



More Than
STONE SOUP

A Stewardship and Giving Emphasis Program for Congregations

CHANCEL DRAMA

Overview: This drama is a new take on a very old story. A critical piece of the program, the story sets the stage for the remainder of the giving emphasis campaign. The Director is encouraged to keep the performance on the light side. All present should have fun with this. A laugh now and then is a good thing and something to which the entire cast should endeavor to achieve.

Theme: An often mentioned detriment to generous giving seems to be a perception among church members of a scarcity of resources. Yet when we really look at our blessings, we realize most have all that is needed to make life work. The story of Stone Soup helps all to focus on abundance as a method for overcoming the perception of scarcity.

Casting: The cast consists of a Narrator, a Weary Traveler and six to ten villagers.

Props: The props are few and inexpensive, and most can be reused:

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| -cauldron or soup pot | -fresh carrots with tops |
| -rubber chicken | -three fresh potatoes, unpeeled |
| -sticks to be placed around cauldron | -fresh celery with tops |
| -fake flames (colored cardboard) | -fresh onion |
| -clean stone (size of softball) | -box of salt (can be empty) |
| -ladle for stirring the soup | -box of frozen peas (empty box) |
| -cups and spoons for the peddler and for each of the villagers | |
| -metal pitcher or small metal bucket to simulate pouring water into the cauldron | |

Costumes: Costuming is what you choose to make of it. Villagers can wear contemporary street clothes or they can be dressed in something more likely to be worn by villagers; flannel shirts, bibbed overalls, straw hats, etc. The Weary Traveler should be equipped with a knapsack, messengers bag, side bag—something a traveler would carry. The stone prop is placed in the bag the Weary Traveler carries.

Setup: All except the Traveler should take their places in the front of the Sanctuary. The villagers are scattered throughout the chancel yet in plain site of the parishioners. Props are out of site behind the Altar or another convenient location. The Narrator is the only cast member with a speaking part, so should be equipped with a microphone so all can hear clearly, and can be located either in the sanctuary or out of sight.

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

NARRATOR: As a point of clarification, the narrator is to read all of his script as printed. The quotation marks are not intended to define what is to be read, but are provided to assist with interpretation. Read with some animation.

>>>>: This symbol indicates action to be taken by the various villagers. Spread the gathering and delivery of the various ingredients among the various actors. No villager should provide more than one ingredient. Villagers should perform with some animation as well. Lots of gestures and body language.

MORE THAN STONE SOUP – THE SCRIPT

NARRATOR: A story is told from long ago and takes place in a quaint little village. It was a beautiful place with well kept cottages and white picket fences. The citizens were cheerful and friendly, very neighborly and eager to help one another at a moment's notice. The community gathered often to party and conduct festivals. Life in the little village was very good and everyone was happy.

Then, one day, troubling news came from far off places. It seemed that some villages in the surrounding countryside had fallen on hard times. Food had become scarce, cottages were falling into disrepair and folks were squabbling with one another. The news was troubling, indeed.

The news frightened the people in the little village. They worried about the possibility that theirs might be the same fate as that of other villages. Folks reacted in a manner very unexpected. They began to hoard food and other of their possessions. They stopped partying and spending time together, and their wonderful festivals were no more.

>>>>: As the narrator speaks, the Traveler wanders up the center aisle of the sanctuary and onto the stage area, looking around and surveying the villagers as he makes his way to center stage.

NARRATOR: One day a weary traveler wandered into the village. He was tired and hungry, and looking for a place where he might satisfy his needs. Expectations were high as he looked around the village. "Certainly, I can find a friendly villager willing to share something with me. I am so hungry."

>>>>: The Traveler visits the villagers one by one. Each villager turns a back to the Traveler as he approaches.

NARRATOR: The Traveler's expectations were not met. For villager after villager turned their backs as he approached. The traveler was about to move on down the road. "No food here," he thought. "At least, no food for me." ...But, wait! The traveler remembered something he had picked up along the road. Reaching

into his pack, he pulled out a large stone made smooth by decades of water running in the clear, cool brook near the village.

>>>>: The Traveler removes the stone from his bag, and raises it high over his head as he slowly turns left and right, addressing the villagers.

NARRATOR: Raising the stone high above his head, the Traveler spoke in a loud voice, “If you have nothing to feed me, then at least allow me to fix a meal myself. Who has a pot that I can borrow... and some water... and maybe a little firewood. I am going to make Stone Soup! That is what I will do!”

>>>>: The villagers mill about, shaking their heads no, and making gestures suggesting the Traveler is crazy.

NARRATOR: Well! The villagers didn’t know what to think. They looked at one another with amazement. Clearly, they doubted what they heard. They approached the Traveler cautiously, and assembled near him. “What do we have to lose?” they agreed. “Water is free at the creek, firewood is strewn all around our village, and the Festival soup pot is too heavy to run with. So, let’s play along and see what this stone soup is all about.”

>>>>: The villagers face one another, bowing forward in a gesture of acceptance, nodding yes with their heads.

NARRATOR: The villagers were just too curious to deny the traveler his request. They fetched the pot, gathered firewood and carried water for the soup.

>>>>: The villagers bring the pot and fire wood, assemble it in the designated spot on the stage, attaching the cardboard flames to the affair.

NARRATOR: Soon a fire was crackling under the village’s big soup pot. A villager poured water into the pot and the traveler placed the stone carefully into the water. He began to stir the stone soup.

>>>>: A villager simulates pouring water into the pot.

NARRATOR: “This is going to be the best stone soup ever!” the Traveler declared. “I can taste it already. Of course... it would be even better if I had an onion to give it some additional flavor. Too bad an onion is not available.”

>>>>: With a look of hopeful anticipation on his face, The Traveler surveys the villagers... waiting for a response.

NARRATOR: “I have some onions,” offered a reluctant villager. “I am certain I can spare one.”

>>>>: The villager hurries to get the onion, returns, and hands it to the Traveler who places it in the pot.

NARRATOR: The Traveler continues to stir the soup, occasionally lifting the ladle to his nose and sniffing the brew. “The onion made all the difference in the world,” said the Traveler. But... I think some potatoes would make it even better. I like my stone soup with a little potato in it. Too bad I don’t have a few potatoes.”

>>>>: A villager raises her hand and says...

NARRATOR: “We had a very good crop of potatoes this year. I think I can spare two or three for this stone soup of yours. But I don’t know why. Everyone knows you can’t make soup out of stones.” With that the villager fetches the potatoes.

>>>>: The villager gets the potatoes, returns, tossing them carelessly into the pot. The Traveler steps back quickly to avoid being splashed.

NARRATOR: (In a scolding tone) Let’s be careful there, villager. We wouldn’t want to splash any of the broth out on the ground where it will go to waste... now would we?

>>>>: The villager makes a silent, but animated gesture of, “Sorry” with her lips and body posture.

NARRATOR: Looking around at the villagers the Traveler says, “As good as this soup is going to be, stone soup is even better with a few vegetables. Stone soup is especially good with some celery. Too bad celery is so scarce this time of year.”

“I have a little celery at home,” offers a villager. “Maybe some celery would improve the soup.” With that she went home and returned with the celery.

<<<<<: The villager leaves and returns, celery in hand, giving it to the Traveler who puts it in the soup pot.

NARRATOR: “My, my, my,” says the Traveler. “This stone soup is beginning to smell really good! But, you know what would make it even better? Carrots. Too bad it is so late in the year. Were it earlier some carrots might still be available.”

Again, a villager responds, “I have a lot of carrots. They are still in the ground in my garden. I have so many. I think I can spare a carrot or two.”

>>>>: The villager leaves and returns with the carrots, handing them to the Traveler who places them in the pot with the tops sticking up.

NARRATOR: The Traveler continues, “You have already been so generous. I hate to bring this up, but I cannot imagine stone soup with out a good helping of fresh green peas. Might anyone have some fresh green peas?”

>>>>: A villager raises and waives his hand. He leaves to return with a box of frozen peas and places them in the pot.

NARRATOR: (In a questioning tone) Fresh green peas, villager. Fresh... fresh. I specifically stated fresh green peas. Yup, it's right here in the script. Fresh green peas.

>>>>: The villager shrugs his shoulders in a gesture of indifference.

NARRATOR: "Whatever!" By now, the villagers are mesmerized by the gurgling soup pot. All are sniffing fragrant aroma of the cooking stone soup in eager anticipation. But the soup is not quite ready.

"This soup is almost ready to go, I think," states the traveler. "But it could use a little seasoning. Some salt would be nice."

>>>>: A villager leaves and returns with a box of salt, and places the entire box in the soup pot.

NARRATOR: "Oh, good grief. A little salt, Villager. A LITTLE salt"

>>>>: The villager places hands over the mouth and raises eyebrows in a gesture of, "oops!"

NARRATOR: The Traveler makes one final request. "The stone soup needs one final thing, just one final thing. What the stone soup needs is... a little meat. Just a little meat... and this stone soup will be... absolutely perfect!"

>>>>: The Traveler looks around at the villagers who are looking around at one another. After a few seconds of these gestures, a villager steps forward, faces the Traveler and lifts his hands chest high in an almost disgusted fashion.

NARRATOR: "Just this morning I butchered one of my hens," the villager grumbles. "I suppose I could give it to you, but I really had planned on canning the bird."

>>>>: The villager shakes his head "no" and makes gestures of discontentment.

NARRATOR: "That would be great!" The Traveler is obviously pleased with the offer.

>>>>: The villager leaves and returns carrying the rubber chicken upside down, holding the chicken by its feet. Approaching the soup pot, the villager bends over the pot and begins to dunk the chicken in the soup pot, much as one would dip a tea bag in a cup of hot water.

NARRATOR: "That's a big batch of soup, Villager, and a rather skinny chicken. I think it best to put the whole bird in the pot. All of it, Villager. Come on! It's getting late, so just put the chicken in the pot!"

>>>>: The villager places the chicken in the pot, head down with the feet sticking up out of the pot. He then steps away, shaking his fist at the narrator in a disgruntled manner.

NARRATOR: After what seemed to the villagers to be hours, the soup is finally ready. The Traveler addresses the villagers, “Come, my new friends, and eat. Bring your cups and enjoy Stone Soup. There is plenty here for all to enjoy!”

>>>>: The villagers gather around the pot with outstretched arms while the Traveler ladles soup into their cups. Someone hands a cup to the Traveler and he ladles some soup for himself. All simulate eating.

NARRATOR: The Traveler’s Stone Soup was a big success with the villagers. All ate their fill and were satisfied. Then they began to realize the Traveler’s trickery had taught them a very valuable lesson. They each had something to contribute, and collectively they had all they needed to make things work. The quarreling stopped, they became friendly once again, and the wonderful festivals continued. All was well once again... in the quaint little village... with the well kept cottages and pretty white picket fences.

>>>>: The villagers all hug one another, dance around for a while, and skip dance off the stage and out of sight.

NARRATOR: After the villagers had returned to their homes, the Traveler retrieved his stone and departed the village to resume his travels.

>>>>: The Traveler begins to leave, but then hastily returns to the pot, knocks the cardboard flames to the floor and stomps on them as if putting the fire out. He then frantically paws through the contents of the pot scattering everything on the floor. Retrieving the stone, he places it in his bag, and with a big smile of accomplishment and a wave, he wanders slowly down the center aisle and out the back of the sanctuary, leaving the mess behind.

NARRATOR: (In a half disgusted tone) “That’s the way it is with church people. Everybody wants to enjoy a good meal, but nobody is willing to stay for clean-up.”

>>>>: The cast returns to the front of the sanctuary where they are joined by the narrator. All bow before the congregation. Pastor comes forward clapping, thanks the cast, and encourages applause. The cast can feel free to bow once again. After allowing sufficient time for the cast members to pick up and carry away the props and any other debris, Pastor then begins the Homily.

THE END