

Faith Report

Rejoicing: Appreciation, Graduation, Celebration, Salvation

by Pastor Stan Long

What is worship?

So much happens when we gather weekly for praise, fellowship, prayer, preaching and encouragement. We commonly view worship as giving the Lord **APPRECIATION** and then reflecting upon His word that we might grow spiritually. I was thinking of these two aspects of worship this month when we often focus on Grads and Dads. This year, Terri and I have been especially privileged to experience the unique blessing of **GRADUATION** through our triplets, Daniel, Grace and James. In a few weeks, we will celebrate Father's Day, a time for me to appreciate the life of my own dad, now deceased, and to reflect upon the important calling I have as a dad.

Have you ever thought that both of these June events foreshadow something much deeper, just as Sunday worship does? Each week we celebrate the fact that day by day we are to grow more and more into the likeness of Jesus, to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him." (2 Cor. 4:16-17, 2 Peter 3:18) One day we will have our last graduation event because "for me to live is Christ, to die is graduation." (my paraphrase of Philippians 1:21). By grace we

will hear from the Master, "Well done. Good and faithful servant, enter now into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:23) Also each week we gather to show appreciation to the One who is called, in Isaiah 9, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace and Everlasting FATHER.

What is worship?

Theologians tell us that public worship is a form of an ancient "Covenant Renewal Ceremony" where the people of Israel gathered to reflect on their obligations, hear God's promises, and declare their intention to remain faithful to Him. This can be seen in the lives of Moses, Joshua, King David, King Solomon, Kings Josiah and Hezekiah, and others.

In the New Testament, the Last Supper was a Jewish Passover renewal **CELEBRATION** to which Jesus gave new meaning: "This is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you." (Luke 20) In his article "The Biblical Covenant and Christian Worship," Dr. Richard C. Leonard states,

Historic Christian liturgy moves through a sequence of entrance, service of the Word, service of the Lord's table, and dismissal.... The entrance serves as the prologue, a joyful celebration of the Lord's dominion and his acts of salvation. The service of the Word brings forth the

Scriptures as the stipulations or charter defining the relationship between the great King and his servants. The ... Lord's table is an act of covenant affirmation, the worshipers' pledge of loyalty in the intimacy of communion ... The dismissal is a time of benediction or blessing pronounced upon the faithful, those who keep covenant with Christ the King.

A contract is established by two parties with equal legal rights who often negotiate on the terms of the covenant. Great kings would establish the terms of ancient covenants and offer them to a smaller king as a peace settlement. God is our great King and He has spoken his promises to us and set the terms of our relationship. He will be our God - Provider, Protector, Redeemer, etc. We are to simply believe and trust Him. **SALVATION** is about covenant, and worship is about renewal of this covenant.

My prayer is that we will see the gospel in the joyous events of our lives. Every celebration points to God's ultimate celebration, the marriage of the lamb and His bride. Sunday mornings should also serve as a regular reminder of the great salvation into which we have entered. ♦



Underestimating God's Ability to Provide

By Randy Race

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*United that the
world would
know*

*²⁷ All the ends of
the earth
will remember
and turn to the
LORD,
and all the
families of the na-
tions
will bow down
before him,
Ps. 22:27*

Faced with a badly deteriorated roof on the white house (church office) which leaked every time it rained, missing front stairs, a porch barricaded with caution tape because of rotting wood and fallen structural support, and a budget that did not provide for repairs, I could not see a way to contain the damage, much less make improvements. The white house offices are our frontage to the community along Greenmount Avenue. It is also where vendors, suppliers, and donors meet with us, entering the "back door" through the kitchen. Our deteriorating facilities were in dire need of revitalization.

I underestimated God's ability to provide but several of us made plans anyway. **In March**, volunteers removed the old deck wood and reinstalled new pressure treated lumber. Before our tools were even put away, a donor check arrived designated for the entire lumber bill – including most of the planned stairs and railings!

In April, a talented worshipper drew landscape plans and made recommendations on trees, bushes, and flowers. Kevin Feldman, FUW Executive Director, was contacted by Towson University students wanting to do a community project. He quickly located a supply of free red bud trees and the Towson rugby team planted the trees and weeded our frontage along Greenmount. A few of us spread eight yards of mulch around the office and church. Our only cost was the mulch.

Recently, our insurance company decided that our shedding roof was the result of storm damage over the years and issued a check for the full replacement cost. **In May**, a roofing company replaced the roof. The check covered all but some wood rot discovered on the eaves and gutters, and removal of a fourth layer of shingles on the roof. We will incur some cost but at just a fraction of the amount poured

into our office building and staff morale!

Several servants built and primed custom railings, and installed an 8-foot wide staircase along Greenmount. One day, we hope to invite visitors into the white house foyer through the front doors. We also plan to add a handicapped ramp and replace the doors to accommodate a wheelchair.

I underestimated God's ability to provide. There is still more to do including planting bulbs, annuals, and flowering bushes – plus lots of painting! If you or your covenant group would like to take on a project for a couple hours, please contact us at the church office or via the website. ♦

Bits and Pieces

Congratulations to

- High school graduates Nabi DeAngulo, Emma Johnson, Sarah Johnson, Heather Johnson, Daniel Long, Grace Long, James Long, and Paula Maouyo, who are all heading off to college.
- Tim and Laura Farmer on the arrival of baby Vivienne Lynne on May 21.
- Daryoush Ekhterae and Bahareh Asadisami on their marriage on May 29.
- Jeff and Lynne Beans, Sara Breedlove, Alex Hoogland, Vic & Joanna King, who were received into church membership in May.
- Roy Macdonald on his 70th birthday on June 10.

This month we say farewell, God Speed to:

- Pete and Trisha Carlson who leave for Bangladesh. Pete is to be the Sports Coordinator at Grace International School in Dhaka.
- Dr. Mark and Kim Humphreys and family who are moving to Norfolk, VA*.
- Dr. Alan and Andrea Olsen Lam who are moving to San Diego, CA*.

*Both Mark and Alan are serving with the US Navy. ♦

CALENDAR

Jun 4-6 2K10 Revival at New Song
Jun 9 Faith Leadership Night