

Words of Faith

THE NEWSLETTER OF FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Better English on 6th

An exciting new ministry of Faith--called Better English on Sixth--began on Monday evenings last September. Teaching English as a second language (ESL) is an increasingly popular service and outreach ministry for churches. Currently, over 200 churches in North America have ESL ministries. Such programs are attractive because they provide largely unreached internationals in the area with a largely unrecognized commodity every member of the congregation has: English conversation.

Faith Presbyterian has rallied to this new opportunity with remarkable energy. Initially, we enjoyed several weeks in which our church partners outnumbered the students, but we soon arrived at a rough balance and have even had several uncomfortable weeks when we were short-staffed. We have evolved from two levels of instruction to four and we're hoping to soon begin a fifth section focused on the study of the Bible.

Our students hail from Central or South America, Africa, Europe, and Asia—more than twenty countries. Their energy and love of learning creates an exciting atmosphere every Monday night. They are grateful for the help they receive and find our format to be uniquely helpful. One student said that he can hear other internationals mispronounce English at TCC, but at Better English on Sixth, he can converse with native English speakers. And Better English on Sixth is the only program in the area that meets in the evenings, allowing people who work during the day to attend. The evening meeting time regularly results in referrals from daytime ESL programs.

Ancillary ministries to Better English on Sixth have begun to emerge. There is a weekly ladies knitting meeting where women of Faith can provide friendship and additional conversational practice to students. Additionally, we hope to have soon an international Sunday School class appropriate for a variety of ESL levels so we can offer our Monday night students with an additional learning opportunity. And we had so much fun at our Christmas party with word games such as “Apples to Apple”, that we plan to offer a monthly Friday night game night as well. Other possibilities such as Saturday field trips and home-based Bible studies could also be natural developments from the ministry in the future.

In February we will welcome a Mission to North America associate who trains church groups in effective ESL teaching and ministry. Ruth Dagg is going to fly out from Connecticut and will spend Friday evening, February 12th and all day Saturday, giving anyone at Faith interested in the ministry an intensive 12 hour training. With a critical mass of well-trained and experienced ESL teachers at Faith, Better English on Sixth will be well-positioned to reach unreached internationals in the community for the long-term. We earnestly hope that the Lord blesses our conversations and grows fruit in the hearts of our new friends.

“An Interview with Pastor Rayburn”

Installment No. 3: Pastoral Duties & Preaching, Part 2

Dr. Mark Murphy

Dr. Mark Murphy recently sat down with Pastor Rayburn to talk about various aspects of his ministry, his life as a pastor, Faith Pres., etc. Herewith, an excerpt from that discussion, covering part two of Pastor Rayburn’s thoughts on pastoral duties and preaching.

Dr. Murphy: *On most Sundays, you preach two sermons (no small feat.) On average, how many hours does it take to prepare a Sunday AM and Sunday PM sermon?*

Pastor Rayburn: I can’t answer that question in any helpful way because everything depends on the text. Some of those early chapters of Leviticus, for example, which are full of arcane terms and odd, and at least to us, alien procedures, I had to work over at great length. I have to be confident that I understand the material before I can explain it to you and make persuasive application of the truth to faith and life. If I’m not clear in my own mind as to the meaning of a text, I certainly am not going to make its meaning clear or relevant to the congregation. On the other hand, other texts submit themselves to understanding more simply. So, much depends on the complications afforded by the text themselves, and then much depends on whether or not I find it relatively easy to fashion an argument from that text or find myself struggling to know what is best to say. I usually spend at least one work day on each sermon and sometimes a day and a half. I never begrudge the time spent! The Bible is a luminously wonderful book and I have found it endlessly interesting. It never fails to instruct, impress, and delight the attentive reader. Sermon preparation is for me what Alexander Whyte once described as a “compensation” of the ministry: morning, noon, and night the Bible is in my hands!

Dr. Murphy: *Are there any differences between AM and PM sermons (preparation, content, purpose, delivery, etc.?)*

Pastor Rayburn: I wouldn’t say that there are intentional differences between the two and I think in many cases there would be no significant difference. But I think almost anyone who listened to sermons

for years at Faith would admit that the evening service preaching sometimes lends itself to more of the lecture style than the sermonic style. I would never go through Leviticus chapter by chapter if all I had was a morning service. Frankly, nobody ever does. The most you might get from a PCA pastor who was preaching in the morning on Leviticus would be 3 or 4 sermons on the themes of the book. But if a preacher is to go through a complicated set of chapters such as we find in Leviticus, where so much explanation has to be offered in order to understand what it is we just read, much less to understand what it means for us today, there is going to be a little bit more of the lecture and perhaps a little bit less of the sermon. Still, it is my intention always to preach a sermon, not to deliver a lecture!

Dr. Murphy: *You tend not to get lost in the weeds, so to speak, by hanging out in one verse too long, but instead aim to present the “burden” of the passage (a key point that the author is making). Do you ever get hung up in deciding what is the key point? Or when multiple points are being made, which key point to emphasize in a particular sermon?*

Pastor Rayburn: The importance of the burden of the text to someone who preaches through books of the Bible is that if you descend to the details, you will never, ever get through the book. How many years was it, twelve or thirteen, that Lloyd-Jones was preaching through Romans on Friday nights at Westminster Chapel? And he didn’t finish! It would have been another 2 or 3 years before he had completed his sermons on Paul’s great letter. No congregation can stand 15 years of sermons on a single book of the Bible. It is unnatural, the Bible being the book that it is. Nor is such an approach faithful to the way the Bible reads. When the Apostle Paul wrote Romans and sent it off as a letter, he didn’t expect them to stop on every word as the letter was being read to the congregation, to dissect the meaning of each word and each phrase as the reader proceeded. It is a letter and communicates its message in paragraphs, as we communicate in paragraphs today, whether in speech or writing. I think it is more faithful to the Bible itself and to the nature of communication simply to attempt to

understand what the burden of a particular paragraph is and to reproduce that burden in the preaching, to make an impression with the paragraph's point, to seek to make the congregation feel the force of that truth in their hearts. So my approach is to examine the text, decipher the real interest of the text, and formulate my argument from there.

Dr. Murphy: *Do you ever struggle with finding the burden of the text?*

Pastor Rayburn: Certainly, though no one should underestimate the clarity of the Bible. Most of the time it is pretty obvious what the biblical writer is intending to say! Probably the more common problem for me is to decide which of several obvious and important truths has the strongest claim to be the burden of the text. In many cases there is no certain answer to that question.

One thing I should add in further answer to the question is that I have grown more convinced over time that it is a serious mistake for a preacher to identify himself with a particular exemplar, school, or paradigm of biblical preaching. Such alliances, whether to the "redemptive/historical," "Christocentric," "grace only," "classification," or some other school, and such loyalty to the Puritans, to Charles Spurgeon, to Martyn Lloyd-Jones, or to some contemporary preacher tend, I would think almost inevitably, to restrict the preacher's openness to the message of the text and at least sometimes blind him to the message that is obviously the burden of that passage of Holy Scripture. The question for the preacher should be: what is the Lord saying to us in this particular passage? He should never ask whether that message is of any great interest to the particular school of preaching to which he belongs or the particular preacher he is trying to emulate.

Dr. Murphy: *You are now returning to books of the Bible (Genesis for example) that you have preached through before. Do you find that after many years you see things in the original sermon series that you would now preach differently, or that you regret you said originally?*

Pastor Rayburn: As you say, I am now preaching through Genesis, which I preached through almost 20 years ago. I always look at my old sermons, but rarely are the new sermons very much like the old ones. The reason for that is that times have changed, I have changed, and scholarship has advanced. I am at this moment working on the conversation between Abraham and the Lord about the fate of Sodom, about whether he would punish the city if so many righteous people could be found in it. I am preaching an entirely different sermon on that text in some significant part because I think I understand the text better, its narrative purpose more clearly, than I did 20 years ago. That is in largest part because I have commentaries to read that hadn't been published 20 years ago and Genesis scholarship was not as sensitive to some things 20 years ago as it is today. In other cases, in most cases, I understand the text in pretty much the same way, the theme of the sermon may be much the same, but I still find reasons to preach a different sermon. I don't disagree with what I said 20 years ago, but I don't repeat myself either.

Dr. Murphy: *When my father began writing, he intentionally used big words (the more syllables the better!). Yet later, as a more mature writer, the opposite was true—he strove for simplicity and succinctness. Do you recognize any trends in your preaching over the years, and if so, have those changes been intentional?*

Pastor Rayburn: I return to my definition of preaching: "truth mediated through personality." How I preach in many respects is how I speak. How I speak is in most respects how I think. I don't really consciously adjust my vocabulary or my oratorical style to meet a particular end or purpose or to make my sermons more popular in their style. I do strive to be comprehensible and in the editing process often simplify my sentences and vocabulary to achieve a more natural effect. I wouldn't say that I make an attempt to be as simple as possible. It wouldn't be wrong for me to do that, but I haven't done that.

News Bits

All Hallows' Eve

Crystal Comis



Dave Bellarts, with Hannah

Faith's traditional Harvest Party has transmogrified into an All Hallows' Eve Party. Why?, you may ask. First, since most of us no longer harvest our own food, culturally we no longer celebrate the end-of-the-year ingathering of our sustenance the same way many of our forefathers did (with the glorious exception of the generous donations of pumpkins and corn stocks for the All Hallows' Eve party from the Nichols); secondly, and most importantly, this is the day we Christians celebrate that our Savior, Jesus Christ, has conquered all the wicked principalities and powers of this age, and that He is continuing to do so through His Holy Church (through all the saints of the ages).

All Hallows' Eve (All Saints' Eve) is the Christian festival that historically employed humor and ridicule to confront the power of death and Satan. It is the Holiday that is meant to remind us, in the middle of all our troubles, that Christ has won and we have a reason to laugh and celebrate. Hence the reason for wearing all the silly costumes. This is a victorious celebration, one that ought to joyously remind us that Christ is King over heaven and earth. This fundamental truth of our faith should also remind us to laugh at the times to come. Whatever the future holds for us personally or corporately,

Christ is still Lord over it all. Because He has conquered sin, death, and the grave, He is Lord over both life and death.

Finally, this is the kick off to the holy-day season, and should be thought of as the first of the holidays.

So now, onto our celebration: This year, our wonderful All Hallows' Eve Bash was an exciting time of contra dancing, laughing, feasting and enjoyable fellowship. This was all done in the festive and funny theme of "Bed Time Stories." It brought out an afternoon of Mother Goose, The Fiddlers Three, the Moon & the Sun, St. George the Dragon Slayer, Monkeys Jumping on the Bed, the Queen of Hearts with the Mad Hatter, Dwarfs, Cinderella and her Godmother, and a plethora of others creative characters. And if you saw our Male Costume Winner, Mr. Doug Lawty, as The Man in a Cage in the Arms of King Kong, you know what we're talking about when we mention silly costumes. He really went all out! Our Female Win for best Costume was a tie, going to Katelyn Simpson as the Moon, and Crystal Comis as the Queen of Hearts. And as a family theme, the Funches took the cake as the Characters from Redwall. Josiah Mellott won the prestigious Poster Contest; while the best pie went to Beth James. This year we honored two Pumpkin Carver winners, Sadie Hanks and Joseph Woodard.

Family Fun Luncheon

Lesley Pollack

Sunday Rayburn food:
Roast, rice, mushrooms & olives,
Sweet, sweet tea, of course.

Poetry, songs, Psalms,
Skits, manners, & instruments:
Beauty, joy & fun.

Happy fellowship,
Toast (Roast?) to Rob & Florence;
We are greatly blessed.

Madrigal Feast

Abraham Sullivan

“Wes hale again, most noble guests,” called the Jester (Ian DeGraaf) as he began the 2015 CHS Madrigal Feast. It was a night of festive support for Covenant High School, as DeSoto Hall “did ring with the noise of their revelry,” as one member of the Royal Court put it. Guests were welcomed by some Christmas piano arrangements as they entered and were seated, where they began to fellowship and eat salad. The tables were named after famous Renaissance and Reformation figures--Henry VIII, Machiavelli, and Knox.

Trumpet fanfare announced the arrival of the choir, which entered singing “Sing Ye Merrily, One and All.” Then the boar’s head was brought in, and thus commenced the feast--chicken, French bread, savory lentils, and more, all served by the freshmen. During this time, communications among the revelers began to travel through these first year servants. Some messages added to the cheerful mood, others were intended for parents, and still others were threats against the King (Abraham Sullivan). The esteemed parson--Robert S. Rayburn--was invited by messenger to become court chaplain, but refused when he found he was required to proclaim the King as Supreme Head of the Church in England. Somehow, he kept his head when he should have been losing it among all those about. Most of the guests, oblivious, laughed and chatted as they enjoyed the sweet strains of wandering minstrels on recorder, violin, and guitar.

A dessert auction followed in which each table gave donations in an envelope, and the table to give the highest amount of money got to choose their dessert first. It was a hard choice for the Lady Jane Grey table, the winners, for all of the delicious desserts made by parents looked almost too good to eat. As the guests enjoyed their desserts, the skit began. Filled with corny jokes, “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, Let Down Your Heir” was a take on the traditional story of Rapunzel. Told by the brothers Relatively Grimm and Moderately Grimm (Watchman Tamminga

and Andrew Ludwig), with the help of two jesters fighting each other to be in the limelight, the skit brought out quite a few laughs and even elicited audience involvement as the trees in the forest! After the skit, the evening concluded with three Renaissance songs--from Ireland, England, and Spain--sung by the choir.

As guests left, they perused Covenant High School students’ art, of several different genres, from watercolor to pencil to gyotaku. While the guests left the lighted church building for their cars, I’m sure many of them were thinking the words of Leonardo da Vinci: “A well-spent day brings happy sleep.”

Game Night

Kathryn Schuster

Faith Presbyterian’s 2nd Annual New Year’s Eve Game Zone brought about 40 people together for fellowship, fun, and eating. The games to choose from were diverse and sundry. Seattlyopoly provided a history lesson about the Seattle area while players tried to monopolize the board and build wealth. A royalty card game session revealed character qualities of players as the measly peasant, servant, dog, flea, and scum were trying to rise above their present position and even overthrow the kingdom (king, queen, prince, princess, duke, duchess); many royalty did thus fall making happy underlings. Wycliffe Scrabble stretched wordsters. Some played a relaxing game of UNO and/or had a tête-à-tête. The children also played board games, tag, and the like, and reveled in just being together. Children and adults alike watched the Star Wars movies all through the evening. When midnight came, we toasted and prayed into the New Year! Thanks to all who joined in the entertainment and helped with set up and clean up. We look forward to our 3rd annual Game Zone next year; please mark your calendars for this December 31st, 2016.

News Bits, continued

Weddings...always in season



Nate Shelden's marriage to Rachael Gary on December 12th was, in the words of Nate's mother, "the loveliest, most joyous occasion!" Pastor Rayburn officiated at Resurrection Church, which was a winter

wonderland of lights, birch trees, and greenery. Many family photos were on display, including those framed in a "family tree" beside the entrance to the sanctuary. The bride and groom were an outstandingly good-looking couple. Beautiful bridesmaids in long, forest-green dresses included Nate's sisters Rosemary Lee and Emily Shelden, and flower Girls Kate and Claire Mellott, looking angelic in white, shone nearly as brightly as the bride and her groom. Bundt cakes, life-sized Narnia books, sisterly songs of love and a hoarsely sung (by the groom) song of devotion highlighted the reception, which was crowned by the sparklered sending off--Nate driving the new Sheldens away in the CHS school bus!

The newlyweds honeymooned in Quebec; highlights included ice skating, dog sledding, throwing snowballs, lots of good French food, a helicopter ride, and a symphony concert which was half Disney tunes and half Star Wars.

The Sheldens live in Tacoma, where Nate teaches at Covenant High School and builds custom furniture, and Rachael works at the University of Puget Sound, as a Learning Support Coordinator. They plan to worship at Faith and also visit Resurrection Church in Tacoma.

Meghan Johnston and Nikilas Cuddeback were married on January 2nd at Faith Presbyterian Church after being engaged for over two years! It was a beautiful wedding full of Faith, family, and friends. In particular we commend Nik and Meghan for their witness to their unbelieving relatives, and thank them for the marvelous sight created by the releasing of 12 doves from the front steps of the church.

In what only can be described as the most selfless act of the decade, Nik took Meghan to Disney Land. The Cuddebacks live in Kirkland, where Nik is an RN at a local hospital and Meghan is completing her clinical rotations for nursing school at Northwest University.



Michaela Welch married John Rutherford on Saturday, January 16 at Faith. It was a simple wedding, with a reception following in DeSoto Hall. Hand-crafted decorations, including plenty of roses, and designed by the bride, generated admiring

comments from many. The couple honeymooned in Hawaii. The Rutherfords will reside in Auburn, very close to the bride's parents. John is working at a label-printing shop, and Michaela will be finishing her graphic-design degree at Highline Community College. They plan to worship at John's home church in Kent.

Wonder works

Bonnie Payne

Stop the day of evil growing
Stop the night of never knowing
Help all those the truth believing
Who the light of life receiving
Send your Spirit forth with power

Their faith for sure salvation turning
For a better country yearning
Spread the light and keep it glowing
Thus your Kingdom ever growing
Send your Spirit forth with power

None can stay your hand its working
E'en where darkest sin is lurking
Yea, the Kingdom is advancing
Despair is turned to joy and dancing
Send your Spirit forth with power

Joy unbounded to be numbered
'mongst the saved no more encumbered
By the sin that gripped me soundly
In deepest gloom the Savior found me
Yea, it was my finest hour

In Jesus Christ Yourself revealing
On my inmost being stealing
Highest thoughts of adoration
Sings my spirit adulation
Saved by grace!

Now secure in Him I rest me
Looking back see all He blest me
All for him my heart now beating
Till I hear "Well done" the greeting
Home at last!

Beef Roast

Florence Rayburn

1 (5, 6, or 7lb) sirloin tip or rump roast
Minced garlic
Lemon pepper

Place roast in roasting pan on a rack. Cut slits against the grain of the meat, all over the roast, and fill with minced garlic. Sprinkle all over generously with lemon pepper. Put 1/2 inch water in bottom of pan or up to bottom of roast; place in oven preheated to 350 degrees. After 5-10 minutes, turn oven down to 250 or 255 degrees, depending on the size of the roast. Remove after 4.5 to 5 hours, or turn heat up the last half hour if a browner interior is desired. Roast slices will brown up on platter.

Sauteed Mushrooms

Florence Rayburn

Fresh white mushrooms, as many as you like
Small amount of garlic butter
Garlic salt to taste
Worcestershire sauce to taste

Wash mushrooms by leaving them in their plastic bag. Add water and teaspoon of salt as an abrasive. Rub them through bag. Drain water and rinse with fresh water. Cut larger mushrooms in half or quarters as desired. Place in pan in garlic butter; turn heat to medium-high. Add garlic salt and Worcestershire sauce to taste. Cook and stir to desired color and texture.

Beef Gravy

Florence Rayburn

Begin with juices left from cooking roast. Add cold water to complete 4.5 cups broth. Skim off excess fat and add 3 chicken bouillon cubes and 1 teaspoon beef bouillon. Bring broth to a boil and add 1.5 cups milk and 12 teaspoons flour, stirring vigorously. When thickened, turn heat down and begin tasting. Add 1 capful Kitchen Bouquet, garlic salt and pepper to taste. Serve over rice or mashed potatoes. For 10-16 people. Makes 6 cups of gravy.

Calendar

Jan 27 – FPC Annual Meeting
Jan 28-29 – Presbytery of the Pacific Northwest Meeting
Feb 4 – Baby Shower for Jennie & Elizabeth McClelland
Feb 10-Mar 27 – Ash Wednesday, Lent Begins
Feb 12-13 – Better English on Sixth Partner Training
Feb 28 – Selections from Elijah in the Evening Service
Mar 3-5 – Couples’ Retreat
Mar 17 – Covenant High School Drama Production, “Tartuffe”
Mar 20 – Palm Sunday
Mar 25 – Good Friday Service, Men’s Night of Prayer
Mar 27 – Easter Sunday
Apr 24 – “Elijah”
May 13 – Covenant High School Spring Concert & Art Show
May 27 – Covenant High School Commencement
Jun 18-25 – Sacred Road Youth Group Mission Trip
Jun 20-24 – General Assembly
Jul 9 - 16 – YXL Youth Leadership Camp

For more details about these events, please visit
<http://www.faithtacoma.org/events>

Member Changes

Additions

Stephen & Marian Bush, reaffirmation, 11/1
Austin Larson, child profession, 11/8
Jed Shelden, child profession, 11/22

Baptisms

Elijah Wilson, child, 11/29
Abigail Rayburn, child, 12/27
Elizabeth McClelland, child, 1/17