

Independent Evangelist

LE it's happening



Follow the Leader

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The breezes taste

Of apple peel.

The air is full

Of smells to feel-

Ripe fruit, old footballs,

Burning brush,

New books, erasers,

Chalk, and such.

The bee, his hive,

Well-honeyed hum,

And Mother cuts

Chrysanthemums.

Like plates washed clean

With suds, the days

Are polished with

A morning haze.

- September, John Updike



Welcome to the September newsletter. The summer days are drawing to a close but that's not too bad. September still has a lot of warm days to enjoy as the kids go back to school and families get back to church.

Happily we bask in this warm September sun,

Which illuminates all creatures...

- Henry David Thoreau

We Give Up Way Too Much

Are you willing to give up your religion? Or at the very least, are you willing to be told where, when and how to worship?

We let this world chip away at our faith all the time and it's sad. I've been outraged every time the ACLU clogs up the legal system with another attack on Christianity but in reality we are just giving up.

I thought these were just concerns of modern times but it's an ongoing concern. There's a movie of a true story that illustrates the issue very well called, Sheffey. Robert Sheffey was an evangelist in Appalachia in the 1800's (he died in 1902).

Friends and neighbors called him, Brother Bob. Brother Bob traveled throughout those mountains spreading the word of God and helping people any way he physically could. The most common way back then was revival meetings which

were meant to give people a way to give themselves to Christ.

He set up a camp that held yearly gatherings where hundreds of people would show up and spend a week learning the word of God. Near the end of his life, a vandal burned the camp. At the end of the movie, the vandal confronted him and was forgiven. The speech Brother Bob gave was so relevant to today's attacks on Christianity that I have to pass it on.

“God never forces his will on men. He calls them unto himself but if they will not follow him then they have to go their own way. The campground is gone but not because you burned it but because God's people didn't want it and God let them have their own way.”

“Every time we give up a part of our faith to fit in to the ways of the world, we lose it forever. We lose a precious part of God's promise and sacrifices to the world and the world will never give it back. **And some day when the world tells us we can no longer have our religion except where they say and God is driven from our schools and our government and our homes, then God's people can look back and know that our religion was not taken from us, it was given up, handed over bit by bit until there was nothing left.**”

That last line broke my heart because it's true and it doesn't have to be. We, as a society, are giving up our religion bit by bit until there will be nothing left. That “Someday” is here and it's time to follow God because to go our own way is to be without God and we all know that is the true definition of Hell.

Political correctness has run amuck and extreme liberal ideals have weakened us. People worry so much about “fitting in” that they lose sight of just who they are trying to “fit in” with and give up religion; not with a fight but with a whimper.

God is my salvation and the only one with whom I want to “fit in”. Life is short enough as it is so why would I hand over my religion and walk away especially when the promise of a life forever with God is there for the taking?

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

matthew 16:26

For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

Psalms 149:4

oddly related stories

After I wrote page one, I heard the **first oddly related** story on Channel 5 News that caught my attention. It seems there's a Catholic high school in Wisconsin where the priest in charge told the parents that they have to start leading by example. They have to attend at least 7 out of 10 Sunday's in church.

The parents are fighting it because of the way the priest told them. He apparently reminded them that the school subsidizes tuitions for certain cases and he told those families they had to go to church or they wouldn't subsidize anymore; blackmail of sorts.

The school and the affiliated church is irrelevant because I am not a reporter and our media rarely gets facts right but the idea that such a story would make the news and such a fuss would be made about going to church was disturbing to me.

The news people spouted some "facts" that 40% of Catholics think that the Church is out of touch with the world around them and Mass is boring. Boring! Think of that.

They think that the church simply teaches rituals that kids don't understand. Of course, Channel 5 is entitled to say what they want and the story meandered away from the main topic; **making parents go to church** 7 out of 10 times, or simply **70% of their Sunday's**. What a hardship that would be!

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.
Proverbs 22:6

Read the quote, highlighted in blue on page one by Robert Sheffey. "**God's people can look back and know that our religion was not taken from us, it was given up, handed over bit by bit until there was nothing left.**" Keep in mind that freedom of religion was paid at an extremely high cost; the blood of Jesus and in a smaller way, the blood of those that died in battles to protect our freedom.

Also, think back to April 29, 1607 when Reverend Robert Hunt dedicated America to our Lord Jesus Christ for His glory and purpose; "**From these very shores the Gospel shall go forth to not only this New World, but the Entire world**". That covenant was reiterated by our founding fathers when we gained our independence but we, as a Christian nation keep dropping the ball.

All of our ancestors would be amazed at how easily a single generation has turned their backs on that covenant with God, the church, their faith and God Himself all to "fit in" with today's society. Robert Sheffey said it right; we are giving our faith away without any concern just to fit in with the world.

Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.
Lamentations 3:40

After the news on channel 5, I looked at the paper at the **next oddly related article**; The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America going on about allowing gay ministers. Apparently, it's too late; they are already here even though the Bible says "No" to gays. I'm not making that one up. "**Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it [is] abomination.** Leviticus 18:22". I found seven other biblical references. There may be more but I'm no expert. Let's just say it's another way of "**fitting in**"!

Also in the paper, **another oddly related story**; people in Cologne, Germany are fighting the builders of a mosque; not because they dislike the Muslims but because they want the architecture to match that of the surrounding medieval churches. In other words, they want *them* to "fit in"

Now it may seem like I'm meandering but there's a point to be made here:

- **2000 years ago**, Christ was brutally killed so we would be saved.
- **400 years ago**, a covenant was made with God to spread His word on this continent and throughout the world.
- **A little over 200 years ago**, our founding fathers renewed that covenant.
- **100 years ago**, an evangelist in Appalachia said we would be told when, where and how to show our faith and the freedom of religion would be given away to "fit in". He was right!
- **Today**, parents have to be forced to attend church to set an example for their children.

Why bother to force parents to go to church. We, as a society can no longer keep a covenant with God because Sunday morning is our day of rest. The church is out of touch with reality after all; we have gay ministers. Let's "fit in" with the world. Soon, we will be begging Islam to make mosques that "fit in" with the landscape of downtown Any Town, U.S.A and not even notice we are no longer a Christian Nation.

Oh, I'm sorry, that **oddly related story** has already been established by Barrack Obama on page two of the Trib when he was quoted saying, "We are no longer a Christian nation". ***I guess he's the final authority on that!***

That little Catholic school in Wisconsin better learn to "Fit in". I don't want to sound like a doomsayer but when a church has to blackmail parents to set an example for their children, the rest of the news of the day hardly matters. Let's just fit in, shall we? We should all become gay ministers and attend the nearest mosque so we "Fit In". I'm all for fitting in but I just want to ask; **With Whom?**

He that walketh with wise [men] shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.
Proverbs 13:20

The strongest principle of growth lies in human choice.
George Eliot
English novelist (1819 - 1880)



Behind the Scenes

In the July issue, I wrote about Pete Leo and the contemporary services at Good Shepherd Church. He attributed much of the success of the program to Paul Wood, whose official title in the church is Associate Director of Contemporary Music and Worship.

So who is Paul Wood? Aside from being an outwardly happy and sociable member of the staff, he is a fountain of talent and very knowledgeable of Christian music. I asked how he got where he is and he filled me in with the evolution of contemporary music at Good Shepherd and his growth as a Christian.

First of all, he seems so relaxed playing piano and guitar, I had to ask if he was born with a guitar in his hand.

"Piano was my first instrument. Started when I was about 4 or so. ...Guitar was my first love. I picked it up pretty fast in 5th grade. I was about 10 and was already playing the violin and the drums in school. Drums was the first to go. Mom had a hard time dealing with the noise!"



Paul Wood

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

James 1:17

He had quite a varied and eclectic musical resume by the time he arrived at Good Shepherd. Here are some of the highlights:

- "Road bands started in 1970 with "SING-OUT" or "UP WITH PEOPLE" My parents actually had to pay to get me in that group.
- "The Edwardians" was a show band, broke off the Main group from Sing-Out.
- A couple of original-type, and top 40 rock bands played local Chicago and Suburban rock clubs until I got hooked up with "Mariah", and the "The New Seekers".
- In 1980, "Scramble" became the center band for a handful of 60's revival bands including "The Drifters" with original Charlie Thomas, "The Coasters" with the original Charlie Brown, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, and finally the Cryan' Shames with Originals Jim "JC Hooke" Pilster, and Singer Tom "Toad" Doody. Since then we've pretty much just gone the course with the Shames.
- We still play a bunch of summertime fests, and a few corporate functions. We are on the bill with Gary Puckett at "Star Plaza" in Merrillville, IN. on October 6th."

He certainly had the tools and stage presence to be a part of anything related to music which naturally made me think how most guys would easily become jaded and self-centered and only think of material gains. Granted, the Cryan' Shames

keeps him busy but serving the Lord comes first with Paul. He tells of his joining Good Shepherd in a humble way.

"I started here at Good Shepherd in the early 90's. My wonderful and talented wife Mary found this place. I was still on some other planet and had walked away from God for too long. A really cool and talented young woman named Dori Erwin-Collins had been hired here to start the new "contemporary" worship program, and just about fell out of her chair when I asked her if she could use a professional player to help her band. After that I started bringing in my speakers, and microphones, and cords, amps, etc...and we built up a contemporary sound"

I wish I had been around then because I am fascinated with how well people take to such change. There is the change of direction in a man's life as well as the change in the way church members worship.

As good as he was at that point, musically, God revealed a plan for Paul.

*"At that point I was still a volunteer. In the late 90's Mike Ferguson was hired to be the Director, and I soon made a new friend!. In 98 or 99 I came on staff as Mike's assistant. Then in summer of 2003, Mike took a calling to another church, and all of a sudden I was left with the Director's position. Pretty cool! **What an amazing God we have! He took a used up Rock and Roll junkie like me and turned me into a real live Worship Director!** One of the hardest things I've done in my life! I put more hours into this than I did anywhere in my whole life".*

Part of that work involves auditioning additional musicians and singers for Eighth Day. Initially, that came easy; *"I dragged a couple of my good friends from the rock and roll business along with me and we upgraded the band"*.

I've seen rehearsals and watched Paul objectively during services and he is a natural leader. All of the musicians and singers work very hard and it shows, but what shows more is that they love what they do.

One thing I have to say is that I do see a lot of "finger pointing" of sorts among all of them. They point the finger of blame at everyone else for their success. When I interviewed Pete Leo, he pointed to Paul as one of the reasons for his success and Paul had this to say; *"Pete Leo came on board, upgrade to the Worship Department. He really has done some amazing things. **God is surely hard at work at Good Shepherd!!!"***

With all their success they remain humble which is why the church has a good music program. They know the meaning of teamwork and God is first in their hearts.

What an amazing God we have! He took a used up Rock and Roll junkie like me and turned me into a real live Worship Director! -Paul wood-

The Brutal Truth about Islam

By Dale Hurd
CBN News
August 25, 2007

CBNNews.com - Ever since 9/11, Americans have been bombarded with the message that Islam is a religion of peace. The "Islam is Peace" campaign began in earnest the day after 9/11, when President Bush visited a mosque in Washington, D.C.



"The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam," President Bush said. "That's not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace."

The leading Muslim advocacy group, the Council of American Islamic Relations, or CAIR, has continued to spread the "Islam is peace" message through the media, even though CAIR is now an un-indicted co-conspirator in a terrorism case.

A CAIR commercial says "Islam is not about violence. It's about peace and justice."

Some have even suggested that Christianity is somehow as dangerous or more dangerous than radical Islam. Rosie O'Donnell said as much on the program *The View* last year. Co-host Elisabeth Hasselbeck said "...And if you take radical Islam and what's going on there...". O'Donnell interrupted: "Just one second. Radical Christianity is just as threatening as radical Islam in a country like America."

But is it? A new book says there's no comparison. *Religion of Peace: Why Christianity is and Islam Isn't* by Robert Spencer, says that while the Bible teaches Christians to love their enemies, the Koran teaches Muslims to be "ruthless" with un-believers.

Consider the reaction of some British Muslims in London last year after a Danish cartoonist drew Mohammed with a bomb in his turban. "Nuke, nuke Denmark. We want Danish blood. We want Danish blood. We want Danish blood," Muslim protesters shouted.

It has been said that while most of the world's Muslims may not be terrorists, most of the world's terrorists are Muslims. But many on the left still fear Christianity more than Islam.

Spencer says it's time for West to defend Christianity, and tell the truth about Islam.

All "truths" we believe depend greatly on our character and point of view. There is no way I can care what Rosie O'Donnell and those on the TV show, *The View* have to say about religion but the story told me just how twisted the idea of political correctness has become.

It seems we have those who adapt their purposes to reality and those who seek to mold reality in the light of their purposes. I say trust the Lord and the rest comes easy.

Let's see what else is going on.

S.K. Hostages Reportedly in Good Health

CBN News
August 24, 2007



CBNNews.com - A doctor in touch with the group holding the South Korean missionaries says he was told they have "no medical problems."

He also said the Taliban moves the young aid workers every few hours to foil any rescue attempts. So far, the Taliban have killed two hostages and released two others. The two who were released say adjusting to life back home in South Korea has been difficult.

"You may think of us as happy now that we are with our families again," Kim Jee-Na, one of the two women released, said. "But since returning home, it's been impossible for me to sleep even one night peacefully, worrying about the hostages that were left behind."

The remaining missionaries have been captive for six weeks now.

Those that were released are suffering "Survivors Guilt"; a common feeling where they ask themselves, "Why was I spared and not my buddy"? It's common among combat vets but survivors of any unusual situation face it but few recognize it. They need our prayers.

Personally, I think the Taliban messed up and just don't know how to get out of the situation. The story makes no sense. I guess it all boils down to how much money for the cause they can get out of any situation. Whatever their reasons are, it's gone on long enough. They were just missionaries doing God's work after all.

S.K. Husband Pleads for Wife on YouTube

Christian World News
August 12, 2007
YouTube: [To My Darling Wife in Afghanistan](#)



CWN.com - Christians around the world have watched and prayed as the hostage crisis in Afghanistan stretches on.

For the families members of the hostages, the wait is even more difficult as each day passes with with no resolution. This week, one Korean husband -- desperate to communicate with his hostage wife -- posted a video letter on YouTube.

My times [are] in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

Psalms 31:15



Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou [art] with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

Old Friends

There was a song called Old Friends, written by Paul Simon. It was a haunting melody and although the words were more suited to old people in the inner city, the images fit the feeling of loneliness often associated with old age.

The song tells of two old friends that sit on a park bench like bookends. They sit there in all weather pondering the sights and sounds of old age. Simon and Garfunkle end the song imagining themselves ending up that way and singing the words, "How terribly strange to be seventy". It doesn't have to be as bleak as that song makes it seem.

Many of you reading this are young and rarely are around the elderly. Many of you are 55 and older and considering retiring, perhaps to one of the many communities for 55 and older. Either way, being around "old folks" may be new and somewhat odd.

Then there are old guys like me who have always been around "old folks" since I was a kid; I'm used to it. I even worked in geriatrics at a large hospital at one time. Being around old people can be fun when you see it from a certain point of view. Here's what I mean.

When my father was still alive, he was mowing the lawn one day and when he was finished he put the mower by the curb for anyone who wanted it. He was really done cutting grass. Within a very short time my parents had moved from their home in Lawton, Michigan and moved to a place called Miller Court, in Paw Paw, which was for 55 and older.

Miller Court was an apartment complex on a river and it offered a lot of amenities that appealed to "old Folks". Those amenities meant nothing to my mother at first but in time she adjusted to the place as well, if not better than my father. One amenity not listed in the brochure was the friendships that would develop.

My father still went fishing with his old buddy in Lawton; that was only a 10 minute drive after all. However, he found an old diner he eventually made part of his daily routine. Another "regular" at the diner was a former baseball player who had been in the Negro League and was also on the Chicago White Sox. They hit it off like they had known each other all their lives.

He also liked to walk everywhere as much as possible and in time everyone in town knew him; even high school kids would stop and talk with him on his favorite park bench.

I was lucky enough to walk around with him. The funniest thing was to see how the "old guy" could spot wild berries growing along the river. On one walk he three different types of berries though they were gone by the time we got back home. Not bad for an old blue collar worker from the city.

He still drove during those years but keeping a car running could be a problem. However, the local service station was run by an "old guy" just like him and they became good friends. Good friends look out for each other and they did just that while they sat on the bench in front of the store talking about things that mattered; the Depression and WWII and growing up broke and somehow having a good life in their waning years.

The glory of young men [is] their strength: and the beauty of old men [is] the gray head.
Proverbs 20:29

My mother hadn't walked well for years and was afraid she would never get out, being cooped up in an apartment. The thing she didn't count on was the fact that every one in that building knew each other and to her surprise and delight the ladies never let her just sit around.

She went on more trips with her friends than she ever would have living in Lawton. Miller Court had an arrangement with a tour bus company that had busses that accommodated handicapped people so they kept her very active.

I met her friends as well. The lady in the next apartment was a real fireball. When she turned eighty, she bought her first computer, mostly for the internet and games. She would send me emails often with all the "news" that was at all important and she always asked me if I was behaving myself. Of course I told her I wasn't and let her know all the details.

Another of her friends was the daughter of the man who invented the Browning automatic rifle, or BAR as the military called it. I used to love to hear her stories of her family as much as she liked having someone new to tell them to.

She had a friend in another part of the building that grew up in the Pullman homes in Chicago. Her father worked for the company that made the famous Pullman train cars. However, it was her point of view of life in the Pullman neighborhood that fascinated me.

Every one of their friends knew me because whenever my wife and I would go to visit my parents, we couldn't just visit them. It was never a trip to Michigan to see the "old folks"; it was a trip to Miller Court and all that entailed; visiting "old Friends" and getting lessons on living life fully instead of just growing old.

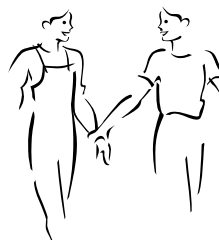
I know there were bad times there. As they got older there would be falls to contend with or illnesses and eventually, they all passed on but they will never be forgotten. They opened up to anyone who would listen and anyone would did listen with an open mind would be truly amazed at how much they had to give.

They were an inspiration to me with their insights and backgrounds and I learned to savor my time here. Forget having it be "terribly strange to seventy". Whether or not I live that long doesn't matter; those "old folks" were truly my "Old Friends".

We "Baby Boomers" are now the "Miller Court" type of people. Learn to open up to anyone who will listen. You may think you have nothing to pass on but when you think of the history we lived through those that listen will be amazed and we just might make our own "Old Friends" along the way.

There is no cure for birth and death, save to enjoy the interval.

*George Santayana,
US (Spanish-born) philosopher (1863 - 1952)*



The unexamined life is not worth living.
*Socrates,
Greek philosopher in Athens (469 BC - 399 BC)*

Book Corner

The Good Shepherd librarian, Helen keeps coming up with books that are never what they seem. Two such examples are **More Than a Hobby** and **Quiet Strength**.

More Than a Hobby on the surface seems like it belongs in the business section of a library. It's about David Green, the low-key, likeable entrepreneur who created the Hobby Lobby stores.

David was from a small Oklahoma town and he never possessed the heritage or education to oversee a 1.3 billion dollar a year business, which he started from a 600 dollar loan, but he did. He honed his skills in a very small town drug store and through his faith in the Lord and not in a business school.

David Green was willing to go against the tide, allowing his faith and Christian values to play a huge part of his business. **More Than a Hobby** describes how this wildly successful business was built not on business school theory, but on the founder's own experience as a grassroots store manager. It's truly a book not for the business shelves of a library.

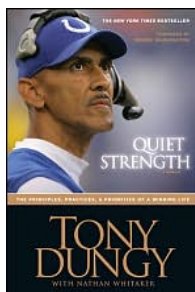
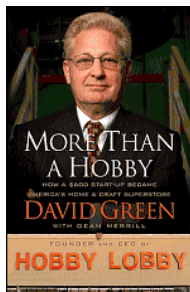
Quiet Strength is a biography about Tony Dungy but it neither belongs in the biography section or the sport section of a library. Sure, he led the Colts to victory in the Super Bowl and it is a biography but it's more of a confession of his faith as he reminds readers often of how God has a hand in your life.

With this book, I opted for the audio version. It is narrated by Tony and it's fun to hear emotion in his voice as he reveals the secrets of his success.

This is a fascinating memoir. Tony Dungy made history to become the first African-American coach to win the big game and watching his quiet demeanor on the sidelines fans wonder how he did it. After all, he is the opposite of traditional fiery coaches like Mike Ditka.

Tony tells all the secrets of his success; principles, practices and priorities that have kept him on track despite overwhelming personal and professional obstacles including firings, stereotypes, and the tragic loss of a child.

In the face of so much adversity, Tony has not only survived but risen to the very top of his profession in a way that's won the respect of fans, players, and even his competitors. His thoughts on leading, succeeding, and attaining true significance will inspire you to take a long, hard look at the things that really matter in your own life.



Back to School

Oh, how I hated those words as a child! Still, I'm glad I went through it all when I did. I was looking at the "Stuff!" kids have to have now. I don't know where to begin so I'll start with the most gregarious sight; the backpack.

When I was in Nam, we had packs that averaged around 70 pounds and it made us walk bent over and someone coined the phrase, "humpin' in the boonies" from the way we looked.

Kids today start "humpin' in the boonies" way too soon. I found this picture from an internet ad. The little girl must be only in first grade or so. I feel sorry for her to have to wear a pack, but put a cartoon character or a rock star on the back and it becomes a status symbol. She's happy!



Yes, she's happy until she has to fill it up. I know from the items I see on the shelves in the stores, some things haven't changed since I was in school. They still start with the basics; notebook and paper, pens and pencils and all that good stuff. Throw in a calculator, pencil cases, art supplies and other odds and ends and, oops, there's no room for books. Let's not forget the cell phone and ipod!

Suddenly, that cute little pack with the cartoon character weighs as much as the little girl. She has to get bigger herself because she will have to be able to handle a bigger pack as she gets older to carry library books and personal gadgets someone my age can't begin to imagine.

I've seen the backpacks high school kids carry and I'm not sure I want to know what's in them. I do know that this old man, a combat vet who carried a 70 pound pack, can't carry one of them, nor would I care to!

I thought the electronic age was supposed to make life easier. If school wasn't the place where kids learn social skills as well as fashion sense, I'd say do the classes via email.

All I can say is that I really will pray for them to have strong backs as well as strong minds. Good Luck!

Back to School
by Vicki Rogers

*It's that special time of year,
When moms and dads stand up and cheer.
They're spending money by the scores,
In malls and in department stores.
Buying paper, pencils, and pens,
And bookbags to stuff everything in.
New pants, new shirts and new underwear,
Nikes or Jordans they don't really care.
Cause the kids are going back to school.
Sometimes life can be really cool.*

The lighter Side

Dear God:

So far today, I've done all right. I haven't lost my temper, haven't been grumpy, nasty, selfish or overindulgent.

I'm glad of that, but in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed and from there on I'm going to need a lot more help.

Thanking you in advance. Amen.



A little boy opened the big and old family Bible with fascination, and looked at the old pages as he turned them. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible, and he picked it up and looked at it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed between the pages. 'Momma, look what I found,' the boy called out. 'What have you got there, dear?' his mother asked. With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered: 'I think it's Adam's suit!'

"Worry looks around, sorry looks back, Faith looks up."

September means-

School,

Effort, and

Play.

Trying your best

Each hour of the day,

Making new friends,

Being good as you can

Exciting discoveries,

Reading books with a friend.

- Boni Fulgham

