



Seventh Notes

SEVENTH & JAMES BAPTIST CHURCH

September 2009

BETWIXT & BETWEEN

I am writing this on the fourteenth anniversary of my service as Pastor of Seventh & James. I came at a time when I personally was recovering and in a healing process. I was smarting from the fundamentalist take-over of Southern Seminary, a tragedy from which I will never fully recover. It was a very painful experience for Pat and me and for some of you. I had just been through surgery to remove a kidney. The good people of Seventh had supported me with prayer and thoughtful notes. A bit weak in spirit and body I arrived in Waco in the heat of summer. The church was also in a process of healing from things that you had been through as a family. We have recovered and healed together.

I do not think there was a better church or a better place for me to land in my condition than Seventh & James Baptist Church and I have not changed my mind about that. We've had some good times and we've had some difficult times. We've cried together and we've laughed together. We've had disappointments and accomplishments but I think we have maintained the tradition of Seventh & James. We have continued to be a compassionate community that cares for one another and cares for others. Certainly perhaps our greatest moments have been our shelter moments during the hurricanes. We have continued to be a church that prophetically proclaims the mercy and the good news of Christ and stands for justice, often holding positions that were unpopular in the broader community. In recent years our Christian conscience has been disturbed by events in the Baptist world as well as those on the national and international scene. Transitions at Baylor affected the lives of our people and thus the whole community. Many of our people were hurt. We had people who did not get tenure. We had people who were forced to leave town, lose their jobs. It had a definite effect on our congregation and our ministry.

I have, I'm sure, not always pleased all of you. Seventh is a difficult church to pastor. It's very hard to have a leadership position where everyone is a leader. We often joke about the fact that our greatest strength and our greatest weakness is the fact that we are all chiefs and no Indians. My leadership style and strong commitment to our tradition and to process has troubled some. I, too, have known frustration when the hard work of councils has been questioned or ignored. Every proposal or document is subject to debate and rewrite. This is the Baptist way but can be overdone and make progress painful. Nonetheless most of us have persevered with mutual love and respect.

My paradigm for being a pastor is that of an orchestra conductor, I try to be sure that all the different sections are in harmony and playing the same composition. Section leaders, staff and laity, advocate for particular areas but I must see the whole picture. Together we make beautiful music but that sometimes means a toning-down in a given area for the good of the whole.

We are beginning our fifteenth year together. The calendar says New Year's Day begins the year but the truth of the matter is, at least in American culture, the start of school is the beginning of the year. Many of you have been away most or all of the summer and now the flock is coming back, people are gathering children are going to school, faculty are going to school, new people are in town, new people are getting started. It is a time of beginning and that's important for us. There is still a lot of work for us to do. There are new students and faculty coming to Baylor, TSTC and MCC. We have ministries. Marvelous opportunities for adults, youth and children here. Meaningful worship is complemented by quality education and fellowship. People can find grace in this place that is more elusive in other places.

There are people in Waco who have given up on church. There are a lot of people who haven't turned away from Christ but have turned away from institutional religion. There are people who have given up on church who could find in this congregation a place in a Christian community. We have a responsibility and an opportunity to reach them. It is important for us to do whatever outreach we do and to reach out to people not just to show off but in order to make a difference in their lives. There are people who do not know the grace of Jesus Christ. There are people out there – to use traditional terminology – who are unsaved because they have never realized God's love and God's salvation through Christ for them. There are people out there who do not realize that God is interested in justice in all things, in all matters, in all places. I hope that we will continue as we struggle together, learn from one another, to encourage one another, to be unified by the common goal to be true to the church as we understand it. The Church is not an end in itself, it's a means to an end and I think we need to keep reminding ourselves that the purpose of the Church is always to point beyond itself to Jesus Christ. Seventh & James is not an end in itself but a means to bringing people to Christ.

I thank you for allowing me to continue for awhile to be a part of this work. I thank you for being patient with me and I apologize when I have not always been patient with you. Let me assure you that you will never have a pastor who believes in what he or she thinks the ideal of Seventh & James is, more than I do. You'll never have a pastor who loves this congregation more than I do. Let's move on and get the work done that lies before us.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

WOMEN'S BIBLE CLASS

This intergenerational, Scripture-focused class is led by Rosalie Beck. This fall the class will study the work of the Holy Spirit.

INNER WISDOM

Inner Wisdom is a contemplative approach to biblical study facilitated by Blake Burlison and Jim Kennedy. This inter-generational class practices prayer, meditation, chanting, and imaginative exercises which amplify sacred scripture. Blake teaches world religions and Jim teaches Old Testament at Baylor University.

SIMS' CLASS

This class takes a group approach to explore some of the more provocative issues of today. This fall the class will study myth and will use Karen Armstrong's "A Short History of Myth" as a starting point.

YOUNG FAMILIES CLASS

This class is designed for creating fellowship among young families and is intended for young couples and families with children. The class focuses on the application of theology in the everyday lives of young families.

W.D. BOWEN CLASS

This Bible study is taught by Lai Ling Ngan. The Bowen class is made up of a diverse group of couples and singles, representing a wide range of ages, and holding a healthy variety of theological perspectives. Lai Ling teaches Old Testament Scriptures at Truett Seminary.

ROUNDTABLE CLASS

This conversation-oriented class rotates the responsibility for leading class discussion among the members as they choose various topics to study.

THE WAMMACK & MEN'S CLASS

This Bible study class is led by David Pennington using Smyth & Helwys literature which follows the Lectionary.

W. LOWREY COOPER CLASS

This class will meet with the Inner Wisdom Class until Sunday, October 11.

SOJOURNERS AND SEEKERS CLASS

Designed to provide community for persons of all ages and walks of life who are interested in basic Bible study, this discussion-oriented class will be using literature from Smyth & Helwys which follows the Lectionary. This class is taught by Tom Newsom.

THE COLLEGE CLASS

Taught by Derek Dodson, the College Class will engage in relevant conversation on scriptural, theological and life issues with the goal of making a connection between deep faith and real life.

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

7TH - 9TH-GRADE CLASS

10TH - 12TH-GRADE CLASS

Led by Katie Cook & Donna Kennedy

PRESCHOOL & ELEMENTARY CHILDREN SUNDAY SCHOOL

INFANTS & CREEPERS

L-101 (Leuschner Building, 1st Floor)

TODDLERS & TWO-YEAR-OLDS

This class is taught by Carrolle Kamperman and Jeanne Ryden using LifeWay's *Bible Teaching for Kids* curriculum.

THREE, FOUR & FIVE-YEAR-OLD CLASS

"Godly Play" is taught by Sherrie Dodson and Janet Sheets. The goal of Godly Play is to teach children the art of using religious language-parable, sacred story, silence and liturgical action to help them become more fully aware of the mystery of God's presence in their lives.

FIRST, SECOND & THIRD-GRADE CLASS

This interactive class is taught by Pat and Sharon Hynan using *CrossWalk* curriculum in conjunction with *SPARK* missions curriculum.

FOURTH, FIFTH & SIXTH-GRADE CLASS

This interactive class is taught by Missy Kittner and Angela Cruseturner using *CrossWalk* curriculum in conjunction with *SPARK* missions curriculum.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CELEBRATIONS

The Newsom Family will be honored as “First Family of Baylor” by the Baylor Alumni Association on September 18, 2009.

Sunday School Fellowship

Join us for goodies in Harper Hall before Sunday school on

Sunday, September 27th
9:15-9:45am

Don't miss this chance to fellowship with friends!

Food From the Faithful:
Please bring donations of canned meat (tuna, chicken, etc.) to be donated to Caritas for families in need in the Waco community.

SAVE THE DATE:

Deacon Ordination & Potluck Lunch:
Sunday, September 20
XYZ: Thursday, September 24
Women of Seventh Luncheon:
Saturday, January 23

DEACON RETREAT

October 10, 2009

9:00 in Harper Hall

Helen Harris— Death and Grief:
Helping in Congregations

Please RSVP for lunch reservations by calling the church office or emailing Donna Kennedy.

DEACON OFFERING COORDINATORS

DATE	DEACON
September 6:	Frank Mathis
September 13:	COMMUNION
September 20:	Tim McKinney
September 27:	Becky Griffin
October 4:	Tom Newsom
October 11:	COMMUNION

MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5
8:30 AM

HARPER HALL
PLEASE INVITE A FRIEND!
\$6.00

