

The Club

***Aim :** This is a light-hearted piece that shows how some people view the church – as a club for which you need to follow certain rules and regulations to become a member. It is a good place to start – exposing the myth before going on to deal with the reality.*

Characters :

Mrs Stanley

Matt

Props/Costumes :

Coat, scarf, hat, gloves, handbag for Mrs Stanley

Clipboard & pen

***Notes :** I hope that people aren't offended by this one! It is merely a pastiche, originally used in a pub setting and tapping into the genuine fears that people have about being judged by "church people"*

The character of Matt should be played naturally, but Mrs Stanley is a stereotype – a smart, elderly lady who has been in the church since it was founded, and past whom knowing is getting without a fight.

Between the scenes we had a blast of hymn music and Mrs Stanley did the same movements eg looking at her watch, sniffing, before turning to see Matt approach.

The Club

Mrs Stanley is waiting outside the (imaginary) church door. She is obviously waiting for people to arrive. She carries a large handbag and a clipboard. Matt approaches the church confidently and smiles at Mrs Stanley.

1) Good morning, dear, and a warm welcome to St Someone's.

She thrusts out her hand to shake his

2) Oh. Thank you very much.

1) Is this the first time you've visited us here?

2) Erm yes, actually, it is.

1) Marvellous. You're very welcome.

2) Right. Thanks.

He goes to walk past her into the church, but she stops him by saying . .

1) So before you go in I've just got to run through a few questions with you – just to check you're our sort of person you understand

2) Oh

1) One bad apple and all that

2) Right.

She turns to her clipboard

1) So, firstly, why have you come to see us this morning?

2) Well, I haven't got a hangover for once, and it beats the launderette.

1) Oh dear. *(She puts her clipboard away in disgust)* I think you may have confused the House of our Lord with the greasy cafeteria on the High Street. I think you may be rather better suited to that establishment

2) But . . .

1) Good morning.

She turns her back to him and he walks away

Music

Mrs Stanley is waiting outside the door as before. Matt arrives.

1) Good morning, dear, and a warm welcome to St Someone's. Is this the first time you've visited us here?

2) Yes. No. Well sort of. I came last week

1) Ah yes.*(she looks him up and down disparagingly)* I remember. Want to give it another go then?

2) Yes. Well, I think so.

1) All right. We all deserve a second chance, I think that's what the Good Book says. (*She gets her clipboard out again*) So, why are you here this time?

2) (*As though he is trying really hard to get it right*) Because I want to understand more about God

1) And?

2) And learn how to worship him in an appropriate

1) And humble?

2) An appropriate and humble fashion. (*He is pleased with himself for getting it right*)

1) Marvellous. Now to your lifestyle.

2) Okay

1) Do you drink?

2) Er, no (*Mrs S raises her eyebrows at him*). . . Yes (*she raises them again*). . . In moderation

1) Fine. I always think to not drink at all is rather suspicious, probably a recovering alcoholic or such like

2) And would they not be welcome here then?

1) I'm sorry, I thought *I* was the one asking the questions

2) Right, sorry.

1) Do you smoke?

2) Nicotine or pot? (*Pause as Mrs Stanley gasps*) Joke.

1) We don't do jokes. Good morning.

She turns her back on him and he walks away

Music

Mrs Stanley is waiting by the church as before. Matt approaches

1) Good morning, dear, and a warm welcome to St Someone's. (*She stops in her tracks*) Oh, it's you again.

2) I should get some points for effort surely.

1) Yes, the words "bad penny" rather spring to mind.

2) Look, you know why I'm here, and I must be showing you I'm keen. I lead quite a good life – I don't over-indulge in alcohol, I don't smoke . . .at all. Anything.

1) Lies.

2) What?

1) Do you tell lies? (*She goes back to her clipboard*)

- 2) Er . . . yes, (*then, in one breath*) but I try not to and when I do they're only really, really little ones and they don't hurt anyone
- 1) Acceptable. Do you have lots of friends?
- 2) Er . . . yeah quite a few. Especially those I watch football with
- 1) Oh dear. I don't think this church has room for any more fanatics, of any sort
- 2) Oh no, not fanatic . . .and I'd like to make new friends . . . talk about Jesus and that
- 1) (*very pleased with this*) Oh well I'm sure we could find you some marvelous new play-mates. Do you like bowls?
- 2) I'm sure I could learn to – if necessary
- 1) And what newspaper do you read?
- 2) The Sun (*she looks at him*) day papers, and The Guardian (*she looks dubious*) The Times (*and again*) The Church Times that is
- 1)(*with large smile*) Very impressive. Very good
- 2) Thank you.
- 1) And music?
- 2) The Darkness (*Mrs Stanley looks very shocked*) was lifted for me by listening to Cliff
- 1)(*she beams at him*) Of course. You and I are kindred spirits
- 2) Oh. Right
- 1) You're not married I presume (*she inadvertently straightens her hat and strokes down her clothes*)
- 2) What? When I can play the field instead? I mean why spoil a good time by getting tied down? (*he notices her horrified expression*) I'll go now shall I?

Matt walks away as Mrs Stanley turns her back on him

Music

Mrs Stanley is waiting outside the church, as before. Matt arrives.

- 1) Good morning and welco . . .
- 2) Look, I know I've messed up before, but I really want to go into that church. I want to praise the Lord in a happy smiley fashion. I want to make new friends who I can drink decaf coffee with, or the odd glass of wine, in a non-smoking environment. I want to learn how to play bowls and table tennis and talk about the Bible and God and sing along with Cliff and the other angels. I want to meet a lovely young lady who will show me the error of my ways and I would love to share close fellowship with you, united in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

1) (*Her shock makes way for a look of delight*) Well if you'd explained that in the first place (*she reaches out to shake his hand*) you are most welcome into our little church. May you know the love of Christ amongst us.

2) What? I'm in?

1) Of course, brother.

He stands back and looks at the door

2) Well, praise the Lord

1) Praise the Lord.

He walks past her to go into the church

2) And about bloody time!

Mrs Stanley is left looking after him in absolute horror