

CALVIN COMMENTARY



JOHN CALVIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AUGUST 2016

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SEEK GOD

Nola Girl with Umbrella—Street Art in New Orleans

From



The Study Window

I have been doing some reading on the importance of attitude in the life of the congregation and I wish to share some of my reflections with you. My thinking at this point is heavily influenced by the work of Peter Coutts. As the saying goes, “attitude is everything.” It is what makes the difference in how hospitable a congregation is, how externally-focused it is, its priority for spiritual growth, its openness to change etc. The determining factor in congregational flourishing often comes down to attitudes. Change initiatives grind to a halt when prevailing attitudes impede movement.

The good news is attitudes can change. An attitude is made up of three components: a belief, an evaluation, and a strength. At the core of an attitude is a belief about something (what is called the attitude’s object). Let’s imagine a person’s attitude towards clapping in worship (the object). A person might believe that clapping in worship is inappropriate in that all worship is to be focused on God. Next, what really empowers an attitude is the evaluation one makes of the belief: that it is good or bad, right or wrong. In this example the worshiper might evaluate his belief about clapping as “I dislike it.” Finally, every evaluation has a strength. Our person may simply not like clapping or he might think it’s sacrilegious. Change becomes possible when people review and revise any of an attitude’s components: the belief, the evaluation or the strength.

The most effective way to help people change their attitudes is by helping people reflect on and revise the beliefs at the center of an attitude. Coutts tells of working with a church whose members were very aware that their membership was aging and declining (the object of an attitude). They thought there was nothing they could do about it (the belief) and consequently they felt hopeless (the evaluation). Their attitude disempowered any possible motivation to deal with their situation. As he talked with the members, one person said what many believed, “The problem is that there are no young families in our neighborhood. We all moved here and built this church when this neighborhood was brand new. But the children of the neighborhood have grown and moved out. The area is now filled with seniors and empty-nesters. There is no next-generation for our church.” Coutts thought about that for a moment and said, “if that is true, why is the public school down the street expanding?” The people agreed that the school was expanding and that this meant there were families in the area. A fixed belief (“there are no young families in our neighborhood, so there is nothing we can do to improve our future”) was challenged by very simple evidence. The new belief changed their evaluation, making them more hopeful. The new attitude, in turn, motivated them to engage young families in the neighborhood and meet their needs.

Obviously it is often not this easy. Some congregational attitudes can seem impervious to change. But while the beliefs and evaluation of an attitude may appear fixed, the strength of an attitude can often change. The easiest way to make this happen is to help people consider a few of their attitudes in relationship to each other and consider what needs to be held onto and what needs to change.

Coutts tells of a congregation he worked with whose highest priority was an inward focus on maintaining their fellowship. He helped them to see that this inward focus was hindering their desire to grow because they were not focused enough on being in mission with the neighborhood around them. His work did not change the desire for a strong fellowship but it did help the church reevaluate the relative importance of their top priorities. Today this congregation is still enjoying a fulfilling community life, but now it is also more proactively seeking to be in mission with the community around it.

As we reflect on the efforts we have made to be more missional, and we have done much, I think we need to reflect further on the goal we set of being mission central for the community. What might this involve? What might it look like? Who do we need to talk with and listen to?

In Christ’s Service.

Rev. Harry Brown

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By: William R. Memmott

FROM THE MUSIC CORNER

Our thanks to Summer Soloists: Sharon Fortyn, Men's Chorus, Ron Palmisano and Sandy Cranfill. How wonderful to have these talented people inspiring us each week while the Choir vacations!

Although midweek rehearsals haven't resumed yet, the choir has prepared anthems for the Sundays of August (just come for warm-up rehearsals at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays beginning August 7).

Then our annual Old Fashioned Hymn Sing will begin the service on August 28. We start early -- at 10:15 a.m. Please turn in your requests by August 21 (22).

After your last "hurrah of summer (Labor Day)," choir rehearsals resume on Wednesday, September 7 at 7:15 p.m. Let's have a full house (including newcomers). We prepare for the 50th Anniversary Celebration and the Gathering of Choirs in October, and then the Christmas Concert in December (Handel's Christmas Music from "Messiah") and festival Christmas services on December 24 (it's a Saturday this year).

"Come basses, join the crew; it's the only sensible thing to do."

Soli Deo Gloria



MESSAGES FROM JCPC TWEENS
ABOUT
MO-RANCH SUMMER CAMP -2016



Really cool camp! The cabins were great and I loved the Guadeloupe River. I made a lot of new friends and everyone was really nice. I got to fish and teach others how to fish. We did small group games, competition, daily worship and just had fun. I definitely want to go back.

A big thank you to the church for co-sponsoring my trip.



Sebastian Trail Zea



I liked the Rapids!

Maggie Walker



Swimming, meeting new friends and adventuring was fun. This trip helped me grow in my faith

Portia Robinson

2016



Vacation Bible School



The last week in July rocked with 60 children ages 3 to 10 learning that Jesus is the Light of the World! Many thanks to the wonderful John Calvin volunteers that nurtured and taught the children that:

Jesus gives us hope
Jesus gives us courage
Jesus gives us love
Jesus gives us direction
Jesus gives us his power



Our crew leaders this year were: Barbara Egan, Kit Melchert, Maureen Nelson, Portia Robinson, Julie Russo, Barbara Taylor, Ginny Thomas and Maggie Walker. They led the little ones from station to station and shared each day's Bible point.

Leading the Sing and Play each morning was Sophia Hill. The day's Bible story was told by Judy & Wayne Tracy. The KidVid Cinema starred Jananne Lankard and Lorraine Hicks. Cynthia Palmisano with helpers Meghan & Mia Lauland & Caleb Hebert challenged kids through the Imagination Station. Julie Etland, with the help of son Ethan, taught the children Bible songs and Carolyn Calvin & Barbara McHan made snack time the best!

Just another way the people of John Calvin share the good news of Jesus Christ...the light of the world!



Second Harvest Activity Scheduled

Mark your calendars now (!) – we are scheduled to sort food at the Food Bank’s warehouse on Saturday, September 17, from 8-11 a.m.

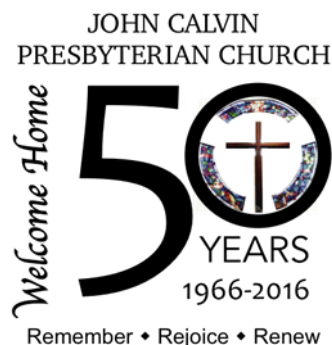
Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana is the largest such group in South Louisiana, distributing over 25 million lbs. of food annually, through over 500 associated non-profit partners. The Food Bank is rated 4-stars by Charity Navigator.

Second Harvest’s stated mission is to “end hunger by providing food access, advocacy, education, and disaster response.” Some of its programs include: 1. Childhood Backpack Program (and, after-school Kid’s Cafe); 2. Summer Feeding Programs (hot meals prepared at its state of the art kitchen); 3. Senior Café (distributes freshly-made meals daily to senior centers; 4. Mobile (travelling food trucks) and School Pantries; 5. Nutrition Education (including classes/demos).

SUPPORT SECOND HARVEST

50 years ago...

.... did you know?



Fifty years ago, when John Calvin Presbyterian Church was being organized, did those first visionaries have any idea the strength of the new church they were creating; how it might be tried and how it would overcome destruction and turmoil? Surely they would be proud of the strong faith of the church they created and its role helping the surrounding community. While the stories are still painful in the hearts and minds of the members who lived through the tough times, these stories need to be told to help us remember who we are and what we are made of.

In August 2000, the first pastor at John Calvin Presbyterian Church left after 33 wonderful years. Three months later, on November 21st 2000, an arson fire destroyed the sanctuary, the offices, and several classrooms...everything familiar was gone. How can a church move forward without a pastor and without a building? Fortunately, this congregation understood that through adversity, they needed to continue to “be” a church. Without a pastor or sanctuary, Thanksgiving services were held in the Fellowship Hall (luckily a separate building), just two days later!

The congregation quickly rose to the challenge of dealing with the legal and insurance issues, to plan and rebuild the church, even expanding its usefulness to the greater community. Worship continued to be held in the Fellowship Hall for the 2 years it took to rebuild, served by interim and part-time pastors. With God’s grace and the widespread help from members, friends, and churches all over, John Calvin Presbyterian Church was able to survive.

Two important items survived the fire. One was the charred cross which had been the most striking feature of the former sanctuary. It now hangs over the entry door to the new sanctuary. The other was the panel of stained glass windows depicting an historic account of God’s Grace. The windows could no longer withstand the weather and now grace the entry into the narthex. Both are reminders of a congregation overcoming adversity, and growing stronger in the process.

Then, on August 29, 2005, just 5 years later, Hurricane Katrina hit the New Orleans area.

The church buildings took in 1-6 inches of water, creating significant floor and wall damage. Most of the office furniture was destroyed, file cabinets got wet and the contents destroyed, and computers were damaged. Throughout the buildings, all of the carpet had to be replaced, sheetrock cut out, replaced and repainted, the lower parts of the pews refinished, and completion of extensive mold remediation. Yet, unlike with the fire, this time nearly every member of the congregation suffered similar damage – some much more severe, and some less. The church had to hold together and rebuild while the entire congregation was individually doing the same.

Most church activities were curtailed initially, but the first Worship service after the storm was held on September 18, 2005. Due to the heroic efforts of members of the congregation, the church was up and running less than 2 months after Katrina, and the Playschool within 3 months. In fact, through members were individually dealing with their own losses, they reached out to the community to offer additional help.

On Wednesday October 12, 2005 the church began offering a hot meal to anyone who needed it. Most of the homes surrounding the church had taken on floodwater, too. People had to gut their homes and most did not have an operable kitchen for months. The church put up signs and spread the word that every Wednesday evening, hot meals were available to anyone who wanted them. Teams of 3-4 members each served one Wednesday a month, setting up the Fellowship Hall, preparing and serving dinner, and cleaning up afterward.

There was no program during the meals, Pastor Harry Brown offered thanks, then the people gathered would visit with each other – sharing the stories of what had happened to them, and networking to find repairmen. “We became one big family supporting each other.” Some evenings, the church accompanist, would play the piano for everyone’s entertainment, often with folks joining in to sing along. The story goes that one evening, she brought a colleague from Pat O’Brien’s to play along with her. The players played and the group joined in singing, everyone having a great time. The Fellowship Hall became “Pat O’Brien’s West” for an evening.

The Wednesday Night dinners started out serving 70 people or so each evening, rising to a maximum of about 120, then tapering off to around 70 after a year. These meals continued from October 2005, through December 13, 2006 – all while the members themselves were cleaning up and rebuilding their own lives.

The generosity and faith spirit of the members of John Calvin Presbyterian Church didn’t stop there. Within a month of the storm, the Fellowship Hall was being used to provide housing for volunteers coming to New Orleans to help with the clean up. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) offered its resources early on to connect volunteers from churches and organizations across the country to those needing assistance in New Orleans. These groups needed a place to stay for the week or 2 they came to the area, and our Fellowship Hall became one of those spaces. Yes, you read correctly, dinners were provided to the entire local community in the Fellowship Hall while it was being used to sleep volunteers!

Something like 80% of the congregation were out of their homes for at least a month following the storm. Many people lived in the upstairs of their two-story homes for months with just a small fridge and a microwave. While it took many people nearly 2 years to get their homes fully repaired, there are a few who are still completing repairs 10 years later.

In that first year, 20% of the congregation permanently relocated out of the area. In the next 4 years another 10% permanently relocated. In just 5 years, the congregation experienced 20 years of the change that a congregation would expect under normal conditions.

Yet, here at the 50 year mark, the congregation is thriving – a blend of the new and the original. The mission statement reads, “Freed by the fire, renewed by the flood, and empowered by the spirit, we strive to move Christ’s mission forward by going deeper in faith and farther in mission with our community and world.” This says it all.

Next month...Outreach then and now. This place just doesn’t keep still!

What does our community think?

John Calvin Presbyterian Playschool

was named



***Best Preschool
Part-Time***



***Best Preschool
Full-Time***

by voters in the Jefferson Parish Parent Survey!



Congratulations Playschool!!

hello
AUGUST

BIRTHDAYS CELEBRATIONS!



Guidry, Ms. Kristin	08/02	Freudenthal, Matthew	08/16
Nelson, Vanessa	08/02	Bottomley, Bill	08/21
Antill, Randall	08/02	Brown, Marilyn	08/23
Fish, Lauren Helen	08/03	Smith, Sara	08/24
Lauland, Mia	08/06	Lankard, Jananne	08/25
Perret, Dana	08/08	Fuller, Bill	08/25
Magri, Bella	08/08	Palmisano, Ronald	08/25
Fuller, Marcia	08/09	Miller, Joe	08/26
Britson, Janis	08/16	Wade, Ashley	08/30



August

- 2nd: PW Council Mtgs Resume @ 10:00 (Lbry)
Resource Mtg @ 7:00
- 15th: Session Mtg @ 7:00
- 28th: "All Request Hymn Theme" Service @ 10:15
- 30th-31st: P/S Teacher In-Service/Training

September

- 5th: Labor Day—Church Office Closed
- 6th: PW Council Mtg @ 10:00 (Lbry)
P/S Teacher Training
- 7th: P/S 1st Day
Choir Practice Resumes @ 7:15
- 11th: Sunday School Kick-Off
Teacher Dedication
- 13th: Lydia Circle Mtgs Resume @7:00
- 17th: Second Harvest JCPC Food Bank Day:
{Volunteer's Needed 8:00 - 11:00am}
- 20th: Grace Circle Mtgs Resume @ 9:30 (Lbry)
- 23rd: P/S Bk-2-Schl Fmly Dinner & Fun Night

John Calvin Presbyterian Church



“Freed by the Fire, Renewed by the Flood, and Empowered by the Spirit”