

stained glass

a play in two acts

by p. m. strain

Patrick M. Strain
2909 Wild Rose Ln.
Onalaska, WI 54650
PatrickStrain@Charter.net
608.332.8257
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CAST OF CHARACTERS (alphabetical)

CONWAY HARDING, 52, divorced businessman, First Lutheran Church's council president, determined to see the church move purposefully into the 21st Century.

KURT HYDE, 36, Susannah's husband, a hard working farmer, mechanic and handy-man.

SUSANNAH HYDE, 32, Kurt's wife, mother of four, lifelong member of First Lutheran Church.

SOPHIA LUMENS, 29, single female artist and stained glass expert, consultant for the building project for First Lutheran Church.

PASTOR RACHEL PAULSEN, 26, a single woman of deep spirit, newly called pastor of First Lutheran Church.

CHARLENE V. (aka CHARLIE) ROMANO, 47, strong-willed woman in the demolition and construction business and advocate for same-sex marriage; a longtime friend of Conway Harding.

RICH SAUNDERS, 26, single man, charismatic youth director and leader of contemporary music at First Lutheran Church.

NAOMI STONE, 37, a vibrant woman looking to reconnect with the church.

ALAN ZASTROW, could be 100, perennial caretaker of First Lutheran Church.

TIME / LOCATION

Time: 2010

Place: First Lutheran Church of Westfield, MN, a building constructed in 1917.

PRODUCTION NOTES

As a scenic and lighting designer who has frequently designed on a shoe-string budget, my approach to playwriting is infused with theatricality and symbolism, not realism.

Were I the director speaking to the scenic designer, I would encourage an evocation of an old church, a maze of hallways, rooms and stairs. Various stained glass windows may be seen or (were the lighting designer present as well) indicated. The best scenic and lighting design will evoke, not present, a large, old church. I've found many old churches, as well as scripture passages, hard to navigate and/or easy to get lost in (in the negative as well as positive sense), and the scenery and lighting might want that same goal.

I've always paid much too little attention to shoes to have terribly constructive things to say to costume designers, save the obvious - they should dress the way they live.

Since I eagerly anticipate the creativity of the actor and director to make sense of and personalize the intricacies of the characters, I rarely, if ever, underline words I may think should be emphasized and never add "angrily" or some such to the dialogue. There are many "right" ways to say a line and many ways to embody these characters. Throughout the script, however, various means are used to indicate my intentions with truncated dialogue (that I seem to use a fair amount):

A sentence that ends in an ellipsis... indicates the speaker has stopped themselves.

A sentence that ends with a dash - indicates that the speaker was cut off by the next speaker.

A sentence that ends either after an ellipsis... or a dash - [*with additional words in italics in brackets*] indicates the words in the brackets were next to be spoken, but are not spoken, and efforts could be made on the part of the actor to, as much as possible, evoke the bracketed words.

Occasionally, a (non-standard) guide to pronunciation will

be included [*pr. in-KLEW-ded*] for odd words.

One last word to the actor and reader. It may be tempting to simplify these characters into pro-gay and anti-gay stereotypes; to like one person because they agree with you and hate another because they don't. I am convinced this play, on first blush, will be a Rorschach test, but because theatre is an art form, the true depth of meaning will only come through dialogue, discussion, analysis and careful suspension of preconceived ideas. Remember that no character thinks they are the bad guy.

And lastly, I've no doubt people will ask me (should this piece ever find a production company, which it won't) which character represents my point of view, and I will say, frustratingly, as every good playwright before me, they all do - even the ones that I strongly, strongly disagree with. I do have a point to make with this play - I believe that leaving everything "open for the audience to decide" is weakness of artistic character. This play certainly presents my views on the intersection of sexuality and the Christian (maybe specifically Lutheran and even more specifically ELCA and even more specifically early 2000's ELCA) church, but it took a whole host of characters to encompass my thoughts.

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And the without-whom gang: my wife Amy, daughters Emily and Abigail who are relentless in their love and support.

And though it may go without saying, it should be noted that this play does not represent the views of the congregation of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, the ELCA as an organization or Christians in general. If you have a bone to pick, it's with me.

Peace,
Patrick

ACT 1

PRELUDE

The actors are scattered around the stage. Each person is lit, separately, in turn. The bold lines will be emphasized when these lines are repeated.

PASTOR RACHEL

We are called to be unified in Christ; That is of paramount importance. Now, I know very well what the Word of God says; it's knowing the mind of God that's the tricky part.

CONWAY

It doesn't matter whether or not your theology is sound; if no one comes to the church to hear the message, what difference does it make? The church that doesn't change will die.

KURT

I am just the way I am. That's how I've lived my life, but now I'm wondering if God is calling me to follow another path. Can God truly replace a heart of stone?

SUSANNAH

A person should be loved and forgiven, even when, maybe especially when, we find their actions unforgivable. Ultimately we are called to just love.

RICH

The word of God is alive and active; it judges our thoughts and intentions of our hearts. We must let Scripture speak to us and not just listen for what we want to hear.

NAOMI

God is a God of love, so I don't understand when people claim to worship that loving God while hating people who want to join. I can't find any sense in that.

CHARLIE

I don't care whether you like who I am or not. I'm done trying to play nice; I will not let anyone stand between me and the person I love.

SOPHIA

We are all, every single one of us, broken. We are all separated from God and each other, and we spend our entire lives desperately trying to be reunited.

The actors repeat these lines in an overlapping manner twice. Each time they will begin their lines after the preceding actor finishes their **bold line**, the first time speaking their other lines somewhat more softly, the second time increasing the volume and intensity until in a blackout we hear the sound of an explosion: stone walls falling, wood cracking and over all, the sound of glass shattering.

Lights rise on ALAN, holding a shard of stained glass.

ALAN

Somethin' miraculous about a stained glass window. Sun shinin' through all those different colored shards early on a Sunday mornin', sending light dancin' everywhere. The stained glass of First Lutheran... well, one might say the pieces have been scattered to hell 'n' gone. First Lutheran Church was established in Westfield, Minnesota, as the cornerstone says, Anno Domini [*pr. ANN-oh DOE-mih-knee*] - in the year of our Lord - nineteen-seventeen. And in nineteen-eighty-eight First Lutheran joined together with other ALC congregations across the country to help form the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. For you non-Lutherans, that's the liberal one. And now, in two thousand-ten... well, this is the story of how Pastor Rachel Paulsen lost her life trying to hold her church together, and it's a tragedy for everyone involved.

(Perhaps he looks at the shard.)

Ironically, all this devastation is the result of a building project.

ALAN stands still as the scenery emerges onto the stage (or is revealed by lighting). He begins whistling "AMAZING GRACE" and exits.

SCENE 1

First Lutheran Church.

*PASTOR RACHEL and SOPHIA enter
down a few steps US.*

SOPHIA

Is this the right way?

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm still getting oriented, myself.

SOPHIA

Look at this stone work.

PASTOR RACHEL

A bit unsightly, I suppose, but that's the original
foundation; literally rock solid.

SOPHIA

Amazing.

PASTOR RACHEL

It's like a labyrinth, to be perfectly honest. The church
has been added to quite a bit over the years; pathways
leading to nooks and crannies and, none too seldom,
(she opens a closet door)

dead ends.

SOPHIA

Pastor Rachel, I'm still not sure what my role in this building
project is supposed to be; I feel like I'm late to the party.

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm just getting up to speed myself; this project was already
underway when I was called.

SOPHIA

So Conway was -

PASTOR RACHEL

The point man, yes. When he brought in our general
contractor, she insisted on a consultant to evaluate the
stained glass; she recommended you.

SOPHIA

Your architect hadn't consulted with anyone?

PASTOR RACHEL

He hadn't thought it was going to be a problem.

SOPHIA

Most people underestimate how much care stained glass needs.

PASTOR RACHEL

Are they in bad shape?

SOPHIA

They need some love. For instance, at first glance, some pieces are pulling away from the lead coming. [*pr. LED KAY-ming*]

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm sorry - lead coming?

SOPHIA

The lines in the windows - it's what holds the glass together. You've got pieces starting to separate.

PASTOR RACHEL

Could you restore them?

SOPHIA

Conway said that you just wanted an assessment.

PASTOR RACHEL

Well, we can't leave them like that, can we? Separating?

SOPHIA

At first glance, none are in immanent danger, but if you want to keep them from falling to pieces, something needs to be done.

PASTOR RACHEL

That's what I thought.

SOPHIA

Can I make an honest observation?

PASTOR RACHEL

Sure.

SOPHIA

Your building committee seems pretty messed up; like they're going in ten different directions.

PASTOR RACHEL

Wise observation. Without going into all the sordid details, the congregation has developed... factions.

SOPHIA

"How pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity."

PASTOR RACHEL

That's one of the Psalms, right?

SOPHIA

One-thirty-three.

PASTOR RACHEL

This church has been through a lot, so I've been meditating on Ephesians four: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

SOPHIA

That's good. The bond of peace.

PASTOR RACHEL

I'll keep making every effort. But that's my problem... tell me what you thought about Solomonson's presentation.

SOPHIA

He kept using words like "sleek" and "efficient" like this church is... *[an eye sore.]* I know portions may be, as you say, unsightly, but...

PASTOR RACHEL

His design's better than I thought it would be.

SOPHIA

I'm not saying it's butt-ugly, just... Oh. I'm sorry. My mouth sometimes.

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm having a hard time getting used to everyone cleaning up their language around me. I keep worrying that I'm going to drop the F-bomb in committee meetings.

SOPHIA

I'll keep that in mind.

PASTOR RACHEL

So, the design isn't butt ugly...

SOPHIA

Yes, this old structure poses certain challenges, but it's the heart of who you are. Stained glass, held in place by this venerable old stone, tells the story of your faith.

PASTOR RACHEL

What about the idea of hanging the windows in the new narthex?

SOPHIA

There are churches that do that.

PASTOR RACHEL

And... *[you don't like that idea?]*

SOPHIA

Stained glass was created to have sunlight streaming through it. Anything less is a tragedy.

CONWAY and CHARLIE enter down the same US steps. They have an easy and quick wit between them.

CHARLIE

I could bring this old man down in a heartbeat.

CONWAY

I thought the foundation might cause some issues.

CHARLIE

Bigger they are, harder they fall.

PASTOR RACHEL

Conway.

CONWAY

Reverend Paulsen. Moving right along, don't you think?

CHARLIE

Boy, the smell of this place brings back memories.

PASTOR RACHEL

Memories?

CHARLIE

I grew up in this church.

PASTOR RACHEL

I didn't know that. Where do you attend now?

CHARLIE

I don't. *(to Sophia, extending a hand)* Sophia Lumens.

SOPHIA

Do I know you?

CHARLIE

Your reputation precedes you. Friends call me Charlie.

SOPHIA

Nice to... *[meet you.]* Wait a minute. Charlie Romano. I know you. You're, ah -

CHARLIE

The overbearing dyke pushing for legalizing gay marriage?

CONWAY

I thought "dyke" was politically incorrect.

CHARLIE

It would be if you said it.

(to SOPHIA)

That isn't a problem, is it? My being a lesbian?

SOPHIA

No... no, of course not.

CONWAY

I told the committee that Charlie's the best general contractor for the job, period. Her sexual preference isn't a factor. Her firm did an incredible job on our corporate headquarters.

CHARLIE

Orientation.

CONWAY

Sorry?

CHARLIE

The term is sexual orientation, not preference. What decade are you living in?

CONWAY

(as a gibe at a friend)

Boy, "overbearing dyke" is right.

PASTOR RACHEL

Sophia, you remember our Church Council President.

CONWAY

Excuse my razzing Charlie, but somebody's gotta give her a hard time.

SOPHIA

That's what old friends are for, right?

CONWAY

We're actually very lucky to have Charlie on board - I had to do a little arm twisting.

CHARLIE

Not so much. I'm happy to help.

SOPHIA

So, how's your fight for same-sex marriage coming?

CHARLIE

Like a snail on a turtle's back, but with denominations like the ELCA making progress, it's only a matter of time.

CONWAY

We're ordaining openly gay pastors and one of the few denominations blessing same-sex couples...

CHARLIE

It ain't marriage, and congregations can still choose not to bless same-sex couples, but it's a foot in the door.

SOPHIA

What has your congregation decided?

Pause.

CHARLIE

That's the big question, isn't it?

PASTOR RACHEL

We haven't had time to address it yet.

CONWAY

Way I look at it: new pastor, new era, new building. Which reminds me, I was just telling Charlie that we want to get the dirty work done quickly so we don't rile up the neighbors.

CHARLIE

Demolition isn't like it was in my old man's day; we do the calculations.

SOPHIA

You're talking like it's already been decided to take down the sanctuary.

CHARLIE

Isn't that the plan?

CONWAY

(to PASTOR RACHEL) Is this about the finance committee? (to CHARLIE) There were a couple eyebrows raised by your demolition fee; and questions about using explosives.

CHARLIE

I do what I do and it costs what it costs. As for the explosives, it's a ground-breaking technique that utilizes just a few small strategic charges.

CONWAY

And then Charlie's crew is already on site to start construction. We've gone over this.

PASTOR RACHEL

Actually, Sophia's got me thinking... what if we keep the sanctuary -

CONWAY

Reverend Paulsen -

PASTOR RACHEL

Just hear me out. What if we keep just the sanctuary and build around it?

CHARLIE

Conway, is she serious? You have finished plans upstairs, dated two-thousand and five by the way - you've been sitting on this project for five years...

CONWAY

It's been a lot longer than that, let me tell you.

PASTOR RACHEL

What would it mean?

CHARLIE

Besides the fact that you'd be back at square one? Well, for starters, demolition of all these add-on buildings would be almost twice as expensive.

CONWAY

Construction would be more difficult.

CHARLIE

Isn't that how you ended up with this piece-meal structure in the first place?

PASTOR RACHEL

Just trying to discern the options.

CHARLIE

Boy, I forgot how wishy-washy Lutherans are.

CONWAY

Charlie.

CHARLIE

What is the goal of this building project, Pastor?

PASTOR RACHEL

We want a facility that is an effective community outreach and worship center.

CONWAY

Wouldn't you say we're looking for a way to accommodate more people?

CHARLIE

Bottom line? People who renovate instead of rebuild have less building and in five years are angry they didn't do it right the first time.

ALAN enters down US steps whistling
"A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD."

PASTOR RACHEL

Alan, are they ready for us?

ALAN

Yah... way I see it.

CONWAY

OK... I'll go corral the committee.

PASTOR RACHEL

Join you shortly.

CHARLIE (ASIDE)

And Conway. The contract; and we still need to talk about-
[my wedding plans.]

CONWAY

Yep. I'm on it.

CONWAY exits up US steps.

PASTOR RACHEL

Alan, have you met Charlene and Sophia?

ALAN

Ah, yah. Little Charlie. 's been a long time.

CHARLIE

I didn't think you'd remember me.

ALAN

Ah, yah. Ya went off to school... early '80s, if I 'member right. Lost track of ya after that.

CHARLIE

A lot of people did.

PASTOR RACHEL

Sophia, this is Alan Zastrow. He's our... well, he does it all.

ALAN

First one in and... well, ya know what they say: last one out turn off the eternal flame.

SOPHIA

That's funny.

CHARLIE

It used to be oil, right?

ALAN

'sright. 'ventually we changed it out for 'lectric, though.

CHARLIE

Fire marshal today'd go mental over a live oil flame twenty-four, seven.

ALAN

S'pose so, yah. Too bad, though. Seeing a cord takes all the myst'ry outta it.

PASTOR RACHEL

You still have the oil one around here somewhere, I bet.

ALAN

Ah, yah. Can't throw it out; it was donated. Aaronson family, I 'spect it was, eh Charlie?

CHARLIE

S'pose so.

PASTOR RACHEL

Alan, without you this whole place would fall to pieces, I'm sure of it. Well, I better get going. See you upstairs.

PASTOR RACHEL exits up US steps.

ALAN

That Pastor Rachel...

CHARLIE

You like her?

ALAN

I like her, sure; but it's not her job to be liked.

CHARLIE

What is her job?

ALAN

First day at his new church the ol' country preacher's sermon was about how we're all rebellious, so God's love took Christ to the cross, 'n' Christ died 'n' rose again so that we could be forgiven. Next week, same thing. We're all rebellious, so God's love took Christ to the cross, 'n' he died 'n' rose so that we could be forgiven. Week after week, month after month, same thing. Finally, one of the old deacons works up the nerve to ask him. "Preacher," he says, "why is it that all your sermons are about how we're rebellious so God's love took Christ to the cross 'n' he died 'n' rose so that we could be forgiven?" The pastor just smiles 'n' says, "During the week, I see how you all live. When I think you've got that sermon down, I'll move onto another one."

ALAN exits DR, whistling "A MIGHTY
FORTRESS IS OUR GOD."

CHARLIE

He always was an odd fish.

SOPHIA

I bet he knows more about this church than all the other members combined.

CHARLIE

Probably. Still an odd fish.

(Short pause.)

Musty down here. You smell it?

SOPHIA

Reminds me of my grandma's cellar.

CHARLIE

You don't like me much; you think I'm too cocky.

SOPHIA

I just don't think you appreciate the merits of this church.

CHARLIE

The merits...

(Small laugh.)

What are the merits of this church?

SOPHIA

It's inspirational. It's heartening. It's sublime.

CHARLIE

Sublime? You gonna force me to dig out a thesaurus before we're done talkin'?

SOPHIA

Are you making fun of me?

CHARLIE

Not at all. Is the sanctuary aesthetically pleasing? The stonework high speed? Absolutely. A lovely ceremonial space; great place for funerals... weddings...

SOPHIA

Weddings?

CHARLIE

I understand that the sanctuary has artistic appeal, but do you know how many steps are between the front door and the altar?

SOPHIA

So now you're an advocate for the handicapped?

CHARLIE

Spit out what's really bugging you.

SOPHIA

You want to knock down this beautiful building and stick all the stained glass in a box.

CHARLIE

Feel good to get that off your chest?

SOPHIA

You don't care about the windows at all.

CHARLIE

Someone once paid a high price for these windows, so some of them need to be used somehow or the process is D.O.A., but it will need to be done judiciously.

SOPHIA

Hanging on a wall.

CHARLIE

You know as well as I do that installing old stain glass into a new construction is tricky at best, but if we work together, we could still relocate... maybe half the windows.

SOPHIA

Tell half the stories?

CHARLIE

Maybe half those stories aren't worth telling.

SOPHIA

You're not shoving all this stained glass into a closet.

CHARLIE

Into a closet... You're spunky. I like that, but let me give you a lesson in business one-oh-one. Know everyone at the table and what clout they carry, and I hate to tell you, but you are just a hired gun.

CHARLIE exits with SOPHIA following. Transition to RICH's area, DL.

SCENE 2

KURT and RICH sit together at a table.

RICH

You have searched us, Father God, and you know our thoughts. You are familiar with our ways. There is nowhere we can go from the presence of your Spirit. You know our hearts and our anxious thoughts. We ask that you enter into this meeting here and if there is anything offensive in us, lead us in the way everlasting. A-men.

(KURT is uncomfortable.)

So... Kurt... first off, you know I'm not a counsellor, but I'll help any way I can. Honestly, if Pastor Rachel didn't have so much on her plate, I'd - *[send you to her.]*

KURT

No. I'd rather talk this out with another guy.

RICH

Why don't you start at the beginning, when you first knew... *[about your lusts.]*

KURT

When I knew I was this way? I've always been like this.

RICH

When you were young?

KURT

As far back as I can remember.

RICH

So when you say you were attracted - *[to a lot of women.]*

KURT

Well, when I was really young it wasn't... I didn't know the biology or anything - but I was always looking.

RICH

And once you did know the biology?

KURT

I wanted to experience everything I could.

RICH

Did you ever talk with anyone about it?

KURT

Talk about it? No. I remember once with my mom when I was about ten. I was staring at... I don't even remember who, but my mom caught me and slapped me across the head. 'I know what's going on in that head of yours,' she said, 'and just stop.'

RICH

That must have been hard.

KURT

I didn't know why she was so mad, but I knew I needed to be careful.

RICH

But you didn't stop.

KURT

Not really. I mean, there are times when I stop myself, but...

RICH

I know it's hard to talk about, and that you aren't used to being in a church; I appreciate you being honest.

KURT

If you're going to be my mentor, I have to be honest, right?

RICH

It's the only way to make progress.

KURT

I want to get a handle on things, but I don't know if I can change, deep down, you know?

RICH

In your heart.

KURT

Isn't that what one of your songs is about: a change of heart?

RICH

Right. Changed hearts are what Christ is all about.

Transition to PASTOR RACHEL's
office SR. Table moves to SR.

SCENE 3

PASTOR RACHEL is seated at her desk. CHARLIE enters.

CHARLIE

Last time I was in this office it belonged to Pastor Edwards.

PASTOR RACHEL

How does it feel to be back?

CHARLIE

Sort of like when you go back into your elementary school after you've grown up; everything seems strangely small.

PASTOR RACHEL

Well, what can I do for you?

CHARLIE

(sitting)

I'd like to get married in this church, and I'd like you to perform the ceremony.

Short pause.

PASTOR RACHEL

Really? I'm sorry. I thought this was going to be about the building project.

(Setting aside her building committee binder, mostly to herself)

Well, I knew I'd be dealing with it at some point...

CHARLIE

Dealing with it?

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm sorry -

CHARLIE

No, that's OK. It's an explosive issue.

PASTOR RACHEL

I just didn't think it would come across my plate so quickly. You know, the state doesn't recognize gay marriage.

CHARLIE

I've got lawyers dealing with the state. I'm asking you about a ceremony, that's all. No signature required.

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm not necessarily opposed to doing a blessing, but... I don't have the pulse of this congregation yet.

CHARLIE

Conway's on board, so if you want to go through the council, that's fine, but I'm not interested in a blessing, I'm looking to have a wedding.

Short pause.

PASTOR RACHEL

I haven't even done a regular wedding yet.

CHARLIE

A "regular" wedding?

PASTOR RACHEL

I didn't mean... I'd better talk this over with our synod bishop.

CHARLIE

Bishop Solberg?

PASTOR RACHEL

You know him?

CHARLIE

I know he used to teach at Luther Seminary.

PASTOR RACHEL

Wouldn't you rather wait until the new building was finished. Celebrate in the church you built.

CHARLIE

I thought about that, but I do find the aesthetics here absolutely sublime, don't you?

PASTOR RACHEL

I'll call the Bishop today.

CHARLIE

(standing)

You do that; discuss whether you'd rather be associated with Torquemada or Martin Luther King, Jr.

CHARLIE starts to exit, then stops
and looks around.

PASTOR RACHEL

Is there anything else?

CHARLIE

Well, you remember when the ELCA was about to vote on their statement about sexuality, a tornado hit the convention center at the exact time the vote was to take place? I was just waiting to see if lightning was going to strike or something.

(Short pause.)

It looks like it'll be OK.

Transition to RICH's area, DSL.
Table moves to DSL.

SCENE 4

RICH sits reading a well-marked study Bible. SUSANNAH enters from US steps.

SUSANNAH

Forgive me. The girls took forever getting out of school, then when we're halfway home, Hannah tells me she forgot her math book in her desk, so I had to drive back into town, wait for her to find a janitor to open up the room...

RICH

Don't worry about it.

SUSANNAH

My whole life is running from one thing to another. People are always waiting for me...

RICH

I've read the Bible cover to cover a number of times. Never ran across "thou shalt not be late."

SUSANNAH

You're sweet.

RICH

Did you leave the girls with Kurt?

SUSANNAH

They're in the nursery. The toys keep Kara busy and Hannah can focus on her homework. Don't tell her I said so, but she's got a little crush on you.

RICH

Really?

SUSANNAH

You've never noticed how we're always in the front row on Sundays when you're singing? Promise you won't say anything.

RICH

It'll be our little secret.

SUSANNAH

So... just the two of us?

RICH

I didn't think we needed to get everyone together just to finalize a few planning details. Let's start out in prayer.

(RICH and SUSANNAH join

hands. Short stillness.)

Father God, you are our shepherd. We ask that you continue to bring us safely to lie down in green pastures. Lead us to still waters. Restore our soul. Guide us along the right paths for your sake. Even if we walk down the darkest alley, we know that we don't need to be afraid, because you walk with us. Your protection and even your discipline comforts us. You give us more than we need. Let your goodness and love envelop us. Let us live in your house forever. A-men.

Brief silence.

SUSANNAH

You turned Psalm 23 into a prayer.

They slowly release hands.

RICH

I learned that at a worship leader conference last year. I could teach you how to pray the Scriptures in your quiet time.

SUSANNAH

You honestly think I get "quiet time" in my house?

(Small laughs.)

So, I printed off the list of hotels.

RICH

Where do you think we should stay?

SUSANNAH

Do we have to stay in the same hotel as the kids?

(She worries this will be taken wrong.)

I didn't mean you and... *[me together.]* I meant, the kids can be... *[so noisy.]*

(With a playful push/touch.)

Oh shut up.

RICH

I didn't say a thing.

SUSANNAH

The hotel across the street from the convention center is more expensive, but they have a pool and a free breakfast.

RICH

That's what I was thinking. We'll have to add swimsuits to the packing list. Can I send you the final head count Monday, then have you go ahead and book it?

SUSANNAH

Sounds good.

RICH

Other than that, it's just the brat sale, and most of those arrangements are already taken care of.

(Short pause.)

What?

SUSANNAH

I'm just waiting to see if you're going to let me in on the secret you've been keeping from me. I talked to Kurt.

RICH

What secret did Kurt tell you?

SUSANNAH

He told me you're going to be singing at the gathering.

RICH

Oh. He told you that, did he? It's not a big deal, really.

SUSANNAH

Tell me more about this band you're singing with.

RICH

It's a couple guys I played with in college. We're just doing a couple songs as a warm up to the opening night's band, that's all.

SUSANNAH

That's all? It's the National Lutheran Youth Gathering. The last one had almost forty thousand people. This could be your big break. Hannah and I will be your groupies.

RICH

Christian musicians aren't supposed to have groupies.

CHARLIE

(Inserting herself.)

Charlene Romano. Friends call me Charlie.

RICH

Charlie. You're the, uh... [*RICH knows all about CHARLIE.*]

CHARLIE

General contractor, right. Conway gave me a copy of your demo CD. Why should the devil have all the good music, right Rich?

RICH

I'm sorry.

CHARLIE

Larry Norman? Pioneer of Jesus music? Why should the devil have all the good music? Anyone?

(Nobody knows him.)

I'm getting old. You kids are probably into rapping the Psalms or something like that.

SOPHIA

Kids?

RICH

Something like that.

CHARLIE

Like what I'm doing with the building; taking something old and transforming it into something people can actually enjoy.

SUSANNAH

Rich always says that just because the melody is new, it doesn't mean the message isn't old.

SOPHIA

Not unlike Jesus's message of God's love.

RICH

Sophia, Pastor Rachel said you had some insightful thoughts on the sanctuary; she thought you and I should connect.

SOPHIA

I'm planning on doing a more detailed inspection Wednesday.

RICH

Could we meet after the service?

SOPHIA

Perfect.

RICH

We artists have to stick together.

CHARLIE

Indeed, Rich. Pastor Rachel commented that you are a real lover of the arts.

ALAN enters DR, whistling "WERE YOU THERE?"

SOPHIA

Alan. You find the blueprints?

ALAN

Ah, yah. Got 'em right here.

(Pats his Bible.)

Best blueprint for a church in the world. Easy as pie.

CHARLIE

How about for the building?

ALAN

Well, the instructions in here require Cedars from Lebanon.

CHARLIE

Cutting down old growth trees? Those were the days, huh?

ALAN

Ah, yah. Seems like only yesterday this church was assembled. I was quite a whipper-snapper back then, I must admit, but I hovered around the whole operation.

CHARLIE

You can't be that old.

SOPHIA

He's joking, right?

ALAN

The ground opened up to the bedrock. Stone rose one layer at a time. The roof stretched overhead like a tent canopy.

RICH

I bet that was something to see.

ALAN

And the singing! I can't think of it without remembering the singing.

Pause.

CHARLIE

Well, how 'bout those blueprints? You're the only one who seems to know anything about them.

ALAN

Follow me.

ALAN exits UR, whistling, "WERE YOU THERE?"

RICH

I look forward to Wednesday.

SOPHIA

Be there with bells on.

CHARLIE

Richard.

CHARLIE and SOPHIA follow ALAN.
SUSANNAH resumes her seat.

SUSANNAH

That Sophia's attractive.

RICH

Why do you say that?

SUSANNAH

No reason. She just has a face that lights up a room.

RICH

(sitting as well)

Funny, that's what Kurt said about you.

SUSANNAH

Thought you weren't supposed to tell me things you two talk about.

(MORE)

SUSANNAH (CONT'D)

(Short pause, then to change
the topic)

So what songs are you going to do?

RICH

When?

SUSANNAH

When? The National Youth Gathering. You should do that
kinda soft song you wrote; you sang it a couple weeks ago.

RICH

I don't remember... two weeks ago... Sing a bit of it?

SUSANNAH

I can't sing.

RICH

Come on - so I can figure out what song you're talking about.

SUSANNAH

The chorus was something like...

(SUSANNAH quasi-sings.)

"I lo - ove you. I lo - ove you. My heart's in your
hands..." That one.

RICH

"Lead of Love." Just wanted to see if I could get you to sing
a little. You've got a nice voice; we should sing a duet.

RICH touches her shoulder.

SUSANNAH

You're just trying to sweet talk me.

PASTOR RACHEL and NAOMI enter US
steps. RICH removes his hand.

NAOMI

I'd love to get involved with Meals on Wheels.

PASTOR RACHEL

Remind me to get you Martha's number before we leave. Rich,
sorry to interrupt. I thought you'd be alone.

RICH

(standing)

Nonsense. What can I do for you?

PASTOR RACHEL

Well, I'm looking for a little guidance. I haven't done a wedding yet, and Naomi stopped by to talk with me about having her... having her ceremony here at First Lutheran.

NAOMI

(Offering a handshake to RICH.)

Naomi Stone.

SUSANNAH

You're getting married? How exciting!

RICH

Congratulations.

NAOMI

Thank you. I'm also looking for a church to join, actually.

PASTOR RACHEL

We were discussing our options, she mentioned music, and I thought you two should meet.

RICH

I usually coordinate the music and can get you going in the right direction for everything else.

NAOMI

I hear you're very gifted. I'd love to have you perform at the service.

RICH

That's very kind. I always enjoy weddings.

PASTOR RACHEL

I tell you what, Rich, why don't you stop in my office when you're done, and we can chat.

RICH

Can do.

PASTOR RACHEL

OK then.

NAOMI

This is so much easier than I thought it would be.

PASTOR RACHEL and NAOMI exit to US steps.

SUSANNAH

Congratulations again!

NAOMI

Thank you!

(To PASTOR RACHEL as they exit.)

Has this church gone to gluten free communion wafers?

PASTOR RACHEL

It was something I changed when I started.

KURT

Suzie?

KURT enters from DR.

SUSANNAH

Kurt? Down here.

KURT

There you are. Hey, Sweetie.

(He gives SUSANNAH a kiss.)

Rich. Good to see you again.

RICH

Kurt. How's life on the farm?

KURT

Non-stop there. Non-stop at the garage.

SUSANNAH

What's up?

KURT

Couldn't get you on your phone. Thought I'd pop in.

SUSANNAH

Sorry... I must have forgotten my purse in the car.

KURT

Wonderin' if you could do chores tonight. Workin' on a little foreign job. I promise'd it'd be done first thing in the morning. It's been one of those days.

SUSANNAH

Uh... yeah, sure.

KURT

That's my girl, thanks.

SUSANNAH

You want me to bring you some dinner?

KURT

Naw. I'll just grab somethin'.

SUSANNAH

What time'll you be home?

KURT

Could be late. Don't wait up. Rich. Gotta bolt.

RICH

See you again Thursday morning?

KURT

What time did we say?

RICH

Six A.M.

KURT

Right. I can still make that work. See ya, Suzie.

KURT exits DR. SUSANNAH begins to gather her things.

RICH

So... do you prefer Suzie?

SUSANNAH

What? Oh... it's what I went by in high school. Don't you have friends who call you Richie or Ricardo or something?

RICH

My aunt calls me Chi-Chi, but she's a nut case.

SUSANNAH

Did Kurt talk about our high school days?

RICH

No, not yet. It may take a while.

SUSANNAH

Sure. I've just been trying for so long to get him connected to the church - get him some help for... you know. I appreciate you agreeing to be his mentor.

RICH

I'll do what I can.

SUSANNAH

Well, I guess I better get going.

CHARLIE enters from UR carrying a set of old blueprints.

CHARLIE

So do you play any country music? Probably not. Country music is all about alcohol and sex; not exactly the image you want on a Sunday morning.

RICH

You're confusing style with content.

CHARLIE

I've been known to do that. But... I really did like your demo CD. You're very gifted; I'm surprised you don't have a recording contract.

RICH

I'm not out to be famous.

CHARLIE

Yet you have a CD.

RICH

That was really just for the congregation.

CHARLIE

Well, we all need to bow to the masses now and again, don't we?

SOPHIA enters from UR, carrying
papers.

SOPHIA

Look at this. The original window designs: rough sketches,
construction details, hand written notes...

CHARLIE

Why don't we go grab a little something and look them over.

ALAN enters from UR, whistling
"WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS."

SOPHIA

Yeah, sure. Thank you again, Alan.

ALAN

That everythin' you were hopin' for, then?

SOPHIA

More than I ever dreamed.

CHARLIE, SOPHIA and ALAN exeunt US
steps.

SUSANNAH

You were a little short with her.

RICH

Charlie? I don't trust her.

SUSANNAH

She seems OK to me.

RICH

You know what? You should join the building committee.

SUSANNAH

What?

RICH

Your great-grandfather helped with the stained glass, don't
you want to have a voice in what happens next?

SUSANNAH

I don't know if I'd have the time.

RICH

Tell you what. Come meet with Sophia and me on Wednesday - look over the glass, then decide.

SUSANNAH

I can never say no to you. OK, I'll be there.

(standing)

You gonna walk up with me and meet with Pastor Rachel and that woman about her wedding?

RICH

I'll head up in a bit. Naomi, right? Did she mention her husband's name?

SUSANNAH

No, I don't think so.

Transition to conference room.
Table moves to SC.

SCENE 5

CONWAY is seated as CHARLIE enters UR.

CONWAY

Charlie, do you have the numbers on concrete? Foundation and slab with excavation. Lumber would be nice, too.

CHARLIE

Before I can get 'em I need a signature on the contract.

CONWAY

According to the bylaws I need to take it back to the council; they won't meet til the third Monday. It would be nice to have those numbers by the end of the week though.

CHARLIE

As a friend, I'll move it along, if you can talk to Pastor Rachel.

CONWAY

She didn't agree?

CHARLIE

Said she needed to talk to the Bishop.

CONWAY

Solberg? Don't let him worry you.

CHARLIE

He doesn't worry me. It's just - I thought since you're president, you'd be able to grease the skids a bit.

CONWAY

Give me a day or two; I'll talk to her.

CHARLIE

It would be nice to have an answer by the end of the week.

CONWAY

What's the rush?

CHARLIE

We'd like to do the ceremony before ground-breaking.

CONWAY

In the old sanctuary?

CHARLIE

Seems poetic to me; musty old building, musty old custom.

CONWAY

You want to get married, right?

CHARLIE

Honestly, I'd be happier at the courthouse, but since that isn't an option...

CONWAY

Well then, why not just wait?

CHARLIE

Just wait? Sometimes you're really stupid, you know?

CONWAY

You use that kind of sweet talk to sweep Naomi off her feet?

CHARLIE

I did, actually.

CONWAY

You're joking.

CHARLIE

I never told you that story?

(CONWAY shakes head no.)

Well, we were both at a meeting of a group that was forming a five-oh-one, c-four to address LGBT issues and we were put in a small group together. This was just a year or so after the Matthew Shepherd thing, so most of us were focused on getting hate-crime legislation moving. She, however...

NAOMI enters SR as a memory.

NAOMI

We should make same-sex marriage a priority; take the fight to the churches. If we can get a few pastors to agree to same-sex marriage that would help tip the scales.

CHARLIE

I told her that she was stupid -

CONWAY

You silver-tongued devil.

CHARLIE

It was the first sentence I ever spoke directly to her, actually. I said that we needed to get society tipping first, and then the churches would fall in line.

NAOMI

What makes you think that?

CHARLIE

Did churches ease up about divorce all on their own or did they do it because of cultural pressure?

(a gesture of agreement from
CONWAY and NAOMI)

Churches never change until it's in their own interest.

CONWAY

Did you convince her right away?

CHARLIE

Nope. Took two more meetings and three dates before...

NAOMI

You're probably right.

CHARLIE

If she hadn't been so... *[attractive.]*

(NAOMI gives CHARLIE a look.)

At the time, I was more interested in the hate crime legislation.

CONWAY

So she talked you into fighting for same-sex marriage?

CHARLIE

Nobody talks me into anything.

(NAOMI exits.)

I started fighting for same-sex marriage because, you know what? Screw 'em, that's why. Bunch of pandering politicians want to play hot potato with my love life? Constitutional amendments and DOMA and all that crap? They want to do this in the courts? Fine.

CONWAY

Glad we're on the same team.

CHARLIE

They don't want me in the Country Club? Screw 'em. When I'm done I'll buy the Country Club and turn it into a dog park.

CONWAY

If that's how you feel about it, why do you care about a church wedding?

CHARLIE

A church wedding's important to her, so it's important to me.

CONWAY

Well, I guess I know who wears the pants in the family.

CHARLIE

Just because you've never gotten marriage to work out doesn't mean we'll all be miserable failures at it.

CONWAY

Thank you. I appreciate your sensitivity and love.

CHARLIE

Truth hurts. Deal with it.

CONWAY

Has you pushing for same sex marriage hurt any business deals?

CHARLIE

You think the reason I'm giving you such personal service on your church job is I'm being blackballed for being a lesbian?

CONWAY

Just curious how it's playing out on the business side.

CHARLIE

I may have lost a couple accounts, but fewer than when the issue was just me being a woman taking over my dad's company. And in the long run I'll gain more than I lose.

CONWAY

That's what I thought.

CHARLIE

Don't worry. I'll get my day in court yet.

Transition to the sanctuary. Table to SR.

SCENE 6

Evening. SOPHIA has the paperwork about the stained glass scattered on the floor. RICH enters USL.

RICH

I love this sanctuary.

SOPHIA

It's so peaceful. These old stone walls really keep out the street noise, don't they.

RICH

I can practice with my guitar amp cranked and not bother anyone.

SOPHIA

Oh... so you've been rattling the windows?

RICH

Do you think I could have - *[done some damage?]*

SOPHIA

Just messin' with you. I doubt any of the damage is your fault.

RICH

How bad is it?

SOPHIA

I thought you invited Susannah?

RICH

Let's go ahead. She wouldn't want us to wait for her.

SOPHIA

Well, let me show you something. Come here. If you stand...*[here.]*

(SOPHIA moves RICH DR and stands close behind him, pointing.)

Look at that window. Eve on the left, Adam on the right, serpent down the middle? See where the serpent curls near Eve's breast? You see the moonlight?

RICH

Yeah, I do.

SOPHIA

The pane is separating.

RICH

I never noticed that before.

SOPHIA

Perhaps you were distracted by Eve's state of undress.

RICH

Well, she is the only naked woman I usually see in here.

SOPHIA

Usually?

RICH smiles.

RICH

How serious is it?

SOPHIA

It's cause for concern; stained glass windows don't stay in their original shape forever.

RICH

Do they all need work?

SOPHIA

There are other panes like Eve has.

CHARLIE enters UR unseen to RICH and SOPHIA.

RICH

Say, I bet you might know the answer to this. Most of the windows are sets of four, but behind the altar -

SOPHIA

The passion series.

RICH

Yeah - that has seven. Why is that?

CHARLIE

(Stepping forward.)

Seven is the number of completion, Rich. So that's reserved for the passion, when Jesus's work was completed.

SOPHIA

That would be my guess.

RICH

Charlie.

SUSANNAH enters DSL.

CHARLIE

Just thought I'd see how the assessment is coming before I go chat with Pastor.

SOPHIA

Almost done.

RICH sees SUSANNAH.

RICH

Susannah? Excuse me.

RICH crosses to SUSANNAH, DL.
CHARLIE and SOPHIA continue their conversation DRC, overlapping underlined words as possible. The Dual Dialogue format here is to help indicate the overlapping words.

RICH (CONT'D)

What are you...? You don't look well?

CHARLIE

Well, I'm looking forward to your report.

SUSANNAH

I forgot Sophia was... *[here]*
I... *[wanted to talk to you]*

SOPHIA

I bet you are.

SUSANNAH

Pastor Rachel wasn't... I
[should go.]

CHARLIE

I am, I really am.

SUSANNAH

I was hoping you and I could... this is a mistake.

SOPHIA
For what?

RICH
What is it? Can I... [help?]

CHARLIE
I did a little more checking up on you.

SUSANNAH
You don't... [want to know]

RICH
Susannah.

SUSANNAH
I was...[at Kurt's shop.]

SOPHIA
You did what?

RICH
What is it?

SUSANNAH
I shouldn't have bothered you.

CHARLIE
You have quite a reputation...

RICH
Susannah. Slow down.

CHARLIE
...as someone who gets along with everyone.

RICH
Whatever it is, it'll be O.K.

SOPHIA
O.K...

SUSANNAH
Kurt was working late again tonight.

SOPHIA
You want to tell me what you're after.

SUSANNAH (CONT'D)
After chores, I took him dinner.

CHARLIE picks up some of the papers.

CHARLIE
King David has a chink in his armor, doesn't he?

SUSANNAH (CONT'D)
He was... I walked in on him... with someone.

SOPHIA
What are you getting at?

RICH
At the shop? Did he... [see you?]

SOPHIA

The prophets. That's Daniel in the Lion's Den. Here's Jonah.

CHARLIE

Always getting into trouble, those prophets.

SOPHIA

Occupational hazard, I guess.

CHARLIE

Maybe there should be a religious extension of OSHA. [*pr. OH-shuh*].

SOPHIA

You've got a very dry wit.

CHARLIE

(Picking up a paper.)

Abraham and Isaac. I remember that from when I was a kid.

SOPHIA

I love that story.

CHARLIE

Seriously? Why?

SOPHIA

It's so dramatic. Abraham takes his son up the mountain. Isaac doesn't know what's going on, and he's saying, "Dad, we have the wood, but where's the lamb for the sacrifice?" Abraham tells him, "God will provide." So Abraham gets the wood ready, binds his son, pulls out his knife, and at the moment he's going to kill his son -

CHARLIE

You really like this story?

SOPHIA

At that exact moment, God sends an angel to stop him and a ram to take Isaac's place.

CHARLIE

The guy's going to kill his son and you like that story?

SOPHIA

It shows Abraham's incredible faith.

CHARLIE

Really?

SOPHIA

God promised Abraham he would be the father of a great nation through Isaac, and then God asks Abraham to sacrifice him. Abraham had so much faith in God following through on his promise that he wasn't even afraid that death could stop it. God had that ram waiting the whole time; it was just a test.

CHARLIE

Helluva test.

SOPHIA

The window has the ram's face - here, it's on this sketch, you can't see the window with it dark outside. See, the lamb's right in the center, so our eyes will be drawn to it. The whole story points to Jesus. Isaac was Abraham's one true son, whom he was willing to sacrifice.

CHARLIE

You're some Biblical scholar.

SOPHIA

Just business one-oh-one when you work with stained glass.

CHARLIE

You know, I can't imagine a mother with a knife to her daughter's throat.

SOPHIA

Just in Greek tragedies.

CHARLIE

What else you got? Jesus walking on water, the raising of Lazarus. Jesus knew how to put on a show, I'll give him that. What are those?

SOPHIA

Oh... these are the ones with more serious problems. Moses parting the Red Sea, Jericho, Sodom and Gomorrah...

CHARLIE

Sodom and Gomorrah... So - as Devil's advocate - let's say you can only have a third of the windows.

SOPHIA

A third, now? Before it was half.

CHARLIE

Which ones can you let go.

SOPHIA

It's like asking me to rip chapters out of the Bible.

CHARLIE

Like losing all the "begats" of First Chronicles would really kill anybody.

SOPHIA

And you call me a Biblical scholar.

CHARLIE

I'm not - *[really a scholar.]*

SOPHIA

Don't lie to me. Where did you study?

CHARLIE

Luther Seminary. Came this close to getting ordained.

SOPHIA

Really?

CHARLIE

Shocking, I know. Woulda been the class of eighty-eight.

SOPHIA

Why didn't you go through with ordination?

ALAN enters UL, whistling "GO, TELL
IT ON THE MOUNTAIN."

CHARLIE

I worried I might get sent to a church that would put Sodom and Gomorrah in stained glass.

SOPHIA

Evening, Alan.

ALAN

I love it when I get to see the church from the outside at night. Best is Christmas Eve before the candlelight service. I'll walk around the outside, see these windows blazin' away, shinin' in the night, colored light dancin' across the snow.

SOPHIA

Sounds beautiful.

CHARLIE

Never thought about the windows being seen from the outside.

ALAN

Ah, yah. Well lit church on a cold winter night...

CHARLIE

We were talking about which windows to move into the new building.

ALAN

Make way for progress, huh? Which ones you think should go?

CHARLIE

Oh, one's the same as the next to me.

ALAN

You don't seem to like Sodom and Gomorrah very much.

CHARLIE

No, not really.

SOPHIA

Which ones would you keep?

ALAN

That's a hard one. Moses liftin' up the snake on his staff? That's pretty archaic, isn't it? But it's a symbol of Jesus on the cross - livin' poetry. Jonah spent three days in the belly of that great fish, and how long did Jesus spend in the tomb? Historic foreshadowing. From Genesis to Revelation, everythin's a part of the larger narrative. Even Sodom and Gomorrah teaches us a lesson.

CHARLIE

God hates fags?

ALAN

(Unfazed.)

To me, Sodom and Gomorrah is about God's love and mercy.

CHARLIE

Scorching the queers is God's idea of love and mercy?

ALAN

The folks in Sodom and Gomorrah must've done a whole host of things to get God's dander up like that. And Abraham thought he could talk God down from his wrath. "What if I find fifty righteous men? Forty? Thirty? Twenty? How about ten?" Abraham must have thought himself quite the negotiator, because God promised to let all those heartless folks live if it meant savin' ten good men. But there weren't ten good men there. Out of all those people, only one was worth his salt. But instead of lettin' Lot die, God went out of his way to save him. Now, maybe it is a tragedy all those others died, but to me, that story says God will not let one person die who doesn't have to.

SOPHIA

I've never thought about it like that before.

CHARLIE

God still murdered all those people.

ALAN

We shouldn't be afraid of losing our bodies. We should be afraid of giving away our soul.

CHARLIE

I'm going to have to think on that one.

ALAN

I'll leave you to that, then. You're in a good place for it.

ALAN exits DR, whistling a verse
from "GO, TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN."

SOPHIA

Good night, Alan.

CHARLIE

That man is...

SOPHIA

...wisdom incarnate.

CHARLIE

Yeah... that's exactly what I was going to say.

SOPHIA

Do you ever tell the truth?

CHARLIE

Look, we're not as far apart as you might think.

SOPHIA

I want to keep all the windows and you don't care about any of them.

CHARLIE

That's not the truth, but even if we were to use Solomonson's plans we can't relocate them all.

SOPHIA

If we use Solomonson's plans?

CHARLIE

There's more than one way to skin a cat. Society's changing, Sophia, and since the ELCA's statement about sexuality, you watch. Other denominations will have to follow; they just need a nudge. *(Checks watch.)* I'm overdue to meet with Pastor Rachel, and it seems you still have work to do. Give some thought about those windows; you know as well as I do that some won't make the cut.

CHARLIE exits up US steps.

Transition to PASTOR RACHEL's office.

SCENE 7

PASTOR RACHEL is seated as lights rise. RICH enters.

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich. I'm glad you stopped by. You and I didn't get to talk about Naomi the other day, and... What's wrong?

RICH

I need to talk to you about Susannah.

PASTOR RACHEL

I can't tell you anything she said while I was counseling her, I'm sorry.

RICH

I get it. I'm not looking for gossip about Kurt's adultery.

PASTOR RACHEL

I understand you were starting to mentor Kurt... I think he should really - *[see an actual counsellor.]*

RICH

I'm in love with Susannah.

(Short pause. Sits.)

Two years now, at least. I ask God to take away the attraction. I try to take my thoughts captive; think about her as my sister in Christ. Nothing helps.

PASTOR RACHEL

You're mentoring Kurt about his sexual issues while you're in love with his wife?

RICH

I know, and you're right - I can't keep doing that, but... since the other night, I can't help but wonder if... if what Kurt did will lead to them getting a divorce and then...

PASTOR RACHEL

Have you and she - *[slept together?]*

RICH

Susannah? No. There hasn't been... No.

PASTOR RACHEL

Do you know how she feels?

RICH

I've been doing all I can to deny my feelings, I haven't dared asked her about hers.

PASTOR RACHEL

But you think there's a possibility she has feelings for you?

RICH

There's an attraction there; it can't just be one sided.

PASTOR RACHEL

You say you're in love with her. Do you want a relationship with her or do you just want to sleep with her?

RICH

Having one leads to the other.

PASTOR RACHEL

Which do you want first?

RICH

Sex outside of marriage is a sin.

PASTOR RACHEL

You didn't answer my question.

RICH

This was a mistake.

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich, wait.

RICH

Then this came in this morning.

RICH hands PASTOR RACHEL a letter.

PASTOR RACHEL

What's this?

RICH

An e-mail from a music producer in the Cities. Someone sent him my CD and he'd like me to do some festivals this summer, cut a polished version of the demo.

PASTOR RACHEL

What does this have to do with - [*Susannah and Kurt?*]

RICH

It's the same feeling as with Susannah; I don't know if it's a door opening or just a temptation. I started doing music because I thought it would make me a better youth director.

PASTOR RACHEL

We haven't known each other that long, Rich, but music is your passion, I can see that. There's nothing wrong with that.

RICH

Shouldn't my thoughts be about pleasing God with my music instead of pleasing an arena full of fans? Pleasing myself?

PASTOR RACHEL

I think the things that give us energy are from the Holy Spirit; things that drain us aren't. Only you can discern that.

RICH

Would you pray with me.

(RICH and PASTOR RACHEL bow
their heads.)

According to your love, Father, according to your tender mercy, wash me, cleanse me. You know me completely; my wrongs are right in front of you. Create in me a clean heart, Father. Renew a right spirit within me. Don't push me away from your side and don't keep the Holy Spirit from living within me. Restore my joy in you and your saving grace, and sustain me with an obedient spirit. I want to sing about your goodness and lift you up in praise.

PASTOR RACHEL

The psalm David wrote after he slept with Bathsheba and had her husband killed?

RICH

A-men.

Transition to conference room. Table to SC.

SCENE 8

*SOPHIA, RICH, PASTOR RACHEL, CONWAY
and CHARLIE are standing around a
table as the lights rise.*

PASTOR RACHEL

We aren't making any progress.

CHARLIE

Because you won't listen to me.

RICH

You are impossible.

CONWAY

Everyone take a breath.

CONWAY and CHARLIE move SL, RICH and
PASTOR RACHEL MOVE SR.

RICH

She is such a... *[bitch.]*

CONWAY

Bit pushy, don't you think?

PASTOR RACHEL

She's passionate, no denying that.

CHARLIE

'Everyone take a breath.' That was perfect timing.

ALAN enters UR whistling "ONWARD CHRISTIAN
SOLDIERS." PASTOR RACHEL looks at her
watch.

PASTOR RACHEL

It's a good thing I moved my counseling appointment back.

RICH

Is that with Susannah? How's she doing?

CONWAY

We want Reverend Paulsen on our side, remember.

PASTOR RACHEL

All I can say is that whether or not extramarital affairs ends a marriage mostly depends on how much support they get from people who love them.

Not noticed, ALAN exits UL, still whistling.

CHARLIE

All right, we don't want to lose the momentum.
(CHARLIE returns to table.)
Sorry to get so worked up, Pastor.

PASTOR RACHEL

(Returning to her seat.)
Passions always run high when it comes to the stained glass.

CONWAY

Everyone just needs to be willing to compromise a little bit.

RICH

Her only goal, it seems, is to demolish the sanctuary.

CHARLIE

You were the ones who came to me with this existing mash-up of tacked-on buildings that is, honestly, a botched abortion.

CONWAY

For cryin' out loud, Charlie.

CHARLIE

(sitting; ALL follow suit.)
Pastor; what kind of facility are you looking to build?

PASTOR RACHEL

A mission outpost.

CHARLIE

What does that mean?

RICH

A bait shop. Jesus wanted us to be fishers of men, not keepers of an aquarium.

CONWAY

I like that. 'Get hooked on First Lutheran.'

SOPHIA

Another way to say it is we're the hands and feet of Christ.

PASTOR RACHEL

The building isn't the ministry, it's where we meet to plan the ministry.

CHARLIE

Why didn't you say that weeks ago? That's actually a progressive vision.

RICH

Progressive - isn't that new code for liberal?

CHARLIE

Rich, you think church music should be limited to a pipe organ?

RICH

It's not the same -

CHARLIE

Pastor, you limiting your Biblical scholarship to what was known in fifteen-hundred?

PASTOR RACHEL

Of course not.

CHARLIE

Then why is your building project getting high-jacked by five hundred year old ideas about architecture?

CONWAY

My ex-wife's congregation moved into a warehouse kitty-corner from a Wal-mart. Doubled the congregation in six months.

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich, maybe we do need to consider changing with the times.

CONWAY

I've got polling on that. Asked if people would consider joining a church that didn't have a traditional sanctuary, sixty-five percent said that it would make no impact on their decision. The younger the respondent, the less concern they had for attending a church with a traditional church building.

RICH

But the sanctuary, filled with stained glass, creates a worshipful environment.

CHARLIE

I think you're confusing style with content. We need to focus on how form follows function.

(CHARLIE brings out some papers, photos, etc., move to PASTOR RACHEL.)

Look at these. This is a church we did outside of Chicago.

RICH

What room is this?

CONWAY

That's the central meeting space.

RICH

This is the sanctuary?

CONWAY

It's multipurpose.

RICH

There's no cross.

CHARLIE

Does there need to be one?

PASTOR RACHEL

No cross?

CONWAY

A number of polls indicate that seekers are more likely to join a church that's not exclusive in it's iconography.

RICH

Not exclusive in it's iconography?

(Slight disbelieving laugh.)

We're a Christian church. The primary symbol of a Christian church is a cross. It's one of the ways you can tell a church from the Elks club.

CHARLIE

That the significant difference?

CONWAY

I think the central focal point might be better utilized with a large format digital display. That way the central message can be anything, not just the cross.

PASTOR RACHEL

I think that might be going a bit too far.

CHARLIE

Cross. No cross. Doesn't make me much nevermind.

SOPHIA

These look sterile.

CHARLIE

Another word for that is flexible.

RICH

These don't have any windows at all, stained or otherwise.

CHARLIE

Light in a space that's utilizing media technology is very important. Sunlight isn't desirable. It's a lot better to use controllable sources, the more indirect, the better.

SOPHIA

So no stained glass.

CONWAY

A lot of churches decide it's just not worth the expense to -

SOPHIA

Those windows are - *[the heart and soul of the building.]*

CONWAY

Hard to maintain in this day and age, Miss Lumens.

SOPHIA

So you do want to cut them out entirely?

CONWAY

I've never advocated getting rid of all of them.

SOPHIA

Because then the project is D.O.A.

CHARLIE

Perhaps a museum would be interested in them.

RICH

So that's it, then? Pave paradise and put in a parking lot?

CHARLIE

If the windows were out of the way; if they didn't exist, would you still want to keep the sanctuary the way it is?

Short pause.

PASTOR RACHEL

Probably not.

NAOMI enters UR. SOPHIA is surprised and turns away.

NAOMI

Charlie, I heard your voice booming all the way down the hall.

CHARLIE

I never boom.

NAOMI

Liar. It's the same way at home. How's everything going?

CHARLIE

You know Harding. And of course you've met Rich.

RICH

Wait a minute... Charlie is your...

NAOMI

Fiancé. (To CHARLIE) I'm sorry. She doesn't like that word. Didn't you... *[know that?]*

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich, I'm sorry. With all we've had on our minds this week, we haven't had time to - *[talk about this]*

RICH

You knew about them?

PASTOR RACHEL

Maybe we should go to my office.

CONWAY

Tell you what. Why don't we table the building discussion for a bit. Sophia, you and I can duck out while they talk.

SOPHIA realizes she can't hide.

PASTOR RACHEL takes RICH aside SR.

NAOMI

Sophia?

SOPHIA

Hi, Naomi.

NAOMI

Charlie?

PASTOR RACHEL

Charlie and Naomi have asked me to perform a blessing ceremony for them.

NAOMI

You didn't mention... *[you were working with Sophia.]*

RICH

Blessing ceremony?

CONWAY

You two know each other?

PASTOR RACHEL

Just give me a second.

NAOMI

Oh, yeah. We - *[dated.]*

SOPHIA

Went to the same college.

CHARLIE

That's why your name was familiar. *[A thinly veiled lie.]*

NAOMI

Right. Same college... We took a few art classes together.

RICH

A lesbian wedding? Are you kidding me?

(All turn toward RICH.)

So, when is the joyous event planned?

CHARLIE

The weekend before we've scheduled to start demolition work is open.

NAOMI

So our wedding would almost literally bring down the house, huh? That's funny.

(Silence.)

Not funny, funny.

(No reaction.)

I'm sorry. I thought... *[we had worked this out Wednesday.]*

PASTOR RACHEL

No, I'm sorry, Naomi. Could you all give Rich and I a moment.

CONWAY and CHARLIE confer URC.

CONWAY

We're a stone's throw from making a break-through.

SOPHIA

Does Charlie know...

CONWAY

Get your construction schedule ready to roll.

NAOMI

About you and me in college? Sure.

CHARLIE

And the contract?

SOPHIA

I'd appreciate it if she didn't - *[tell anyone.]*

CONWAY

I'm on it.

CHARLIE exits UR. CONWAY starts gathering papers.

NAOMI

Why would she want to spread it around that we were lovers? You're afraid we'll out you? Don't worry, we'll keep your deep, dark secret.

NAOMI exits UR. SOPHIA turns to exit UR.

RICH

Wait. Sophia. How well do you know Naomi?

SOPHIA

Why?

RICH

(to himself)

This is a whole 'nother can of worms.

SOPHIA

Can of worms?

RICH

I just thought... if you knew her, you might be able to...
[talk her out of having a wedding here.]

SOPHIA

I haven't seen Naomi since college, but didn't your synod just set policy for this with their new proclamation?

PASTOR RACHEL

Set a policy? Not really, no. They left most of the decisions up to the congregations.

SOPHIA

Well then, I guess it's up to you.

SOPHIA exits UR.

RICH

When were you going to tell me?

PASTOR RACHEL

I thought that if you got to know Naomi first...

RICH

If I got to know her, what? That I'd like her so much I'd abandon Scripture?

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich.

RICH

You can't perform a ceremony of any kind for those two in this church.

CONWAY

(crossing to SR)

Hold on there, Rich. I know there isn't demand for a gay-friendly church in the area, right now, but public opinion is tipping that way; I'd hate to end up on the wrong side of history. Prejudice. Bigotry. That's the terminology getting tossed around. This could be a perfect time for us to do some rebranding; let people know what the ELCA is all about.

RICH

Maybe if we had a catchy jingle?

CONWAY

Could you write one?

PASTOR RACHEL

I think Rich was being sarcastic, Conway.

CONWAY

Sometimes it's hard to tell.

RICH

The Bible is clear about this.

PASTOR RACHEL

You know as well as I do that there are quite a few scholars who doubt the traditional interpretation of the "anti-homosexual" verses.

CONWAY

We're the ELCA, Rich - we try to accommodate everybody.

PASTOR RACHEL

This isn't the Wisconsin Synod.

CONWAY

Thank God we're not judgemental like those people. After all, Rich, ten percent of the population is gay.

RICH

No, it's not. It's like, three percent, maybe.

CONWAY

What does it matter? Half the population thinks it's twenty-five percent. I'll go smooth things over with Naomi.

CONWAY exits UR. Silence.

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich. I'm sorry. This isn't how I wanted you to find out.

RICH

Wanted to coerce me in private?

PASTOR RACHEL

This isn't about you and me. The congregation needs to have this discussion.

RICH

And how do you suppose that'll go?

PASTOR RACHEL

I think most people are open minded -

RICH

This is small town America, not an inner city or academia. You tell them you're going to perform a gay wedding -

PASTOR RACHEL

It won't be a wedding, OK? I talked with the Bishop. He said as of right now, the most I can do is a commitment ceremony.

RICH

Held in the church, for the purpose of two people getting God's blessing? Sounds like a wedding to me.

PASTOR RACHEL

I know Charlie's a bit of a...

RICH

Manipulative - *[bitch?]*

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich. Naomi's very sweet.

RICH

I don't care if she's Mother Teresa. What do you think is gonna happen when people find out you want to perform a wedding for two lesbians in the church their great-grandparents built?

PASTOR RACHEL

Well, the synod hopes everyone will be respectful of each other's opinions.

RICH

Great plan. You let me know how that works out.

RICH exits UR. PASTOR RACHEL picks
up a page of statistics CONWAY
left.

PASTOR RACHEL

Sixty-eight percent of all congregational leaders leave their churches within five years of a new building project. Can't imagine why.

END OF ACT 1.

BLACKOUT.

ACT 2

SCENE 1

ALAN enters DR, whistling "BE THOU MY VISION." PASTOR RACHEL enters US steps, and lost, opens the same closet door.

PASTOR RACHEL

Not again. You would think I'd be able to...*[find my way around.]*

ALAN

To learn your way, you need to close your eyes.

PASTOR RACHEL

Close my eyes?

ALAN

Walk by faith, not by sight.

PASTOR RACHEL

You may be right. I was looking for Rich and Sophia.

ALAN

'nother big meeting, huh?

PASTOR RACHEL

Just the three of us.

ALAN

Sounds like a good number; you can get something done with three.

RICH (OFF)

Pastor Rachel?

PASTOR RACHEL

Here I am!

ALAN

A cord of three strands is not easily broken.

PASTOR RACHEL

Alan, why aren't you on the building committee?

ALAN

Nobody asked.

RICH and SOPHIA enter US steps.
ALAN exits DL, again whistling, "BE
THOU MY VISION." ALAN does not
speak from here until the end of
the show, but could be seen
randomly in the background, doing
various janitorial/menial tasks.

RICH

What's Charlie up to?

PASTOR RACHEL

What do you mean?

SOPHIA

You didn't see the Romano Construction trailer?

PASTOR RACHEL

The what?

SOPHIA

It's sitting out front, bold as brass.

RICH

I bet Conway's behind it.

PASTOR RACHEL

One thing at a time. Did Solomonson finish?

RICH

It's not a complete set of drawings, but it shows that we
could keep the sanctuary and still get everything we want.

CHARLIE and CONWAY enter US steps.

CHARLIE

Morning everyone. Beautiful day, isn't it?

RICH

What's your trailer doing here?

CHARLIE

Perhaps we haven't met; I'm Charlie, your general contractor.

CONWAY

Charlie has all the finished construction documents.

CHARLIE

By the time we get done clearing the pad, steel could be rolling in.

PASTOR RACHEL

This isn't what we talked about.

CONWAY

The congregation voted, Reverend; it was contentious, but they gave us a green light to proceed and make the final decisions about the stained glass.

CHARLIE

"To preserve as many windows as reasonable within the given budget."

PASTOR RACHEL

The vote barely passed. I know we can proceed, but I'd rather take some time to see if we can keep everyone together on this. I think just plowing full speed ahead is a mistake.

CHARLIE

You said you wanted to be fishers of men; it's time to fish or cut bait.

SOPHIA

Maybe you could inscribe that in stained glass above the door.

CHARLIE

I was beginning to think the cat had gotten your tongue.

PASTOR RACHEL

Conway, I think you should have a look at this.

PASTOR RACHEL offers CONWAY
Solomonson's proposal.

CONWAY

What's this?

PASTOR RACHEL

Solomonson revamped his plans.

CHARLIE

All by himself, he decided to do all that work?

CONWAY

Again with the existing sanctuary?

RICH

I think we should take this back to the congregation.

CHARLIE

We had a vote and you lost, fair and square.

SOPHIA

The congregation didn't have this option in front of them.

CHARLIE

Business one-oh-one; have all your work done on time.

CONWAY

They knew keeping the sanctuary was one way to go.

RICH

But they didn't know what it might look like, and people have a hard time visualizing big changes. It's not our fault Solomonson didn't have enough notice about the meeting.

CONWAY

I set the meeting according to the bylaws.

SOPHIA

Pastor, it would be my recommendation - *[you call a new meeting.]*

CHARLIE

Your recommendation is no longer necessary.

CONWAY

We thank you for your consultation, Ms. Lumens. I consider your work on this job to be complete.

CHARLIE

You know, I always find it helpful to revisit the roots of an organization. Clarifies things. It seems that back in the day Martin Luther had a disagreement with the Holy Roman Church. He tried to talk it out, but eventually he had to take matters into his own hands; once that big list got nailed to the church door, things really started rolling.

RICH

What's your point?

CHARLIE

Yesterday I mailed a letter to every member in your congregation, thanking them for their support on the project, and I added a personal note thanking you, Pastor, for agreeing to perform a wedding ceremony for me and Naomi.

PASTOR RACHEL

I said I was thinking about it. Conway? Did you know about this?

CONWAY

I co-signed it.

PASTOR RACHEL

So you think you're Martin Luther in this scenario, do you?

CHARLIE

No, I'm probably just the hammer.

PASTOR RACHEL

I wish you hadn't done that.

CHARLIE

It's just information; what's the problem?

PASTOR RACHEL

The problem is that what Martin Luther did split the Christian church in two; that was never his intention.

PASTOR RACHEL, RICH and SOPHIA exit
US steps.

CHARLIE

That went well.

CONWAY and CHARLIE exit US.

Transition to RICH's area.

SCENE 2

RICH is alone. He sits quietly with his Bible open in front of him. SUSANNAH enters.

RICH

Father God, you are my light and my salvation - my fortress; be merciful, hear me and come close to me. Teach me how I should live, lead me along your path. There is only one thing I want, Lord: to live in your house my whole life, to delight in your beauty, and in this, your holy temple, I will offer shouts of joy and songs of praise to you. A-men.

SUSANNAH

You pray out loud even when it's just you?

RICH

(standing)

It helps clarify things.

SUSANNAH

Rich, I just came to tell you I won't be able to - *[help anymore with the youth group]*

RICH

Susannah, I've been worried about you.

SUSANNAH

I'm fine.

RICH

Thou shalt not lie.

SUSANNAH

Please, I don't need lessons in the Commandments.

RICH

Sorry. I saw Kurt's garage has been closed.

SUSANNAH

You're not the person I should be... *[talking to about this.]*

RICH

We're supposed to bear each other's burdens.

SUSANNAH

It's complicated.

RICH

Of course it's complicated. That's why it's important not to try to slog through it on your own.

SUSANNAH

There's so much to slog through, I wouldn't know where to start.

RICH

The beginning. I don't even know how it all started with you two.

SUSANNAH

I figured you and Kurt had gotten through all that. Weren't you supposed to be mentoring him? Help him with his wandering eyes?

RICH

We only met once. When you asked me to mentor him, you didn't give me a lot of details. I knew the issues were sexual, but - *[you didn't tell me the whole story.]*

SUSANNAH

I'm sorry. You're right. It's... it's embarrassing.

(Sitting, not looking at RICH.)

It started in high school. Kurt was older, had a reputation. I had always told myself I was going to save myself until I was married, but...

KURT enters URC, as part of
SUSANNAH's memory.

KURT

If you don't want to, we don't have to.

SUSANNAH

I told him it was OK; that it would be OK.

RICH

You can't beat yourself up over that. You were young.

SUSANNAH

I was old enough to know better, but... Even then... I know, you just see him as a farmer and mechanic, but Kurt's always attracted a lot of attention from women.

RICH

When did it start?

SUSANNAH

The first time we weren't even married yet. I just about took his head off.

KURT

You think I go looking for women? I don't! I swear I don't, but then... [*women approach me.*] I can't stop myself; it's just way I am.

RICH

He sleeps around and that's just the way he is? That's stupid.

SUSANNAH

I don't know if it is or it isn't.

RICH

Susannah, you deserve... every woman deserves to be treated better than that.

SUSANNAH

I know that. I'm not stupid.

RICH

Why did you stay with him?

KURT

You're pregnant?

SUSANNAH

Spring of my senior year.

KURT

Suzie, let's just go ahead and get married. It'll be OK.

SUSANNAH

Most of the time he is very sweet, Rich. He's a good father; he loves the kids. He's not a monster.

RICH

He's just being who God made him to be?

SUSANNAH

You know, I'm no saint, Rich; I've got skin in the game.

RICH

No pun intended, I'm sure.

SUSANNAH

The second time was a year after we were married. That time, to even the score, I called up a high school crush...

KURT

You slept with... with Marcus Gianelli [*pr. jee-uh-NELL-ee*]?

SUSANNAH

Kurt went ballistic, but he straightened out.

RICH

For a while?

KURT

For a long while.

RICH

So, what now?

SUSANNAH

What would you do?

RICH

If my wife cheated on me all the time?

SUSANNAH

Not all the time.

Pause. KURT exits UR.

RICH

You know God told the prophet Hosea to marry this really promiscuous woman named Gomer.

SUSANNAH

Gomer? Her name was seriously Gomer?

RICH

Yeah. God wanted to use them as a living example of how Israel was acting toward God - the Israelites were like an adulterous spouse, chasing after the pagan gods.

SUSANNAH

Did he do it? Hosea marry this Gomer?

RICH

He did, and they had kids together, and then one day she left him for another man and God sent Hosea after her again, to bring her home and love her unconditionally.

SUSANNAH

Did that straighten out the Israelites?

RICH

Not really - they were a bunch of knuckleheads; a lot of the book of Hosea is God pouring out his anger on them, but eventually they repented - which literally means they turned around - and God took them back.

SUSANNAH

Did anyone tell God he was being a doormat?

RICH

In the last chapter of Hosea God says, "I will heal their waywardness and I will love them without boundaries, because my anger has turned away from them."

SUSANNAH

That's what we all need - love without boundaries.

RICH

It's what we get when our waywardness is healed.

SUSANNAH

I have another confession; something you need to know. That night I came here... that night you took me to talk with Pastor Rachel... I was thinking Marcus Gianelli all over again. If you... if you hadn't taken me to talk to Pastor Rachel, I don't know what I would have done that night.

RICH

You came so that you and I - *[could have sex.]*

SUSANNAH

Part of me wanted to just run away. It's what my mom did; she left my dad when I was eight. You always hear people say that kids are resilient. That is such crap. People just say that to convince themselves it's OK. I know God hates divorce, Rich. I can't quote the verse that says it, but my heart knows it's true. When we get married our hearts and souls get knit together, and divorce rips all that apart; it rips our hearts and it shreds our souls.

RICH

Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who sins against him. He asked, "Up to seven times?" And Jesus said, "Not seven, but seventy times seven times."

SUSANNAH

People might say I'm stupid, and that night it was all I could do to keep myself from... [*hurting him really bad*] but in the clear light of day, I know he's my husband. For better or worse. I made a commitment to him before God and everybody.

NAOMI enters US steps.

NAOMI

At first I thought the church was all mine. Then I started hearing voices, and I thought either I'm going crazy or...

RICH

Can I help you?

NAOMI

Naomi. Naomi Stone?

RICH

I'm sorry; we're in the middle of - [*something important.*]

NAOMI

This will just take a sec. I was hoping to talk with you about music for our ceremony.

SUSANNAH

Don't worry about me, Rich. (*To NAOMI*) You have a date set?

NAOMI

Soon.

RICH

I don't think - *[I'll be available.]*

NAOMI

I know that... that you and Charlie aren't seeing eye to eye.

RICH (ASIDE)

More like eye for an eye.

NAOMI

You need to get to know each other.

RICH

That's not the problem.

NAOMI

I really want you to play at the wedding. Please.

RICH

I'm sorry, I can't.

Short pause.

NAOMI

No, I'm not letting Charlie mess this up because of her bullheadedness; besides, the bride always gets her way.

RICH

Is that you or Charlie?

SUSANNAH

Rich, what are... *[you talking about.]*

RICH

Didn't you get the letter? Charlie's a woman. Charlene. You met her - the contractor. They're lesbians.

SUSANNAH

Oh. I didn't... *[know.]*

Short pause.

NAOMI

The cat's out of the bag, now, isn't it?

SUSANNAH

Pastor Rachel's going to perform... *[a same-sex wedding?]*

NAOMI

That's the plan.

RICH

I don't see how she can.

NAOMI

I don't... *[understand.]* Charlie said the ELCA was -
[accepting of LGBT people now.]

RICH

Was what? Yes, the big shots of the ELCA made a statement and now all the congregations have to deal with the fallout. I didn't want to make a big... *[scene over this.]* The Bible says it's a sin; that's the bottom line. It says it again and again and again. It says it's an abomination.

SUSANNAH

Rich.

NAOMI

An abomination. That's what I am to you?

RICH

This is not about you, personally; it's about God's authority. Every single time the Bible mentions homosexuality, it's condemned. Every single time.

NAOMI

I see. Well, I guess the ELCA isn't what Charlie thinks.

RICH

Look, I don't claim to speak for everyone. I'm know there are people in the ELCA who agree with you, but First Lutheran is my church; my congregation. If I start throwing out parts of the Bible, then - *[what do I have?]*

NAOMI

The Bible? Is that the kill all the women and dash the children on the rocks Bible? You follow that part?

RICH

What chapter is that in again?

NAOMI

How should I know?

RICH

My point exactly. I think you should leave now.

NAOMI

You know, I didn't choose to be gay. It's just the way I am.

KURT enters DR, comes to the edge
of the scene, unnoticed by RICH.

RICH

Just the way I am. Is that supposed to make it OK? If I acted out the way I am I'd be a self-serving, egotistical, womanizing, money-hungry, glory-whore. That's the way I am. You think I should act out the way I am?

NAOMI

I think you should be who God made you.

RICH

"Deny yourselves, take up your cross daily and follow me." The Bible doesn't call us to wallow in "the way we are," but be transformed by Christ.

NAOMI

Doesn't the Bible also say to love your neighbor as yourself? I seem to recall Jesus was pretty big on love.

RICH

Am I showing you love if I know you're sinning and don't say anything about it? Leviticus has a long list of sexual sins, and the only one that's called an abomination... the only one... is homosexuality.

NAOMI

Leviticus. Is it not possible that Leviticus is one person's point of view from an ancient, patriarchal, homophobic culture?

RICH

You want to approve anything else on that list? Leviticus 18 - read the whole chapter - sex with your mother or father? That OK? Brother or sister? Bestiality? How about child sacrifices? Any of those sound OK? The only one that's singled out as an abomination is homosexuality and you're asking me to bless that.

NAOMI

There are lot of things in the Old Testament -

RICH

First Timothy, chapter one has a list of the ungodly groups; it includes slave traders, liars, murderers and homosexuals. Unlike a lot of Lutherans, I've actually read the Bible.

NAOMI

We'll see what Pastor Rachel says.

NAOMI turns to exit.

RICH

I don't care what Pastor Rachel says; this is my church and I'll burn this building to the ground before I let a gay marriage take place here.

NAOMI

(Looking back.)

Sophia Lumens. She know how you feel?

RICH

What does she have to do with this?

Pause.

NAOMI

Maybe you're right about what the Bible says about homosexuality; but Charlie and I love each other and I guess, in the end, maybe that's all that matters.

NAOMI exits. KURT is still unnoticed.

RICH

You probably think I'm a hate filled bigot.

SUSANNAH

I think you're a little on edge.

RICH

Do you have an opinion?

SUSANNAH

About gay people?

RICH

Yeah.

SUSANNAH

I don't know. Maybe it is just the way they are.

RICH

Like Kurt's the way he is?

SUSANNAH

I don't think it's the same thing.

RICH

Isn't it? Guys who sleep around say it's just the way they are. Gay people say it's just the way they are.

SUSANNAH

Rich, for cryin' out loud; I'm tryin' to hold my marriage together with spit and bailing wire, and you want me to debate the nature of homosexuality?

RICH

You're right, I'm sorry.

(SUSANNAH puts a hand on
RICH's shoulder)

That burst of anger and defensiveness? That's why I need to read the Bible out loud.

KURT steps forward.

KURT

Suzie?

SUSANNAH

Hi.

KURT

Couldn't get you on your phone.

SUSANNAH

Left it in the car.

KURT

I thought we were going to meet and...

SUSANNAH

Yeah. Give me a second. (to RICH, aside from KURT, standing)
We're going to talk with Pastor Rachel again.

RICH

So... he's your Gomer.

SUSANNAH

I wouldn't call him that if I were you.

RICH

You have an amazing gift for unconditional love.

SUSANNAH

Does that qualify me to be a prophet?

(RICH smiles.)

Thank you.

SUSANNAH and KURT start to exit.

RICH

Kurt, just a minute. Could I... could I have a minute?

SUSANNAH and RICH share a look.

SUSANNAH

Seventy times seven, Rich.

RICH

Most people forget to carry the one.

SUSANNAH puts her hand on KURT's
shoulder.

SUSANNAH

I'll wait for you upstairs.

SUSANNAH exits US steps.

KURT

Seventy times seven; that an inside joke between you and
Suzie?

RICH

You know she likes to be called Susannah, right?

KURT

She likes you to call her Susannah.

Pause.

RICH

Nothing ever happened between us.

KURT

Yeah, that's what she said, right after she told me she came this close to running away with you that night.

RICH

She just told me that part a couple minutes ago. That can't make you like me very much.

KURT

Not really, but she also said it was you who took her to Pastor Rachel, so maybe I owe you one.

RICH

When we started the mentoring process, I told you that we needed to be honest with each other.

KURT

I wasn't lying to you. I didn't plan to - *[have sex with that woman.]* It just happened.

RICH

I know... I need to be honest with you about Susannah... Suzie. She's amazing, beautiful and if she weren't married -

KURT

Are you looking to get hit?

RICH

I think you and I are more alike than I'd care to admit.

KURT

How's that?

RICH

I don't think you spend time thinking about having affairs, but then you do; I don't have affairs, but I've spent time thinking about it. According to Jesus, we're exactly the same.

KURT

I don't get it.

RICH

Jesus said if you've committed adultery with someone in your heart it was the same as if you really did it.

KURT

And you committed adultery with Suzie in your heart?

RICH

I've tried very, very hard not to.

KURT

So let me get this straight; you feel guilty about things you think? Suzie should have married someone like you. I don't deserve her; I really don't.

RICH

Maybe not, but she may have the unconditional love you need to change your heart.

KURT

You think she can forgive a monster like me?

RICH

I don't think you're a monster; I think you're stupid, but you're not a monster.

KURT

Pastor Rachel thinks I still need to talk with somebody.

RICH

Probably not the best idea to enlist the man who's been secretly in love with your wife for two years.

KURT

Two years? Yeah...I don't see how that works.

RICH

Tell Suzie... tell her I'll be praying for both of you... out loud.

Pause.

Transition to Pastor Rachel's
Office.

SCENE 3

*PASTOR RACHEL is sitting.
CHARLIE enters UR and paces.*

CHARLIE

Where is he?

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich isn't here.

CHARLIE

Lucky for him.

PASTOR RACHEL

He told me about - *[his encounter with Naomi.]*

CHARLIE

How he called Naomi an abomination? Like she's some kind of... *[monster.]* If he's looking for an abomination that causes desolation, I'm his gal.

PASTOR RACHEL

He feels bad about how their conversation went.

CHARLIE

Fat lot of good that does me.

PASTOR RACHEL

He didn't mean to - *[hurt her feelings.]*

CHARLIE

She grew up in the church, her youth director cared for her even when her parents wouldn't talk to her. You know how excited Naomi's been at the prospect of getting married here?

PASTOR RACHEL

I understand that it hurts to be told you aren't welcome.

CHARLIE

Not welcome? That doesn't even scratch the surface.

PASTOR RACHEL

Which makes this all the harder... I just can't perform the ceremony.

CHARLIE

Can't? I know Bishop Solberg gave you permission to do a blessing ceremony, and Naomi was OK with that. It's not that you can't. It's that you won't.

PASTOR RACHEL

It's a conversation the congregation needs to have, and -
[they're not ready.]

CHARLIE

Naw, I understand. It's a no-win situation. The denomination can't get enough votes to get things done, so it punts the issue to each congregation for you all to fight it out until they can rally more troops.

PASTOR RACHEL

That's not quite how - *[I'd describe it.]*

CHARLIE

It's all wishy-washy. Not like back in my day. If you were gay - back then there was no "LGBT," we were all just "gay" - when you came out you were kicked out. Period. You had to lie about it. All these old gay pastors crawling out of the woodwork... they had to have lied about it. Because if a seminary student - a young lesbian woman, for example - were to sit down and tell her review board the truth; tell them that she was in a lesbian relationship... Well, that bishop-wanna-be would send her packing; four years of seminary training down the tubes. Back to the family business for that overbearing dyke. But if her partner at the time looked her review board in the eye and lied; if that woman were to deny the relationship she'd been in for the past three years - deny the love she felt for her lesbian partner - well, she'd be rewarded with a call to a congregation. Even if every single person on that review board knew damned well she was lying.

PASTOR RACHEL

You went to seminary? I didn't know - *[that.]*

CHARLIE

It's humorous, actually. The Bible is extremely clear about some things - divorce, for instance; Jesus says don't do it. That's black and white and yet, when's the last time you heard that from the pulpit?

PASTOR RACHEL

These are issues we just scratch the surface of in seminary.

CHARLIE

Honestly, I don't care anymore. Gays, no gays. Cross, no cross. I give up.

PASTOR RACHEL

There must be a church in the Cities that would perform a ceremony for you.

CHARLIE

You don't get it. Naomi doesn't want a wedding now at all.

PASTOR RACHEL

Why would she leave you because of - *[something Rich said.]*

CHARLIE

I didn't say she was leaving me.

Pause.

PASTOR RACHEL

She doesn't want a wedding. She's losing her faith in God.

CHARLIE

Oh, it's gone. And she lost it right here in your church. In a way, I should thank you. She finally understands the reason I don't trust Christians. I just hate to see someone I love get crushed like that. Wouldn't you?

PASTOR RACHEL

Yes.

CHARLIE

Homophobes like Rich don't surprise me - people who quote the Bible so much always get under my skin - but I expected more from you, and you couldn't care less.

PASTOR RACHEL

It's not that I don't care -

CHARLIE

The other thing... In the business world, you don't screw someone who's gone out of their way for you.

PASTOR RACHEL

I apologize if we've - *[caused you any problems.]*

CHARLIE

Do you know the amount of red tape it takes to get explosive charges set up for a job?

PASTOR RACHEL

There are explosives here?

CHARLIE

You think I'm a rookie? You think there's a big barrel of black powder sitting around waiting for some kid to drop a match. My point is I've been doing all this prep work for you without a final contract because of my good old friend Harding.

PASTOR RACHEL

I didn't mean to be - *[deceptive.]*

CHARLIE

If I never step foot in a church again, it'll be too soon.

CHARLIE exits UR.

Transition to another time.

SCENE 4

PASTOR RACHEL sits. RICH enters UR.

RICH

I heard Charlie blew up at you. Sorry about that.

PASTOR RACHEL

I think Charlie's always on the edge of blowing up. And since her letter, I've been swamped with phone calls, e-mails, letters, visits.

RICH

Good. I was hoping it would backfire on her; let her know that this congregation isn't going to stand idly by.

PASTOR RACHEL

They aren't all saying I shouldn't do the ceremony. I'd say six o' one, half dozen o' the other.

RICH

Seriously?

PASTOR RACHEL

It's the ELCA, Rich; we're a kaleidoscope. We need to be tolerant of everyone's point of view.

RICH

Is Charlie being tolerant of my point of view?

PASTOR RACHEL

Yeah, you're cut from the same cloth all right.

RICH

(An accusation.) You want to perform the ceremony, don't you?

PASTOR RACHEL

I have colleagues and professors from seminary telling me, "it's easier to ask for forgiveness than permission."

RICH

You're supposed to be a preacher of the Word; the Bible is clear about homosexuality being a sin.

PASTOR RACHEL

It's clear about adultery, and I'm meeting with Suzie and Kurt next Thursday.

RICH

Kurt acknowledges that what he did is wrong, and Suzie is willing to forgive him. Charlie doesn't want God's love, she just wants society's acceptance.

PASTOR RACHEL

We've got two people reaching out to us and if I don't do the ceremony I'll be pushing them away - telling them God doesn't love them.

RICH

If you do the ceremony, people will leave the congregation.

PASTOR RACHEL

If I don't do the ceremony, people will leave the congregation.

RICH

Well, you can't both do the ceremony and not do the ceremony.

PASTOR RACHEL

How am I supposed to know the right answer? Biblical scholars who've studied their whole lives can't even agree.

RICH

Biblical scholars. Being a Biblical scholar today is about research and rhetoric; selling books and getting tenure. We need you to be a preacher.

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm not a preacher; I'm a pastor.

RICH

What's the difference?

PASTOR RACHEL

Preachers are concerned about giving good sermons; pastors are concerned about taking care of people.

RICH

Right now this congregation needs a prophet.

PASTOR RACHEL

A prophet? The ragged guys moving from town to town? Who listens to those guys?

RICH

Those ragged guys are the ones searching God's heart, living the tough life and speaking the cold, hard truth.

PASTOR RACHEL

Why should the truth be cold and hard? Can't we speak the truth in love.

RICH

It's still the truth.

PASTOR RACHEL

You gonna turn me into Pilate, now? "What is truth?"

RICH

The truth is that this issue has and is and will divide the church, and a house divided against itself cannot stand.

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm not trying to part the Red Sea; I'm just trying to hold this one congregation together.

RICH

Pastor, if you try to hold the congregation together on this issue, you're going to find that you'll be the one ripped apart.

Transition to conference room.

SCENE 5

CONWAY and CHARLIE as lights rise.

CONWAY

We've got a problem.

CHARLIE

You getting cold feet?

CONWAY

You said your letter would ruffle a few feathers. Half the congregation is ready to walk if we go forward with your wedding.

CHARLIE

It's not a wedding. It's just a blessing ceremony.

CONWAY

Whatever you call it, it'll end up being a funeral for this church.

CHARLIE

You always knew you'd lose some members.

CONWAY

Some, yes; I'm fine losing some. But half? Maybe more than half?

CHARLIE

People who are going to leave because of this issue would end up leaving over something else anyway. Do you want those kind of people in your church?

CONWAY

I just don't see how we pay for a new building if we lose half the congregation. I don't know...maybe we got the cart before the horse on this wedding thing.

CHARLIE

It's not a wedding; stop calling it a wedding. A wedding is something that makes everyone happy. A wedding comes with paperwork from the state and signatures.

CONWAY

OK. OK. I'm sorry. I get it.

CHARLIE

Do you? Nothing is going to change if someone doesn't keep pushing the envelop. I thought you understood that.

CONWAY

I do. It's just... if we could be a little more patient. By this time next year, Rich will be off playing concerts, right? We already know Reverend Paulsen is sympathetic. Why not encourage her to lead a nice long congregation-wide study, bring in a couple Biblical scholars... let society get closer to the tipping point and maybe we only lose a handful of members.

CHARLIE

Pastor Rachel wants to do the ceremony; we need to strike while the iron's hot.

CONWAY

What about Naomi? Didn't she say it's off?

CHARLIE

She says a lot of things. I pull this back together, and she'll be fine. Send Sophia packing, get the building committee knee deep in making decisions and this week I'll make a magnanimous gesture of offering to pay for a half dozen or so stained glass windows getting relocated into the new sanctuary.

CONWAY

You'd do that?

CHARLIE

It will give me enough good will with the old timers that they won't all be able to say no to a little ceremony and if we're lucky, Rich will spout off and end up sounding like a member of the KKK.

Transition to the sanctuary.

SCENE 6

Transition ends and SOPHIA enters UR.

SOPHIA
Rich, can we talk?

RICH
Sure.

SOPHIA
I heard you were raising hell with Naomi.

RICH
I'm not exactly winning the Nobel Peace Prize lately.

SOPHIA
Look, I've got something I need to... *[tell you.]* I don't know if this is going to come out or... *[not.]* I just wanted you to hear it from me.

RICH
Sounds serious.

SOPHIA
It's about Naomi.

RICH
What about her?

SOPHIA
She and I... in college... we were lovers.
(Pause.)
Pause for dramatic effect.
(Continued silence.)

RICH
Sorry. I don't know... *[what to say.]* You're a lesbian?

SOPHIA
I don't know.

RICH
What do you... *[mean by that?]* If you don't know, who does?

SOPHIA

It's complicated.

RICH

A lot of that going around. Are you attracted to women?

SOPHIA

I have been.

RICH

Are you attracted to men?

SOPHIA

Not usually.

RICH

Are you attracted to me?

SOPHIA

A little bit.

Short pause.

RICH

I don't get it. Can you explain - *[your sexuality?]*

SOPHIA

Why I am the way I am? Should I have to?

RICH

Probably not. Can you?

SOPHIA

Can you explain why you're straight?

RICH

It's just... *[the way I am/God made me.]* It's the way God intended us to be. I mean, if I think about being with a man... *[it makes me sick.]*

SOPHIA

I get it. Look, I don't usually get into all this, but...

(NAOMI enters SL as a part of
the memory.)

Why is this so hard? It was my second year of college...

NAOMI

We were both taking a life drawing class. You know, nude models -

SOPHIA

Anyway... for extra practice, a few of us -

NAOMI

Men and women alike -

SOPHIA

- got in the habit of posing for each other.

NAOMI

Round robin, we used to say.

SOPHIA

So, one night Naomi and I were the last ones to leave the studio and I mentioned how beautiful one of our classmates was - she had posed for us that night, and...

NAOMI

Isn't it cliché to say "one thing led to another"?

SOPHIA

She kissed me, and something clicked. In that moment, all the confusion and self-loathing I'd had as a teen disappeared, and that week, in a rush of naive excitement, I told all my friends. Pretty soon all my friends were gone. I was disappointed, but -

NAOMI

Good riddance.

SOPHIA

Naomi was great; she was older - a non-traditional student with her own place off campus.

NAOMI

You'll have a whole new crowd of friends in no time.

SOPHIA

Couple years later - by this time I'd fallen in love with stained glass and knew that was my calling - I decided that if I was going to work with stained glass and be in churches all my life, that I needed to understand the Bible.

NAOMI

And being all rebellious and independent now -

SOPHIA

I didn't want to get someone else's preconceived views, so I just read it on my own. Twice. Then a third time. It consumed me. People who've spent their whole lives going to church and never read it? I don't get that.

NAOMI

Well, there aren't exactly a plethora of Psalms singing the praises of a lesbian lifestyle.

Short pause.

SOPHIA

A word kept echoing in my mind. I used the N.I.V. translation, so, it wasn't "abomination," it was -

NAOMI

Detestable.

RICH

Detestable.

SOPHIA

I think that was worse, actually; an abomination seems so old fashioned, but detestable...

NAOMI

I've detested people before.

SOPHIA

It wasn't just the "clobber passages" either; all the symbolism of God's relationship with us is based on marriage; one man, one woman.

NAOMI

So everything that clicked two years ago suddenly unclicked?

SOPHIA

To spare you the gory details, Naomi and I parted ways and again, for some reason, I felt that I needed to explain myself to everyone who had befriended me when I started dating Naomi. And again, everyone disappeared.

(NAOMI exits SL.)

(MORE)

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

The same people who celebrated when I told them I "discovered" I was a lesbian rejected me when I told them I "discovered" God's word. Maybe Paul's right. Maybe it is better to be single.

RICH

I don't know what to say.

SOPHIA

You don't have to say anything.

RICH

So how do I fit into all that?

SOPHIA

There's something about you... Maybe it's your passion for your music. Or this old building, this glass.

RICH

It's not my dashing good looks?

SOPHIA

I just wanted... *[to let you know.]* I feel like we've become friends and... I didn't want you to get blind-sided if Naomi or Charlie say something.

RICH

I appreciate it.

SOPHIA

OK. I... I should go.

(SOPHIA starts to exit UR,
then turns.)

Rich, do you think I'm an abomination?

RICH

I... *[am confused by contradictory thoughts.]*

SOPHIA

You know what? Don't answer that.

SOPHIA turns to exit.

RICH

For what it's worth, Sophia, I like you.

SOPHIA

Well, maybe that's a start.

Transition to later in the sanctuary.

RICH exits UL.

SCENE 7

SOPHIA sits alone DRC, looking at the stained glass. PASTOR RACHEL enters UR.

SOPHIA

Did Conway send you to get me packed up?

PASTOR RACHEL

I told Conway you still have things to do.

SOPHIA

They need more work than I first thought. It's not like any window is completely messed up, but it only takes one pane to start failing.

PASTOR RACHEL

I can't tell you how many people have told me that their grandparents sacrificed so that these windows would be here, they thought, forever.

SOPHIA

Eternity ain't what it used to be.

PASTOR RACHEL

The people who built this church were humble families investing in this building instead of a retirement account.

SOPHIA

That's why you care about these windows?

PASTOR RACHEL

It says a lot about the roots of this congregation. They came together to make these beautiful and inspirational windows come to life.

SOPHIA

They believed in the doctrine of stained glass.

PASTOR RACHEL

Don't believe I learned that in seminary.

SOPHIA

Little fragments of colored glass.

(NAOMI, CHARLIE, SUSANNAH,
KURT, RICH and CONWAY enter
UC as a brief chorus.)

Each piece, on it's own...

NAOMI

...is insignificant.

SOPHIA

Worse than that;

CHARLIE

...a problem.

SOPHIA

If you found one on the floor,

CONWAY

You'd look at it...

SOPHIA

...turn it over carefully, peer through it;

RICH

Lift it up to the sunlight...

SOPHIA

...and then, not knowing what to do with it,

KURT

...throw it away.

SOPHIA

It's glass after all;

SUSANNAH

It has sharp edges.

SOPHIA

But take that shard of glass,

SUSANNAH

and bind it together with hundreds of other shards;

KURT

...suddenly that dangerous little piece of glass has a purpose.

CONWAY

In the context of all the others,

RICH

...a beautiful picture emerges.

SOPHIA

When you see that piece now,

NAOMI

...it's invaluable,

CHARLIE

...and if that piece is shattered or removed,

SOPHIA

...you risk the entire window falling to pieces.

NAOMI, CHARLIE, SUSANNAH, KURT,
RICH and CONWAY exeunt UC.

PASTOR RACHEL

You should go to seminary.

SOPHIA

You don't sweat over the smallest details in these windows without waxing philosophical once in a while.

PASTOR RACHEL

If you found an extra piece of glass, would you take the entire window apart and trim all the other pieces to try to make it fit?

SOPHIA

I might try to make another window.

PASTOR RACHEL

And would it match the windows we already have?

SOPHIA

Ah yah. That's advanced Stained Glass doctrine, there.

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm afraid I'm going to lose some pieces.

SOPHIA

I think Charlie had that factored in as the price of doing business.

PASTOR RACHEL

I'm not sure why, but I keep thinking of this woman who spoke at my seminary. She was striking; long blonde hair, make-up, high heeled shoes. She's a lay leader in a church just East of St. Paul, and she'd just come out to her congregation that she was a lesbian. She talked about what she was going through: very well spoken and thoughtful, really challenged us on a number of issues, but the thing that sticks in my head is that she said, "I can't stand really butch lesbians. Women who are all rough and strong and everything. They drive me nuts." I had never envisioned a gay person having prejudices against other gay people, you know?

SOPHIA

We're all complex creatures.

PASTOR RACHEL

What am I supposed to do, Sophia? The wind is howling and I'm surrounded by a hundred shards of glass.

SOPHIA

This is your congregation, Pastor.

PASTOR RACHEL

You know as well as I do: I'm just a piece of glass myself.

SOPHIA

That's very Lutheran of you. "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

PASTOR RACHEL

Colossians. [*pr. ka-LAH-shuns*]

SOPHIA

God's love. If you're looking for something to bind all of us pieces of glass together, that's the only thing that has a chance.

Transition to the conference room.

SCENE 8

Lights up on SOPHIA, RICH, PASTOR RACHEL, CONWAY, CHARLIE, and NAOMI.

CHARLIE

What in God's name were you thinking? Can you tell me that?

NAOMI

Now, calm down.

CHARLIE

This just blows my mind.

CONWAY

Charlie.

CHARLIE

Don't touch me.

PASTOR RACHEL

I made the decision and the council agreed; Conway agreed: the building project's on hold.

CHARLIE

Yeah. I get it.

RICH

It's our building. We can do whatever - *[we want to.]*

CHARLIE

Like burn it to the ground?

RICH

How many times -

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich has already apologized for -

CHARLIE

I have half a mind to do you one better.

SOPHIA

What's that supposed to mean?

CHARLIE

How'd you like to see those windows of yours -

CHARLIE makes an explosion noise.

RICH
Is that a threat?

NAOMI
Would you behave?

PASTOR RACHEL
I think everyone should take a breath.

CONWAY
Charlie. I understand you're angry. And we recognize that your firm did a lot of work on a... a...

CHARLIE
On a gentleman's agreement?

CONWAY
We know you need to be compensated, we just need - *[a number]*.

PASTOR RACHEL
We know you've been terribly inconvenienced by -

CHARLIE
Inconvenienced? Incon... OK.

CONWAY
What'll it... what'll it take to make it right.

CHARLIE
What'll it take to... *[make it right?]* I'm willing to settle for four-point-five.

RICH
Four-point-five?

SOPHIA
What?

PASTOR RACHEL
Million?

CONWAY
Charlie, come on.

SOPHIA
How do you come up with that?

PASTOR RACHEL
That's out of the question.

RICH
She's crazy.

CONWAY
You know that's - *[out of line.]*

SOPHIA
This was never about the building for you.

CHARLIE

You want me out of your hair, that's the number.

CONWAY

That's just not... Charlie, please, as a friend, give me a realistic number.

CHARLIE

As a friend... I think that's quite realistic.

RICH

We won't pay you four and a half million dollars.

CHARLIE

My lawyer disagrees with you.

PASTOR RACHEL

You'd take us to court?

CONWAY

Charlie. We'll pay for your time, the materials and man hours you've got into the job, but -

RICH

You can't expect us to pay for jobs you passed up.

CHARLIE

I think you misunderstand me. This isn't about the job.

Pause.

RICH

This about me?

CHARLIE

Not just you.

PASTOR RACHEL

What? I don't... *[understand.]*

CHARLIE

I've got lawyers talking to me about discrimination law, hate crime law, mental anguish, constitutionality...

CONWAY

There is not a court in the land... *[that would take that case].*

PASTOR RACHEL

SOPHIA

Because I refused to - *[marry Naomi? Did you know that she you?]* -

CHARLIE

(to SOPHIA)

Why don't you go back into your closet and -

NAOMI

Easy...

CONWAY

Charlie. This... even if a judge would hear the case... there's no way... *[a jury would find in your favor.]*

CHARLIE

I've got no problems with your Christ... Gandhi, said this... I've got no problems with your Christ - I'm paraphrasing - It's you Christians I don't like. You're nothing like your Christ.

RICH

Charlie, I said it before; I'm sorry for how I acted. Naomi, again, I apologize; I shouldn't have gotten so agitated.

CHARLIE

You recanting, Rich?

RICH

I'm apologizing for my behavior.

CHARLIE

Are you willing to say that you don't think God hates fags.

PASTOR RACHEL

NAOMI

That kind of language - Charlie.
[isn't appropriate here.]

RICH

I never said that.

CHARLIE

Not in so many words.

RICH

I just think people need to hear God's word.

CHARLIE

So, would you shake my hand and welcome me at worship if I came this Sunday to hear God's word?

RICH

Yes.

CHARLIE

How about communion? Can I take communion?

RICH

It's a dangerous thing to stand between a person and God.

CHARLIE

And Naomi?

PASTOR RACHEL

Everyone is welcome to come into this church.

CHARLIE

I'd rather hear it from him, if you don't mind. Can Naomi and I come together?

SUSANNAH and KURT enter UL.

RICH

Yeah, sure.

CHARLIE

We can hold hands?

(Slight pause.)

If I wanted to give her a kiss? In this church?

SUSANNAH

It seems we've come at a bad time.

RICH

The church isn't a place for...

CHARLIE

For displays of affection?

RICH

Physical expressions of love should be private.

CHARLIE

Oh, it's a private matter, now?

NAOMI

So no one ever kisses in this church?

RICH

I don't think it's really... appropriate.

CHARLIE

(to CONWAY)

Conway, you cheat on your wife?

PASTOR RACHEL

Charlie, that's too far.

CONWAY

It's OK. She knows perfectly well I didn't.

CHARLIE

She cheat on you?

CONWAY

Not that I know of.

CHARLIE

You got divorced, right? Why?

CONWAY

We just drifted apart, I guess.

CHARLIE

Is that appropriate in your church, Rich?

PASTOR RACHEL

Divorce isn't the issue.

RICH notices SUSANNAH and KURT.

RICH

To be honest, it bothers me. Divorce rips families apart, and every effort should be taken to avoid it.

CHARLIE

But it happens? Right? Even in your church.

RICH

We're all sinners. We all fall short. I've never suggested I'm not a sinner.

CHARLIE

What are your sins, Rich? You like pointing out everyone else's sins so much, what are yours, huh? Avarice? Pride?

NAOMI

Charlie...

CHARLIE

Lust?

RICH

My sins are between me and God.

CHARLIE

That where they are? A big, steaming heap right there on the floor between you and God?

RICH is silent.

SUSANNAH

(to CHARLIE)

Rich is a man after God's own heart.

KURT

CONWAY

Suzie, this isn't about us. Charlie, let me ask you -

RICH

Jesus came to heal us from our sins.

CHARLIE

Who's us? Rich? Who is the us Jesus came to? Just you?

PASTOR RACHEL

Jesus came for everyone.

RICH

He came to those who needed him. Lepers. Tax collectors. Prostitutes.

CHARLIE

If Jesus came today, he certainly wouldn't be here. He'd be saying something about how these stones will be thrown down.

RICH

You think if Jesus came today he'd be in the gay community?

CHARLIE

You don't? He came for everyone the world kicks out, right?

A beat.

RICH

You know, you're absolutely right. If Jesus came today - thank you, Charlie, I'd never put that together - if Jesus came today, he would be in the gay community. You're right; he came for the outcasts and he healed them.

CHARLIE

Damn right. *(a beat)* Wait. You saying I need healing?

RICH

The healthy don't need a doctor.

CHARLIE

You calling me sick?

RICH

I don't condemn you. Just go and sin no more.

CHARLIE

Go to hell.

SOPHIA

Stop! Both of you.

CONWAY

Charlie! Let's get back to - *[the issue at hand.]*

NAOMI

(to CHARLIE) Would you behave?

CONWAY

What do we need to do to keep this out of court?

CHARLIE

Simple, really. I want to come to church next Sunday and have Rich here get up in front of the congregation and say... better yet... sing. I want to hear one of them Christian pop songs about how God loves and accepts gay people. I'm sure that would be no trouble at all. Gifted guy like you.

RICH

That's not going to happen.

CHARLIE

Why?

RICH

I'm not going to contradict what the Bible clearly teaches.

CHARLIE

That the Christian message? Love your neighbor, except for the queers?

RICH

Show me one verse - anywhere, absolutely anywhere in the Bible - that hints at God approving of homosexuality and I'll write an anthem about it in four part harmony.

CHARLIE

Well, ya got me there. That proves it. God hates fags.

RICH

You go to hell!

PASTOR RACHEL

Rich!

CHARLIE

Only if you come with me.

The following dialogue overlaps and crescendos, RICH's lines being continuous.

RICH

"Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason -

SOPHIA

Charlie, this isn't going to help.

PASTOR RACHEL

Stop.

CONWAY

Rich does not speak for this church.

NAOMI

Charlie, let's just go.

KURT

Let's just go.

CHARLIE

(singing "Joshua Fit the
Battle of Jericho")

"And the walls come a tumba-lin' down!"

SOPHIA

Rich, she's not going to
listen to you.

PASTOR RACHEL

Let's just calm down.

RICH

- my conscience is captive to the Word of God.

CONWAY

Come on Charlie.

(CONWAY attempts to touch
CHARLIE's arm.)

Let's go - *[talk, just you and me.]*

CHARLIE

Don't touch me!

SOPHIA

Rich.

SUSANNAH

Kurt, don't.

RICH

I cannot and I will not recant anything -

NAOMI

Charlie, stop.

PASTOR RACHEL

Conway, don't!

CHARLIE

You'll hear from my lawyer.

SOPHIA

Please... stop!

CONWAY

I don't believe this.

PASTOR RACHEL

Father, forgive them...

RICH

for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe.

CONWAY

I'm trying to help you!

SOPHIA

Rachel, help...

PASTOR RACHEL

...they don't know what they are doing.

CHARLIE

Help me?

RICH

God help me.

CHARLIE

I don't need your help!

RICH

A-men!"

BLACKOUT. We hear the same sound we heard at the beginning of the show. Explosion and shattering glass. In the dark and chaos, all the actors disappear.

Transition.

POSTLUDE

ALAN stands center stage, as at the Prelude, with a shard of glass. As ALAN speaks, the others appear at various areas of the stage, each with a shard of glass. As each character exits, they hand ALAN their glass.

ALAN

Pastor Rachel, I'm sorry to tell you, was in the church when it exploded, and her death has rocked the church to its foundation.

(PASTOR RACHEL appears by ALAN.)

There was a lengthy investigation, but in the end, no arrests. The job site trailer and safety locker that housed the explosive charges were both forcibly opened.

PASTOR RACHEL

For to me, to live is Christ.

ALAN

I'd like to think the perpetrator didn't know Rachel was meditating in the sanctuary that night. A fair number of people suspect Charlie; some think Rich might have done it.

PASTOR RACHEL

And to die is gain.

ALAN

The truth is, everyone had a hand in it one way or 'nother. I hate to say it, but at her funeral, half the congregation - those who had supported tearing down the sanctuary - sat on one side...

PASTOR RACHEL

We are called to be unified in Christ.

ALAN

... and the other half - those who had wanted to keep the sanctuary as it was - sat on the other.

CONWAY

It doesn't matter whether or not your theology is sound.

ALAN

Conway's spearheading the congregation members who want to forge a new start.

CONWAY

"Judge not, or else you're going to get judged, too." It's not our place to tell someone else they're going to hell.

ALAN

He's already talked with the insurance agent, and got his hands on a set of plans, but he's not going to use the name First Lutheran.

CONWAY

Look at it this way - you tell someone they're going to hell, how likely are they to come to church?

CHARLIE

I don't care whether you like who I am or not.

ALAN

Charlie's not going to be working with Conway.

CHARLIE

When Abraham asked God for a name, God just said, "I am who I am." It's like God is this big black woman rolling her neck and waving her hand. You think you know me? Uh-uhh. *[Meaning no.]* You don't know me and I don't know you, so don't try to simplify my whole existence with some label.

ALAN

She's vowed never to take on a church project again.

CHARLIE

I think that's how we should all introduce ourselves... "I am who I am."

NAOMI

God is a God of love.

ALAN

Naomi and Charlie did end up having a ceremony. There was no official, just the two of them up front exchanging vows.

NAOMI

When I was fifteen and didn't know who I was, when kids were calling me queer and my mom wouldn't even look at me, my youth director, Ms. Johnson, just accepted me for who I was.

ALAN

Naomi told Charlie that it was just as good as a church wedding. That it was OK.

NAOMI

She said she didn't know if it was a sin or not, but she knew God loved me, and in the end, that was all I wanted to hear. When Christians talk about "being saved" that's what I think about; Ms. Johnson told me I was loved, and I was saved.

KURT

I am just the way I am.

SUSANNAH

A person should be loved and forgiven.

ALAN

Susannah and Kurt are determined to hold their marriage together.

SUSANNAH

I always wondered about the woman caught in adultery. The men could have just stoned her to death, but instead they brought her to Jesus.

KURT

"Moses told us - you catch someone committing adultery, you kill 'em, isn't that right, Jesus?"

ALAN

They've decided that they can't live in the past.

SUSANNAH

Well, you probably know the rest - no one lets loose a single stone because they knew they were all sinners.

KURT

When everyone left, Jesus straightened up and looked at her - I bet her heart was going a mile a minute - "I'm not going to hold this against you either."

ALAN

So they're going to focus on each other, right now.

SUSANNAH

Can you imagine how she must have felt? Jesus was her literal savior.

KURT

Maybe she thought she'd pulled the wool over the ol' rabbi's eyes.

ALAN

And pray for strength in the future.

SUSANNAH

But then Jesus spoke His last words.

KURT

"Go, and sin no more."

SUSANNAH

She didn't fool anyone. Jesus knew. And that was something she would have to live with.

RICH

The word of God is alive and active.

ALAN

Rich accepted an offer to be the opening act for a Christian band.

RICH

My church read a lot more of the Old Testament when I was a kid. Lutherans don't know Shem from Shiloh.

ALAN

He'll likely spend the next few years of his life traveling from town to town.

RICH

I'm really not a fire and brimstone kind of Christian. It is by grace we have been saved, through faith. And faith comes from hearing the word of God.

ALAN

He's decided to name his band the Restless Prophets.

RICH

But I think too many Christians nowadays are under the false impression that grace is something we deserve. And when God's grace is something you deserve... Well, something you deserve is something you've earned and... grace is a gift.

SOPHIA

We are all, every single one of us, broken.

ALAN

Once the investigation was finished, Sophia combed through the debris and gathered up every piece of glass she could find. She doubts that she'll be able to put all the windows back together, but she's going to do her best.

SOPHIA

There was a time when you couldn't build a church without stained glass windows. Today, people don't really value it. To make stained glass, minerals are added - it's the impurities that create the different colors. Adding cobalt, for instance, makes blues; silver creates shades of yellow; copper compounds make greens and blues; and gold, surprisingly, produces a stunning red. But even though I know all that, there's still a profound mystery to stained glass. It's this jewel-like substance made from the most ordinary materials: sand transformed by fire. Sun shining through, sending light dancing everywhere.

ALAN hands SOPHIA the shards. ALAN exits, whistling, "AMAZING GRACE."
SOPHIA stands alone. A stained glass window encompasses the entire stage.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW.