Three Generations, One Shepherd

Three Generations, One Shepherd — Pastor Appreciation Skit for Church

WHAT

A grandmother, a forty-year-old daughter, and a sixteen-year-old granddaughter sit on the living-room floor sorting through a box of old church photo albums. Each generation argues about which moment was the one — the funeral he preached for grandfather, the wedding he officiated for the daughter, or the youth retreat that changed the granddaughter. The argument turns into a tribute. They realize the shepherd is the thread. The final beat is a fourth voice — a small child cast member — who interrupts to ask if Pastor will be there for her baptism too. The grandmother answers — he will be there. That's who he is.

THEME

A long pastorate is the rare gift of one shepherd watching three generations grow up.

WHO

GRANDMA EVELYN — Late seventies; widow; sharp-eyed; has been at the church 52 years

KAREN — Evelyn's daughter, age 40; married, two kids; faith feels worn but holding

BRIDGET — Karen's daughter, age 16; opinionated, half-curled into a hoodie, secretly listening

LITTLE MAY — Bridget's six-year-old cousin; appears in the final beat only

PASTOR DAVE — Heard offstage twice — once at the funeral, once at the wedding

YOUNG KAREN — Karen at age 22, in the wedding vignette

YOUNG EVELYN — Evelyn in her forties, in the funeral vignette

HOW (STYLE / TONE)

Stage as a warm living room — couch, coffee table, lamp, a wide rug. A large cardboard box of photo albums sits open in the middle. Three generations sit cross-legged on the rug, passing pages back and forth. The vignettes happen in a small lit area stage left — a single tall window pane, a chair, a Bible on a stand. We never see the pastor. We hear his voice, faint and warm, in two of the vignettes.

PROPS

- A worn cardboard box marked 'CHURCH — 1972 to NOW' in marker
- Five thick photo albums, the older ones falling apart
- A wedding photo Karen lifts out and holds for a long beat
- A funeral program Evelyn keeps tucked in her Bible
- A youth retreat name tag Bridget pulls from her wallet

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- A coffee mug for Evelyn that she warms her hands on
- A small white baptism dress Little May holds at the end

TIME
15 minutes

Scene 1 — The Box Comes Down

(Lights up on the living room. Evelyn lifts the lid off a wide cardboard box. Karen and Bridget settle on the rug)

EVELYN (sighing)
Fifty-two years of pictures, girls. Fifty-two years of one church. I don't know how I'll ever sort them.

KAREN
Mom, you don't have to sort them. We just need to pick a few for Pastor Dave's appreciation Sunday.

BRIDGET (mumbling)
Pastor Dave has been our pastor since the Earth cooled.

EVELYN (gentle)
Pastor Dave has been our pastor since before your mother could spell.

KAREN
And before I knew there was a God to spell about.

(All three lift photo albums. The first one spills onto the rug)

Scene 2 — The Argument Starts

EVELYN
If we are going to pick one moment, the moment was your father's funeral.

KAREN (firm)
Mom. The moment was my wedding.

BRIDGET (eye roll, fake-casual)
If anyone cares — the moment was the youth retreat my freshman year.

(All three look at each other. A beat. Then a small smile from Evelyn)

EVELYN
Three women. Three moments. One pastor.

KAREN
We are not going to agree on this.

EVELYN

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Then let's start with mine. I'm the oldest. I get to start.

Scene 3 — The Funeral Vignette

(Lights shift left. Young Evelyn enters in a black coat, holding a folded program. She stands by the small lit window)

YOUNG EVELYN (quiet)

He buried my Walter on a Saturday in October. The pastor was thirty-one years old. It was the third funeral he had ever preached.

PASTOR DAVE (offstage, gentle, very young)

Walter Hayes loved this church. Walter Hayes loved his wife. Walter Hayes loved the Lord. The order of those sentences mattered to him. So we will say them in that order today.

YOUNG EVELYN

He didn't try to be eloquent. He told the truth. He held my hand at the graveside. His own hands were shaking.

PASTOR DAVE (offstage)

Evelyn — I don't have all the words. I will be back tomorrow with more. I will be back the day after that. I will not stop coming back until you tell me to.

YOUNG EVELYN

He came back every Tuesday for a year. Every Tuesday. For a year.

(Lights shift back to the living room. Evelyn dabs her eyes)

Scene 4 — Karen Pushes Back, Gently

KAREN (softly)

Mom. That's a beautiful one.

EVELYN

I know it is.

KAREN

But you have to let me say mine.

EVELYN

Tell yours, baby. Tell it slow.

Scene 5 — The Wedding Vignette

(Lights shift left. Young Karen enters in a wedding dress, slightly nervous. Stands at the lit window)

YOUNG KAREN (to the audience)

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I was twenty-two. I was scared. The man I was about to marry — David — I knew he was right, but I was still scared.

YOUNG KAREN
Pastor Dave pulled me aside in the back hallway. I thought he was going to give me some big spiritual word.

PASTOR DAVE (offstage)
Karen. You can do this.

YOUNG KAREN
That was it. That was what he said. You can do this.

PASTOR DAVE (offstage)
Marriage is hard. He is a good man. You are a good woman. You will figure it out together. That is the whole sermon.

YOUNG KAREN (almost laughing)
He buried my dad. He officiated my wedding. He held my hand on the worst day of my life and on the best day of my life. Same man. Same hand.

(Lights shift back)

Scene 6 — Bridget Surprises Them

BRIDGET (quiet, no sarcasm)
Same man held my hand too.

(Karen and Evelyn turn slowly)

KAREN
Bridget.

BRIDGET
I'm not going to say I love church or whatever, but. Pastor Dave saw something.

EVELYN (softly)
Tell us, baby.

BRIDGET
It was the youth retreat. Two summers ago.

Scene 7 — The Youth Retreat

(Bridget pulls a name tag out of her wallet. Stays seated. Light slowly warms on her where she sits)

BRIDGET

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I went because Mom made me. I sat in the back. I had my arms folded the whole weekend. I hated everything about it.

BRIDGET

And on the last night Pastor Dave sat down on the floor next to me. He didn't sit on a chair. He sat on the floor. He's like sixty. He sat on the floor.

BRIDGET

He didn't ask me what I believed. He asked me what I was scared of.

BRIDGET (quieter)

I told him. Everything. The boy. The grades. My dad's drinking. The thing I was thinking about doing to myself when nobody was looking.

BRIDGET

He didn't preach at me. He just said — Bridget. I am not going anywhere. I will be your pastor when you are forty. I will be your pastor when you are sixty. I will be your pastor when I am gone, because the man who replaces me will know your name from the file I leave him.

(Karen reaches over and squeezes Bridget's hand. Long pause. Bridget doesn't pull away)

Scene 8 — Three Stories, One Man

KAREN (quiet)

Mom. He sat on the floor for my daughter.

EVELYN

He sat at the graveside for me.

BRIDGET

He told you you could do it before you walked down the aisle.

EVELYN

Three different decades. Three different chairs. Same shepherd.

KAREN

We were going to argue about which moment was the one.

BRIDGET

Maybe the moment is — there hasn't been a moment without him.

EVELYN (softly)

The moment is not a moment, girls. The moment is fifty-two years of moments. Stacked on top of each other. Like the photo albums in this box.

KAREN

He has officiated nine funerals in our family. Did you know that?

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BRIDGET
Nine?

KAREN
Your great-grandmother. Your great-grandfather. My dad. Two of my dad's brothers. My cousin who died young. The neighbor we adopted as family. And both of grandma's best friends.

EVELYN
He preaches the funerals like the dead were his own family. Because by year fifteen — they were.

Scene 9 — The Photo Album Pages

(All three flip through the album. Each one stops on a different page)

EVELYN (looking down)
Here's our church potluck in 1974. He has hair down to his shoulders. He looks like a different man.

KAREN
Here's the day David and I were baptized together as a married couple. He's holding my hand under the water.

BRIDGET
Here's the youth retreat. He's sitting on the floor. Like I told you.

EVELYN
And here is one I had forgotten.

(She lifts a photo. Looks at it)

EVELYN (softer)
Here is the day he buried my mother. I had not seen this picture in thirty years.

Scene 10 — Evelyn's Confession

EVELYN
Girls. I want to say something. I have not told either of you this.

KAREN
Tell us, Mama.

EVELYN
After Walter died, I almost left the church. I was angry. I was angry with God. I was angry with the deacons. I was angry with the women who brought casseroles for two weeks and then forgot.

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EVELYN

I told Pastor Dave I was leaving. I told him I needed a fresh start somewhere quiet.

EVELYN

He looked at me and said — Evelyn. Go if you need to. But I will keep your seat in the third pew until I die. I will not let anyone else sit there. Not ever. Just in case.

EVELYN (smiling through tears)

I came back six weeks later. The seat was empty. He had put a little card on it that said 'reserved.' Forty-five years ago. He still saves it for me.

Scene 11 — Karen's Confession

KAREN (quiet)

I have one too.

EVELYN

Of course you do.

KAREN

When David and I were almost done — and we were, Mom, you didn't know — Pastor Dave drove out to our house at midnight. He sat at our kitchen table for four hours. He didn't tell us what to do. He just kept asking us — what do you remember about the day you got married?

KAREN

By two a.m. we were laughing. By three a.m. we were crying together. By four a.m. we had decided we were going to fight for this.

KAREN

You didn't know I almost left David.

EVELYN

I didn't.

KAREN

Pastor Dave never told you. He never told anyone. He carried it for us.

BRIDGET (very quiet)

Mom. I have one too. One I never told you.

KAREN (turning)

Bridget.

BRIDGET

Sophomore year. The bad year. You remember the bad year.

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KAREN (gentle)
I remember every minute of it.

BRIDGET
He met me at the diner once a week. Just a Coke. He let me pick the booth. He let me cry when I needed to. He never told you what we talked about. He carried that one for me too.

EVELYN (eyes wet)
Three of us. Three secrets. One pastor. One man holding our family together when nobody else knew it was breaking.

Scene 12 — The Doorbell

(A doorbell rings. Little May, age six, runs in carrying a small white baptism dress on a hanger)

LITTLE MAY (bright)
Grandma Evelyn. Look. Aunt Karen. Look. My mommy got me a dress for my baptism.

(All three women stop. The albums slide off their laps)

LITTLE MAY
Will Pastor Dave be there? He has to be there. Will he be there for my baptism too?

(A long stillness. Karen looks at Evelyn. Evelyn looks at Bridget. All three turn back to Little May)

EVELYN (steady, warm)
Sweetheart. He'll be there.

EVELYN
That's who he is.

Scene 13 — Final Moment

(Little May runs to Evelyn and climbs into her lap. Karen and Bridget close the photo albums slowly)

BRIDGET (quiet, to Little May)
And when you grow up, May — you'll be sitting on a rug with your daughter, looking at pictures, telling her about the same man.

KAREN
And she'll roll her eyes the way you do, and the way I did.

EVELYN

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And then her grandma will tell her the funeral story. The way I told you. The way my mother told me. The way it goes.

NARRATOR: Psalm one hundred forty-five — 'One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.' One generation. To another. The pastor in the picture didn't write that. He just lived it for fifty-two years. And the women on the rug? They are the next chapter of the same psalm.

(Lights down slowly on the rug. Hold three full beats)

END

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