

Words of Faith

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50-plus years of Faith-fulness

When Faith Presbyterian Church came into existence in the 1950s, there was a young wife and mother who was a part of the fledgling congregation.

She had been a Presbyterian and a resident of Tacoma all her life to that point, and could not remember a time when she did not believe in and pray to the God of the Bible.

More than half a century later that young woman is now in her 80th year, still a resident of Tacoma and member of the church, and still holds fast to the God revealed in the Scriptures.

Possibly the only adult charter member of Faith still active in the congregation, Mrs. Bonnie Payne has seen much change over the span of more than half a century, but has remained constant in her faithfulness to Christ and His church, and anyone who has been at Faith for any length of time is very likely on one of her prayer lists.

Born in 1926 as the seventh of 11 children, Bonnie grew up in Tacoma as the daughter of a carpenter and schoolteacher. She prayed extensively, even as a child, and found that “The Lord was very near, especially at my mother’s death,” which occurred when Bonnie was seven years old, following the

birth of her brother David.

After graduating from Stadium High she went into nurse’s training at Tacoma General, graduating in 1947, and married Bud Payne that same year, having met him at First Presbyterian Church, in which they were both active.

The growth of their family ran just ahead of the new church. Bonnie notes that her claim to fame was, in the mid-1950s, having six children under the age of five, including two sets of twins. Ron, their oldest, is a carpenter in Port Townsend. Brian and Laurie (Mrs. Steve O’Ban) are twin acorns that did not fall far from the family tree, and both live in Tacoma with their families and are members of Faith. Christine (Mrs. Bob) Chase is likewise a Tacoma resident and member of Faith. Valerie (Mrs. Jim Vincent) lives in Gig Harbor, and her twin brother Martin (married to Debbie) is the pastor of Lakey Gap Presbyterian Church in North Carolina, and was the keynote speaker at the 50th anniversary celebration at Faith in 2003.

Bud was an avid traveler, and took his family on camping vacations all over the U.S. and Canada, and down into Mexico as well. In later years he and Bonnie traveled ▶ 7

Gospel thriving after tsunami

Recently several members of MTW’s Thailand staff, accompanied by two Thai physicians, traveled by fishing boat to the island of Lao off the coast of southern Thailand, where 300 “sea gypsies” live.

They held a day-long clinic and treated 150 adults and children.

Despite the major health needs there, including a high incidence of tuberculosis and a lack of childhood immunizations, they found that the gospel has been thriving among the Mogan people following the devastation of their island by the tsunami.

Prior to that event there were no known believers on the island. Now, however a church of 100 people is worshipping there, and 50 sea gypsies on another nearby island all attend church as well.

As the group traveled to another area, which was part of Thailand’s hardest-hit region, they saw the results of six months of rebuilding, with many new fishing boats built and new cottage industries started. In that area there were two churches prior to the tsunami, but now there are 23 churches, with scores of people being baptized every month. ♦

*From the winter 2005 issue of
the MTW mission publication
Network*

Fifth in a Series

Presbyterianism

By Rev. Rob Rayburn

In the last installment of this series I began to list some of the virtues or strengths of Presbyterian church government. I mentioned the wisdom of relying on a number of godly men instead of but one; its division of labor by which each essential function of church leadership is provided its own office; and its lay officers who serve as a barrier to clerical absolutism.

But there is a virtue in our system greater than any of these. I am speaking of the way that Presbyterian church government embodies and practices the unity of the church. Our Savior and his apostles laid great emphasis on such unity. The oneness of the body of Christ would be a demonstration to the world of the truth of the gospel (so lacking in unity is the human race in general and so crippling is that disunity), and Paul often argued that God's people individually would draw great strength from a church that was one in heart and purpose.

This stress on the unity of the church of Christ may be said to be the principal interest of Presbyterian church polity. In the first installment of this series I cited J. H. Thornwell's definition of Presbyterian church government: "The government of the church by parliamentary assemblies, composed of two classes of elders, and of elders only, and so arranged as to realize the visible unity of the whole church." At the time I pointed out that only the last part of that definition was uncontroversial, but the last part concerns the unity of the church.

To be sure, Presbyterians aren't alone in favoring a government that makes both real and visible the unity of the church. Episcopalian church government (i.e. the polity of Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodists, etc.) does as well. Perhaps for this reason Presbyterians would have to admit that their principles bring them nearer to episcopacy than to independency. In independent church government, in which each congregation is entire to itself and subject to no other, the unity of the church is more a theory than a fact. In Presbyterianism, individual congregations belong to presbyteries which, in turn, belong to General Assemblies. Each local church is part of the larger church in real ways: each congregation is subject to the larger church, is able to appeal to it for redress or help, and each congregation shares in the life and work of the church as

a whole. It is not for nothing that the name of our church is The Presbyterian *Church* in America, not the Presbyterian *Churches* in America. We are altogether one church!

According to Presbyterian principles, in an ideal world, there would be but one Christian church in Tacoma, Washington, with the many congregations of that one church—each governed by its elders on the local level—subject to the rule of the united eldership of the town. That city church or presbytery (as before Corinth or Ephesus), would then be part of the regional church of the Puget Sound (as before the church of Judea or Samaria), in turn governed by a representative selection of its elders drawn from all its congregations. That regional church or synod would then be part of the General Assembly, the Christian church in its entirety, as before in the assembly of Acts 15, ruled by a representative selection of elders drawn from all its synods.

In a world such as ours, however, we can only create such a visible and practical unity to the extent that we can persuade Christians and congregations to agree with these principles. So, alas, there is not one single Christian Church of Tacoma, Washington whose congregations are all subject to a single government and which belongs to the one Christian Church of the United States, which, in turn, belongs to the one, holy, catholic Christian Church ruled by its representative, international eldership.

The church in Tacoma does not speak with a single voice and does not display its unity in a way that demonstrates its supernatural origin. There are many more independent congregations than Presbyterian ones and, for a variety of reasons, the church presents to the world many faces instead of one. In far too many ways the church looks like any other human institution, fractured by the inability of people to get along and to unite in love and mutual confidence for the sake of a common purpose. That is not the only reason for the church's disunity, to be sure, but that disunity should nevertheless be a matter of real grief and embarrassment to Presbyterians and to all Christians.

We Presbyterians have not, of course, always lived up to our principles. In 1936 the ministers who founded the separatist Presbyterian denomination in which Faith Presbyterian Church would

"The church in Tacoma does not speak with a single voice and does not display its unity in a way that demonstrates its supernatural origin."

eventually be established in 1953, did not so much leave or separate from the Presbyterian Church USA as they were cast out of that church. As the 18th century Scot, John Brown of Haddington, once put it: "Providence often points out the duty of separation by permitting some faithful ministers to be tyrannously thrust out of her communion." 1936 was not an un-Presbyterian act even though it did result in two churches instead of one. It was loyalty to Holy Scripture and to Jesus Christ on the part of some Presbyterians and disloyalty on the part of others that produced that division. In 1937, however, the division among the separated conservatives over eschatology and Christian liberty was a very un-Presbyterian act, as some of its principals later acknowledged. Now one church had become three.

Still, the chart of Presbyterian church history in the United States very clearly reflects the Presbyterian commitment to the unity of the church. It reflects the union of a number of Presbyterian bodies over the years and now, after all the tumult of more than three hundred years of American church history, almost all American

Presbyterians (a number somewhat larger than 3 million) belong to one of two churches, the Presbyterian Church USA and the Presbyterian Church in America, with perhaps only 150,000 Presbyterians remaining to be divided among a number of smaller bodies (excluding the Dutch Reformed churches).

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the most remarkable and the most wonderful institution in the world. It demonstrates its supernatural origin by nothing so much as its unity across all the barriers that ordinarily separate people from one another. In our time we are seeing wealthy American Episcopal congregations placing themselves under the authority of Anglican bishops in Rwanda and Nigeria. That is a beautiful and important development. We have a long way to go to embody that unity as profoundly in the Presbyterian church. But I am thankful that our principles compel us to care that our church, as much as possible, demonstrates herself to be the *one*, holy, catholic church she is said to be in Holy Scripture and the ancient creeds. ♦

Milestone reached in Sunday afternoon Bible study

By Lynn Seelock

Sunday, April 9, 2006, marked a milestone for the group that has met for dinner and Bible study on a Sunday afternoon for the past 15 years, most of them at the home of Mary Meyerhoff. It started with an organizational dinner at Mary and her late husband Jim's home on April 7, 1991, with the first lesson in Romans 1 and 2. That four-volume study by James M. Boice took eight years and eight months to complete. After Jim went to be with the Lord, Mary continued to host the studies under the leadership of Andy Allen, and at present, David Bye. After studying Romans, the group completed Boice's commentary on Ephesians in two years, his study on the minor prophets in three years and five months, and Daniel in ten months. A new study on Joshua began in April. ♦

Lynn is one of the original members of this long-running Bible study, which is currently attended by some 17 members of Faith. The alumni list numbers another 33 past and present members of the church.

Juliana

By Bonnie Payne

*The kids have been to Nanny's house
And scattered all around
The Tinker Toys made guns and tanks
And war-like things abound*

*Oh, little boys are little boys
The Lord has made them so
And all the preaching in the world
Won't change the way they grow*

*But in the library, what's this?
A napkin laid with care
And put to bed a little lamb
Two dollies and a bear*

*And over all a little towel
A coverlet is laid –
A little girl has been here, too
A dainty little maid*

*The apple of her daddy's eye
Such sweet and gentle ways
E'en now a little mother she
The other way she plays*

Jane Austen: Cassis Style

By Becky Love

Covenant High School senior Kelly Cassis has been performing in plays all through high school. Her talents often parallel those of Jane Austen, who, at a young age, was an acclaimed and widely known novelist. One of Austen's more popular stories was *Emma*; it was popular enough to be made into movies and, in the case of Covenant's most recent play, a stage-performance. CHS senior Becky Love sat down and talked to her about Jane Austen and Kelly's recent debut as the quirky, Edwardian cupid.

Words of Faith: Kelly, what did you find out about Jane Austen while you were preparing for the role?

Kelly: Jane Austen touches a lot on the refinery of life, and she sometimes shows the difference between *appearing* refined and actually *being* refined. For example, Harriet is shown to be in the lower class, and

Mrs. Elton is shown in the higher class. However, Mrs. Elton is, clearly, not seen as refined, whereas one of my lines to Harriet was "I hope that I can resemble *you* in any small way."

WOF: Was there anything of you, personally, that you saw in the character of Emma?

Kelly: Oh yeah! (laughs) Her plans often get frustrated. She thought she knew everything about everybody, but her own life was, shall we

is amazing. She just put it in different terms and languages to fit the period, but it's ultimately the same thing today.

WOF: In your opinion, do you see any evidence that Jane Austen and her family were Christians?

Kelly: She may have seemed anti-religious in her portrayal of ministers and the church, but it was actually a portrayal of her society rather than her faith. She must have felt frustrated when she so often came into contact with the hypocrisy of the ministers who, back then, often were unbelievers. So, personally, I think there is reason to believe that she was actually a Christian.

WOF: Let's talk about Covenant's play version of the story. I know that the team held practices for about six weeks, two days a week, but how much time did you spend on your own to prepare for your part?

Kelly: I did stuff an hour or two at a time either at home or school. I practiced lines and movements, and sometimes I practiced in front of a mirror. Overall, I felt pretty prepared, but a couple more weeks of organized practices would have been nice.

WOF: What were some of the challenges that you were met with while preparing for your role?

Kelly: Emma is a very subtle character, which is hard to portray on stage. On the stage, everything has to be larger than life, so it was difficult for such a character. In the book and movie, you can get into her head and see what she's thinking, but you can't do that as easily with a stage performance. On the other hand, I could identify with her, so that made it easier. When it comes to lines, there were a lot. However, most of my lines were dialogue, so they weren't as challenging as they may seem.

WOF: What was your favorite part of the play?

Kelly: The costumes and the final scenes when Emma realized she is in love with Mr. Knightly. Mr. Elton was fun to play off of, too.

WOF: Tell us about your past involvement in drama and plans for the future.

Kelly: When I was six, I did the Three Little Pigs in a homeschool group. I was the pig who



Emma (Kelly Cassis) plays the gracious host while Mr. Elton (Jordan Hayes) eyes the punch.

say, a constant surprise and source of frustration. She also tried to be coy and on top of things, but she found that she wasn't while interacting with certain characters like Mrs. Weston.

WOF: Was Jane Austen's portrayal of society in those times accurate? Did women really spend so much time and energy discussing marital prospects, suitors, and the like?

Kelly: They still do. That's why Jane Austen

built his house out of straw. The group grew, and we did more plays up to junior high, performing at the church. We put on *The Odyssey*, E. Nesbitt's *Five Children and It*, and things like that. In high school, besides *Emma*, we've done Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, and Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*.

WOF: Out of all these, which has been your favorite and why?

Kelly: Oh, *Emma*, definitely. I was finally a girl this time! (laughs) Also, *Emma* was a really developed character with great costumes. As far as future plans go, I'd like to do drama with the kids at church. When I attend college, I might participate in theater on the side, but not as a major. We'll see. ♦

Did you know?

Jane Austen (1775-1817) was the daughter of the Rev. George Austen, for many years the rector of the Anglican church in Steventon, England. While best known for works such as *Emma*, *Sense & Sensibility*, and *Pride & Prejudice*, she was also the author of three prayers that were preserved by her sister Cassandra. One of them reads in part, "Give us grace, Almighty Father, so to pray, as to deserve to be heard, to address thee with our hearts, as with our lips. Thou art everywhere present, from Thee no secret can be hid. May the knowledge of this teach us to fix our thoughts on Thee, with reverence and devotion that we pray not in vain...Above all other blessings...we implore Thee to quicken our sense of thy mercy in the redemption of the world, of the value of that holy religion in which we have been brought up, that we may not, by our own neglect, throw away the salvation Thou hast given us, nor be Christians only in name." Although she wrote some of the most finely-crafted romantic novels in the English language, with some of the happiest and most satisfying endings, she herself was never married, and died at the age of 41. She is buried at Winchester Cathedral.

News Briefs

A spring classics concert was held at Faith on March 9. Featured performers were Courtney Rayburn, soprano; Ron Bechtel, organ; Maddie McComas, piano, and Veronica Arnold, accompanist. Music included selections from J.S. Bach, J. Sebelius, W.A. Mozart, Franz Schubert, Gabriel Faure, Lerner and Lowe, George Gershwin, and Rodgers and Hammerstein.

It was total immersion for five members of Faith who participated in the Washington State Swimming Championships at the King County Aquatic Center in Federal Way on February 18. Andrew Chase (swimming for Wilson), John Hannula (Curtis), Jesse Stipek (Mt. Tahoma), Carl Weigly (Mt. Tahoma) and Brian Jack (Wilson) collected a handful of individual and team medals. In addition, Elder Dick Hannula, who broke two national high school records while swimming for Wilson High School, was inducted into the state swimming Hall of Fame.

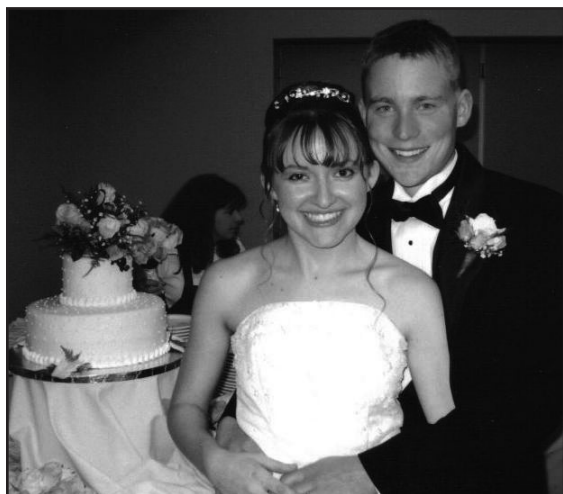
Also, Jacob Pappuleas saw action on the Gig Harbor varsity football team as they battled to a seventh-place finish in the state tournament.

Four fathers and seven sons traveled to the Yakama Reservation in April for a weekend of work with PCA missionary Chris Granberry. They helped rehab one of the homes on the reservation, installing new sheetrock, pulling out old carpet, scraping and priming outbuildings, and putting on a new deck. Bob Chase, one of the dads who went, recalls that the woman whose house was being worked on told them that "This is like a dream come true," and was planning on attending the reservation church for the very first time on Easter.

The biannual Covenant High School tour of Great Britain took place from March 27-April 11. The 60 students and 10 adults visited cathedrals, museums, battle sites and centuries of history. Among their stops were St. Giles' Church in Edinburgh, where John Knox preached; the beaches of Normandy, France, where the Allies landed at great cost in 1944; Olney, England, where John Newton lived and preached; and the spot in Oxford where Reformers Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were burned at the stake in 1555. They also dropped in on Tim and Renata McNeeley, their infant son Owen, Josh and Bryonie Moon, and Peter McNeeley, who are living in St. Andrews, Scotland while Tim, Josh, and Peter attend school there. The group saw its share of empty churches during their two weeks of travel, prompting Elder Mike Pfefferle to remark that "It's a lot easier to build a cathedral, lasting a thousand years or more, than to build a church that lasts just a few generations."

New Members

Lisa (Hoffman) Lind is a medical technician and the new wife of Matthew Lind. She attended Clover Park College and Pierce College. Baptized in the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod), she and her parents were part of a Messianic Jewish



Lisa and Matthew Lind

congregation for her growing-up years, and she also attended a non-denominational church on Portland Avenue, which ministered extensively to homeless people. She and Matthew met while doing contra (folk) dancing, and started attending Faith a year ago. They were married in April. Her new husband graduates from Faith Seminary in Tacoma in June and

then they are headed north to Alaska, hopefully to take some further studies and to be mentored by Ben and Jana Shoemaker.

Amy Vitzhum has been a nanny for 12 years, and the wife of Chris Vitzhum for a little more than 12 months. She grew up doing a lot of baby-sitting, attended Linfield College in Oregon and Seattle Pacific University, and had her first nanny job while still in college. She grew up attending First Presbyterian Church in Everett, then attended two different Baptist churches for a time, and was working in Redmond when her aunt (Wendy Matsuda) set her up with Chris on

a blind date. They saw each other for a time, then things cooled until, as she recalls, "I realized all I was missing out on." Chris must have also felt something similar, because in time they got back together, and were married in the spring of 2005. She also dances (swing, ballroom) and cooks.

Josh and Lindsey Wymer live in Federal Way, have been married for a year and a half, and were looking for a church home for just about that length of time as well. Josh is in the Navy and attending Seattle University, studying medicine and aiming for a commission in the Nurse Corps. Both were raised in Christian families and in Washington state, Josh in an independent church in Poulsbo and Lindsey (who is the daughter of Troy and Diane Wisdom) in the Evangelical Reformed Church. She attended Seattle Pacific University and is a contract dental assistant at Ft. Lewis.

Jonathan Webb has ten years of military experience under his belt, first as a Marine infantryman and more recently as an Army crew chief on Black Hawk helicopters. He grew up in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, attending a Southern Baptist church there. This summer he ends his enlistment and is headed back to Iraq (he has already been there once as a soldier) to work for a security company. Although a long-time Baptist – he is transferring membership from Leesville Baptist Church in Leesville, Louisiana – he has for several years been moving towards a Reformed viewpoint, and heard about Faith from Presbyterian churches he visited in Monroe, Louisiana and Hampton, Virginia.

Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. (from the Heidelberg Catechism)

Into Life Eternal: Art Bittner, April 14

Daughter Jennifer (Mrs. Andrew Sullivan), writing about her father's love of travel, said that "There was one country, however, that my Dad was never able to travel to. He loved its people and spent many hours studying about it and its history. He mostly longed to see and know better its founder and king. He longed for this because he knew the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. He is in that country now with endless days to explore, learn, and love." She also spoke of "the wonderful gift he gave his family and friends of stepping over to heaven not only without a doubt or hesitation, but with a joy, surety, and longing which almost overflowed at times."

Child Baptisms

Elanor Murphy, infant daughter of Robert and Jessica Murphy, February 12 ♦ *Malachi Vander Pol*, infant son of Timothy and Sharletta Vander Pol, March 26

Child Professions of Faith

Ben Gordon, son of Michael and Marina Gordon, January 29 ♦ Bethan Sullivan, daughter of Andrew and Jennifer Sullivan, February 19.

Moving

Jack and Donna Carlman, to 2045 Greenview Lane, Lynden WA 98264 ♦ *Jeff and Dena Wheeler*, to 9 Blossom Springs Drive, Battle Mountain NV 89820. ♦

50 Years, continued

1 ◀ to other parts of the world as well. Bud died in 1996, but his contribution to the church can still be seen in the wife to whom he was married for nearly 50 years, in the family that he helped raise, and in the seasonal banners that adorn the sanctuary walls at Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas, which he helped Bonnie put together from artwork created by former FPC member Alison Brown.

When troubled times came to the church in the 1970s, the Paynes elected not to leave, and recalls that “we were a motley crew of about 40 people” when Rob Rayburn, along with Florence, arrived to take up pastoral duties in 1978.

The praying girl of many years ago is now a praying grandmother, a fixture at Wednesday night prayer meetings who also maintains a daily personal prayer time each day that encompasses the church and those who are a part of it. In addition to those times of prayer, she also meets with four of her sisters each week for lunch and prayer. “We discuss and cover about 300 family members plus our own besetting problems,” she says. “This has become a priority for us all, and we seldom allow anything to encroach on this time.”

Alfred Lord Tennyson, the 19th-century English poet, wrote in his poem *Idylls of the King*, “More things are

wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice rise like a fountain for me night and day.” And long before that, James the apostle wrote that “The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power.” Bonnie Payne has spent a lifetime practicing the discipline of prayer, and the nurturing of both her own family and the family of faith, and in the economy of the kingdom we suspect that she has had a great and far-reaching impact. She is a true Faith original. ♦

Disorganized Religion, continued

8 ◀ drawing near.’ (Hebrews 10:25). Such interaction could be in a worship service or at Starbucks; it might be satisfied through a Sunday school class or a dinner in a fellow believer’s home.”

Barna has articulated a view of the church which I encounter all the time—I’m a Christian; I accepted Jesus back in youth group in high school; church is wherever I happen to be—at a Third Day concert, on the beach, in the mountains, in my room. It looks like disorganized religion, but it’s really organized: it’s organized around me, my work schedule, the tides, and the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

Barna’s definition of the church is “the aggregation of followers of Jesus Christ whom He has saved.” His definition is a little different from Saint Paul’s definition in *Philippians 1:1*. Maybe Barna would re-write the verse to read, “Paul and Timothy, revolutionary servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi.” What is left out? Something huge: “together with the overseers and deacons.”

According to Barna, “We should keep

in mind that what we call ‘church’ is just one interpretation of how to develop and live a faith-centered life. We made it up. It may be healthy or helpful, but it is not sacrosanct.”

The truth is that the local church is God’s invention, not ours. It is the organized church, not just the church at large, which even the gates of hell will not prevail against. It is the organized church, not just your Moms-in-Touch prayer group, which God purchased with his own blood (*Acts 20:28*).

Barna insists, “I am not called to attend or join a church. I am called to be the Church.” Actually, you’re called to do all of these things. You can’t just get together with your buddy on the Lord’s Day, share some serendipity faith stories on the golf course, write a fat check to the local rescue mission, pray earnestly for your neighbors, go home, call it a day and say that you “did church.”

Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that

would be of no advantage to you.” This suggests many things, but it at least suggests that the New Testament church was not the house church your cousin is all excited about. The New Testament church is an organized church. It is organized around the Triune God, around the prophets and the apostles (*Revelation 21:14* and *Ephesians 4:7-13*), around Christ Jesus. It is a church which, by definition, has “overseers and deacons.”

Your cousin’s house church might actually be one of the good ones, complete with bishops and deacons, but here is the point: the local, organized church is God’s idea; a biblical church is a church with godly, ordained servant-leaders—the overseers and the deacons.

Thank God that He not only called you to enjoy a personal relationship with Him, but that He also purposely placed you in His organized church. ♦

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Church Calendar

Second Sunday of each month:
Church potluck ♦ August 10-17:
Mexico Project ♦ September 4:
Church Picnic ♦

Disorganized Religion

“I’m a very spiritual person; I’m just not into organized religion.” How do you respond to this statement? Is it a liability for the Christian faith to be organized? Would the Great Commission be better served if we all operated as free-lance Christians apart from the local church? Researcher George Barna is forcing people to ask these questions. His latest book, *Revolution*, predicts that by the year 2025 the local church in this country will be practically non-existent. In its place will be loosely related Christians, “revolutionaries,” who live the Christian life in a radical New Testament way.

Translation? To be a good Christian, you don’t have to be involved in a local church. All you have to do is love Jesus and be really serious about it.

The local church, according to Barna, is something invented by human beings. As the local church becomes increasingly passé in our post-modern, Gen-

X environment, it will die out. But the real church, Christians who get together informally and do their own thing, will survive and thrive.

In case you think I’m making this up, here are a few choice quotes from Barna’s book. After describing devout Christians who dropped out of church because they were bored with the predictable worship services or because their church refused to recognize how revolutionary and gifted and driven they were, Barna assures us that “whether you become a Revolutionary immersed in, minimally involved in, or completely disassociated from a local church is irrelevant to me (and, within boundaries, to God). What matters is not whom you associate with (i.e., a local church), but who you are.”

Barna’s proto-type Revolutionary doesn’t tithe to his local church but gives generously to causes he feels are “trust-

By Rev. Stephen Lewis

Stephen Lewis is pastor of Evergreen Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Salem, Oregon. He and his wife Amy have five children. He holds a B.A. in Social Science from Biola University, and an M.Div. from Westminster Seminary in California.

worthy and significantly help people.... His life reflects the very ideals and principles that characterized the life and purpose of Jesus Christ and that advances the Kingdom of God—despite the fact that he rarely attends church services.”

Hebrews 10:25 has long been a proof text for why we should go to a worship service every Sunday morning. But Barna reads that verse a little differently—“When the Bible admonishes us to gather together, it does not imply that that should be a church service or congregational event. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is ▶ 7