

The Pastor's Quarry

First Baptist Church of Granite Falls, MN
June, 2007

The Reputations of Sumac and Saints

On a recent hike in Memorial Park, my wife and I reveled in the profusion of late-May greenery. I enjoy such hikes with my wife, since she has such a keen interest in plants. When she looks at a plant, she looks at it appreciatively; she often knows its name and characteristics. I, on the other hand, often look at a plant rather blankly. Though I admire plants, I usually admire them too superficially. I lack the appreciation of someone who knows that the plant has beautiful blossoms for one week in the spring, or that it will grow to be a great tree, or that it attracts monarch butterflies, or that it is a tasty herb. I enjoy learning such things so I can better appreciate the plants I look at, and I delight in recognizing plants I have come to know.

So when we found ourselves in a colony of sumac, I delighted in recognizing one of my favorites! All about us trembled the green fronds of sumac in the gentle breeze, as if eager to reveal their secret. If leaves ever could be eager, then the sumac leaf would surely be among the most eager of all. For every autumn, the sumac is the first to reveal the brilliant color within its leaves. Whenever a summer draws to a close, I eagerly watch for the splashes of crimson that grace the land. The crimson sumac leaf is a portent of fall colors, crunching leaves, hot spiced cider, and brisk, blustery days. It is what the sumac did last fall that I appreciate most when I behold it in springtime. Its past behavior establishes its reputation today.

Likewise, our own past behavior establishes our reputation. At any given moment, we might not look much different from the person next to us, while we are pumping gas or buying groceries or mowing the lawn. What really sets us apart is our *reputation*. What people have seen us do and heard us say is what brings honor or dishonor upon ourselves, our family, our church, and ultimately (and most importantly) our God.

What is your reputation? What sets you apart from the person next to you?

When somebody looks at you and recognizes you, the recognition is really a recollection. The thought, "I know him," is really, "I know what he has done in the past." When people look at you, what do they think? Have they seen you stand out from the world around you? Remember Peter's exhortation to the early Jewish Christians:

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1Pe 2:12)

What other people think of us really matters. Our reputation reflects upon our God.

What are you doing today that will establish your reputation for tomorrow?

Why Do We Do It That Way?

Have you ever wondered why we use hymnals in worship? Since many people have abandoned them in favor of big-screen projection, we ought to know our reasons.

Firstly, we ought to worship in a decent and orderly manner (1Co 14:40). Hymnals organize our songs and readings, and enable those to sing who have not memorized the songs. Furthermore, hymnals with musical notation enhance the quality of singing. Without musical notation, it is impossible to sing in four-part harmony without an established oral tradition. While an oral tradition can develop around a text-only hymnbook, it is highly unlikely to develop much around words projected on a screen, since the main purpose of projection is to spend more time on the new than the old.

Secondly, hymnals provide a ready reference for those who wish to meditate upon and memorize songs. If our hymns are truly edifying, as they ought to be (1Co 14:26), then they should not be hidden away waiting to be projected.

Thirdly, hymnals are more convenient than projection. They require no special operator nor clutter of equipment. And they are always at just the right length from your eye!

Some argue that looking up at one screen better unifies the body than looking down, prayer-like, at many books. But to borrow Tozer's words, "Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other?"

Mark Your Calendars

In my absence, on June 10 Mr. Joel Zartman of Fourth Baptist Church, Plymouth, MN, will teach Sunday School and preach in both the morning and afternoon services. Please welcome Mr. Zartman and his wife, Katrina!

On Sunday, July 1, missionary Stephen Stilwell will visit our church, Lord willing. He wrote, "We are looking forward to sharing with you how the Lord is using your prayers and financial support in Peru."

On Saturday, July 14, we will enjoy a summer picnic, Lord willing. Details to follow.

On Sunday, July 15, we plan to conduct our second quarter business meeting in place of our regular service at 1:15 P.M.

On Sunday, July 22, 2007, we have the large shelter house on the north side of Memorial Park reserved for our regular assembly. Meeting times, etc. will be just like a normal Sunday. Optimistic that this will become a tradition, I am calling it "Riverside Sunday."

Pastor's Schedule

Underlined dates are times when I will be in town without my "better half."

In Granite Jun 2-3
In Granite Jun 16-17
In Granite Jun 22-24
In Granite Jun 30-Jul 1
In Granite Jul 7-8
In Granite Jul 14-15
In Granite Jul 20-23
In Granite Jul 28-29

"Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you"

John Donne (1572-1631)

BATTER my heart, three person'd God; for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee,'and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.
I, like an usurpt towne, to'another due,
Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you,'and would be loved faine,
But am betroth'd unto youremie:
Divorce mee,'untie, or breake that knot againe;
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.

A Bit of History

Mr. Eric White, member of Fourth Baptist Church and registrar of Central Baptist Theological Seminary, just concluded his initial on-site survey of our historical documents. For this month's "A Bit of History" column, I present to you Mr. White's words:



I give thanks to everyone at Granite Falls for your help. It is difficult to sift through all of the material from a church that has been in existence for 129 years. I was able to accomplish quite a bit, but much more work has yet to be done. (I only made it through 1974 when Pastor Streblov resigned.) Besides a "thank you," I desired to leave with you a bit of what I have found.

The 1950s and 1960s seemed to be a time of solid growth under the leadership of Frank Divine, Al Pearson, and E. Streblov. The church membership grew to over 100 and built a new building on the west side (its current location). Something began to change in the late '60s, and I sense the '70s were turbulent times. Pastor Streblov, in his report in the 1971 annual meeting, appears discouraged. Many people were leaving the church, a new roll call was being conducted, and there was apparent financial troubles.

The primary question in my mind is how First Baptist Church of Granite Falls has not only existed for 129 years, but also maintained its steadfastness? How come it is still here? More study needs to be done to come close to answering this question. Yet, I believe I found a clue in the following quote:

The Rock, the Foundation, the Help is a person—the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Help of this group of believers. He is the reason for our being here. He is the reason for our service and sacrifice to maintain a true testimony in Granite Falls. Oh, that we would be more faithful and thus more fruitful for Him.

Howard Knutson had written this quote on scrap paper in preparation for the 1971 annual meeting.

Thank you again,

Eric White



I know I speak for all of us when I thank Mr. White for his efforts. I saw first-hand his approach to the daunting task of sifting through 129 years' worth of notes, reports, bulletins, letters, and clippings.

Listening to Mr. White read about several notable events, I was struck by the immensity of our duty. For 129 years, by God's grace, Christians have watched over this church. What will happen on our watch?

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"Walk-in" office hours

10:00-12:00 A.M. Sat. in the church study, schedule permitting.