

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The ***Word and Work***



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

May, 2000

**DON'T GIVE
UP ON THE
CHURCH**

**KENTUCKY / INDIANA
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WEEK**

The 53rd Annual Fellowship

August 7-10, 2000

Theme: Standing At The Crossroads

Monday Evening, August 7

7:30 Making The Decision For Christ Paul Estes

Tuesday, August 8

9:30 Definition of Leadership Dale Offutt

10:40 Complete Joy David Tapp

11:30 Lunch

1:00 Unity of Faith Julius Hovan

2:10 Need for Church Growth Harry Coultas

7:30 Do Not Compromise Paul Estes

Wednesday, August 9

9:30 When There's No Leadership Dale Offutt

10:40 That You May Not Sin David Tapp

11:30 Lunch

1:00 Unity of Spirit Julius Hovan

2:10 Develop Church Growth Harry Coultas

7:30 Building the Faith Paul Estes

Thursday, August 10

9:30 Follow Your Leadership Dale Offutt

10:40 Know You Have Eternal Life David Tapp

11:30 Lunch

1:00 Unity of the Church Julius Hovan

2:10 Results of Church Growth Harry Coultas

7:30 Maintaining the Faith Paul Estes

**DAY SESSIONS: Portland Church of Christ,
2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212**

**NIGHT SESSIONS: Sellersburg Church of Christ
211 South New Albany St., Sellersburg IN 47172**

Prayer Time Daily at 9:00 a.m.

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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In This Issue

Theme: *Don't Give Up On The Church!*

Guest Editorial: Personal or Corporate Salvation

-- Gordon R. Linscott 130

RoxiWheels: Parable for the Church -- Marlene LeFever..... 131

Active Adoration, or Spectator Sport? -- Alex V. Wilson 133

Don't Give Up On The Church 135

Pray For The Sick? "Yes, But--" -- Robert J. Tinsky..... 136

Can a Long Time Plateaued Congregation Grow? ... Maybe

-- Michael L. Lewis 138

Nothing Happened -- Claude Ries..... 143

The Church & Politics 144

Effective Worship Springs from Prayer, Thought and Work

-- Baily B. McBride 146

Seek Interest In Others -- Joyce Broyles 148

What the Bible Teaches ... God's Sovereignty, Satan's

Power, and Human Freedom -- Alex V. Wilson 150

Trusting The Sovereign Lord Amid Difficult Circumstances 153

Counselor's Column -- Dennis Kaufman 156

Voices From The Fields..... 157

News and Notes -- Bennie Hill 159

Personal or Corporate Salvation?

Gordon R. Linscott

"Personal Savior" is an overworked expression, or so it seems to me. Although it is not found in Scripture, it does express a thoroughly biblical concept. "My Lord and my God!" cried Thomas, and that's getting pretty personal. Paul had some rather personal feelings when he wrote, "I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord." And, "I have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus." More than one hymn writer has put Paul's thoughts into the words, "I am His and He is mine."

To know Christ personally is not optional. Salvation is an individual, one-at-a-time matter. It requires a personal faith, a personal commitment, a personal transaction. It is not enough to acknowledge the Lord Jesus as the Savior of the world or of sinners in general. We must, with Paul, be able to say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." I was a sinner, lost and undone, and Jesus took my sins upon Himself. That is what it means when I say, "He's my personal Savior." That's pretty wonderful.

And yet, I don't like the expression "personal Savior." Maybe it's because it's used a little too glibly by some of the radio preachers I hear. Or it may be because so many churches seem to stop right there. The sinner is brought to Christ, but then he is left to exist in a spiritual limbo until the rapture. He is never really taught to enjoy the corporate aspect of salvation.

Corporate salvation

The Roman Catholic church and some others have taken this aspect of salvation and ridden it to an extreme--to the point of totally obscuring the truth. People are baptized into the church, and salvation (if it is even considered possible) depends entirely upon being in a right relationship to the church. A personal relationship to the Lord isn't even talked about. Perhaps some of the "personal Savior" people are over-reacting to this "salvation is in the church" distortion.

Yet, encrusted beneath the traditions of men there lies a glorious neglected truth. Christ Jesus is "the Savior of the body." And "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5). The believer who never finds his place in the body of Christ is missing a great deal. Just being a church member is not the whole thing. Paul speaks of the church as a building; there's a world of difference between a building and a heap of building materials. A congregation may be one or the other, or somewhere in between. Turning to the similitude of a body, a corpse with every member in its proper place is still a corpse.

Too often we look only at external details. What about the *life* of the body? What about the *relationship* of member to member? Real

fellowship is the oft-missing ingredient. Personal fellowship with our "personal Savior" is wonderful, but it cannot be fully enjoyed in a hermit's cave. Only in the fellowship of the saints is Christ fully manifested. He has made us to complement each other. "Bear ye one another's burdens." How far from this is a perfunctory weekly greeting and handshake. There's much more in store for us, and it is realized only in a company of believers that functions as "members one of another." Therefore, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." "And above all things, have fervent love among yourselves." (1 Peter 1:22; 4:5)

RoxiWheels: Parable for the Church

by Marlene LeFever

Adult night at the roller rink! I needed the exercise, but hadn't been skating since high school Youth for Christ skating parties three decades ago. Could I stand up on wheels? Would people laugh? What if they ignored me completely? I pushed back my fears, rented my skates, and walked bravely through the door. What happened that first night, and in the weeks that followed, was wonderful. Over and over I found myself thinking, "Wouldn't it be great if the church were more like RoxiWheels?"

"Hi! You're new, aren't you?" A woman sat beside me as I laced up my skates.

"Yes, and I'm scared to death," I admitted.

"I'll skate around with you the first few times. You can lean on me until you feel comfortable."

So Karen held my hand, and off we went. That evening at least a dozen people welcomed me, asked my name, and said they hoped I would return. When I did show up a second time, they remembered my name.

"I can't believe how friendly everyone is," I told Karen.

"We need you," she said. "Every new person who enjoys skating means the rink will continue seniors' night. You're not just a number."

One night Janet fell. Immediately skaters formed a protective circle around her. She had time to get up and dust herself off, without worrying that someone else would run into her. I felt more secure about my own skating after that. Falling would hurt, but the group would help me through it.

"You're going to have problems if you form bad habits at the beginning," Joe told me. "I've been at this for years, so watch how I skate. I'll skate in front of you and you copy me." So I patterned my skating after Joe. "Practice that for awhile," he said. "Don't get discouraged. If you need to know anything else, ask. Everyone here is a teacher."

"Getting better!" people would call as they whizzed by.

One night another skater pointed to a man in his seventies. He was surrounded by people who were both laughing and crying. "It's his first night back," she explained. "He and his wife used to come all the time before she got cancer. Before she died, she made him promise he wouldn't stop coming. She knew that this is where his friends are. He's hurting tonight, but next week will be better."

Then there was the evening that Wilbur's hair flew off, went flying through the air, and landed like a hairy bat in the center of the floor. No one seemed to notice. There was no raucous laughter. Nothing! Wilbur skated back to his toupee, picked it up, stuck it on his head, continued skating, and still no one noticed. I didn't hear one joke or one sly, but terribly funny crack. No one noticed, and Wilbur was back the following week.

Julie was upset because a man she had been dating for months had broken up with her. She sat watching him skate, obviously on the verge of tears. I didn't know her well, but I decided to risk talking to her.

"Buy you a Coke," I said.

"Why?"

"Because you're hurting, and at RoxiWheels we take care of each other."

Last Sunday I visited a church. No one said hello except the pastor. He was stationed at the back door greeting everyone, because that was his job.

"Good morning," I wish I could have said. "How would you and your whole congregation like to come roller skating? There's a parable being lived there that I'd like you to see."

--From *Wheaton Alumni Magazine*

Active Adoration, or Spectator Sport?

Alex V. Wilson

When thinking of Christian congregations we sometimes speak of the **gathered** church and the **scattered** church. By the first term we mean members meeting together to honor their God and receive strength to serve Him when they scatter. By the latter term we refer to Christians at their daily jobs or at home, living everyday life. The gathered church is like a ball team holding its practice sessions, while the scattered church is like the team playing its official games. Either one without the other is terribly incomplete, an exercise in futility. Try to imagine the absurdity of it. Yet some believers try to opt for one or the other, instead of both. Right now let's consider the gathered church.

How are the meetings in your congregation? Are they meaningful and lifechanging, or "the same old stuff"? Which term more accurately describes the average attender--participant, or passive? Which expression better depicts the overall atmosphere--active adoration, or spectator sport? Is there enthusiasm, or boredom?

Sterile Worship (A Horrible Possibility!)

A brother who apparently visits many congregations makes the following sad observations. If the shoe fits--and I hope it doesn't--wear it.

One of the most important factors working against the spread of the gospel is the sterile worship services in most Churches of Christ. The strong emphasis on restoring first century patterns of church worship has not been balanced by a studied effort to bring out the best of people's minds and emotions. Every facet of public worship is characterized by repetitious, hackneyed expression. From opening comments through communion prayers to the closing prayer, the typical congregation experiences a series of commonplace declarations that numb the mind and kill the spirit.

From the general order of worship services down to the songs used in worship, our brotherhood has demonstrated more indifference than thought. Most congregations have hymnals with more than 700 songs, but most will use only about 50 different songs for worship during a year's time. The average public prayer is so generalized that it could be repeated any place in the world and would be equally meaningless. The rote process is repeated again and again.

Often the atmosphere is so cold and impersonal that going to church is much like going to the neighborhood movie. People rush in and out as strangers. Only the leadership and central core of the church enjoy anything close to first century fellowship.

Growing churches know that worship is communication with God and the celebration of spiritual life in Christ. The best minds in the church should be given the responsibility for planning so that the church is edified by every song, every Scripture, every comment, every silence. Intellectual vigor and life must go into planning worship to keep the church from perpetuating sterile and fruit-less worship.

I welcome that writer's emphasis on thoughtful planning and preparation. But surely even more important is our need to *pray*, to seek the moving power of the Holy Spirit in our meetings. He alone can make spiritual things real to us, and make our gatherings alive and transforming. So may our recurring request to God Most High be, "Revive us again! Fill each heart with Thy love! May each soul be re-kindled with fire from above!"

"Planned Spontaneity"

Bob Moorehead uses that term in his book, *The Growth Factor*. It means to balance a meeting so that it has both *structure* and *flexibility*. "So structure your worship that there is room for spontaneous praise times, an additional chorus, scripture or whatever. Spontaneity doesn't have to mean confusion, but it means giving the Holy Spirit the room and the freedom to do what He wants to do when He wants to" (p.53).

Here are various ways our congregation tries to do this from time to time: 1) During prayer-time, encourage as many brothers as desire to, to lead short, specific prayers or praises. 2) Ask someone to lead a prayer without any requests at all, but entirely worship and thanksgiving. 3) Use responsive Scripture-readings. 4) Have a period when folks can share any Bible verses that God recently used in their lives in some significant way. 5) Have testimonies of recent blessings, especially answers to prayer. (If you Elders fear this may get out of hand, then announce that any time someone has such a testimony, he should share it with you ahead of time. Then you can decide if, when and how to call on him or her to share it--maybe at a fellowship meal.)

6) Have special singing groups (but not to such an extent that you weaken congregational singing). 7) Teach the words of new songs by putting them in your bulletin or by using an overhead projector, so everyone can see them. (Don't infringe on copyrights, however.) 8) Have an extended period of singing *only worship songs*, especially songs sung directly to *God Himself*. The Lord uses such times of praise and adoration to make Himself real to our hearts.

9) Have a period of *silent, directed* prayer. The leader might say, "For the next few moments let's each silently thank God for specific, recent blessings.... Now tell the Lord how much you love Him.... Now commit to Him

any burdens that may be weighing you down and causing you heartaches.... Now pray for 4-5 folks who are sick or have special needs.... In closing, for a few moments just listen to the Lord, asking if He wants to impress anything special on your heart. ... Amen." Such times of silent prayer and meditation can be very precious.

May the Lord make our times of assembling before Him so meaningful that we shall look forward to them with intense eagerness, and that He Himself will be overjoyed and will look forward to them too!

DON'T GIVE UP ON THE CHURCH

Sometimes you have to suffer as much *from* the church as you do *for* it, said Flannery O'Connor. Some of my friends share her sentiment, and they asked me, "Church--who needs it?"

"I gave up my faith in the church a long time ago, even though I still believe in it." I told them that my faith isn't ultimately in the church." That is misplaced faith, idolatry. My faith is in God. But I still believe in the church because it is central to what God is doing in the world--forming a reconciled and reconciling people who are a light to the nations."

One of the besetting sins of American Christianity is its failure to take the church seriously, to see its essential role in the mission of God. There is in the United States a growing phenomenon of Christians unconnected to any church, a gap between what George Gallup calls "believers and belongers." A simple comparison of the number of people who say they believe Jesus Christ is God or Son of God (84%) with the number who attend church regularly (43%) illustrates this gap. The "Jesus and me" spirituality of para-church Christianity has triumphed. Is this not a contradiction of terms: a churchless Christian? To become a Christian disciple means not just deciding to follow Jesus, but also joining with a community of disciples bound together by their common commitment to their Lord.

When we develop unrealistic expectations of the church, we become frustrated and bitter or, worse, disillusioned. But as one wit put it, if we become disillusioned, perhaps we didn't have the right to be "illusioned" in the first place. Misplaced faith always disappoints. Think how small the New Testament would be if all the parts dealing with the early church's problems were excised. Many of Paul's letters were sparked by controversy or conflict in the church, some sin, or a theological or ethical error. The church is an all-too-human institution, but the church is more than just a human institution, because it is built on a durable foundation, Jesus Christ. --Excerpted from an unsigned editorial in *Christianity Today*, Oct. 6, 1997

PRAY FOR THE SICK? "YES, BUT--"

Robert J. Tinsky

It's prayer time at our church. Brother Praisehim, our worship leader for this morning, is about to lead us in the morning prayer. But first he pauses and says, "Friends, we have a long list of people we need to remember in prayer this morning."

He then shares with us the need to pray for Sister Johnson who had gall bladder surgery on Thursday, Brother Jones who suffered a heart attack Tuesday and may need open heart surgery, Brother Kidwell, our former preacher, who recently was diagnosed as having cancer.

Before he offers the prayer he turns to the congregation and asks, "Are there any others we need to remember in prayer this morning?" From the back a voice is heard, "We need to remember Jack who sprained his back yesterday while working here at the church building."

Another feminine voice meekly suggests that we remember her aunt in Wyoming who is ill with the flu. A young voice is heard requesting prayer for Jimmy's dad who broke his big toe at work last week. After a few more such requests, Brother Praisehim finally leads us in the morning prayer, taking time to mention each of these requests for healing.

This is the kind of prayer time that my wife and I have observed in almost every church we have visited in the past few months. This is also the kind of prayer time that takes place in area men's meetings, preachers' meetings, class meetings and almost anytime we get together as Christians.

Now I am glad that we have learned to be more specific in our petitions. We should be concerned about those who are hurting and suffering. And we ought to do more than just pray as we so often used to pray, "And God be with all who are sick. You know who they are and You know their needs."

Forgotten requests--I have become increasingly concerned, however, about the direction our public prayers have taken in the past few years. It seems to me that more and more of our prayer time is devoted to petitions for the sick, and less and less to praying for some other things our Lord and His apostles instructed us to pray about.

For example, how long has it been since you heard a public entreaty for more laborers for the harvest? Have we forgotten that Jesus requested that we pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest? (Matt. 9:38).

And why do we spend so much time interceding on behalf of those who are physically ill and so little time pleading for those who are spiritually ill? I remember the apostle Paul crying, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel, is that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). Do we care as much about those who are lost as we do about those who are sick? How long has it been since you heard a specific prayer for a brother or sister who has fallen away from the Lord?

Another prayer that I listen in vain to hear from our pulpits is the plea of our Lord for the unity of all believers. We began as a people dedicated to answering that request. Perhaps we need to dust off that part of our Bible and bring to life again the heartbeat of our Savior. His petition just a few hours before He was lifted up on a cross was, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20, 21). Have we forgotten the plea of Thomas and Alexander Campbell and of Barton W. Stone?

Let's try another verse on for size. The apostle Paul instructed us to pray for the leaders of the nations. Not only that. He said we should pray for the leaders of all nations. That's right, *all* nations.

In his first letter to Timothy he gave us this command: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:1, 2). When was the last time you heard a public entreaty for President Clinton or Vice President Gore? For your governor or senator or congressman? For the leaders of Russia or China or Japan? For the members of the Supreme Court? For your mayor and the members of your city council?

How about including a specific prayer each Lord's Day for at least one of the missionaries, colleges or children's homes that your congregation helps support? Why not ask a certain person in the congregation to be responsible for bringing to the attention of the entire body the urgent requests of this particular mission?

Here is another petition I find in my Bible that I hardly ever hear in our public prayers. It is the last prayer recorded in the New Testament, John's fervent request: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). Wow! What would that do to our way of thinking and living if we prayed more often for the return of our Lord?

How long has it been since you heard or offered a prayer for the homeless? For the millions who are starving because of a lack of food? For those caught in the slavery of drug or alcohol addiction? For those who are prisoners because of their faith in Christ? Many prayers were offered for those who were political hostages but what about the untold numbers languishing in some dreary cell, prisoners for Christ?

We need to do some serious thinking about the direction our public prayers have taken in recent years. Sure, we need to pray for Aunt Susie. We need to pray for Jimmy's dad. But let's not forget that there are other issues, some larger and eternally far more important, for which we need to pray.

The next time you lead your congregation in worship, pray for the sick, yes. But remember to include in your petitions the other urgent matters for which our Lord and His apostles taught us to pray.

[Reprinted from *Christian Standard* by author's permission.]

Can a Long Time Plateaued Congregation Grow? . . . Maybe

Michael L. Lewis

"The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it." --Harry Emerson Fosdick

Every so often one of those "Trojan horse" phone calls comes to the office. You know the kind--disaster wrapped in a sweet candy shell. It's a call from someone on some search committee representing some middle-aged or older congregation looking for a dynamic preacher who can help turn the congregation around.

The caller almost always says something like, "Yes, we have been plateaued for ten years or so, but now we're ready to grow, ready to make whatever changes we need to make to be evangelistic and we need you to help lead us. . . ."

Just as you're feeling a touch of pride that others would think of you in such terms, a little voice whispers inside "Be careful. . . it is a trap . . . there is another side to this story and it is a potential nightmare."

One of the most common mistakes a search committee can make is to think a new preacher can accomplish and sustain what a congregation has been unwilling to do for themselves for years. After all, meaningful, long-term change is ultimately an inside job.

There are a number of successful ministers today who will not even consider going to a middle-aged congregation as part of a strategy to modify its mission and commitment to grow. The reasoning runs from "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" to "why not go where you can do the most good." They advocate the importance of beginning new congregations with a precisely defined mission, strategy, worship styles and audience target, and ask only those in complete agreement with the pre-defined purposes of the congregation to become members. A zero-history group certainly provides advantages. When you experience first-hand the tension over worship styles, leadership expectations, the harsh criticism, and all the personality friction that has happened and continues to happen in established congregations, it is easy to see the appeal of starting "fresh." So, given all of this, do you add me to the list of those who just say "no" to such opportunities?

Not yet. Please understand there is no known job search in my immediate future.

But Fosdick is right. And even if you disagree with him, perhaps you will believe Paul, who put it better anyway, "Nothing is impossible with God."

There are two key principles providing the real tests if a plateaued congregation is to continue the mission of Christ, seeking and saving the lost in every generation. They are: *The importance of focus and flexibility* and the *importance of the cross of Christ*.

Focus and Flex

No one doubts the commitment of Paul to reach the lost with the gospel. No one doubts Paul's commitment to sound doctrine and his unwillingness to compromise with the world. Remember his preaching in Thessalonica, as was his custom, in the synagogues, reasoning from scripture, proving Jesus is the Christ. That's Paul, delivering the message the Jews and God-fearers most needed to hear.

But then later in Acts 17 there is Paul in Athens looking around for an opportunity, an opening to preach. He finds one with philosophers at a public forum. Paul proclaims God as creator and worthy of our worship. There is no obvious quotation of scripture during the presentation. Paul does quote Aratus of Soli, "in whom we live and move and have our being"; and Cleanthes, who wrote a hymn to Zeus including the line "for we are indeed his offspring."

Now let these facts settle for a moment with you. Paul did not proclaim the plan of salvation in Athens or appeal to the authority of scriptures. These Greeks were not ready for that. Paul did use objects and poets with whom they were familiar to introduce God. What shall we say: Paul was embarrassed about the gospel? Paul was just into entertainment? Paul cared more about making people feel good than pleasing God? Surely all would say, "No, that doesn't characterize Paul."

Paul kept his focus. The message ultimately is Christ and Him crucified, but Paul also knew that people have different backgrounds and cultures. He began where his audience was so God eventually could take them to the cross. Paul knew his audience, he knew their poets, their literature, and their mindset. And he knew how to build bridges between different people and Christ.

Focus and flexibility is an important principle; it is important because it is Biblical. There can be no compromise on the mission of Christ to reach the lost; the authority of scripture; the centrality of the cross; and the great Biblical doctrines of salvation, judgment, sanctification, faith, obedience, grace, etc. *Flexibility without focus* is a rudderless and dangerous ship. However, *focus without flexibility* is a ship with a very small crew, unwelcome in most ports.

The church of our Lord is multi-generational, as well it should be, for we come to Christ from a multi-generational world.

A congregation with a strong commitment to maintaining its focus while demonstrating flexibility can be hopeful for its future.

Do you know those you are trying to reach for Christ? Is it the "Builders" born before World War II who have been shaped with a strong sense of absolute right and wrong, patriotism, the value of authoritative leadership, and productivity, but still can't program a VCR? Builders generally believe in God. They dominated an era when Christianity was the most commonly accepted religion in America, and they long for a clear message about what is good and bad without apology.

Then there are the “Boomers,” born after World War II but before the end of the Vietnam War. They grew up in a different world of music, morality, and mistrust of institutions. Boomers generally work too hard, hurt their families too much, and find the heart to make their marriages successful too little. Truth is very relative for Boomers. They know few absolutes. They know less about commitment. They may have several VCRs but still don’t know how to program them. You reach them by demonstrating relationships in Christ that matter, worship that is meaningful involving their whole being, and the message of reconciliation in Jesus that can bind up their wounds and provide a compass for their lives.

“The Busters” are the post-Boomer generation born after the mid-sixties. VCRs, forget it. VHS is dead; it is digital and DAT for the future. The majority of this generation grew up in broken homes with broken dreams. They probably do not know their grandparents and probably do not care to do so. They know little about the Bible, less about God. They find more meaning in MTV and nail polish than in a traditional sermon and trip to a church building. **THIS IS ATHENS.** Try to reach Busters and you must begin with the basics about God, truth, death, and hope, all without talking down to them.

You’ve got to really want to reach Busters, for they judge your sincerity by the quality of your effort. They long for simple things like grace, hope, and true joy even though they don’t know their needs by those names.

There are a lot of different fish out there if you care enough to be true “fishers of men”. To reach Busters, churches must study them and be flexible in their approach, without ever compromising the truth. Yes, it is demanding but there is something about the cross that was never meant to be consistent with convenience.

The Cross Principle

The Cross Principle is the simple test about whether the mission of Jesus means more to you than your personal preference. What is the number one problem with congregations who have been plateaued for long periods, who now think they want to shift to a growing outreach orientation? Selfishness.

In that often quoted and misapplied passage from I Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul said:

“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law. . . To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have be-

come all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessing." This is not a statement about all Paul was willing to compromise for different people. This is a statement of his willingness to sacrifice himself, desires, preferences and rights for the sake of the gospel.

You see, it is one thing to be flexible for the sake of reaching people and another using flexibility as an excuse for wanting to be served rather than serving. The cross of Christ is about giving up yourself for the cause of God. As we mature in Christ, should we not grow beyond our culture, our generation, our world to be more like Christ who transcends all human preferences?

So Builders become Christians and become angry because others seem interested in change and entertainment only. Do you understand the code? What many such people are saying is that they prefer church to be done the way they like.

And Boomers become Christians and then become angry because others seem intent on cutting the emotion out of worship and refusing to do things in more interesting, contemporary ways. Do you understand the code? What many are really saying is that they prefer church to be done the way they like.

What happened to "not my will but yours be done"? My, my, self-centeredness dies hard in the baptistery. If you believe with Paul that, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is not I who live but Christ in me," how can so many dead people have so many personal preferences?

Even plateaued congregations can change their direction and grow if they clearly know their focus is Christ, are willing to be as flexible as possible in reaching different kinds of people, and are willing to die daily for the cause of Christ, His mission, and His church.

It may not be as rare as some would assume to find these qualities among established congregations. It is at least possible . . . especially with God.

-- from **Church Growth Mag.** 3rd quarter, 1997

NOTHING HAPPENED

Claude Ries

Does it make any difference whether I as a Christian go to the weekly prayer service or not? Does it matter whether as a professing Christian I go to Sunday School or not? Indeed it does, for the simple reason that *what I am to be I am now becoming.*

When I was a student in Houghton College I urged a fellow-student to attend students' prayer meeting. The reply was "Oh, I don't know as it matters. That's just up to me whether I care to or not." That young man finished college, was married and became a pastor. Though far from being an old man, he has been on the shelf, or put aside, for years, for the same spirit which characterized his religious activities in college dominated his ministry after college.

Shame on the healthy-bodied Christian young man who lacks the gumption to get himself out of bed in time for Sunday School! One wonders if "he has what it takes" to produce a virile, red-blooded soldier of Christ.

I once read of a young man home from college who was asked by a Sunday School Superintendent to teach a class. He declined. When the pastor spoke to him about it he nonchalantly remarked, "There's no penalty for refusing, is there?"

"Yes," replied the minister, "there is. There is *the penalty of never knowing the good you have failed to do.*"

"If I never know it," said George, still in his flippant mood, "I guess I won't miss it."

The minister then asked, "Do you remember the incident in the life of Jesus when He was on his way to Jerusalem? He sent two disciples to ask shelter at a Samaritan village; but as His face was set toward Jerusalem, they would not receive Him. Some of His disciples wanted to call down fire and brimstone on the village, but Jesus, reproving them, patiently resumed His journey. What was their penalty?"

"I don't think there was any," George replied. "As far as I know, nothing happened to the village." "No," the minister agreed, "NOTHING HAPPENED. People put out their lights, and went to bed as usual; the next morning they rose as they always did. Nothing happened, indeed; no sick were healed, no new parable was spoken, no

new disciple was found. Had any one of these three things happened, the village would have had a place in history to the end of time. As things are, even its name is unknown."

For a moment George was silent; then he said, "I thank you for the reminder. I will teach that class."

Are things happening for God because of your faithfulness and loving loyalty to Christ or is the verdict of your daily life "Nothing Happened"? --From *Christian Platform*

[In Sept. 1998 the officers of the Portland Ave. Church of Christ approved the following principles as wise guidelines for that congregation.]

The CHURCH and POLITICS

The church should speak out on moral issues. We cannot evade dealing with matters of right and wrong, for God takes such matters very seriously. And as individual citizens Christians need to apply Biblical principles to politics and government as best we can. That is part of our duty to society, to be like salt that deters corruption and light that shines in the darkness.

So the local church needs to teach **principles of godliness and righteousness** to its members. It should urge them to live by such principles, and to seek to elect public officials who believe in them also. Following God's Word, **the Church stands...**

FOR

life

sexual purity

faithfulness in marriage

diligence in work

care for the helpless & suffering

self-discipline & care for the body

responsible treatment of property

peace & gentleness

honesty & truthfulness

freedom

and AGAINST:

abortion & active euthanasia;

pornography, pre-marital sex & homosexual practice;

extra-marital sex & most divorce;

laziness;

exploitation & neglect of the needy;

harmful addictions;

gambling;

physical, sexual & verbal abuse;

cheating & deceitfulness;

political & religious persecution.

So the local church, the body of disciples of Jesus, must promote what is clearly good and oppose what is clearly bad. But as a body it will not always agree on various **implications and policies** related to such matters. Equally good Christians may differ widely regarding issues such as the minimum wage, affirmative action, gun control, the national budget, welfare, whether to keep U.S. forces overseas, what immigration quotas to set, etc. etc. Individual Christians may need to wrestle with such issues, but the church as a body has no business making official pronouncements on such complex specific issues.

In the same way, the church (or a preacher) has no right to tell you what political party to join--for every party is a mix of good and bad. A party may even adopt a terrible "platform," and yet many of its members and some leaders may reject various parts of that platform. We should judge candidates individually, not just by their party. That means the wise voter will not vote against someone merely because you disagree with his party's platform. Check to see how the candidate feels about that platform! But to judge candidates on the basis of their character and wisdom, not their party, will also certainly mean that Christian voters should not say, "My parents and grandparents always voted for that party, and so have I. So I will always continue to vote for that party, world without end."

Let us review and summarize: Church leaders and teachers ought to teach their members **HOW** to vote but not **WHO** to vote for. Guiding them in **HOW** to vote means imparting Biblically-based moral principles and their clearly-implied practices (such as we expressed above in 'For and Against'). But the church as a church should avoid giving official advice as to what particular party or candidates to vote for.

For once a church begins telling members what party or person to vote for, it has crossed the line into becoming a political organization rather than a spiritual family. We must allow our brothers and sisters to apply Christian teachings as they think best. **Individually**, as their friend, of course we may share our convictions. And if someone **privately** asks our advice it is surely okay to share it. But from the pulpit or in a church's general meetings or official Pronouncements, it is unwise to endorse specific parties and candidates. We turn people off when they think, "That church is Republican [or Democrat, or Independent]; they won't want me there."

Christian citizenship is a solemn responsibility; let none shirk it. But let's not let political arguments wound or divide the body of Christ.

preaching have believers been taught about worship. With so little teaching on the subject, churches settle to the lowest level of practice, and consequently worship only occasionally inspires us to seek a closer walk with God.

WHAT IS NEEDED

The pressing need in all our churches is a commitment by elders, preachers and members to improve and enliven public and private worship.

Each believer needs to commit some time every day to adoring and worshipping God either as a private exercise or as a family devotion.

Every participant in public worship should pray daily about the judgment and the action involved in carrying out his assignment.

Believers should set aside time before public worship to prepare their minds and hearts for communication with God.

(Reprinted by permission from *Christian Chronicle*, September 1988.)

Seek Interest In Others

Joyce Broyles

Last year I saw an ad on the local television station about a reunion for the class that I graduated with. The year was 1959, and I have been thinking about how so many things have changed since then. I found an excerpt from a Home Economics textbook intended for high school girls in the 1950s. The chapter was preparing them for married life. Here is what it said.

1. Have dinner ready. Plan to have a delicious meal on time. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal is part of the warm welcome needed.

2. Prepare yourself. Take 15 minutes to rest and refresh yourself for when your husband arrives.

3. Clear away the clutter. Make one last trip through the main part of the house just before he arrives. Run a dust cloth over the tables. Your husband will feel he has reached a haven of rest and order, and it will give you a lift also.

4. Prepare the children. Wash their hands and faces, comb their hair, and change their clothes if necessary.

5. Minimize the noise. Stop the washer, dryer, dishwasher, or vacuum. Encourage the children to be quiet. Greet him with a warm smile and be glad to see him.

6. Do not greet him with problems or complaints. Don't complain if he is late for dinner. That may be minor compared with what he may have gone through.

7. Make him comfortable. Let him relax in his easy chair, give him a drink, and take off his shoes. Speak in a low, pleasant voice.

8. Listen to him. You may have things to tell him, but the moment of his arrival is not the time. Let him talk first.

9. Make the evening his. Never complain if he does not take you out; instead, try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his need to be home and relax.

10. Your goal: Try to make your home a place of peace and order where your husband can relax.

Yes, things have changed much since I was in school. Now, many women work all day and want to come home and relax, too. Most of the time, though, they come home from work and begin their second job of preparing dinner, cleaning house, and caring for the children. Some husbands share in that, but some do not.

One positive thing about this list is that the theme is "Do everything you can to make your spouse happy." That is still a good goal to have, both for wives and husbands.

What if both husbands and wives put as much effort into pleasing one another as the textbook suggests? What if both husbands and wives stopped asking, "What have you done for me lately?" and started asking, "What can I do for you?" Paul instructed the Philipians in 2:4 to "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

Sounds like the ingredients of a marriage made in heaven! Perhaps that is not inconceivable, provided we keep our interests in others when making our personal expressions.

What the Bible Teaches about...

GOD'S Sovereignty, SATAN'S Power, and HUMAN Freedom

by Alex V. Wilson

Part II

Our first installment examined what Scripture says about Satan's power and also human freedom and responsibility. Obviously we must never forget nor minimize either of those facts. But neither should we ever forget the Biblical theme of divine sovereignty, that the Lord is in charge of His creation. He is not having a nervous breakdown worrying about what the Devil or human beings are doing. **His throne is secure, and though our suffering grieves Him and our sin provokes Him, they do not threaten Him.** Note the many O-T verses on God's rule; also another article this month on some implications of that fact. Our third installment will include N-T passages on this theme, plus thoughts by some Bible teachers on how the three truths we are studying relate to each other.

III. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

1Chron.29:11f, Yours, O Lord, is the greatness... power... glory... majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom, you are exalted as head over all....**You are the ruler of all things.**

Job 1:9-12; 2:1-6; also Luke 22:31f. Satan could neither (a) afflict Job nor (b) "sift" Peter without 1st getting God's permission. The Lord *permitted* him to afflict Job, but *set limits* to the afflictions too. Christ *allowed him his request* to sift the apostles, but He himself prayed for them--Peter in particular.

Psa.9:7f, The Lord reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment. He will judge the world in righteousness.

Psa.22:27-28, All the ends of the earth will turn to the Lord &...bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the Lord & he **rules over the nations.**

[Assurance re: the future (27) is based on present fact (28).]

Psa.47:2f, How awesome is the Lord Most High, the great King over all the earth! He subdued nations under us...chose our inheritance for us....God is the King of all the earth....**God reigns over the nations.**

Psa. 71:15f, My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long....I will proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign Lord.

Psa. 93:1; 96:10; 97:1 & 99:1, "The Lord reigns" (or, NEB: "The Lord is king").

Psa.103:19, "The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all."

Psa.113:4ff, "The Lord is exalted over all the nations...The Lord our God...sits enthroned on high....He raises the poor from the dust...seats them with princes....He [makes] the barren woman...a happy mother of children.

Psa.115:3, **Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.**

Psa.135:6ff., **The Lord does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths. He makes clouds rise...sends lightning...and brings out the wind....He struck down the firstborn of Egypt...He sent his signs and wonders into Egypt....He struck down many nations.**

Psa.139:1,16, You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb....**All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.** Also compare *Jer.1:5*, Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. Also *Gal.1:13,15*, I tried to destroy the church of God....But God set me apart from birth and called me by his grace.

Isa.24:21,23, "In that day the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens above & the kings on the earth below...The Lord Almighty will reign in Jerusalem gloriously."

[The future tense indicates that He does *not now* punish and reign to the same degree that He shall then.]

Isa.40:15,23f., The nations are like a drop in a bucket...as dust on the scales....**He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing....He blows on them and they wither.**

God Uses even the Wicked to Fulfil His Plan

Notice God's tools, His shepherd, His messiah ("anointed"), and His servant:

Isa.10:5-7a & 15 , Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath! I send him against a godless nation, I dispatch him against a people who anger me [Judah!]....But this is not what he intends....Does the ax raise itself above him who swings it, or the saw boast against him who uses it?

Isa.44:28 & 45:1,4, I am the Lord...who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say to Jerusalem, Let it be rebuilt'....This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of, to subdue kingdoms before him...to open doors before him....I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. [Also 41:2] The Lord hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him.

[Cyrus didn't live till about 100 years later, and began to reign about 140 years after Isaiah made these predictions. Ezra 1:1-4 shows their fulfillment.]

Jer.25:9, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and I will bring them against this land.

Jer.27:6,7, I will hand all your countries over to my servant NebuchadnezzarAll nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him.

Jer.43:10, The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will send for my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon....He will come and attack Egypt....

Dan. 2:37f., The God of heaven has given you [King Neb. of Babylon] dominion & power & might & glory; in your hands he has placed mankind....He has made you ruler over them all.

Dan. 4:17,25, [Written by Nebuchadnezzar himself!] ...The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men....The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. (Repeated again in v. 31.)

Dan.4:35, All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

How great God is! Amen?

TRUSTING THE SOVEREIGN LORD AMID DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Letter from John Wesley regarding his Travels:

I am content with whatever [circumstances, food, lodging, weather, etc.] I meet with.... This must be the spirit of all who take journeys with me. If a dinner ill cooked, or a hard bed, a poor room, a shower of rain, or a dusty road will put them out of humor, it lays a burden upon me greater than all the rest put together. By the grace of God, I never fret. I am discontented with nothing. And to hear persons at my ear fretting and murmuring at every thing, is like tearing the flesh off my bones. I see God sitting upon His throne, and ruling all things well. Although, therefore, I can bear this also--to hear His government of the world continually found fault with (for in blaming the things which He alone can alter, we, in effect, blame Him)--yet it is such a burden to me as I cannot bear without pain; and I bless God when it is removed.

GIVE THANKS ALWAYS

William Law in his book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*:

There is no state of mind so holy, so excellent as that of thankfulness to God. The greatest saint in the world is he who is always thankful to God, who wills everything that God wills, who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness, and who has a heart always ready to praise God for it.

If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. It is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it you turn it into a blessing. If you could work miracles, therefore, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit. It heals and turns all that it touches into happiness.

DON'T COMPLAIN

William Law, continued:

Whenever you find yourself disposed to murmuring at anything that is the effect of God's providence over us, you must look upon yourself as denying either the wisdom or the goodness of God. For every complaint necessarily supposes this.

Though we are not to think that all things are right and just that the providence of God permits--for then nothing could be unjust because nothing is without His permission--yet we must adore God in the greatest public calamities and the most grievous persecutions, as

things that are permitted by God for ends suitable to His wisdom and glory in the government of the world.

If the Christian cannot thank and praise God as well in calamities and sufferings as in prosperity and happiness he is as far from the [godliness] of a Christian as that man is who only loves them that love him. For to thank God only for such things as you like is no more a proper act of [godliness] than to believe only what you see is an act of faith. Resignation and thankfulness to God are only acts of [godliness] when they are acts of faith, trust, and confidence in the divine goodness.

NO "LUCK," "CHANCE" OR "ACCIDENT"

John Wesley again:

It is a great step toward Christian resignation, to be thoroughly convinced of that great truth, that there is no such thing as chance in the world; that fortune is only another name for Providence, only it is covered Providence. An event the cause of which does not appear, we commonly say comes by chance. O no; it is guided by an unerring hand; it is the result of infinite wisdom and goodness.

RECEIVE LIFE'S CIRCUMSTANCES FROM GOD

J. Hudson Taylor, great missionary who underwent numerous problems:

Judas betrayed his master with a kiss. Our Lord did not stop short at Judas, nor did He even stop short at Satan who filled the heart of Judas to do this thing; but He said, "The cup which *my Father* hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

How our tendency to resentment and wrong feeling would be removed, if we would only take an injury from the hand of a loving Father, instead of looking chiefly at the enemy through whom it comes to us. It matters not who is the postman--it is with the writer of the letter that we are concerned. It matters not who is the messenger--it is with God that His children have to deal.

AMID TRIALS, TRUST YOUR FRIEND

Joseph Scriven experienced "a life filled with trouble. As a young man in Ireland, about 1840, his intended bride was accidentally drowned the evening before their wedding.

"He had begun training as a military cadet, but poor health forced him to abandon his dreams of a career in this field. Moving to Canada, he became a servant of the underprivileged, helping those who were physically handicapped and financially destitute.

"But tragedy continued to stalk his steps. Once again the plans for a wedding were cut short when his second fiancée died following a brief illness. It seemed that Joseph Scriven was destined to go through life alone, knowing only the friendship of Jesus Christ.

"Through much of his life he experienced loneliness, meager pay for menial work, and physical illness. Yet out of those circumstances he wrote one of the most beloved songs of faith ever written, 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus.' This hymn is his testimony that prayer does not necessarily eliminate trouble from our lives. But, in the midst of tragedy, temptations and weakness, Christ will be our ever-present Friend who will give us peace, 'take and shield us,' and carry our 'load of care.'" --*Crusader Hymns and Hymn Stories*

DON'T DISTINGUISH BETWEEN WHAT GOD APPOINTS AND WHAT HE PERMITS

F. B. Meyer, in *The Christ-Life for My Life*:

Make no distinction between what God APPOINTS and what God PERMITS. His permission and His appointments are equally His will. Job thought so, for though Satan blasted his prosperity he said: "The LORD has taken away." Joseph thought so, for he said: "It was not you that sent me here [to Egypt], but GOD." David thought so, because he said, "God has let Shimei curse [me]; let him curse." Jesus thought so, because when Judas came into the garden to arrest Him, He said, "The cup that MY FATHER gives me to drink, shall I not drink it?" Though it had been brought to His lips by a Judas, it had been mixed by His Father.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU, AND WHAT HAPPENS IN YOU

Richard Halverson, late Chaplain to the U.S. Senate:

It's not what happens to you that makes the difference, it's what happens in you! What happens to you is destructive only in terms of what you allow to happen in you. To put it another way, you may not be able to prevent what is done to you, but you can decide how you take it.

DETERMINE TO "REJOICE ALWAYS"

Joseph Carroll, while a missionary in Japan:

I have found it a good practice to learn to enjoy my problems! It may sound a little crazy, but what I am saying is, Don't let the problems rob you of your joy in the Lord. We have never had more problems that we are faced with at this moment, but I am determined to "rejoice always." It is simply amazing what this does for you. It is very easy to drift into being "problem conscious." After all, they are provided by a loving Father to enable us to praise His faithfulness.

Counselor's Column

Dennis Kaufman

Question: How does counseling help people change their lives?

Answer: There may be as many answers to that question as there are counselors, but I will take a shot at answering it from my perspective.

People enter counseling with a history that reveals something about their "relational patterns". These "patterns" reflect an accumulation of decisions that have been made over a lifetime. The further we get from *loving God with all our hearts and loving our neighbor as ourselves*, the more those "relational patterns" become "behavioral ruts" that keep us stuck and frustrated. The vast majority of people that enter counseling do so because relationships are not working effectively.

From my experience, counseling is most successful when a person develops awareness that the present way of life is not working and requires personal change. As long as one blames circumstances or other people or God, the rut continues to control life direction. Pastoral counselors are trained to know how to enter these relational ruts, and lead clients on a spiritual journey to freedom and abundant life in Christ

The journey normally begins with some small step of approaching life situations differently than before. These small changes that the counselor facilitates become like crowbars that pry people out of the rut just enough to experience the anxiety of change. The counselee is then supported and encouraged in this slight shift of thought or behavior. There are times when this minute change becomes like a snowball rolling down a hill. The momentum builds into an avalanche of power and people transform before our eyes.

More often, the change process seeps into life almost unnoticed. Inch by inch, these building blocks of new relational style squeeze out the destructive or ineffective pattern. People who have suffered severe abuse, neglect, or dysfunction from childhood may need a couple of years of spiritual journeying with a counselor because the "relational habits" are so deeply etched upon their hearts and minds. This long-term counseling is much like reparenting the person because they may have no trusted models for what God is like and as a result struggle intensely to be able to love Him, or anyone else.

I try to design each counseling case as a spiritual journey. We define the "as is". The Bible describes the destination, and the journey between those two points is an adventure for counselor and client alike. God has promised to bless those committed to seeking His will. We are also blessed to be a part of a church that is in the powerful flow of the Holy Spirit. Once a person gets out of the rut, it is only a matter of time before we are nudged along toward spiritual growth and abundant life.

Voices From The Fields

Tim & Dawn Yates

June 2000

We are becoming more and more aware of how your prayers are vital to the work here in Australia. And we need your prayers now more than ever.

We are about to submit our application for permanent residency in Australia. In fact, by the time you receive this newsletter, it will be in the hands of the Department of Immigration. This permit is essential to our continued work here. Without it, we would not be able to return after our current temporary visa expires.

The regulations on immigration to Australia are changing all of the time, and they don't appear to be getting easier. In fact, we just recently found out that if we are not accepted for permanent residency the first time, we are not allowed to apply again. This is a once and for all shot.

For this reason, we have hired a lawyer here who specializes in immigration to Australia. We are convinced that since this process could effectively end our ministry here if it goes wrong, we should do all that we can to assure that we go through the right channels and procedures.

It will be a fairly expensive procedure, but it is necessary for our continued ministry here in Australia. The Application alone is around \$1500, with the lawyers fees expected to be somewhere around \$500, assuming we won't have to go to court.

We have received tremendous support from the churches here in applying for Permanent Residency. They are very anxious for us to be approved so that we can continue our ministry here without the constant concern over the right paperwork.

Please pray urgently for the application procedure. We have already been much in prayer over the best way to handle our arrangements for living here, and would appreciate your prayers as we move forward in this direction. The Lord has been faithful in our ministry in so many ways. We look forward to His working in this way.

We have changed our Wednesday night Bible studies to Friday outreach groups. That has been a big adjustment for everyone in the church. There are always some who want to hold on to the tradition of meeting on Wednesday night (which is fine). But in our case, the Friday outreach groups have been a tremendous success.

Instead of meeting at church or rotating around in various homes, we decided to have our meetings in one central home. That allows those new to the group to know when and where the group is on any given week.

We try to keep our time together informal, which really seems to be going over well in the Australian culture. Too much formality just reminds them of the Catholics and Anglicans, which is the very image that we're trying to overcome.

Right now we're watching a video series called *That the World May Know* that is produced by Focus on the Family. It is set in Israel and focuses on the archaeology of the Middle East and its relation to the Bible, and the Bible's relation to our lives.

We spend some time singing, some time watching the video, close with prayer and then have coffee, tea and a few snacks. It really seems to be opening the doors for ministry. If I sound a little excited, it's because I know that this method has actually brought people into our fellowship that never would have joined otherwise. Please pray for the continued success of this ministry; that the Lord would continue to work in the lives of the seekers that attend.

Robert Gill

Louisville, Ky.

February, 2000

I am writing in regard to a need in Japan, which I learned from Brother Jenei Tomura, whom I know well. Jenei was a student at Southeastern Christian College while I was teaching there in 1973-75. He was a serious Bible student. While in Winchester he accompanied Brother Jesse Wood and others to small churches to help in Sunday School and with youth classes. He was always faithful in church work.

After finishing at SCC he graduated from Cincinnati Bible College and later received an M.A. degree there. He has visited me twice

since then, once with his wife. They have one daughter. I stayed in their home several nights in 1988 when visiting the Nakaharas in Japan.

Below are excerpts from an e-mail message from Jenei to acquaint you with the situation at the church in Yono City which is just north of Tokyo. It is the only Church of Christ in this Prefecture (State). I want to help this congregation to have a meeting place and I believe many of you will feel the same. Their present rented space is only available for a few hours on Sunday. Please send all gifts to Church of Christ Worldwide at P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555 and specify for the church in Yono City, Japan.

[From Jenei:] As you know, our meeting started from house-church about 40 years ago and now we are gathering in a rented space near by station. Japanese economy was once in a so-called bubble situation, but now that has been gone. So the price of land and building became more than half, I believe. The building can hold roughly 50 people and is located 7 to 8 minute walk from the station, cost \$500,000.00 US dollars. This is the price for regular house in our area.

We went to see the building and talked with real estate manager the same day. After 40 years longing for the building, we think that this is the chance. From our saving and members, though number are small will pay about 400,000.00 US dollars. My inquiry is if I ask for some help from Christians in the States. Place is the best. Price is also more than reasonable. We are the only Church of Christ in Saitama Prefecture, which has large population.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

LaGrange: (Louis Schuler) We heard five wonderful sermons from God's Word during our recent revival and the following Sunday one of our young ladies came forward and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. For this there is much rejoicing in Heaven and in LaGrange. Our building program is progressing slowly but it is moving forward and we hope to sign papers soon for the sale of the church property. Then, with the Lord's guidance we hope to move forward with the new building. Your prayers in this matter will surely be appreciated.

PCS Chorus Spring Tour: Each year for the past several the PCS chorus has been blessed to go on tour during spring break. This year from April 1 to April 6 they sang in churches in Louisiana and Arkansas. In addition, the chorus presented their program in several churches in the Louisville/Southern Indiana area. This year's chorus is very talented and their program demonstrates the reason for PCS's existence - teaching the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The school is blessed to have Mrs. Phyllis Mullins and Miss Kellie Witten as music teachers.

David Tapp Retiring from Local Church Ministry: As most of you know by now, I have retired from the active, local church ministry. I am looking forward to spending more time with the Radio Ministry of Sowing the Seed. Any congregation desiring to know more of this ministry, please contact me and I will be glad to come and share with you and answer any questions. Contact David Tapp at 912 Pounds Lane, Simpsonville, KY 40067 (502) 722-8003. [During his 47-year ministry, brother Tapp served with these churches: Gallatin, Tenn.; Hopkins, Missouri; & in Ky.--Furnace, Ebenezer, LaGrange, Ralph Ave., & Fisherville twice.]

Sis. Irene M.Chowning (1921-2000) from the Cherry St. Church of Christ in New Albany, Indiana celebrated this past Mother's Day by being ushered into the presence of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! She was a faithful servant of the Lord whom He had at Cherry St. She was always there with words of encouragement - steadfast love and hope in the one who holds the future. We praise God for her example and influence in the home and in the church where she was used effectively to touch many lives for Christ. Our love and prayers go out to Bro. Bruce and Elaine, Janet (Yarbrough) and the rest of their wonderful Christian family. (Bennie Hill)

Southeastern Christian College Website. By now you have been invited to join the SCC website and some of you have already visited it. If you are on the web, you can still access the site from any computer that has internet access. Just go to myfamily.com and log on with your username and password. Get your grandkids to show you how. It is really a blessing to get together after

all these years. I plan to bring my computer to Woodland so we can all work on the site. George Mckee at gbmckee@kiva.net

Financial Statement from the Missions Office...is prepared now on a monthly basis and copies can be mailed directly to you by contacting

Carla Potter
Church of Christ Worldwide
P.O. Box 54842
Lexington, KY 40555

Music Week...with John Fulda and Jonathan Garrett is being conducted at the Antioch Christian Camp in Frankfort, Ky. the week of June 25 through July 2nd. The camp teaches music theory, and sight reading. The last three days of camp the campers perform concerts in area churches:

June 30 - Parksville at 7:00 pm
July 1 - Ralph Ave. at 7:00 pm
July 2 - Antioch at 11:00 am
July 2 -Mackville at 5:00 pm

For additional information & registrations contact:
Lyle Baker or Debbie Gordon 355
Bark Branch Rd., Frankfort, KY
40601 (502) 223-7056

Other Weeks at Antioch Camp:
First Chance, ages 5-8, June 2-4
Teen Week, ages 13-19, July 16-22
Junior Week, ages 9-12, July 23-28
For registration forms or information, see the address in the item preceding this one.

Westminister Witness (Maryland: Gary Pearson, evangelist): "When we come to the New Testament church and we look at how it grew and the methodology that was practiced, we must reach the inescapable conclusion that the Holy Spirit was

the driving force! Brethren, we cannot have a New Testament church in the world today without the workings of the Holy Spirit."

Woodland Bible Camp...Do you have young people with nothing to do for this summer? Are they tired - bored? Why not encourage them to attend Bible Camp? It is an investment that will pay eternal dividends. For registration forms and other information contact: Alan Borders , RR 3 Box 649, Linton, In 47441, (812) 847-7385 or check out our website: www.oblation.com

Schedule:

Junior Week I, June 11-17.
Intermediate Week I, June 18-24.
Junior Week II, July 9-15.
Intermediate Week II, July 16-22.
Senior Week, July 23-29.
Friends/Family Retreat, Sept.1-4.
Sr.Citizens Week, Sept.10-15.
Sr.Retreat (youth), Sept.22-24.

"Words of Life"...is on a new station: WWKY 790 AM from 7:30-8:00 each Sunday. Tune in, spread the news, start off your Sunday mornings with this inspiring broadcast.

Gallatin: Malachi 3:8 asks: "Will a man rob God?" The prophet answers that our failure to give God His share makes us guilty of just such a crime. If a Jew gave one-tenth under the law, for a Christian to give less, under grace, is a disgrace. **When someone begins to amass wealth, it is always a moot question as to whether God is going to gain a fortune or lose a man.**

Highland Community Church. With good weather comes the opportunity to get out on our lawn and meet the community. Tentative plans include "lawn events" in May, June, July, August, and September. There

will be concerts, cookouts, games, etc. We eagerly expect God to work mightily again this summer through these events. James Girdley.

Ooops! We Goofed: Our Sunday School quarterly for June-Aug. has mistakes in lessons 2 & 3. The notes on the lesson are correct, but the wrong lesson text is printed out on the left hand page. We hope readers were able to figure out what the actual text was. It's listed as "printed lesson" but was not printed out! Sorry; please excuse us our errors.

Linton, Ind. (Jerry Carmichael): Baby Dedication-- What a beautiful service we had last Sunday morning. Our attendance even beat Easter Sunday, which by tradition is the largest attendance of the year! We were truly blessed as Kerri & Jason came to dedicate Austin to the Lord, and Kip & Melissa dedicated Kole to the Lord, and Jeff & Jennifer came to dedicate Alex and Olivia to the Lord. Our children truly are a gift of God, a heritage of the Lord! (Psalm 127) How wonderful it is to have concerned parents who want the help of God in raising their children in today's society. We hope that we as a congregation will do our part in encouraging these young families as they follow Biblical principles in raising their children.

[Note by avw: Some may ask, Are baby dedications in God's word? It's not commanded in the NT, though it was in the OT. But surely it's fine to have the church join the parents in praying for them & their infant. And it gives an opportunity to explain biblical conversion in contrast to infant baptism.]

N.A.C.C. in Louisville: Starting around July 11, the humongous North American Christian Convention will be held this year in Louis-

ville -- at Southeast Christian Church. This is an annual meeting of the independent "Christian Churches," with many good speakers & profitable workshops. We can learn much from this opportunity.

Hymnal Update: Thanks to several who have made recommendations about hymnals. In a few months I'll share those suggestions with our readers. Meanwhile, as we said last month, Frank Preston plans to have 3,000 copies of Great Songs of the Church printed. But that won't be finished till early 2001. To place orders or ask questions, call Frank at 859-262-5161.

Central Bible College, Manila: CBC had its 37th commencement exercises on March 17. (It was begun by Dennis Allen & Victor Broaddus in 1955.) The construction of the combined church & CBC building continues slowly but steadily under brother Kwong's careful supervision.

CBC pres. David Moldez writes, "We continue our mission work around Metro Manila. Every Saturday now, I join the team in going from house to house to see who are interested to receive and study the Bible. Pray that the people will accept the evangelistic literature we of-

fer them along with the Bible. Roman Catholicism still has a stronghold in our land."

Opportunities for Advanced Study: Should anyone be interested, Ky. Christian College now has 3 regionally accredited Master programs: Master of Applied Theology, Master of Arts in New Testament and Master of Arts in Christian Leadership. The programs begin in August.--Don McGee

Many, Many Thanks for Help: Betty Stockman of Oakdale, La. asked us to include a letter of thanks, which we had to condense. "Bro. Jerry Samples of Cypress Creek Church sent out a letter on behalf of my husband Tommy who needed an expensive liver transplant due to a rare gene disorder.

"We express our sincere appreciation to all who sent donations and most of all for special prayers for Tommy. His medication is from the Lord, for the doctors tell us he is a miracle and we give God the complete glory. He came through the surgery great with no complications and now his recovery is going well. God has truly blest us in many ways. We thank Him and all of you too."