



# THE PASTOR'S PEN

Volume 43 No. 121

October 22, 2013

## The Scariest Word in the Church Today!

It's the end of October! All Saint's Day is upon us. The television and radio remind us Halloween is nearly here and we have only a few more days to buy candy and treats for the little monsters and goblins that will be knocking on our doors. It's the time of year when we visit the commercialized haunted houses, go on ghost tours or go out to corn mazes, visit the Pensacola Lighthouse after dark and welcome frights and scares that come from all quarters as our neighbors put out their yard decorations and Halloween tricks. But, do you know what the scariest thing is when it comes to the Church? It's found in one simple little word. A word that strikes fear into the heart of congregational boards, sends chills down the spines of elders and deacons, petrifies the average church member in their pew! That word is... **"CHANGE."**

Change, something thought to be so devastating, that most members of the congregation will go out of their way to avoid it! It is a word that is fraught with the shrieks of, "But we have never done it before!" It is a word that denotes the horrors of, "We've always done it this way!" Change is more than just a word; it is an event that spells doom in the thoughts of hundreds and thousands of Church members all across our nation. However, that is our perception, and perception is not reality. In reality change in the Church is actually a good thing. Well done and well managed it can be a blessing for the Church. It means that the congregation has the potential for growing and adapting to new ways and new ideas. It means that the congregation is alive! It means that the congregation is trying to keep up with the community and the culture around it. It means that new people and new ideas have the opportunity to take hold and bring new life into older congregations. Providing, we allow change to happen and providing that we work to make the most of the opportunities that good changes afford us.

This year we are facing a lot of changes in our congregation. We have lost some older members from our fellowship and gained new members. The annual congregational meeting will see the possibility for many changes to take place in our wills and bequest policy, sabbaticals for your pastors in the decades to come, changes to our existing building funds and designated accounts, changes to the annual operating budget and new officers giving of their time and talents to our congregation for next year and beyond. After a number of years, it has been decided by worship and the board, that the contemporary service is no longer an effective use of our resources in trying to reach our changing community. As of November 1, it will be discontinued and the worship committee will be looking for new ways to expand our worship experiences. From the ending of one program that has run its course, comes the opportunity to find and try another that may reach out beyond the doors of our congregation with even greater success in the sharing of the gospel. That is a positive change. All of these changes have great potential, providing we take up the challenge, get behind them and make the most of the opportunities that these changes offer to us.

It is good stewardship to wisely allocate God's resources for their maximum benefit to others. Over the years people change, communities change, ideas change, what we think is important changes,

goals change, jobs change and whether or not we will admit to it, even we change. Does it not stand to reason that the Church needs to change as well? So we see that change is not something foreign to us. It is not something to be feared or shunned; it is actually a natural part of life and the life cycle of the Church.

Instead of being the scariest word in the world for the Church, change and the ability to change should be one of our watchwords and constant companions. When Jesus arrived on the scene to begin His ministry, He changed the teachings of generations. He changed the way that people interacted and reacted with each other and with God. He changed the whole world and told us to keep up the changes with the words:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Now that is change! It is our duty to keep up with that change and share that change with others. The question is: are you ready to go forward with the changes that are in front of us? Are you willing to do your part to support these changes and make them work for our congregation? I hope and pray so, because change will come to us whether we do anything or we do nothing. One way or another, whether we like it or not, change and the love of God are the only constants in the future of our congregation. If we do not embrace and make the changes we need to make, then time and circumstances will change the thing around us anyway in ways we cannot control and in ways that can be devastating to the Church. So, let us choose our changes and go forward with them! Let us take charge of our future instead of letting it “just happen” to us. Let us fulfill the great commission and change the community around us with the outreach of the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Are you ready?

Working for change in our congregation,

*James*

