



First Presbyterian Church

The Cross and Crown



January 2017

Extending God's Grace throughout Northeast Texas

CONTRIBUTOR'S PEN: JULIE ADKINS

"Pen" ... or, more accurately, "Keyboard"

Like many of you, as a child there was almost nothing I loved more on a hot summer day than to GO SWIMMING. Of course, "going swimming" often meant splashing around in the pool, jumping off the high board, diving for pennies tossed to the bottom of the pool . . . in other words, playing, not swimming. Nevertheless, I did take lessons and for many years was a fairly strong swimmer.

I had many different swimming teachers over the summers, but they fell into two basic styles. The first, one might call the "abject fear" style. This teacher made you so afraid of him that your fear of the water was nothing in comparison. He got you to swim by shouting at you, belittling you, making fun of you in front of the rest of the class, each of whom knew their turn was coming. If you wouldn't cooperate in the shallow end of the pool, he'd simply dump you into the deep water, where you would swim or be sorry. At least that's what we thought . . . I know now that he would have rescued any one of us in an instant if we had ever truly been in trouble. But as a child, I was scared to death of him. It was so important to him that we learn to swim that he didn't care how he motivated us! And we did learn; many of us became quite good, but we never enjoyed it.

The other style of teacher I might call the "you can do it" style. My mom definitely fell into this category! She demonstrated, encouraged, made a game out of it. We weren't afraid to jump into the deep water if she was nearby. Mom would stand near the edge of the pool and encourage us to leap in and swim to her. No problem! Of course, as we got better, she would wait until we had jumped and then start slowly backing away, making us increase the distance we could swim. (Sneaky Mom!) But even as she made us work at learning to do it right, we were never afraid that we would fail or let her down (or drown because she had given up on us!). If Mom believed we could do it, then of course we could do it.

Which of these two teachers would you rather have? Which would you rather be? Which one more closely approximates your image of God?

Many of us got the idea, somewhere along the way, that God is more like the "abject fear" type of teacher. God gets us to behave by making us afraid of God. It doesn't matter whether we like the rules or the one who made the rules. All that matters is that we follow them. And so we obey because we are frightened of what will happen to us if we don't.

But isn't God more of a "you can do it" teacher? Does God strike us down when and if we fail? Or does s/he remind us of the right way and then encourage us to try again? Does God throw us into the deep waters and then walk away to let us flail about on our own? Or is God in the deep waters with us, swimming alongside, supporting us when we grow weary? Does God make us afraid, or calm our fears?

I know in my heart which one of these examples God is more like. Some days I even act as if I believe it. (!)

ATTENTION: NEW PRAYER REQUESTS MONTHLY

In order to keep our prayer requests current, our prayer list will start fresh at the beginning of each month. To keep your prayer request in the bulletin, write it on the back of an offering envelope, the attendance sheet or a piece of paper (please make sure your name is on it) or contact the church office, firstpres@peoplescom.net or 903-342-3011. We do not need the reason, unless it is death or an accomplishment, which go under a different heading. Also, please give relationship to you so others know who they are praying for. And PLEASE WRITE LEGIBLY.

As our prayers are answered, we give God thanks. For those with continued needs, we continue to pray.

Pastor

Session members:

Class of 2017

Bob Kelm

Class of 2018

Rick Drennan, Ralph Gore and Leeann Moos

Class of 2019

John Clark and Rhonda Thomas

Treasurer

Jerry Poe

Contact us:

Tina Hammer, Secretary

PO Box 493

301 S. Walnut St.

Winnsboro, TX 75404

Office: 903-342-3011

Fax: 903-342-3011

Email: firstpres@peoplescom.net

Office hours: M-Th, 9-noon

FPC Website:

www.easttexasgrace.org

Cross and Crown articles:

firstpres@peoplescom.net

Attendance:

November 27—35

December 4—31

December 11—33

December 18—34

December 24—47

December 25—33



Noisy Offering

January: Winnsboro

Volunteer Fire Dept.



From the Desk of Ruth Shelton

THE FOOLS GOD CHOOSES:

"YOU ARE NOT AN ACCIDENT, YOU ARE A DIVINE CHOICE" Henri Nouwen

Warm Up: Genesis 25: 19 - 23

Jacob and Esau had not yet been born when God fixed and foretold their futures: "The older will serve the younger." Here we have an early statement of that strange and difficult doctrine of election. Paul, in fact, makes God's choice of Jacob a paradigm of all those "splendidly illogical choices" God delights in making (Romans 9: 11-12).

To put it simply, and to avoid a pointless debate about God's inscrutable ways, may I say that in *this instance Jacob's call was a call to serve, to be useful, to be part of the historic, spiritual line through which the saving "seed" would be sown in a dark and dying world (cf. Genesis 3: 15, 28: 13-15; 35: 10-12).* Jacob was an essential link in God's plan to bring salvation to the earth.

This reality, for me, explains the stern discipline through which Jacob had to pass, for God's call to serve is a call to suffer. Deep wounds are the norm for all those whom God is determined to use. Pain is needful, not for our sake alone, but also for those we are destined to serve. As Paul put it, "We who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. *So, then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you*" (2 Corinthians 4: 11 - 12, italics added).

"Death" is the inevitable, earthly lot of those whom God has called, the lonely, invisible burden of all whom God is using. Sickness, loneliness, clamor, unrequited love, incessant demands, and mundane duties--all conditions that seem to epitomize the frustrations of life---become the means by which spirit of sacrifice and service begins to emerge in us. These are the channels by which our souls are enlarged and our sympathies deepened, the ways by which we are gradually conformed to the image of Him whose primary focus is (and always has been) on others. So death came to Jacob, and so it comes to us.

We have crude thoughts of God's love. We picture Him soothing us, shielding us from harm, bearing us up to heaven on, as the hymn writer; Isaac Watts would have it, "flowery beds of ease." We harbor no thought of the stern and robust reality of a love that employs the file, the forge, the hammer, the anvil, a seasoned love that can sustain the discipline by which everything false is driven out of us and we are made true.

Such is the love of God that "teaches {disciplines} us to say "NO" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2: 12).

When God wants to drill a man
And thrill a man and skill a man,
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part,
When he yearns with all his heart

To create so bold a man
That all the world would be amazed,
Watch his methods, watch his ways.

How God relentlessly perfects
Whom he royally elects,
How he hammers us and hurts us
And with mighty blows converts us
Into trial shapes of clay
Which only God can understand,
While our tortured heart is crying
And we lift beseeching hands.

How God bends, but never breaks
When his good he undertakes,
How he uses whom he chooses
And with every purpose fuses us,
By every act induces us
To try his splendor out---
God *knows* what he's about!

--DALE MARTIN STONE

But why, we ask, would God labor so long and arduously on a person like Jacob, who so often played the fool? Well, I reply, is there any other kind of human being? We're all God's fools. Fools, in fact, are "God's theme," to borrow a phrase from Lord Byron. In His vast wisdom He has chosen to minister to the human race not through glided saint or spiritual pros, but through a motley collection of past adulterers, thieves, drunks, cheats, fornicators, perverts, prigs, and other sorry excuses for humanity (I Corinthians 6:9-11). It's not that He has to make do with the likes of us, it's that He has deliberately and with profound wisdom chosen us so that He might gloriously change us and display us before the whole world as holy examples of His handiwork.

Frederick Buechner marvels at the folly of God to choose for His holy work in the world a bunch of "lamebrains, misfits, and assorted odd ducks." *Ah, the fools God chooses!*

TAKEN FROM: JACOB: THE FOOLS GOD CHOOSES; DAVID ROPER/DISCOVERY HOUSE PUBLISHERS; (pp 21-24).



Music Notes

The chime choir and sanctuary choir are going to take a rest for a bit. Both choirs worked hard to aid in worship during the Advent season by providing special music. The time and talents of each member are greatly appreciated. We will take a break for a couple of months then start preparing music for Lent and Easter. If you have thought you might like to try your hand at chiming or lift your voice to make a joyful noise, you should consider joining us at when we start rehearsing again. Meanwhile, we look forward to some occasional special music by individuals both instrumentally and vocally.

The January meeting will be Monday, Jan 2. Yes, that's the day after New Year's Day; what a great way to start off 2017!

After Bible Study (from 10 - 11), we will have a soup and cornbread lunch. Following the lunch, we plan to have a PW Planning meeting. Although we don't always spend a lot of time on the "business" end of PW, this month we do plan to adopt a budget for the new year. Some pre-planning is being done and will be presented to the group for discussion and approval.

This month, our Bible study will come from lesson 5 from the book Who is Jesus? What a Difference a Lens Makes. This lesson looks at Jesus from Paul's lens. He stresses that the cross of Christ is central to understanding true discipleship.



It's a new year. Is one of your resolutions to spend more time in the Word? Joining PW will be a great way to achieve that goal. Everyone is welcome!

| General Fund Summary Jan - Nov 2016 | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Actual | Budget | Variance |
| Income | \$66,642.67 | \$78,576.66 | \$11,933.99 |
| Expense | \$ 57,383.04 | \$78,576.66 | \$21,193.62 |
| Net | \$9,259.63 | | |

Note: Bank balance 11/30/2016 was \$48,081.07 Restricted funds totaled \$27,780.55, while unrestricted funds totaled \$20,300.52.



From Your PNC

Did you know that we have only been actually searching for a pastor since July? The PNC realizes that it feels like we have been looking forever, but even though we have been without a full-time pastor for over a year, the PNC wasn't formed until April and only started receiving Pastor Information Forms in July. We continue to search for the right person to fit our church, and we continue to hold fast to the knowledge that God has chosen that person and will fill our need in God's own time. Please continue to pray that our hearts and your hearts will be open to God's choice for our pastor-to-be.

Please add our newest member to your directory:

Dan Mickel
378 CR 4879
Winnsboro, TX 75494
903-434-2740
dcmickel@gmail.com



Thank you Larry and Debbie Elmer for the beautiful fused-glass nativity scene. The photo does not do this artistic creation justice...everyone must see this incredible piece of art in person to appreciate what a wonderful gift this is for our church.

We Licked the Platter Clean!

The tables were beautifully decorated for the December Family Lunch. The food was delicious - so much so that we scraped the bowls clean from every dish. This leads us to the reality that we probably need to bring a little more food for family lunches. The suggestion is to bring 2 dishes - one main dish AND a side (salad or vegetable or dessert.) Family lunch is a great time to socialize. In doing so, let's fill everyone's belly!



Lawrence "Larry" Bernard Elmer

1953 - 2016

Larry Elmer was born in Utica, New York to Ruth and Bernard Elmer. He attended Marist College. He joined the Navy in 1975 as a nuclear submariner on the U.S.S. James Madison, SSBN 627. He was Honorably discharged in 1982 and went to work for TXU. His career was diverse. He became an Electrical Training Instructor at the Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Station. He worked in increasingly challenging Information Technology roles prior to leaving TXU in 1998 having worked his way up to Director of Information Technology. He ultimately retired in April, 2013 as the Sr. Director of IT Infrastructure for the University of Texas Systems.

Larry was a patriot, a music enthusiast, a skilled practitioner of martial arts, a winning slot car racer, a talented guitar player, a wonderful chef, a licensed ham radio operator, a dedicated and skilled instructor, an accomplished woodworker and a lover of sports cars. More importantly, he was loving and warm and funny and caring in his relationships with family and friends. Larry was a devoted husband, son, father, brother, grandfather, friend and an adored son in law. He loved entertaining. He and his wife of 21 years, Debbi, traveled frequently and together, enjoyed life in general.

He is survived by his wife Debbi of Holly Lake Ranch, his children, Christine Trowell and her husband, Aaron of North Richland Hills; Marcus Elmer of North Richland Hills; Regan Mort and her husband, Paul, of Ft Worth, Tucker Cappella of Casper, Wyoming, and his mother, Ruth Elmer, of Syracuse, New York. Larry also has 3 grandchildren, Mara, age 3; Reed, age 2 and Cooper, age 1. Additionally, he is survived by his sister and brother in law Peter and Mary Beth Baskin, sister and brother in law Jim and Shelley Hovey, brother Matt Elmer, and numerous nieces and nephews, all of New York. He was predeceased by his father Bernard Edward Elmer and by his sister in law, Kellie Elmer.

The family would like to thank the doctors and caregivers who traveled the cancer journey with Larry and Debbi. In particular, we are immeasurably grateful to Dr. Sasha Vukelja of Tyler who was his medical warrior, Dr. Warren Abrameit of Tyler, Dr. Nabil Choueri formerly of Tyler and the many gracious and caring nurses, physicians assistants and schedulers who cared for us and loved us. Additionally, we thank Hospice of East Texas for their caring support during the past 2 months. You all do a demanding and difficult job and there is a special place for all of you in our hearts.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Stand Up to Cancer, Hospice of East Texas or the charity of your choice.

Memorial Service: Wednesday, January 4th, 2017, 2:00pm at First Presbyterian Church of Winnsboro
Officiating: Dr. Julie Adkins

First Presbyterian Church

Birthdays/Anniversaries

January 2017

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|----------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 New Year's day COMMUNION | 2 10 AM PW New Year's day observed OFFICE CLOSED NO Bible Study | 3 | 4 6 pm Supper & Bible basics | 5 | 6 EPIPHANY | 7 Noon AI-Anon Betty Ash |
| 8 | 9 2-4 pm Bible Study Vicki Bond Kelly Holloman | 10 | 11 1:30 pm Finance Comm. Mtg. 6 pm Supper & Bible basics Don Kettleson Wayne Werner | 12 Christian England | 13 Patricia Clark | 14 Noon AI-Anon |
| 15 Family Lunch | 16 M L King Day 2-4 pm Bible Study | 17 Garnett Russell | 18 6 pm Supper & Bible basics | 19 | 20 | 21 Noon AI-Anon |
| 22 Session after church Laquita Kelm | 23 <i>Cross & Crown articles due by 9AM</i> 2-4 pm Bible Study | 24 | 25 6 pm Supper & Bible basics | 26 Susan Drennan Blossom Barnett | 27 | 28 Noon AI-Anon |
| 29 Noisy Offering: Winnsboro Volunteer Fire dept. | 30 2-4 pm Bible Study | 31 | | | | |