



Captive to the Word, Free in the Holy Spirit

Millbrook Messenger

September 2010

LEGOLAND THEOLOGY (And Church Membership Transfers)

In my monthly mail assortment is a newsletter of a particular church. Each month there is a list of names under "Necrology". That simply means, a person crossed the "Jordan into Beulah land", or tried to cross "the Nile" and failed, resulting in his or her death in "Egypt".

Another part of the newsletter talks about new members who joined the "Temple ". This group always intrigues me. They come from all kinds of denominational backgrounds. For personal and professional reasons they have moved and joined the local Presbyterian Temple.

What has struck me over the years is that I have never yet read of a transfer coming in from the "county jail"; or from places like Soledad prison, here in California. Nor are the city homeless shelters a mail forwarding source.

As I look at Millbrook, I observe ongoing changes, including changes in our demographics. Ethnic diversity is becoming more apparent. There is no doubt that the economic challenges we are facing are also very real. Many new transfers will cause us to have a kingdom oriented view of "membership". After all, kingdom membership is not in the first instance fixated on "temple membership".

Some of the more intriguing transfers I meet are folks who have come in from Legoland.

Having multiple visits to Denmark behind me, I am familiar with the original Legoland, built in 1968 in Billund on the Jutland peninsula (for our history buffs, the First World War Navy battle off Jutland is not readily forgotten).

The Apostle Peter came from Legoland, as indeed I did. I hope you will shortly come to realize that you did as well. Peter, in his first letter, writes about us being a "chosen people", who have been "called out of darkness" to proclaim God's praises (1 Peter 2:9).

In the Greek language the words Elektos and Lego refer to "Out off" and "to pick" to describe this journey.

Temple attendees are people who have been “picked” out of darkness to sing praises to God. Yet it is not quite that simple. After all, the apostle John notes that, “They were with us but not off us”.

Some may remember the sermon of last Sunday from Ex. 25:16 ff. The ark disappeared from the First Temple. Temple worship can never be what it is called to be with the absence of the “Ark” Paul, who also came from Legoland, notes in Romans 8:10 that the “Commandments”, the Word, resides within us. The Word and the Spirit symbolize the presence of the Ark within disciples.

Historically, the Ark was on the move. It trampled through the wilderness carried by a “royal priesthood”, as Peter reminds us.

It is true, Millbrook needs more “gold and silver”. We also need more “frankincense and myrrh” as a sweet aroma and an offering of praise. These gifts all come from the Lord, but they are carried by people.

Such people are the ones who have been exposed to the “Ark ” as it came into their lives. You and I are God's “Ark ”. Whether you walk through Macy's or Wal-Mart, whether you eat in an In/Out fast food place or at Flemings, share with people where you came from and where you are going.

Tell them that, because of Jesus, you have come from Legoland, out of darkness, and into His marvelous light. That light illumines the restaurant menu. It will ensure the right food is chosen so that you can “taste and see” and testify: How great is our God.

Living to Advance His Kingdom,

PJ

I would like to address the idea of change. The idea of change has been subtly bandied about for quite some time now, but the time has come. Millbrook cannot survive if we do not change the way we do things now. We are still trying to operate a church based on some past and glorious times that exist in people's minds. Those days are over. We are financially bleeding to death. We need to make some changes. We have to restructure our expenditures and we must think of ways to attract more people who can give to the church. We must look at every item in the budget and make adjustments. This includes jobs, salaries and mission giving. These are the two biggest usurpers of our income. We must change the way we worship to attract younger people. We must change the way we accept people of all colors, all incomes, and all appearances.

Think back on your own lives and imagine what your life would have been like if you hadn't made changes in your lives. What if you had decided you didn't want to marry that person because you would have had to change your routine? What if you had decided not to have children because they would have interrupted your lifestyle? What if you had not decided to come to church because you would rather sleep in on Sundays? These are just three changes you may have made. Aren't you glad that you made these changes? Now, they don't all work out for what you think is the best, but I bet if you really think about it, you did become stronger because of the experience. God knows best!

Consider all the great people of the Bible: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jonah, Jacob, Joseph, Peter, Paul, John and many others. They all had to drastically change their lives in order to do God's will. They didn't just jump in and change, but they did change after much kicking and screaming. Where would the world be today if these patriarchs had not changed? Of course, there is always the argument that in reality they had no choice in the matter because God had chosen them to further His Kingdom. We are in the same position now. We have been kicking and screaming for far too long, God wants us to change our hearts and attitudes so that He can further His Kingdom in this neighborhood.

The time is now. God has blessed us for many years, but His children in this neighborhood need Him, and we are the instruments of His work. We all need to get behind His work and let go of our strongholds and search for ways to be a lighthouse in this neighborhood. We need to love everybody that He sends us, we need to give of our money and time no matter how old we are and what our financial situation is, we need to give up our preconceived notions of what worship is, and most of all we need to look for any way that we can serve the church and therefore further God's work. I call upon all of you to stop just coming to church and sitting in the service and going home. To quote Bob Dylan, "The times they are a changin'."

Lee Ault, Clerk of Session

During the regular business meeting of Session on August 17, 2010 the following actions were taken:

approval of the dates of October 28 and 29 for Rev. Jerry Voss to attend a meeting of Knox Fellowship in Florida, if he so chooses. Knox Fellowship will pay for travel.

approval of the dates of September 29 through October 1 for Rev. Jerry Voss to attend a pastors retreat and Presbytery in Colorado.

approval of the dates of November 11 through November 19 for Rev. Jerry Voss to teach in Nepal for Knox Fellowship, if he so chooses. Knox Fellowship will pay for travel.

approval of the financial report for July, indicating revenue of \$14,902.57, expenditures of \$21,646.90 for a net loss of \$6,744.33.

approval of keys to the following people: Brian Stewart a maintenance key, Sharon Johnston a Westminster key, Marita Jones a Westminster key, Melissa Hyatt a Cavett Hall key, and Alex Castellanos a Cavett Hall key.

approval of facility use for ACT America on the third Sunday of each month for a fee of \$50. If they outgrow the Hall the use of the sanctuary for \$125 is approved.

approval of John Nidever to set up a one session self-defense class. More information will be forthcoming.

approval of denying the use of the campus as a polling place for the upcoming election.

AROUND THE CORNER...

With the combined efforts of the Evangelism and Mission Teams, we hope to have our Annual Yard sale on October 2nd. Please pray for dry weather.

On November 21 the next Worship Service "Blessing" is scheduled. In the past we have focused on a specific group for a particular occasion. As we move forward, we will celebrate an "Open Blessing" time. Whoever desires to have prayer will be invited to come forward.

Blessings to you!