

= In Marge We Trust =

" In Marge We Trust " is the twenty @-@ second episode of The Simpsons ' eighth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on April 27 , 1997 . It was written by Donick Cary and directed by Steven Dean Moore . The episode guest stars Sab Shimono as Mr. Sparkle , Gedde Watanabe as the factory worker , Denice Kumagai and Karen Maruyama as dancers , and Frank Welker as the baboons . In the episode , Marge replaces Reverend Lovejoy as the town 's moral adviser while Homer explores the mystery of why his face appears on a Japanese @-@ language detergent box .

= = Plot = =

Reverend Lovejoy 's sermon on " constancy " almost sends the entire congregation to sleep . After church Homer takes Bart and Lisa to the Springfield dump to dispose of their old Christmas tree , where they find a box of Japanese dishwasher detergent known as Mr. Sparkle . The face of the character on the box of the detergent strongly resembles Homer . Meanwhile , Marge becomes concerned with Lovejoy 's lack of enthusiasm about helping people . He explains to Marge that he was enthusiastic about the ministry and helping his fellow man when he first arrived in Springfield . However , his passion for helping people gradually degraded as he dealt with Ned Flanders and his constant complaints over trivial and common issues . Marge begins working for the Church as " The Listen Lady " , listening to people 's problems and helping solve them . Reverend Lovejoy soon realizes his inadequacy and begins to feel depressed . While he is alone in the church the stained glass images of saints appear and chastise him for doing little to inspire his congregation .

Homer , disturbed by the box of Mr. Sparkle , contacts the manufacturer in Hokkaido , Japan for information . He is sent a promotional video for Mr. Sparkle , which consists of a TV commercial . At the end of the video , the mascot is shown to be a result of a joint venture between two large Japanese conglomerates , Matsumura Fishworks and Tamaribuchi Heavy Manufacturing Concern . Their mascots , a smiling anime fish and light bulb , merge to form Mr. Sparkle . Thus , Homer discovers the similarity was a mere coincidence .

Ned Flanders calls Marge for help . Jimbo , Dolph , and Kearney are hanging around outside the Leftorium , making Ned worried that they will start causing trouble . Marge suggests that he shoo them away . The trio are about to leave , but when he goes and asks them to , they decide to harass him instead . Ned calls Marge again , whilst he is standing on a chair with the three boys circling him on their minibikes , so she suggests that he " lay down the law " , and when one of the boys snips the phone cord , Marge assumes that Ned has hung up and that everything is fine .

The next morning , Maude informs Marge that Ned is missing , having been chased around by the boys throughout the night . Marge realizes that she may be partially responsible for his disappearance . Marge goes to Reverend Lovejoy for help , and the two of them track Ned to the zoo , where Japanese tourists think Homer is Mr. Sparkle . Jimbo , Dolph , and Kearney have abandoned their pursuit , but now Ned is trapped in the baboon exhibit . While the Simpson family looks on , Reverend Lovejoy rescues Ned in the baboons ' food cart . Now that he feels useful again , Reverend Lovejoy rediscovers his passion for his job , regaling his congregation with the tale of Ned 's rescue .

= = Production = =

By season 8 , the show had begun to explore episodes revolving around secondary characters . Reverend Lovejoy was selected for this episode because , aside from being noted as " the priest who didn 't care " , he had not had much character development . This was the first episode that Donick Cary wrote for The Simpsons . He was disappointed that his first story was about " Marge 's crisis with faith . " The trip to the dump was inspired by Donick Cary 's youth , in which he would often go " dump picking " . This led to the writers deciding to have Homer 's face on a discarded box , which became the Mr. Sparkle subplot . To help create the advertisement , the writers watched

videos of many Japanese commercials . An original scene from Lovejoy 's flashback showed that Jasper Beardley preceded him as minister of the First Church of Springfield . The solution for how Mr. Sparkle resembles Homer was written by George Meyer , after hours of time had been spent trying to come up with a realistic ending . Matsumura Fishworks was named after Ichiro Matsumura , a friend of David X. Cohen .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " In Marge We Trust " finished 25th in ratings for the week of April 21 ? 27 , 1997 , with a Nielsen rating of 10 @. @ 1 , equivalent to approximately 9 @. @ 8 million viewing households . It was the third highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following The X @-@ Files and King of the Hill . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , said : " A rare case of both storylines being worthy of full episodes in their own right , this is a cracking episode which highlights the unduly neglected Rev. Lovejoy and makes you realize Homer isn 't the only one ready to kill Ned Flanders ! Great stuff . " In a 2000 Entertainment Weekly article , Matt Groening ranked it as his fifth favorite in the history of the show . Josh Weinstein described it as one of the best of the season , as well as being one of the most underrated episodes of all time . He also described the Mr. Sparkle commercial as his all @-@ time favorite sequence . The fake Fruity Oaty Bar commercial from the film Serenity was partially inspired by the Mr. Sparkle advertisement . Since 2009 , the show 's new opening sequence includes Mr. Sparkle detergent with Marge 's supermarket purchases .