

OUT TO PASTOR: A NEWSLETTER FOR RETIRED PASTORS

First Edition – April 2020 David S. Barnard, Editor

Advice: *(What I Wish I'd Known Then; What I'd Tell a Newly Ordained Pastor).*

Early on, a retired Roman Catholic priest told me: *No matter who you are as a pastor, 10% of your congregation will love you completely and follow you anywhere; 10% will hate you and criticize everything you do, for no apparent reason; 80% are folk who can be won over if you show honest transparency, sincere caring, and faithful hard work. Focus on them and you'll be a success.* This idea helped me realize that I had to take both praise and criticism with a grain of salt, and invest the time and effort to really get to know the entire congregation and earn their trust.

Struggles: *(Speaking from Experience; Hard truths; What hurt? What healed?)*

I was surprised at how lonely being a pastor can be. No one told me that being surrounded by people who look to you as their pastor can be so isolating. Early on, I was advised not to make friends in the church, because it would lead to accusations of favoritism. I soon realized that a manse is really a fishbowl, with members literally keeping track of whose car was parked in my driveway, and asking who had visited if it was unfamiliar. People came to the door at all hours wanting a key to the church, or asking a question about the schedule. Yet, invitations to dinner or a time to get personally acquainted were almost nonexistent. One older couple with a gift for hospitality helped address this by organizing several Sunday afternoon gatherings in their home with appetizers and beverages, and inviting a cross-section of the church to each. It gave us a chance to meet many more people and to get to know them as more than a face and a name. I also tried to phone every church family and introduce myself over the first weeks. And, finding a few trusted friends, in my churches and outside, made all the difference over the years.

Humor: *(My Most Embarrassing Moments; You've Got to Laugh).*

One of my favorite church folk over the years, an older woman, approached me at the reception before my candidating sermon to be their next pastor. She looked me up and down and said, *"You don't look old enough to be our minister. But, I guess we can age you fast enough!"* She did her part, believe me.

Inspiration: *(Scripture that Speaks to Me; Vital Faith Building; Spiritual Disciplines That Got Me Through).*

Reading through the Gospels regularly has helped me stay grounded in a world full of biblical skepticism and divergent points of view. I think this has done more to keep me focused on God's truth than anything else I've done over the years.

Pastors' Pet peeves: *(People Who Drove Me Nuts; Annoying Things People Say to Their Pastors).*

Where to start? How about the parishioners who felt free to evaluate my hair cut, clothing choices, and office arrangement? Everything from, "You need a haircut," to "You ought to find someone else to cut your hair," to "If you keep growing a beard, I'm going to leave the church." One told me the books lining the shelves in my study looked awful because they were arranged by topic. She wanted me to have each shelf go from largest to smallest by size and be grouped by color. Didn't happen.

Book Reviews: *(What I'm reading; Recommended reading; Still Learning After All These Years).*

I recently read: The Jewish Gospels - The Story of the Jewish Christ by Daniel Boyarin (2012) He is a rabbinical scholar who shares fascinating insights into the Gospels as being very consistent with Jewish teaching at the time they were written, as opposed to being a radical break from it, as many of us have been taught. It's also very affirming of the early accuracy of the accounts of Jesus' life and teaching, including His claim to be the Messiah. A couple quotes to whet your appetite: **Jesus, when he came, came in a form that many, many Jews were expecting: a second divine figure incarnated in a human. The question was not "Is a divine Messiah coming?" but only "Is this carpenter from Nazareth the One we are expecting?"** Not surprisingly, some Jews said yes and some said no. Today we call the first group Christians and the second group Jews, but it was not like that then, not at all. And another: **Mark is best read as a Jewish text, even in its most radical Christological moments. Nothing that Mark's Jesus proposes or argues for or enacts would have been inappropriate for a thoroughly Jewish Messiah, the Son of Man, and what would later be called Christianity is a brilliantly successful—the most brilliantly successful—Jewish apocalyptic and messianic movement.**

Continued calling: *(What is God calling me to do now? How do I fill this time?)*

This newsletter is one way I am trying to follow God's call and fill this lock-down time. Maybe my experience, and yours, can benefit others!

Please Share this Newsletter and Your Input

Think about your own history and please email your wisdom and experiences to me at stanton69@zoominternet.net. (Let me know whether to add your name and email, or to post yours anonymously). I will edit as I think best. Please use one of the categories above, or come up with more if you think it would be helpful! Please pass this along and invite other retired pastors to participate. Your feedback on how to improve this effort is welcomed.

To be added to the mailing list: email me at stanton69@zoominternet.net and ask to sign on. To stop receiving these newsletters, just email and ask.