come and we would have been stuck with these frogs without a clue as to their meaning.

**Henry**: Their meaning? These frogs have…meaning?

**Eliza**: It's just like Intern Ida said. God uses frogs to get our attention when there's some serious liberating to be done!

**Intern Ida:** I said that?

**Eliza**: You did! That and more! That non-anxious presence really works. Your prayerful calm helped me let go of my fear and open this envelope—containing the music Pastor Liepenauer chose to be sung at his funeral. And now I have! And now it all makes sense! You *(to Ida)* being here…and you *(to the audience)…*and you, especially you *(pointing to the frogs)!*

**Henry**: The frogs? They make sense? !

**Eliza**: Henry, these frogs are a gift! From God! And if I'm not mistaken, these frogs may even be a little parting gift from Pastor Liepenauer. Look here, Henry, at this anthem our dear departed Pastor "Leap-Knower" left us to sing—and by "us," I mean you and me, Henry. It's a duet!

(Henry studies the music, starts humming the tune and begins to chuckle.)

**Henry**: Well, I'll be..!

**Intern Ida:** Is there anything I can do?

**Eliza:** Absolutely. You can take the offering during the funeral—with that bushel basket.

**Intern Ida**: Okay, but isn't an offering during a funeral a little unusual?

**Eliza**: Can you think of a better way to celebrate the gift of a life of service given to God than by making it possible for the next generations to enjoy that same. This offering is going to go to the Seminary. To help bright gifted future servants of the Good News—like you, Ida!—be freed to answer God's call!

**Intern Ida**: That's really wonderful! But.. what about the frogs?

**Eliza:** If the Bible gives any clues here, then the frogs have done their job when we've learned to leap, leap to free seminarians from their bondage to financial obstacles. And one offering every 75 years can't accomplish that!

**Henry:** Hey, Eliza, you almost sound like a preacher yourself. Have you thought about going to seminary? (Intern Ida nods in enthusiastic agreement).

**Eliza**: Well, for now let's just concentrate on the matters at hand. Henry, you and I have a Pastor Liepenauer's funeral anthem to practice! (Ida takes a seat and listens)

Henry and Eliza sing "There's a hole in the pulpit" (see attached)

**Epilogue**

**Henry:** Well, that's the way that day began, that Great and Awesome Day, that Day of the Plague of Biblical Proportions. The real miracle, what SQUELCHers now call " The Plague to Plenty Transformation," happened during the service right after the prayers of the people when Eliza asked God to help keep us mindful of the blessings of ministry and the importance of supporting future church leaders on a regular basis, early and often. While Eliza and Intern Ida passed bushel baskets through the congregation, the frogs on the altar and the pulpit and the baptismal font just hopped up and down and out of the chancel and quietly arranged themselves among the members of the congregation—some in pews, some in the choir loft, others in the nursery care room. Ever since then—now so many years later! , those frogs are still here! If you listen you can still hear 'em..... And the transformations keep a-coming, too.

So, you may wonder: will South Quirksville United Evangelical Lutheran Church *always* have these frogs with us? We can only hope to be so blessed! At least that's what our new minister, Pastor Lee Leapready, likes to say. We can only hope! And… so can you! Why, in your church, I bet you have more frogs than you realize!

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NOTES:

**SONG TEXT:**
**"There's a hole in our pulpit"**

**There's a hole in our pulpit, dear Liza, dear Liza.**
**There's a hole in our pulpit, dear Liza, a hole.**

**Then fill it, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry.**
**Then fill it, dear Henry, dear Henry, then fill it.**

**With whom shall I fill it, dear Liza, dear Liza?**
**With whom shall I fill it, dear Liza, with whom?**

**With a pastor, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry,**
**With a pastor, dear Henry, dear Henry, a pastor.**

**You'd be a good pastor, dear Liza, dear Liza,**
**You'd be a good pastor, dear Liza, You! Called!!**

**With learning, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry,**
**With learning, dear Henry, post-college, 4 years!**

**Where shall you learn, dear Liza, dear Liza?**
**Where shall you learn, dear Liza, Where? Where?**

**At Gettysburg Seminary, dear Henry, dear Henry,**
**At Gettysburg Seminary, dear Henry, the Sem! (Seminary)**

**Seminary costs money, dear Liza, dear Liza,**
**Seminary costs money, dear Liza, not cheap!**

**Then fund it, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry,**
**Then fund it, dear Henry, dear Henry, fund it.**

**With what shall I fund it, dear Liza, dear Liza?**
**With what shall I fund it, dear Liza, with what?**

**Not manna, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry,**
**Not  manna, dear Henry, dear Henry, from Heaven!**

**Has manna stopped falling, dear Liza, dear Liza?**
**Has manna stopped falling, dear Liza?  When? When?**

**Open your bible, dear Henry, dear Henry!**
**Open your Bible, Read Joshua 5:12!**

**This is bad news, dear Liza, dear Liza!**
**Bad news, dear Liza, dear Liza, bad news!**

**We need some Good News, dear Henry, dear Henry,**
**We need some Good News, dear Henry, Good News!**

**Who preaches Good News, dear Liza, dear Liza?**
**Who preaches Good News, dear Liza, Who? Who?**

**A pastor, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry,**
**A pastor, dear Henry, dear Henry, a pastor.**

**From where, dear Liza, dear Liza, dear Liza?**
**From where, dear Liza, from where?**

**From the pulpit, dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry,**
**From the pulpit, dear Henry, dear Henry, the pulpit.**

**There's a hole in our pulpit, dear Liza, dear Liza,**
**There's a hole in our pulpit, dear Liza, a hole!**

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