

Opinion

REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION AND LIFE

Rev. Harold Schwantes
Pastor
Central United Methodist Church
Kings Mountain, N.C.



Let's all have a party at Jay Strack Crusade

One of the most popular phrases in the English language today is, "Let's have a party!"

It doesn't matter what the occasion is: a birthday or anniversary, a ball game or just a gathering of friends. Who needs a reason to have a good time? I am kind of fond of that country western song that has the lyrics, "I ain't never had too much fun!"

I believe that God has intended that life should be enjoyed, although our enjoyment is not to be at another's expense. And that is not to suggest that there is not also a time to weep or to mourn or keep silent, as the writer of Ecclesiastes suggests. But enjoyment and fun are not inventions of humanity, but rather a part of the plan of God.

A group of folks have been meeting with me for study of the first five books of the Bible. The third book, Leviticus, is often thought to be the most boring because it is a law book, full of rules and regulations regarding religion and life.

But in the midst of all these laws is a description of all the festivals the children of Israel were to celebrate. If you read over these descriptions carefully, you realize that God really wanted His people to enjoy their faith.

These festivals were well-orchestrated religious parties with food and drink, celebration and fellowship, worship and music all mixed together. One festival even had some "camping" with every family building temporary shelters to stay in during the week. Many of the festivals had elaborate religious ceremonies with elaborate dress and ornamentation.

As you read about all this in Leviticus, you realize these were really some exciting parties with a purpose, and that purpose was to know and enjoy God. God had made himself known to the people of Israel, not to take away the enjoyment of life, but to enhance it and to make life more full and meaningful than they could have ever experienced without God's help and presence. If you know anything about God as described in the Bible, you should know that his purpose in all that He did and revealed was that we might have life and have it abundantly.

For this reason, I am a big supporter of the Jay Strack Impact Crusade coming to Kings Mountain next Sunday through Tuesday. A crusade of this type can fulfill the desire for abundant life in two ways. First and foremost, Jay Strack will preach the good news about Jesus Christ and encourage persons in attendance to make life-changing decisions to become disciples of Christ. Those responding will have the opportunity of a lifetime to discover the abundant life through a new and living relationship with Christ.

But the crusade is also a religious festival, a time when those who already belong to the faith can gather together to sing and celebrate and rejoice and fellowship in a great spiritual party with a purpose. I believe God wants the Christian community to enjoy this experience of working and worshipping together, and at the same time bring others of our community into this experience of enjoying fellowship with God and His family.

So let's have a party, a party with a purpose. Let's join together as a community and let God show us all where the abundant life can be found. I invite you to come to the Jay Strack Crusade party and enjoy the celebration and the life that God wants us all to have.

TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 28:19

Your Right To Say It

Lake level decrease due to lack of rain

To the editor:

"Full pond" level of Moss Lake is 736.0 feet above sea level. The last date water was at or above this level was June 31. Since that time the lake level has fallen steadily to the present level of 735.04, or 11 1/2" below full pond.

This is due to lack of rainfall. In April we received near normal 6.8" of rain. In May we received only 2", which meant that the ground water level began dropping, which resulted in springs feeding less water into streams. June rainfall was back to near normal at 6.7". This did not begin to raise the ground water levels as this mostly went to supply the needs of forests, grass, and crops. July was below normal at 5.5", and this was mostly scattered showers, which means the 5.5" recorded at the water plant may have been 8" or 2" not far away. Thus far in August we have received only a trace of rain.

The decreased flow into the lake is compounded by the three major withdrawals from the lake. First is the 100 cubic feet per minute (19,250 gallons per day) required by the state for downstream flow. Second is the water withdrawn for treatment by the water plant, (4,655,871 gallons per day in July). Third and largest, though not often considered, is evaporation from the 1480 acre surface of the lake. From August 9-11 (2 days) the lake dropped 3/4". This is 30,138,720 gallons. In the same time period, 38,500 gallons went down stream and we pumped 5,974,000 gallons to town. This means evaporation and minor withdrawals accounted for 24,126,220 gallons. It should be remembered that Sunday the 10th was not a hot, clear day, which means the evaporation was less than it could have been. Thus it is easily seen that there is very little anyone can do about the lake level.

On July 23 we attempted to draw-down the lake after the US Weather Bureau predicted major rainfall from the remnants of Hurricane Danny.

We had only reduced the level 1/2" when Danny passed, living up to only a minor part of the prediction. We immediately returned to minimum down stream flow.

It should also be noted that there is no way we can store water from times of excess flow to supplement flow in times of deficient rainfall. Excess flow simply passes over the crest of the spillway and continues on downstream.

We hope this answers some of the questions many of you have concerning lake levels.

Walt Ollis
Water Resources Director,
City of Kings Mountain

Ideas to improve education

To the editor:

The phrase "A Nation at Risk" became more than the title of a study done about 17 years ago which alarmed the people of this state and country about the condition of public education in our country.

Even prior to the release of this study, enlightened citizens were well aware that something was wrong - very wrong - with our public schools.

Right here in North Carolina, which once claimed to be in the vanguard of leadership of the "New South," a number of legislative initiatives were implemented over the course of many years, each with significant funding attached, all purporting to improve education.

Yet today, many years, many programs, and many millions of dollars later, we are still "A Nation at Risk."

As a former teacher, a former legislator for 18 years, and most importantly as a concerned citizen, please allow me to make the following suggestions which, if acted upon, just might prove

beneficial to our schools with very little cost, if any.

First, we absolutely must hold higher education accountable for the role it plays in public schools education. Those who teach our teachers to be play no small part in the overall education equation.

Toward this end we should require all college methods teachers to not only impart knowledge, but actually demonstrate these pertinent skills and strategies in public school classrooms in front of their interns (student teachers). They should be proud to do this, if they are sincere and concerned about education.

Second, all public school administrative personnel, i.e. principals and assistant principals should have at least five years experience or more at the level that they serve as principal or assistant principal.

Third, all administrative personnel - to include superintendents, associate or assistant superintendents, principals, assistant principals, supervisors, et. al. - should be required to return to a classroom teaching assignment at specified and regularly occurring intervals and for specified lengths of time.

These measures will not, of course, serve as a panacea for the ills of education. However, they would bring a measure of morale boosting to teachers, and more importantly, put college teachers and public school teachers and administrators more in touch with the real world of education.

After years and years of a myriad of studies by high priced people, numerous "new" initiatives by high priced people and millions of dollars of taxpayers money expended, perhaps it's time to approach the challenge of saving a Nation at Risk from a different direction.

What do we have to lose?

Howard Chapin

Who cares about length of G.A. session?

Does anybody really care how long General Assembly sessions last?

That was not an idle question as the 1997 session set a record for the latest adjournment in history, easily passing the August 14 adjournment date of 1987. Speculation on when lawmakers would finally go home was the number one topic of conversation in the halls of the Legislative Building. Close behind was whether anyone even noticed that the General Assembly was still in town.

The short answer is that yes, people do care how long lawmakers stay in Raleigh. But sometimes, it seems, they do not care very much.

Lawmakers care about the length of sessions because every week they spend in the Legislature is another week away from their families and full-time jobs.

Legislative staffers, lobbyists, reporters and others who practically live in the Legislative Building during sessions also care. They must cancel vacations and juggle child care.

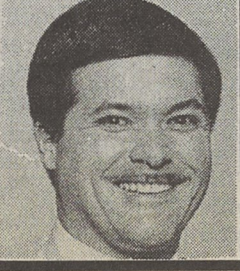
Some citizens also care. Their blood pressure probably goes up a few points when they read that lawmakers are still in town, haggling over this legislation or that budget item.

But canceled vacations become a way of life for staff members and others who populate the Legislative Building. Later than expected adjournments are part of the turf for lawmakers. And few citizens care enough about session lengths to write a nasty letter to their legislator.

Nonetheless, the General Assembly has tried numerous schemes over the years to reduce the lengths of sessions.

The argument is that longer sessions, along with the prohibitive cost of mounting a campaign, make it impossible for average citizens to serve in the Legislature. North Carolina prides itself on having a part-time, citizen legislature, so much so that there has never been any serious discussion about making service in the General

GUEST COLUMN



Andy Dedmon
North Carolina House

Assembly a full-time job, with a full-time salary. But serving in the General Assembly is taking more and more time. Budget-writing sessions held in odd-numbered years stretch from January until late July. Even-year budget adjustment sessions typically last from late May until late July.

Combined, the two sessions require legislators to spend at least eight months out of 24 in Raleigh. Add to that study commission meetings held between sessions and other duties in the capital and many lawmakers spend several days a month in Raleigh, even when the Legislature is not in session.

As a result, the General Assembly of today is considerably different than two decades ago. There are more retirees, for one thing, and fewer farmers and lawyers.

To reduce the length of sessions, lawmakers have pushed the beginning of the odd-year, budget-writing session to late January, to cut time off the front end. They have pushed the convening earlier in January, to get an earlier start, in hopes they would end earlier.

Legislators also have imposed deadlines on themselves. Bills must be introduced by a certain date. They must clear the chamber of introduction by another date. Those steps were designed to eliminate, or at least reduce, procrastination by lawmakers. That has not stopped the flurry of last-minute legislation, however.

This year, the Senate even passed the nuclear

bomb of proposals to reduce the length of sessions: a constitutional amendment. The bill would give voters an opportunity to amend the state constitution to limit budget-writing sessions to 135 calendar days in budget-writing years and 60 days to adjust the budget.

The proposal passed the Senate in early April but has languished in a House committee, at least in part because the Senate also proposed doubling the terms of its members, from two years to four years.

The Senate approved the proposed constitutional amendment only after a great deal of discussion. Much of the debate centered on methods of making a session limit stick. Some states with limits evade those restrictions by adjourning, then convening a special session.

Lawmakers who have talked to their counterparts from other states know that there are drawbacks to session limits. Significant legislation is put off for years because legislators do not have time to fully study and debate the issues. Bills that do pass are sometimes rushed through at the last minute, often with unintended consequences.

In addition, legislatures that spend less time in session have less of an oversight role over stage government. It's a lot harder to keep the bureaucracy in line when you're not in town.

For those reasons and numerous others, North Carolina's legislators have been reluctant to limit the amount of time they spend in session.

Especially when it's not clear that anyone really cares. Or cares a lot.

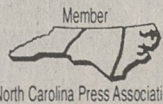
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Sidewalk Survey

• By Lib Stewart

What do you like to do in Day Care?



WHITNEY SCRUGGS
Age 5

"Color and paint."



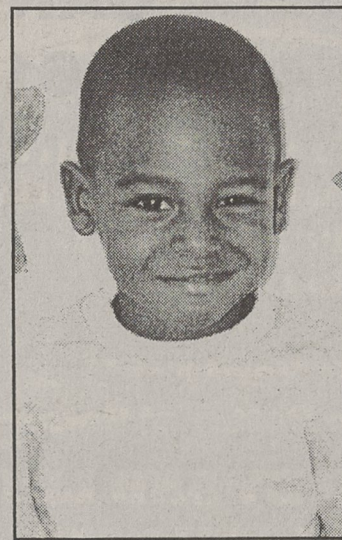
TAYLOR GETTYS
Age 5

"Play games outside."



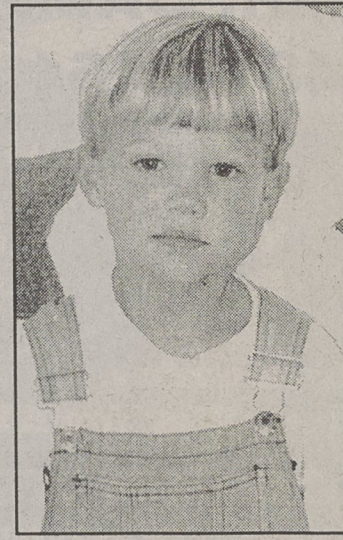
SAVANNAH HORNE
Age 4

"Learn my ABCs."



DAMIAN HILL
Age 4

"I take my lunch every day."



TRAY FUNDERBURKE
Age 4

"I write my name and do art work."