



Parish Presbyterian Church

P A R I S H L I F E N E W S L E T T E R

2 6 A U G U S T 2 0 0 7

Repentance is the Tipping Point

None of us likes to admit it when we are wrong. We all have an automatic defense mechanism. Our guard immediately goes up whenever someone even hints at our mistakes, our foibles, our slights, our wrongdoing, or our sin. The process of admission, confession, correction, and repentance wounds our pride. It is among the most difficult things we ever have to do. The problem is that we all have to do it. We all have to endure failure. We all face the prospect of humiliation at one time or another. It is simply not possible to hide our shortcomings from everyone, everywhere, every time. We make mistakes. We stumble. We sin. Every single one of us. Without exception. Without fail. We are, after all, only human.

As if to complicate things even further, in order for us to learn from our mistakes, we must first admit them. In order for us to move beyond failures, we must first face them. In order for us to set things right, we must first confess that things have actually gone wrong. Thus, our reticence to openly confess our shortcomings becomes our primary obstacle to getting over our shortcomings. If we insist on protecting our pride from injury and embarrassment insures that we will only continue to injure and embarrass our pride.

Counselors and psychologists report that one of the greatest obstacles that must be overcome by people suffering from broken relationships, plaguing grief, dysfunctional homes, chronic fears, or paralyzing stress is simply the ability to admit their own faults, to confess their wrongs, and to repent of their mistakes. As James Ulrich, a renowned British psychologist, has said, "Since sin is the source of virtually all human ills, it is only when we directly deal with sin that we can hope to solve those ills in our hearts, in our homes, and in our communities." Indeed, he claims that the greatest advances in mental, social, and national health come "when we can finally just come to the threshold of genuine repentance." Thus, he says, "It is only then we can actually begin to hope for authentic change. It is only then that we can lay the groundwork for a new beginning. It is only then that the pieces are in place for us to have a fresh start. It is only then that our circumstances and situations are primed for a new day of happiness, prosperity, freedom, and delight."

Now, let's change gears for a moment. How do fads suddenly sweep through an entire culture, becoming practically ubiquitous overnight? What makes one craze abruptly passé and gauche while another instantaneously becomes chic and trendy? How do epidemics spread from small, contained, and isolated segments of a population to infect an entire region or nation or continent? What accounts for sudden changes in cultural behaviors—an unexplained drop in the crime rate, an unexpected demand for a particular commodity, or an unprovoked shift in public opinion? How do fashions take hold of an entire segment of the global marketplace? What is it that makes a heretofore obscure writer or musician or artist or film-maker into a bestselling international celebrity? Can any of these phenomena be understood in merely mechanical processes? Is it possible to foresee and predict such trends? Or perhaps even more importantly, is it possible to create and control them?

These are the questions advertisers, demographers, and social anthropologists wrestle with constantly. They are the obsessions of entrepreneurs, politicians, and pollsters. They are the stock and trade of marketing consultants, strategic planners, and futurists.

According to journalist Malcolm Gladwell, "Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do." The mechanism that actually makes them spread is what he calls "the tipping point." It is this illusive explanation, this unnoticed cause, this elusive mechanism that all those experts are searching for so desperately. It is that little trick, that small nudge, that opportune break, or that glorious epiphany that brings about momentous change.

The tipping point is what actually brings about breakthroughs, aha moments, and eureka developments. It is the catalyst. It is the fulcrum of innovation. It is the straw that breaks the camel's back. It is the beacon light of dawn. It is the transforming advancement that changes everything.

In that sense, repentance is the ultimate tipping point. It is the mechanism that puts genuine change into action in our lives and in our culture. It is what enables us to move beyond the past—and all of the mistakes of the past—and into the future with bright hopes and new dreams. Repentance is the fulcrum upon which transformation turns.

May God grant us just such a tipping point in our own lives, our own families, and our own church. May He grant real and substantial change—through real and substantial repentance.

—George Grant

Community News

Elementary Back to School Bash

All rising k-5th graders: Please join us at the Grants' home on September 8, beginning at 6:30 p.m. for fun, food, and a drive-in movie! Kids, bring your bikes for activities the big kids are planning for you and for the "drive in!"

Williamson County Soccer League for the Fall

The fall soccer season begins in September with games on either Wednesday nights or one day on the weekends (TBD). This is an open league with no age or gender requirements, and allows us to play some decently competitive soccer. More detailed information regarding cost, schedule, etc. will be available soon. If you are interested, please contact Joanna Reategui at 615-574-1029.

Women's Bible Study

All Parish Pres women ages 13 and up are invited to participate in a study of what the Bible teaches about mentoring and discipleship for women. Using the Bible and Susan Hunt's book *Spiritual Mothering*, we will meet three times per month for study and discussion, and once a month for a communal activity. Beginning September 11th and ending November 13th, we will pick up again in January and end this particular study in mid-February. Offered on Tuesday mornings and evenings at our downtown facility, nursery will be provided during the morning study only. Sign-ups begin Sunday, August 26.

Christ Community Church Counseling Ministry—Grief Support Group

Confidential 8-week support group for those who have lost loved ones and would like support and encouragement in their journey through grief. Group is limited to 10 participants. Support group will be held in the Women's Parlor beginning Sunday, September 30, at 12:30 p.m. (*bring a sack lunch*). Carol Terrell will be the facilitator. Registration deadline is Monday, September 24. Contact: Cindy Blom 468-2224 or cindy.blom@christcommunity.org

C.S. Lewis Conference—Faith Set Free: C.S. Lewis and the Quest for Joy

Belmont University is hosting the Southeast Regional C.S. Lewis Conference on September 15, 2007. The one-day conference includes seminars by Lewis scholars, the screening of a Lewis documentary, artistic performances, and meals. Visit www.cslewis.org for more information or to register.

Parish Pres Weekly Breakfast

Join us Monday mornings at 6:45 at One Stop on Columbia Avenue in Franklin. for breakfast and fellowship. Need directions or questions answered? Call Will or Judy Matheny at 790-3685 or 403-8989. We will not meet on Labor Day.

Literature Discussion

The Literature Discussion group is open to anyone of any age at any time. Please contact Greg Wilbur (greg@parishpres.org) if you have any questions. All meetings are at the Chapel from 7:00-8:30 p.m.
September 10: *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood* by George MacDonald, a Victorian novel about parish life.

Choir Rehearsal Begins

Choir rehearsals for Advent begin Thursday evening, September 6 at 6:30 p.m. in the Chapel.

Sunday School Schedule through September 2

Family Sunday School:

For the next few weeks we will continue our *Family Sunday School*. All of us, kids, moms, dads, single adults, teens, tweens, grandmoms, granddads, uncles, aunts, friends, and neighbors (everyone except infants, toddlers, and preschoolers), will study God's intentional design of creation together in a single class taught by Aaron Anderson (a great teacher and an amazingly well-informed student of Creation Design). All our regular Sunday School classes will take a break so that we can spend this time together, learning and growing as a single parish.

New Members Class

If you are interested in joining Parish Pres—or if you are just interested in finding out more about our church—we will host a new members class during the Family Sunday School hour next door at Lillie Belle's. Please see Tom or Lydia Miller, J. Edward or Brenda Campbell, George Grant, or Brent Moelker for more information about this six-week-long introduction to our little covenant community.

Teachers Book Discussion

Karen Grant will be leading a book discussion group for anyone interested in teaching in our Sunday School classes, Bible Studies, or Home Fellowship Groups. The discussions will be conducted at the same time as the Family Sunday School and the New Members Class during the next few weeks. Please see Karen for more details (Karen@parishpres.org or 395-9207).