

Details of my first casting in a church performance

The wonderful and talented Judy Zylstra makes few mistakes, but somehow, in the worst bit of miscasting since John Wayne played Genghis Khan in *The Conqueror*, she selected me to be Apostle Andrew for the annual Easter Cantata at the Christian Church, and so I thought I would share my experiences in this, my first role in a church play.

— 6 p.m., March 21. Because of a conflict, I will be unable to make it to the first rehearsal, on March 26, so Judy and Janet agree to meet me at the church to go over my lines. Unbeknownst to her, my plan is to bushwack her for an interview that ultimately ended up being published on March 28. Upon hearing my reading, Judy directs me to be more outspoken, more “over the top.” I can do that, I think. I also got fitted

for my tunic, which proved to be interesting. Apparently only those who are 8 feet or taller are expected to have my prodigious girth, so some hemming will be in order.

— 1 p.m. April 1. No foolin’, it’s dress rehearsal day. I arrive at 12:45, feeling more than a bit apprehensive, as this is kind of a big deal. The first three people I see in the costume room are folks that I don’t know, which I thought was impossible. I was pretty sure I knew everyone in VG, but I guess not. I find my costume, put it on, and as if by magic, it has been sewn to the perfect length. (Huge shout out to the mystery seamstress) I put it on and trek to where the performance will be taking place, and OF COURSE I immediately have to go to the head, so off goes the tunic. Grr. Finally, I make my way to the pew and

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



await my time to shine in all my apostolic glory. The choir is set to rehearse, and I’m blown away by their talents. I’m also blown away by the discerning ear of Dr. Janet McCumber and guest conductor Rebecca Carmack Regennitter. They are able to separate minute details about the groups of singers and make just the right tweaks to make it even better. These ladies have talent oozing out of their batons!

— 1:30 p.m., approximate-

ly. The overture begins and we make our way to center stage. I immediately find my seat, only to turn and discover that because I missed the cast rehearsal, I didn’t know that I was to remain standing, mingling, shaking hands and hugging my fellow apostles. FAIL! Now the nerves have really set in. Before I know it, it’s my turn to say my lines and even though I have them mostly memorized, I find myself transfixed by the prompter. I

get through them and pass on the mic, and I’m struck by how good my fellow apostles are. I am at the shallower end of the talent pool, to be sure.

— 3:50 p.m. April 2. It’s show time! The Apostles, led by pastor Lenny, say a pre-program prayer and take our seats in the audience.

— 4 p.m., the program begins with “Psalm 23”, an original composition by VG Alum Rebecca Carmack Regennitter, in honor of Mr. Ken Krejci, the venerated long time band instructor at VGHS.

— 4:20 p.m., approximately, the Apostles take their seats and give their soliloquies. I am second in line, and the moment is so powerful and moving that I find myself fighting back tears. For anyone that knows me, this shouldn’t come as a surprise, since I cry at just about EVERYTHING, but I

think it might have helped my performance.

— 5:05ish, and the production reaches its finishing crescendo. I am so high right now, honored to have been a part of such a talented cast and crew.

In closing, I am simply awed by the fact that this much talent could be crammed under one roof in our little river city. The chorus was amazing, the orchestra, sublime. My fellow apostles were true vessels of the Lord as they delivered their lines. Everyone seemed to have saved their best for last, and I was a bit saddened that it had ended. Bringing a taste of the fine arts back to Villa Grove was an epic experience, one that I hope to repeat in the future, and one that I encourage everyone to try.

Resurrection rolls help tell the Bible story for children

This week I have for you a recipe that sounds delicious and can help you tell the story of the resurrection of Jesus to your children. These Resurrection Rolls symbolize Christ and the empty tomb after he was resurrected.

You can have your kids help make these warm and gooey puffs while explaining the story of the Resurrection and the kids may not even notice that you are trying to teach them something.

I will start with the recipe first, then tell you how to use the story telling with the process of making the rolls.

Resurrection Rolls

2 tubes Crescent rolls

1/4 cup sugar
1 tsp cinnamon
16 large marshmallows
1/4 cup melted butter, plus more
Glaze:
1/2 cup confectioner sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla
2-3 Tbsp milk
1/4 cup chopped nuts, optional

Preheat oven to 375. Separate Crescent dough into triangles. In a small bowl, mix sugar and cinnamon. In another small bowl, place melted butter. Dip the marshmallows into the butter then roll in the sugar mixture. Place marshmallow at the wide end of dough triangle. Repeat with all marshmallows

Fold the corners of dough up and over the marshmallow. You may need to gently

stretch dough slightly to cover marshmallow. Seal seams tightly. Dip the bottoms of the dough balls into melted butter, place into ungreased muffin pans, butter side down.

Bake for 10 to 15 minutes until golden brown and the edges start to pull slightly away from pan. When rolls done, remove to wire rack. Mix confectioner sugar, vanilla and enough milk to make a glaze of drizzle consistency. Drizzle over rolls, sprinkle on nuts if desired. Serve warm.

Here is a hint for less messy making of these rolls. Pour the butter into a large bowl with a lid or into a plastic bag. In another bowl or plastic bag,

Let's Cook

By Linda Hoskins



place the sugar mixture. Dump all the marshmallows into the bowl with butter, toss to coat. Then pour it all into the sugar mixture and shake to coat.

Now here is a way you can tell the story of the Resurrection. The marshmallow represents Jesus Christ because

its whiteness symbolizes His pureness. While dipping the marshmallows in sugar and cinnamon, you can explain that followers of Jesus wrapped his body in oils and spices to embalm him. Then they wrapped his body in clean linens, thus the Crescent dough. As you

place the pans into the oven, you can tell how the body of Jesus was placed in a tomb and sealed up. When the children bite into these rolls, they will find the marshmallow is gone, just as the body of Jesus was gone when the tomb was opened.

I wish for everyone a very nice Easter and hope you have family and friends to spend the day with.

If you have a recipe to share, please send to letscook!@heraldpubs.com or mail to Mascoutah Herald, PO Box C, Mascoutah IL 62258. Thanks and Happy Cooking!

Keeping the message real on Easter Sunday

I didn’t care for Easter when I was a kid. My parents didn’t go to church, but they made sure that me and my siblings went any time the church doors were open. Dad would drop us off at church and tell us to ask for a ride home, which we always did.

It felt even lonelier being a kid without their parents at church on Easter than any other time because of all of the “picture perfect” families gathered. Everyone was dressed in such pretty new clothes and bright white patent leather shoes, I was always embarrassed because of the old clothes I had to wear.

Except I had this purple knitted poncho with gold seals on it and the seals were balancing balls on their noses, and there was gold fringe all around the bottom of the poncho. I loved that thing. I was only allowed to wear it to church or on special occasions. It was thin, and not very warm, especially on cold

spring mornings. But it was my favorite thing in my closet, so I always wore it on Easter.

I remember being cold, my skinny bare legs rattling together as I shivered in the park. That is where our church would take us to have their Easter egg hunt every year. They didn’t use plastic eggs filled with candy, but instead, real colored hard-boiled eggs.

The Sunday School teachers gave us each a little brown paper bag to collect them in, and sometimes the eggs would break and be wet, and the bag would get wet too, and it was messy, and cold, and not much fun for a kid.

I never won the grand prize by finding the golden egg, but I usually ended up with a Frisbee or cheap-o plastic kite to take home, anyway. Our church tried to make it special and they did go to a lot of trouble to boil, color, and hide all of those eggs. We usually took ours home and mom would take them and put them in the

potato salad she was making for dinner.

We also had church on Sunday night back in the day, even on holidays. I was raised to believe that if you missed church that you were walking away from God, so we never missed going if the church doors were open.

I never questioned why my parents never went until I was an adult and out of the house. Mom was the boss and in charge, and we just did what she said. I think we were all too afraid to poke the bear, to challenge her authority or cross that line. She could be really scary at times.

Easter night services at our church were never something I liked. I hated them, in fact, and dreaded going. The music was more somber than usual, a lot of people cried and wailed, and then the sermon was always the same. There was a slideshow about what Jesus went through on the cross, and graphic details of

Holding It All Together

By Amy McCollom



how he was tortured and beaten, all for ME, and that I should be so sorry for my sins and run to the altar right now!

I always felt a great deal of sorrow and shame and guilt, even though at the tender age of 8, I couldn’t think of much to repent of yet. I remember trying to go to the altar, but it was so crowded with “big” people, shoulder to shoulder, crying and weeping, the smell of sweaty backs and hairspray, there was never room for me there. I would always end up going back to my seat and just watching. Other kids were laughing and goofing off and I couldn’t understand how they

weren’t feeling what I was feeling. There was a battle going on in my heart and head.

I kept feeling God pulling me. As a rather portly lady played the piano and sang “I Surrender All” I bowed my head and fought back tears and the lump in my throat and I hoped she would hurry up and get done singing. Something was happening to me and I was uncomfortable. I wanted to cry but didn’t know why. It was so hard fighting back the tears.

All these years later I still think about those Easters, and how God was calling me to come closer to Him from the

time I was a child, to surrender to Him. I wonder what might have happened if I would have just yielded instead of fought it? Oh I wish I would have just relaxed and let go that night and many others that I felt that urge to surrender all. I wonder how many trials I might not have had to face, or how many blessings I may have missed.

Years later I did surrender completely to God. It was the best decision I have ever made. Still, life is a journey and my relationship with Jesus is a journey too. It needs to be attended to and nurtured to stay alive and healthy. Paul said “I die daily,” meaning he repents daily and surrenders daily to God. Nothing is once and done. It’s not over when the fat lady sings, in fact, it’s just the beginning.

Easter, when Jesus surrendered all and rose again for us, is the perfect time to surrender all so we can rise again with Him.

IFB President: Farmers invest in sustainable agriculture throughout the year

By RICHARD GUEBERT JR.
Illinois Farm Bureau President

Each spring people around the world celebrate our planet, recognizing the need to find innovative solutions to protect our soil and water for generations to come.

Farmers, often called the “original conservationists,” continue the fight for cleaner, more sustainable agricultural practices throughout the year. We care deeply for our land and collaborate with our agricultural research partners to implement the best solutions to preserve our natural resources.

We invest time, money, and energy in protecting our land. We are investing in our future.

Our farmers utilize a variety of sustainable practices. One strategy that has gained momentum in recent years is the

use of cover crops, or plants such as wheat, rye, and radishes which are planted after primary cash crops like corn and soybeans are harvested. These special crops work hard to enrich the soil, maintain moisture, and prevent erosion among other benefits.

In February, University of Illinois researchers released a new study showing that Midwestern farmers are seeding more cover crops than ever. The study showed that cover crop adoption reached 7.2% in 2021, up from 1.8% a decade earlier. Researchers stated that the rapid increase in cover crop adoption between 2017 and 2021 coincided with increased state and federal incentive programs.

The U of I study, “Recent rapid increase of cover crop adoption across the U.S. Midwest detected by fusing multi-source

satellite data,” was published in *Geophysical Research Letters*.

Farmers also work hard to voluntarily implement the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRs) to reduce nutrient loss to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Last year, Illinois Farm Bureau’s (IFB) environmental team joined forces with farmers and agricultural researchers to film a new documentary highlighting sustainability efforts in Illinois.

The hour-long film “Sustaining Our Future: A Farm Family Story,” celebrates farmers’ dedication to the environment while sharing with a broader consumer audience the trials, and in some cases, the financial risks farmers take to conserve our natural resources.

Viewers are invited to join the Ganschow family of Bureau County to learn how three

generations of farmers have approached sustainability to create a brighter future for generations to come. People can now watch the documentary for free on IFB’s YouTube channel.

This April, Illinois farmers and the agricultural research community are collaborating to showcase current and past conservation practices, including ongoing cover crop projects. These Spring Nutrient Stewardship Field days are an opportunity for those inside and outside of agriculture to learn more about farmers’ role in protecting the environment.

Now in its eighth year, IFB’s Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program supports research conservation projects across the state. Our organization has committed more than \$2.8 million to nutrient stewardship initiatives since 2015. For the fiscal year

2023, IFB distributed \$175,000 in grants for local projects, including \$25,000 to support pollinator conservation across the state.

It is fitting that this year Illinois farmers will host two field day opportunities ahead of Earth Day. In Washington County, farmers will evaluate nutrient loss reduction practices in addition to evaluating cover crop projects. Young farmers in Knox County will also invite researchers and farmers to learn more about their goal to implement one cover crop plot in each township within the county.

Farmers are at the forefront of climate-smart farming, putting scientific solutions, technology, and innovation to work to protect our land, air, and water. Every year is a learning curve, however.

We are constantly building

upon previous research to develop better, more sustainable practices and strategies to protect our land. It is important to also keep in mind this is a long-haul effort. Each year, our farmers find new ways to approach conservation and sustainability, moving the needle ever closer to a brighter, greener future.

I am proud of the work Illinois farmers are doing and will continue to do to preserve our natural resources. While the world celebrates our planet on April 22, I challenge everyone to learn more about how their local farmers are committing themselves to finding innovative solutions to protect our land.

This op-ed was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.