

Clown Ministry by Rev. Marciah

Clowns have been around since the beginning of recorded history. Since humanity began walking in an upright position they have been clown-like characters in the clans, tribes, or communities. Their function was to lift the spirits of the people.

In those days some comic relief was essential. Imagine the stress of saber-tooth tigers and the like! Have times changed so much? How about those fast moving freeways and hectic work places (our modern saber-tooth tigers).

During the Middle Ages in Europe clown-like characters were used in cathedrals as interpreters to relay to the back rows what priests were saying at the altar. Clowns had an important role in those medieval church services, they played the part of "holy interrupters", popping up to illustrate the theological points through mime, magic, or even mockery. Gradually, however, they began to satirize the church and secular society. This did not make the clowns very popular with the church fathers. They fell out of favor with the church, and were thereafter banished to traveling shows...the secular world of the circus ...until their recent revival.

In 1969, Floyd Shaffer, a Luther minister, created his clown persona named Socataco. Reverend Shaffer brought Socataco into the sanctuary and preformed clown worship services. His congregation was so moved by what he conveyed through Socataco, that they wanted more. They began to discover their own clown personas. Today there are thousands of clown ministry groups in the United States and around the world, whose members put on big red noses and funny shoes in order to serve God through the unique expression of the clown.



The clown is a heart-to-heart communicator, whose nature is that of joy, compassion, aliveness and spontaneity and whose message is that of hope, humor, humility and harmony.

Clown ministry is an intergenerational activity, blending children, youth, adults and senior citizens in service to the church and the community. Clown groups perform in special worship services and minister to hospital, nursing home, and children shelters. They heal through laughter and play. Some remarkable things happen in mental hospitals where people previously unable to trust other human beings have responded to clowns.

Charles Fillmore is quoted as saying, "*When joy is put back into religion, there will be more religion in the world.*" And where a clown ministry is made a part of your church activities, there will be more joy. There is always a need to brighten up our lives and the lives of others...turn frowns into clowns!"
