

August 2007

Glimpses of Faith Newsletter

Faith UCC
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Rev. Scott B. Martin



I was interested in a recent Cal Thomas editorial entitled “**Clinton shapes faith to her advantage as a political tactic.**” In this article he accuses all liberal politicians and specifically Hillary Clinton, of shaping their faith to their political advantage.

There may be some truth to this. **All** politicians tend to shape their message to their audience. For that matter so do most preachers! Thomas assumes that conservative politicians like President Bush do not do this yet we have seen any number of conservative politicians pandering to the religious right. Look at how many of them show up at places like Bob Jones University, or Liberty University, or at the Southern Baptist Convention. Does anybody seriously want to suggest that they don’t shape their message to fit those audiences?

Thomas gives as evidence of this “liberal” shaping of a political message to attract what one can only assume Thomas would say are non-religious voters, Clinton saying she was less sure about the doctrine that “being a Christian is the only way to salvation.” Thomas suggests that this distorts Scripture so much that it has to be pandering for votes.

Maybe this is Clinton’s motivation. Unlike Thomas I can’t pretend to look into the heart and soul of Hillary Clinton. What I do know is that I don’t believe Christianity is the only path to salvation and I’m not running for office.

Thomas accuses Clinton of “serving up theological mush” when it comes to her views of Scripture. She says, “**The whole Bible gives you a glimpse of God and God’s desire for a personal relationship**”, good so far Thomas says, “**but we can’t possibly understand every way God is communicating with us. I’ve always felt that people who try to shoehorn in their cultural and societal understandings of the time into the Bible might be actually missing the larger point.**” Doesn’t sound like mush to me. It sounds like plain truth to me.

Thomas suggests that this is a perfect example of what’s wrong with liberal thinking. I would suggest it is a great example of what is right about liberal thinking. Didn’t Jesus say something about tithing dill and cumin but missing the weightier matters of God’s laws, something about straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel?

Eden Seminary to Receive \$18,000,000 from the Deaconess Foundation!

Eden Seminary is about to receive an amazingly generous gift from the Deaconess Foundation, which was created after the sale of the Deaconess Hospital system in St. Louis. The seminary had found itself slipping into debt over the last several years because as Dr. David Greenhaw points out “The simple fact is that it costs considerably more to provide a theological education than can be charged in the form of tuition.” It is also a fact that the former E & R seminaries did not have nearly the endowment that the former Congregational seminaries had, to help cover costs.

The money will be given over a three year period to pay off debt and help with operating expenses. The bulk of the money is contingent on Eden’s instituting certain unspecified “progress” in the financial area.

The Deaconess Foundation is giving the money because of historic ties between the two institutions. The money is being given because of “The importance of effective pastoral training, and of the liberal theological tradition that Eden represents, has never been greater to our church, or to the wider society that it serves.”

In spite of this very generous gift Eden will continue to rely on the financial support of alumni and other donors. Theological education, like all other forms of education, is not cheap and since future pastors tend not to make very much, they can not afford to build up too large a debt



paying larger and larger tuition bills. This is especially true since many arrive at seminary with debts from their undergraduate degrees and second career students often have to use up assets and take out loans to pay tuition.

Welcome to Adam James Gossett

Congratulations and best wishes to Chrissy and Jim Gossett on the birth of their son Adam James Gossett on Friday July 13, 2007! We prayer God’s blessing on the whole family.

Will is enjoying his new role as “big brother.” He even took a class on it at the hospital! He is already learning to share. Adam’s and Will’s birthday are on the same day!

Congratulations on Your New Baby!

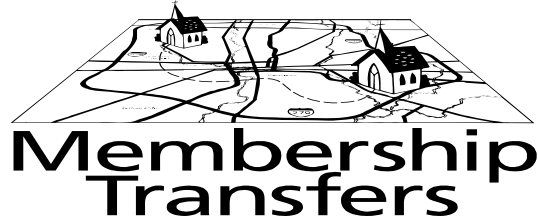


**Steve and Nancy Foster
Visit Their Daughter
In Alaska**

Recently Steve and I traveled “north” to Alaska to visit our daughter Abigail who is serving in the U.S Coast Guard in Ketchikan.

The majesty of God’s creation was on display at every turn. From the snow capped mountains that arise from the sea, to the crystal clear streams that flow down from those mountains. The bald eagles soar above the downtown and along the waterfront. They are as common as sea gulls. Fishing out on the cold waters of the inside passage yielded up a baker’s dozen of Dungeness crab and a 25 lb. Halibut forma depth of 320 feet; while a whale surfaced to join our boating party.

Equally wonderful was seeing how Abigail has grown to become a confident, mature woman; no longer our little girl, and to find that our roles are being reversed. She worried and looked out for us; as we had done for her for the past 22 years. Near the end of our visit she invited us to go to the V.F.W. hall on a Saturday night where her Coast Guard friends gather to have a beer, dance and sing karaoke. I was tired and opted out but Steve went out with Abigail. During the evening, one of the Coast Guard gals asked our daughter if it would be OK with her if she asked Abby’s Dad to dance. Abigail thought the situation over for several seconds and reminded the female “Coastie” that her Dad is a married man. With a stern look on her face Abby said, “All right but you had better dance like Jesus is watching!”



Kay Holmes, who recently moved back to Houston, TX has transferred her membership to First Congregational Church of Houston, TX.

Kay’s new address is:

Kay Holmes
4301 Bissonnet #62
Bellaire, TX 77401

**New Address and Phone
Number for Aurora Hall**

Aurora Hall has changed apartments at the Eden Home. Her new address is:

Aurora Hall
6-F Eden Dr
New Braunfels, TX 78130

Also, the phone number in the directory is wrong for Aurora. Her phone number is 620-5979.



Discovering Gems In Our Hymnal

One of the joys of having a new hymnal is discovering some of the new songs, which will become future “classics.” Ken Triesch has put together a special selection of new hymns and responses that we will use on Sunday August 12th. They will include tunes and lyrics by such greats as Duke Ellington and Brian Wren, as well as others.

Amnesty International Letter Writing Campaign

It was very gratifying to see that most of the Amnesty International Summer Post Card Action sheets I made copies of have been taken. If anyone else is interested in writing a few postcards to people imprisoned by their respective governments for no criminal reasons, please let me know and I will run off some more. We have until the end of August to get them written.

I received an update on the address for Mao Hengfeng, a prisoner in China. It is as follows:

Mao Hengfeng
P.O. Box 601/401
2 Dadui, 1 Zhongdui
29 Xinnslu
Sijingzhen
Songjiangqu
Shanghai Municipal Women’s Prison
Shanghai 201601
People’s Republic of China

Do you suppose the Chinese government is trying to discourage us from writing this woman? (You will need a BIG postcard!) Thank you very much for your support of this project.
Betty Triesch



Jenna Reinke to Share Her Experiences in Uganda After Potluck on August 12th

On Sunday August 12th Jenna Reinke will share her experiences in Uganda this summer. Jenna is the granddaughter of Ken and Betty Triesch. She spent three months in Uganda working with the San Antonio based Rafiki organization.

Jenna worked in an orphanage/school in the capital city of Kampala. As the Rafiki brochure puts it, short term missionaries, like Jenna, “touch the lives of the children and teenagers by showing Christ’s love in a practical manner. Ways to help include teaching classes in the RGC or RBC or offering activities after school at the RCC. MiniMissionaries are a vital help to the ROS during ROS furloughs and vacation schools for the RCC.”

We hope to have some hand crafted items from Africa for display and sale. These items were also at our conference annual meeting this past June.

Faith Church to Participate in Micro-Lending Mission Project

We are very excited about this new mission effort. More than charity the poor need capital to establish and strengthen businesses to support themselves, their families, and their communities. The Church Council, at their June meeting, voted to participate in Kiva

Kiva will let us connect with and loan money to small businesses in developing countries. Throughout the course of the loan, usually 6-12 months, we will receive regular email updates on how things are going.

The money is paid back and once paid back is available for future loans. This means that your contributions to this fund will grow the fund and allow us to help more and more! Kiva's current repayment rate is 99.79%!

Kiva partners with existing micro lending organizations all around the world who have expertise in choosing qualified borrowers. 100% of the money you donate will go to borrowers.

We will establish a team at Faith Church to choose which businesses in which countries we will loan to and keep you updated on how they are doing. If you would like to help simply write a check to the church and designate it for Kiva.

Check out Kiva's website at kiva.org for further information or ask the pastor.



August Birthdays

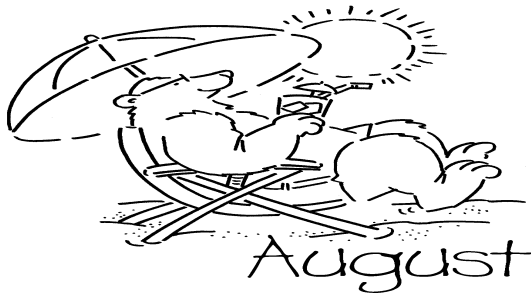
- 8-1 Joshua Coble
- 8-2 Joel Coble
- 8-7 Kay Holmes
- 8-10 Melissa Weige
- 8-14 Karen Dietz
- 8-17 Frances Henning
- 8-18 Lois Swander
- 8-25 Grace Perry-Clark
- 8-30 Nancy Foster
- 8-30 Kenneth Triesch

If you have a birthday in August and aren't listed here let us know so we can update our records.



Memorial Gifts

In memory of:	Given by:
Charles Codd	JoAnn & Bill Brown
Stewart Fischer	Viola Haas
Leroy Val Felger	Kappy Felger Adams
Sister Chapa	Kappy Felger Adams
Wanda Streuer	Kappy Felger Adams



Ushers

- 8-5 Robert & Emily Deninno
Ray & Emma Lou Bizer
- 8-11 Richard Hitz; Norma Gilbert
David & Sally Pena
- 8-19 Ralph & Sandy Ludwig
Tom & Ara Ward
- 8-26 Courtney & Lois Swander
Michele Gilbreth; Don Gregg

Liturgist

- 8-5 Curt Leonhardt
8-12 Bonnie Stark
8-20 Sandy Ludwig
8-29 Lois Swander

Council Rep

- 8-5 Tim Marlow
8-13 Bonnie Stark
8-19 Joe Ward
8-29 Michele Gilbreth

Acolytes

- 8-5 Ray Bizer
8-12 Curt Leonhardt
8-19 Ralph Ludwig
8-29 Albert Hennig

Communion Assistants

Ray and Emma Lou Bizer

Greeter

- 8-5 Dorothy Rest
8-12 Norma Gilbert
8-19 Ralph Ludwig
8-29 Courtney Swander

How does one prepare for Jesus' visit?

How does one prepare for Jesus' visit? Would you clean the house more thoroughly than usual, or let's be honest would you clean the house for a change? Would excessive cleanliness suggest you'd been neglecting some spiritual-advancement opportunities?

Would you borrow fine china to show your deep and abiding respect for the Messiah or use paper plates symbolizing an equally deep and abiding lack of interest in material goods?...I think I'd serve peanut butter on fine china and French wine in paper cups.

If I could screw up my courage, I'd tell him the truth: that he makes me nervous and I'm not sure what he expects from me. Then it might occur to me to apologize for not inviting everyone to dinner who might have wanted to come. Then the few of us would sit down on the floor, I think.

The dog would deposit her 87 pounds beside him, no doubt, and anoint his feet with her fond drool ... I'd listen, and wish I knew whether to wipe his now-slimy feet with my hair or to say something theologically astute and intellectually dazzling.

He could point to the nearest child and suggest I learn about God from her.

(by Joy Jordan-Lake,)

Movie Review "Hairspray"

If you get a chance go see the new movie "Hairspray". It is a movie based on a play, based on a movie, but in spite of being the third time around it is as fresh as tomorrow's cup of coffee.

The movie is a kind of "Happy Days" meets the "Adams Family." It has lots of great 1960's style rock and roll and the action is not stop.

The movie also has a good message about outcasts, whether they be outcasts because of the color of their skin or outcasts because they happen to be "plus size" being who they are, pursuing their dreams and the wider society opening up to include them. The movie offers up a Hollywood version of the UCC theme, "No matter who you are, or were you are on life's journey you are welcome here." Director Adam Shankman describes the movie as being, **"a beautiful message wrapped in crazy paper."**

The movie is appropriate for all ages. Believe it or not they managed to make a movie without any foul language, that I recall, or any nudity. And for anybody who ever saw John Travolta in any of his movies, whether it be one of his early ones like "Grease" or one of his more recent movies, like "Broken Arrow", you'll love Travolta's rendition of Edna, the 300 pound mother of the lead character!

If you like movies don't miss this one. It is a refreshing break from the usual summer fare. You'll come out with music echoing in your ears, your feet wanting to dance, and hope in your heart!



Nic Kapellas Opens New Restaurant

Nic has been coming to Faith UCC for a while now. He has cooked breakfast for the Men's Group, helped with hospitality after church, and brought food to our potlucks. Now he has opened a new restaurant at the corner of Common St. and Union. The restaurant faces Common St.

A number of us went there after church last Sunday and had a delicious meal. Elmo Fischer and I had the special, kabobs, and they were delicious. I even liked the green beans, which is unusual for me to say the least! Others in the group had the traditional gyro sandwich and pronounced them terrific.

All of Nic's family are pitching in. Nic's grandson Nic, Jr. was the busboy and was doing a fantastic job.

Be sure and take some time to look at the beautiful murals that Nic had commissioned. Each panel represents a different Greek Island. On the table is a map of the island Nic grew up on. Be sure and check out Nic's new restaurant!

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Women's South Texas Association Annual Meeting At Faith UCC Sept. 13th

Don't forget that the Women's Association meeting is being held at Faith UCC on September 13th. We hope that not the women in the women's fellowship, but all church women will attend. Rev. Doug Anders, our conference minister, will be speaking. Also, Rev. Shari Prestermon, from Back Bay Mission will be speaking and showing slides of the work there in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

The special offering will be going to Back Bay. The whole church is invited to contribute to this. If you would like to help give a check to Norma Gilbert, who is the Women's Fellowship treasurer.

Response to the Vatican's Claim

You may have read the recent claim from Pope Benedict that the Catholic Church is the only church to offer "full salvation." This represents a major step backwards from their position in Vatican II back in the 1960's.

Their claim comes primarily from "Catholic tradition" NOT from the Bible itself. The Bible makes no special claim for the Bishop of Rome. In fact such a bishop is not even mentioned.

The text about Peter becoming head of the church never fully ever came to pass, as far as we know. Certainly he was an important leader of the early church as the book of Acts and Paul's letters point out, but after Jesus' death Jesus' brother James became head of the church, NOT Peter.

