



Contributed by the

CLOWN-GREGATION

by David R. Suhs

Biography

David Suhs brings over thirty years of experience in clown ministry including performances, script writing, and workshop leadership. He has been blessed to share clown, pantomime, and puppet ministries with hundreds of young people and adults in five different countries. He has authored, co-authored, and collaborated on over 30 clown and pantomime scripts and has had two play kits, *“Yesu-The Life of Jesus”* and *“Clown-gregation”* published by Contemporary Drama Services. He has attended training in clown ministry with two of its major contributors, Floyd Shaffer and Margie Brown, and attended training in mime and pantomime at Old Dominion University. He has held a number of workshops including the nationally recognized Recreation Workshop at Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, North Carolina.

David holds a Master’s Degree in Christian Education from Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, Virginia and has served as a Christian educator in several military chapels and churches. He has also been a classroom teacher and school administrator. David and his wife, Patricia, served for over 20 years as missionary teachers in a Christian international school in South Korea. They have a grown son and daughter, Hans and Bonnie. David and Patricia are secondary school teachers in Hawaii and are both still active in clown ministry.

By perhaps calling the by-line “Clown-gregation” we can refer to not only myself but all future contributors who send in scripts, ideas, questions, and requests.



Journey to DramaShare

“Around the Circus Ring”

One of my favorite paintings of Jesus has always been the so called “Laughing Jesus” by Ralph Kozak. Jesus spoke to us that He would bring us incredible joy and gladness. In our lives, we have seen this joy expressed in innumerable ways. For many over the years, including myself, this has been most profoundly experienced in clowning. Yes, I did say clowning!

In those opportunities I have had to attend a circus, I am always amazed at how the clowns who are seldom the “headline stars” in the center ring seem to have this special talent to transform the audience through their actions “around the ring.” They bring us joy and delight by permitting us to forget the world outside through their simple skits and encounters that bring us laughter. If you would permit this unusual comparison, I believe that Jesus did the same. He was not the headliner priest, teacher, or Pharisee, but a nobody “outside the ring” who dared us to look at ourselves and laugh and be transformed by the love of God.

In my own life, I discovered the clown by accident. My brother was a clown first and as I watched him I realized there was an inner child in me who wanted to interact with people and make them laugh. I also saw that clowns were very relational and this was something that I truly wanted to possess. I believe the Lord was working in my life to value and to develop relationships. Clowning was one of the valuable experiences that helped me grow in this area. As years went by, I also discovered the potential for clowning as a ministry. After seeing and being inspired by Rolf Fosberg’s “Parable” and Stephen Schwartz’s and John-Michael Tebelak’s “Godspell,” I began to experiment with pantomime and clowning, not as a way to be in the center ring, but as a creative teaching tool “around the ring” for both the classroom and worship. I observed that the clown, through pantomime and humor is able to communicate the Lord’s message to people who have become hardened to the Word and were not able to be reached by the spoken word or other forms of communication. Later, noted leaders in clown ministry, Reverend Floyd Shaffer and Margie Brown, will open my eyes to how God’s love can be communicated through the humor of the clown.

Perhaps, the most powerful ministry that I experienced with the clown is in the area I call, “outreach.” This is where clowns enter an arena where there is hurt, loneliness and not much joy. I am referring to hospitals, care treatment homes for older adults, prisons, and facilities for the mentally challenged. The clown seems to have the ability to break down walls, provide needed human touch, and most importantly, laughter. In this setting, the caregiver clown maybe more ministered to than the patient, the inmate, or the resident.

In months to come, it will be my pleasure and blessing to share with the readers and contributors to DramaShare how the clown can bring a special moment of joy, laughter, and delight to both those who encounter the clown through dramatic presentations and to those who participate as clowns.

I look forward to communicating with you on scripts, resources, how to get started, and most importantly sharing in....

The Lord’s Laughter