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## First Baptist

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# First Baptist

## **Abstract**

This is a film review of *First Baptist* (2013), directed by Nedra McClyde and Jamund Washington.

## **Author Notes**

William Blizek is the Founding Editor of the Journal of Religion and Film, and is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is also the editor of the Continuum Companion to Religion and Film (2009).

*First Baptist*

(2013)

directed by Nedra McClyde, Jamund Washington

Narrative Shorts

Odell Bernard is the choir soloist at First Baptist. His brother, Moses, is the choir director. One night Moses catches Odell rehearsing at the church, wearing a red woman's wig. Moses is embarrassed when he realizes



that his brother is gay and he asks Ethel Brown, with whom he is sleeping (a bit of hypocrisy here), to be the choir soloist instead of his brother.

At the funeral of Joletta, who seems to be the Pastor's pet monkey (indicating God's love for all creatures), Odell sneaks to the microphone, protected by his friends. He sings a song, "I Am Gay," in which he points out that God made him this way. Moses is unhappy and tries to substitute Ethel for Odell, until Grandma stands up and sings with Odell. The issue of who will be the soloist is resolved when Grandma puts her stamp of approval on Odell. Grandma is played by Chike Johnson, a male actor, indicating that Grandma is herself gay.

This is a short film, the message of which is that it is okay to be gay at First Baptist. Thank you, Grandma.

— William L. Blizek