

REV-el in Practical Jokes!

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Ladies and gentlemen of the cloth, listen up: It's time for us to loosen up! Smile more. Enjoy life and ministry and spread joy all around. Revs of the world unite!

Last week I went to a "Prophetic Preaching for Anxious People" seminar. Many of God's people are anxious. They're anxious because pews aren't as full as they once were; the economy has tanked; the world is changing at lightning speed and someone they know has cancer. Many of God's people are anxious.

Many clergy are anxious too. God's call to serve the church is a sacred gift. We are invited to share holy, intimate moments with God's people. On Monday we give thanks for a newborn. On Tuesday we hold the hand of the dying. We pray in the office, over the phone, via email, and in folks' homes. Our calling to ministry is a blessing, but it is not easy.

In the midst of sharing burdens and joys, we have partners in ministry who walk alongside us. I do not say this lightly: Church staff relationships can make or break ministry. It's that simple. God has blessed me with fantastic co-laborers at Memorial. We are far from perfect, but we have learned loosening up creates a happy work environment. It is not *the* answer to a harmonious church staff, but it is a step in the right direction.

Here is my holy suggestion for loosening up: Practical jokes! Warning: Treat this suggestion gingerly. The first commandment of clerigified practical jokes is "Thou shalt not use whoopee cushions on Sunday morning." Allow me to restate: *Gentle* practical jokes (not on Sunday).

Around our office there is a motion-detecting frog who "ribbits" at people. He's been duct-taped under chairs, hidden behind theology books and shoved into desk drawers. Spontaneous water gun fights have been known to happen. An entire office of books was carefully turned upside down and noticed weeks later. I once found my high heels in a cabinet above the microwave. A mannequin showed up in the parsonage shower. It's all good.

However, we all know life is not one big practical joke and there is a right and a wrong time for humor. Life is serious. Clergy carry and share burdens and it's a privilege to do so. However, in the midst of change or stress or anxiety let's do our best to find levity in the every day.

Loosen up Revs! Play practical jokes. Enjoy time with staff members. You can do it! Turn framed pictures upside down. Switch out pens and pencils and replace them with pixie sticks or pretzel rods. Change a screensaver. Replace a 60 watt bulb with a black light. Have some fun.

Madeline L'Engle writes "If we are sure of our God, we are free to laugh at ourselves." Loosen up Revs! Learn to find and share the funny with your church staff. There is holy in the hilarious. Let's work to find it!