

Compelling look at humanity's search for communication

"The Christians" is passionately acted and asks more questions than it answers

Review by Jane Zussman

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The Christians is a compelling look at humanity's search for communication, meaning and identity in the context of the Christian church. It will shake up your brain, whatever your faith or non-faith background. A recurring theme is, "I have a powerful urge to communicate with you, but I find the distance between us insurmountable."

Be sure to read the two-page "Letter From the Playwright" in the program, where Lucas Hnath offers some background and a sort of explanation of the lack of resolution in his script. "A church is a place where people go to see something that is very difficult to see. A place where the invisible is—at least for a moment—made visible. The theater can be that, too."

The Sycamore Creek Church may not be a "mega" church but it offers a true, church setting for this human exploration of faith. The play starts like a real church service, with assorted Christian pop music from the Praise Team: Bryce Berry, music director, on piano, Greg Dagner on drums, Yoshi Fukagawa on guitar, and Bethany Jeffery and Emily McKay on vocals.

Then we move into the sermon from charismatic Pastor Blake Bowen that includes a change of heart/mind that contradicts the beliefs of Associate Pastor Zach Riley. Elder Michael Shalley weighs in with his own confusion on the practicalities of church management. Congregant Bethany Jeffery offers her set of questions. We wait a long time to hear from Pastor's wife, Heather Lewis, and she is well worth waiting for, pulled in different directions by her faith and her love.

This play is passionately acted and asks more questions than it answers. It is an even-handed look into what/why/how we believe. It will surely provoke dialogue on the car ride home!

The Christians continues through February 11, 8pm Thur-Sat and 1 pm Sundays. <http://www.peppermintcreektheatre.org>

