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MAY 2024

ISSUE 24-5

The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

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Leadership

PSALM 7: THE SONG OF THE SLANDERED SAINT

From Pastor Mackay

Imagine someone saying to you, “He called me a bad name!” What context came to your mind? If you’re like me, you think of a group of children. The immature resort to slander, exaggeration, and character-assault. ...If only it were so! Too often we see “debate” as thinly veiled attacks on character. It seems more and more that the way up to levels of power and influence is to work one’s way down to school yard-level insults. What about when Christians are on the receiving end of such lies? How should we respond?

First, let us consider ourselves in good company. Jesus bore innumerable insults (Isa. 53:3); even being called demon-possessed (John 10:20). The same can be said of Jesus’ great predecessor, King David. Many of David’s Psalms reflect on being falsely accused by an enemy. David was anointed as king out of obscurity. He lived several years running from jealous King Saul, whose reign he would inherit. And even after Saul’s death, Saul’s allies persevered against David. Particularly, Saul came from the tribe of Benjamin, and on more than one occasion it is Benjaminites who rise up against David.

Such is the opposition in Psalm 7. Here, David deals with Cush, an otherwise unknown figure. As David reflects on his slander (Charles Spurgeon calls this Psalm the “Song of the Slandered Saint”), we see him rush to God to save him. His opponents are not weaklings! (v. 2) But, David knows that God is stronger. Consider three questions implicit in David’s words that we would do well to ask ourselves in the face of accusation.

Am I guilty? David asks this question in two ways. First, he conditions his prayer for rescue (v. 1) with

the invitation for God to allow victory to his enemies if he has done what they claim. (v. 2-5) Second, he asks God to judge on the basis of his (David’s) righteousness (v. 8). David is not over-estimating his own goodness. He knows he is a sinner. David is not claiming absolute perfection before a Holy God, but is claiming righteousness *in the matter about which he has been accused*. We must be willing for God to use the difficult words of others to open our eyes to our sin (He did for David...2 Sam. 12), but an accusation does not prove guilt!

Is God weak? A constant comfort in the face of unfair accusations is the mighty power of God’s

discerning hand. David’s words show God’s power as a double-edged sword cutting two ways. God is a shield for the upright (v. 10), but he wields his sword and bow against the wicked (v. 13). So often the storm of conflict can seem to take on massive proportions. Yet, David’s words point to the infinitely greater and always mobilized God of power.

Does sin ever prosper? A shocking image is used to characterize the wicked: a pregnant man! It is not life that comes forth from him, but “mischief” and “lies.” (v. 14) However, David’s focus is not on this grotesque image, but on the ironic nature of God’s judgment. All the scheming and lies eventually swallow the one who conceives them (v. 16). Their plots achieve the opposite of their intent! So, Christians need only to

be patient. The prosperity of the wicked may be real in the moment (see Ps 73), but God’s victory is sure.

Our greatest evidence of this comes in the victory of the greater David, Jesus Christ. The false curses of his enemies sent him to the cross, but in his death it is death that is defeated! So, let all Christians facing false accusations take heart and bring thanksgiving to God (v. 17). God’s victory is sure. The wicked will not have the final say. ■

PSALM 7

O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers and deliver me, lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it in pieces, with none to deliver.

O LORD my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause, let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it, and let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah*

Arise, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies; awake for me; you have appointed a judgment. Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you; over it return on high.

The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me. Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may you establish the righteous—you who test the minds and hearts,³ O righteous God! My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.

If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts. Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends.

I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.

You're Invited to a

potluck luncheon

In Honor of
VINCE TREADWAY

Celebrating 14 years of faithful
service as Director of Music and
Congregational Care



SUNDAY, JUNE 9, NOON
FELLOWSHIP HALL

SUMMER SERMON SERIES

*Come and Worship:
Psalms of Ascent*

Beginning May 19th

These Psalms all share the designation that they are for the occasion of "going up." In Old Testament Israel, anyone going to Jerusalem was said to "go up." This referenced Jerusalem's altitude and setting among the hills of Judea. Even more, this "elevation change" referred to the worshipper's approach to God himself. Pray that God will use his Word to lift up our eyes to Jesus!

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are highlights from the meeting on April 30, 2024.

- Prayer was given for our the needs of our congregation and the ministries of our church. Elders prayed particularly for members on their Shepherd Lists.
- Norm and Andy Knepper, Silas Coker, and Bob and Tess Yost were received into communicant membership.
- The Director of Music Ministry Search Committee will host a candidate visit in May.
- The Discipleship Committee will host two Fellowship events over the summer. A Cardboard Regatta for all ages will be June 2, and a Parents Night Out on August 9.
- The Evangelism Committee is exploring a possible short-term mission trip opportunity with the Bridge Europe team of World Witness. The committee is also exploring the sponsorship of a staff member of PAK7.
- The Stewardship and Finance committee reported March revenues at 179.2% of budget. The operating account balance is \$262,448. Thanks was given to God for his provision. ■

PRAYER FOCUS

- MAY 5** - Refugees/Bridge Europe
- MAY 12** - Mothers Day
- MAY 19** - Graduates
- MAY 26** - Memorial Day

Mission & Outreach

PHOTOS FROM WORLD WITNESS DINNER



Discipleship

PRISON MINISTRY AND WHY YOU SHOULD READ JONATHAN EDWARDS

From Pastor Myers

A couple weeks ago, I had the privilege of serving on the Kairos prison ministry team as a clergy member and volunteer.

The mission of the Kairos weekend is pretty simple: preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. *Listen Listen, Love Love.* We gave talks, we enjoyed good food together, we prayed for one another, and we held discussions with participants about how each of us hoped to apply the messages we were hearing.

By the end of the weekend, many participants expressed that our ministry was a great blessing to them. But I can easily say that we were every bit as much blessed by their ministry to us as well. There was not a single day during the Kairos weekend that I didn't walk out of the institution more built up in my faith.

Why? Because during my time ministering to prisoners, I did not see much in the way of "frozen chosen" syndrome. I did not see much dead orthodoxy or "ortho-dusty" as one writer puts it. What I saw instead was a wonderful display of what the book of Acts refers to as the Gospel "cutting to the heart." The things of Christ MATTERED to the people we ministered to. The gospel wasn't assumed. The gospel didn't suffer from the contempt which often accompanies familiarity.

Were some of the religious affections expressed fraudulent? Sure. Will some of the participants' attempts to commit or recommit their lives to Christ end in relapse and a betrayal of Christ? Almost certainly.

But based on the testimonies I've heard of how God has used Kairos over the course of multiple decades, these instances appear to be relatively few and far between. The track record suggests that God is truly at work. And that leaves us, First Presbyterian Church Lake Wales, with some questions to wrestle with.

Does the Gospel MATTER to us? Do the things of God CUT us to the heart as they regularly did

amongst the Kairos participants? Or do we sometimes fall victim to the "frozen chosen" "ortho-dusty" stereotype? If we do, how might we grow in our heat (affections) for the Lord as well as in our light (doctrinal precision) for the Lord?

The answer to growing in our heat is NOT to dim down the lights. Dumbing down our theology is not the way to grow our hearts in love for the Lord. Rather, the answer lies in the attitude with which we pursue doctrinal faithfulness. When we pursue biblical faithfulness and good works, it should be with an attitude of profound humility and joyful lowliness. When this happens, theology need not puff us up in pride. Rather, it can build us up in love.

Finding models and exemplars who strike this balance is not easy. Some teachers and Christian writers emphasize theological precision at the expense of the affections, others emphasize the affections at the expense of theological precision. But a starting place I'd like to suggest as a model to learn from would be Jonathan Edwards.

Edwards was the theological engine behind the first Great Awakening of the early and mid 1700s in America. Many scholars not only consider Edwards to be America's greatest theologian but also her greatest philosopher. Edwards' logic was razor sharp and his Reformed orthodoxy intact. Yet the impression one gets when he reads Edwards is the same impression one gets when he preaches the Gospel to prisoners: the Gospel MATTERED to Edwards. Despite being a genius, Edwards was a remarkably and contagiously humble man. God was a person who Edwards loved, not simply a theological concept that Edwards wrote about.

Jonathan Edwards has profoundly helped me in my relationship with God and in how I think about ministry. I warmly recommend him to you as well.

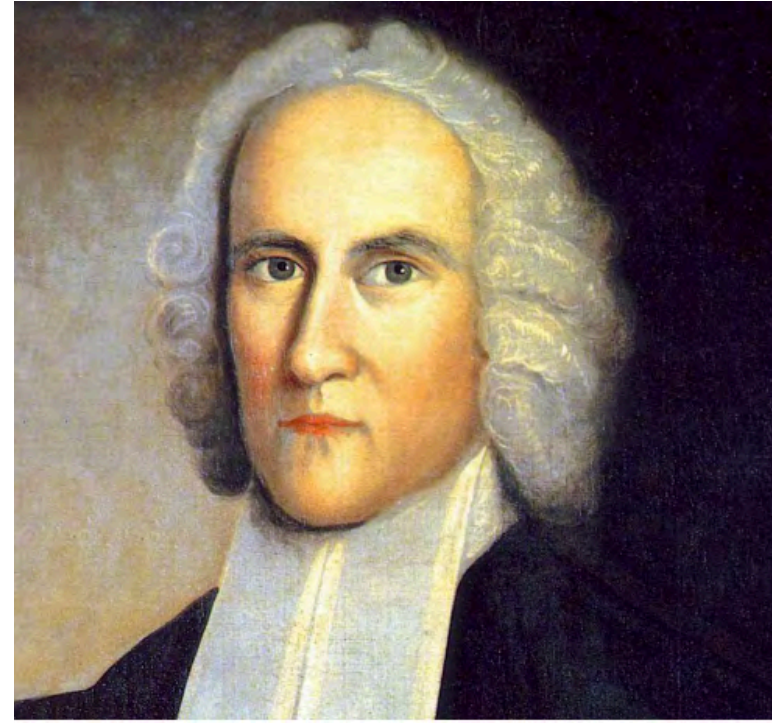
Most people are familiar with his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God", but that is just the tip of Edwards iceberg.

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I would suggest reading sermons such as “God Glorified in Man’s Dependence”, “The Prayer Hearing God”, or “Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God” amongst others. They can be found for free online.

Edwards was, of course, just a man. He had flaws in his theology and he had flaws in his life. But few uninspired authors have ever, I think, done a better job of helping the church grow in both theological faithfulness and in awe and love for God than Jonathan Edwards. He will send you to the Bible feeling like a prisoner who has just been released if you read him carefully and patiently. ■



ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

The Final ROW before Summer Break is MAY 22

Want to help?

Contact Pastor Myers

(Discipleship Committee chair)
if you’d like to help with...

- Kitchen crew/clean-up
- Children’s programming
- Fellowship Night programs

Summer Breather Series

JULY 7TH, 14TH, 21ST & 28TH

Christians are not people whose humanity is done away with by grace. Rather, Christians are people whose humanity is restored by grace. And what does it mean to be human? When God made man and woman, he told them that is good, very good, in fact, for them to be fruitful and to multiply, to exercise dominion and to subdue (Genesis 1:28, 31). In other words, God is saying, to be truly human means to build, not to destroy.

Join us this July for our combined Discipleship Hour Class on Cultural Apologetics entitled **The Songs We Sing By Babylon’s Waters**. The title is taken from Psalm 137, where the psalmist wrestles with the fact that God’s people live in a culture that is not their own, that they live in enemy occupied territory. The psalmist’s situation mirrors our own.

What, then, should God’s people do? On the one hand, the psalmist certainly agrees with the Apostle Paul that we should work towards and pray for the destruction of evil strongholds (compare Ps 137:7-9 and 2 Corinthians 10:4-6). Part of our calling is to destroy. But part of our

calling is also to continue to be human, in other words, to build. Our calling is not simply to critique but also to sing.

The psalmist poses a question in Psalm 137:4, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” Our combined discipleship class in July will seek to answer that question by building a 4-fold biblical vision for the good, a diamond with 4 facets, a song with 4 verses. The song we sing may at times feel like a cold and broken hallelujah, but it is a hallelujah built on the eternal hope of the Gospel. Join us, then, as we consider

- 1)The Goodness of Nature
- 2)The Goodness of Truth
- 3)The Goodness of Innocence and
- 4)The Goodness of Forgiveness.

These are things for which our culture cries out and they are things which God has freely given to us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the worldview which arises from it. ■

WHO WAS MOZART?

From Vince Treadway

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) contributed a prolific library of music to the world that could be considered sublime, simple, elegant, beautiful and memorable. Joannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart, his full name, was born in Salzburg, Germany. Mozart and his sister, Nannerl, were the only two of seven children to survive of his siblings. Mozart's incredible propensity for musical performance and composition was evident at a young age, so much so that his father abandoned his own work in order to concentrate his efforts on the development of his son's talent and career. Although many children display gifts of performance at an early age, it is rare for a child to have such a native urge to compose along with his performing prodigy as was the case with Mozart.

It is difficult to determine exactly when he wrote his first pieces because his father transcribed them, and it is not known how much if any of the work was Leopold's. Most sources agree that Mozart's first pieces were simple clavier (piano) pieces and were composed when he was five. He began formal clavier lessons with his father when he was four, and in fact received all of his education from his father. Mozart's interest in math was evidenced in his letters and by the scribbling of mathematical figures along the sides of his scores. Mozart had an incredible ability to reproduce and improve upon music which he had simply heard. He could determine what key a piece was written in and what instruments it was scored for having only heard it once!

Mozart's public life began in 1761 at the age of five when he became a chorister in a Latin comedy in Salzburg. Shortly thereafter, Mozart's father took his family on a concert tour to expose young Mozart and his sister to as many opportunities for performance as possible as well as to gain patronage from generous nobles and royalty. The travel schedule was intense, taking them to France, England, Holland, Italy, and Vienna as well as to principal cities in Germany. Mozart performed on clavier, harpsichord, organ and violin, even though he had never studied

violin. It was not uncommon for Mozart to be tested by those for whom he performed. These tests consisted of anything from improvisation on a theme just handed to him to improvising on a theme and variations with one finger from each hand and his hands covered with a cloth. When Mozart was not performing, he behaved as one might expect any child to, and felt free to play with the children of the nobles and royalty.

He was a fun-loving person with a great sense of humor, and as he grew older his humor included rhyme, phrases in foreign languages, and sometimes crude language. While there are many rumors about Mozart's moral conduct being poor, there is no evidence to support that notion.

Mozart did eventually marry Constanze, much against his father's wishes, and was not very wise with his financial affairs. He and his wife spent the money they earned on a lavish lifestyle when they had it, and had to beg from friends and family when they did not. He was never able to secure a good paying position, and lived on income he received from his private students and from commissioned works. Fortunately, composing came quite easily for Mozart, and in fact he did all of his composing in his head before he wrote it down on paper! There are no corrections in Mozart's handwritten scores!

Mozart wrote literally hundreds of works for clavier (piano), orchestra, chorus, soloists, chamber music, major choral works, sacred music, sonatas, cantatas, operas, ballet music, arias for voice and orchestra, songs, symphonies, dance music, music for wind ensembles and string quartets, concertos for piano, trumpet, bassoon, oboe, flute, horn, chamber music and miscellaneous works—all this and more by the age of 35! While Mozart did not write anything for solo organ, there are several of his compositions for mechanical clocks that have been transcribed for organ, and they are wonderful!

Mozart's life ended tragically and abruptly on December 5, 1791 at the age of 35. He was diagnosed as having rheumatic inflammatory fever. He was buried in a common grave, and the location is unknown. His wife and children were able to survive on his estate, the sale of his manuscripts, and a pension which they received from the court. ■

Family Ministry

WORDS FROM WALKER

From Walker Kirkpatrick

Hi Everyone!

We have almost made it! Summer begins in a matter of weeks! At least that's what I'm told, but the weather seems to be thinking it's already started. Either way, what a blur this past school year has been. We have done so much and have so much more ahead. Below helps summarize what is in store for this summer!

First off, starting in June, Youth Group will no longer meet weekly. We will meet about 4 times total this summer (June-July), mainly revolving around when camps and trips are not happening. During this time we will finish up our current study of Isaiah and jump into a new short summer study of 1 Peter.

Secondly, we will not be meeting as a separate Youth Sunday School. We will join in with the Hub for the majority of the summer! Youth Sunday School will resume in August.

Thirdly, as we are not having ROW, we will also not be having Youth Bible Study every other week on Wednesday nights. Youth Bible Study will resume when ROW resumes in September. We will be having other events each month and sporadically throughout the summer, so be on the lookout for announcements in the bulletin and in the Diligent!

Check out the summer calendar below for dates of camps, trips, youth groups, and more!

Thanks so much and God Bless!

Walker ■



2024 MAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28	29	30	1	2	3 FILM FRIDAY	4
5 Sunday School Youth Group	6	7	8 ROW Youth Bible Study	9	10	11
12 Sunday School Youth Group	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Sunday School Youth Group	20	21	22 ROW Youth Bible Study	23	24	25
26 Sunday School Youth Group	27	28	29 NO ROW	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8

2024 JUNE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2 FamilyFunDay Cardboard Regatta	3 H	4 S	5 C	6 H	7 FILM FRIDAY	8 T
9 YOUTH GROUP	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 Q	18 U	19 E	20 S	21 T	22 T
23	24 H	25 O	26 R	27 I	28 Z	29 O
30 YOUTH GROUP	1	2	3	4	5	6

2024 JULY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	1	2	3	4	5 FILM FRIDAY	6
7 YOUTH GROUP	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 C	22 A	23 R	24 E	25 S	26 T	27 A
28 YOUTH GROUP	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

May 3, Gracie Berkau
May 3, Fox Rawlings
May 3, Charles Schmidt
May 5, Parker Matteson
May 6, Luke Cain
May 8, Trish Kohl
May 8, Aaron Nelson
May 10, Dale Bourdette
May 10, Tatum Lewis
May 13, Becky Steverson
May 13, Jackie Jones
May 15, Gene Glentzer
May 18, Kandi Lamb
May 19, Milo Miller
May 19, Ruth Gilman
May 19, Thomas Mullins
May 21, Beth Buhrman
May 23, Chuck Clegg
May 27, Major John Benner
May 27, Ronald Horn
May 27, Chris Bachman
May 29, Donna Marie Richert
May 30, LaLa Ingram
May 30, Diana Schmidt
May 31, Venada Peeples

ANNIVERSARIES

Michelle & Stewart Hurst, May 2
Rachel & Mackay Smith, May 4
Libby & Michael Matteson, May 16
Debra & Tom Mullins, May 16

Church Family

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

In lieu of Fine Arts camp, we're looking to have two summer events for families and kids.

Sunday, June 2nd

FAMILY FUN DAY

Featuring The Cardboard Regatta

Friday, August 9th

PARENTS NIGHT OUT

Featuring Magic by Mark Markham

More Information to come!

**Children & Youth Sunday School
will be on break for the months
of June & July**



MAY 30

In honor of the 80th anniversary of D-Day coming up on June 6, *The Diligent* will be rerunning an article series first shared 10-15 years ago. Fox Rawlings collected the stories of several WWII veterans who were also brothers in Christ, Lake Wales citizens, and attended our church. May we remember their stories, honor their sacrifice, but mostly rejoice in their faith-made-sight as they are all with Christ in glory!

BREAKFAST WITH THE GREATEST GENERATION

From Fox Rawlings

EDWIN ALBRITTON 1921-2014

Edwin Albritton has been a fixture at the Men's Prayer Breakfast for many years. I have known Mr. Albritton (as I call him with respect) for many more years than that ...ever since I married into a Baptist family who was very close friends with the Albrittons some thirty years ago. Until recently I never knew that he served in the Army Air Force in WWII as a navigator on B29 bombers. That Edwin has spent a life of service in Lake Wales as a well respected member of the citrus industry and local church family fails to include what he did in service to our country.

Edwin's military career began in Montgomery, Alabama in 1942 at Maxwell Field where he was assigned to navigation school based on his mathematical aptitude. Upon completion of preflight training he was stationed in Albany, Georgia and Monroe, Louisiana before settling in Brooksville, Florida with the Army Air Force Tactical unit. It was here that Edwin honed his skills as a navigator on B17 bombers on simulated combat missions over the Gulf of Mexico, and from Florida to Louisiana.

Training in the new B29 "Superfortress" for nine months in Texas and Nebraska prepared Mr. Albritton to head to the Pacific Theatre on the island of Tinian in 1945. It was from this island that B29s would fly 13-14 hour missions and bomb Japan. It was also from this island that the atomic bomb was delivered to Hiroshima and Nagasaki which effectively ended WWII.

Two separate thoughts came to Edwin's mind when I asked him if he had any specific memories of his military career which included ten combat missions to Japan. He first thought back to a training flight in Brooksville where a P47 narrowly missed colliding with the B17 he was flying in. Edwin was close enough to remember the frantic look on the pilot of the P47 as he pushed his stick forward and seemed to fly

between the props of the B17. Then he told me of a young navigator still in his teens that he befriended on Tinian. He remembered this man as a talented pianist and organist for church services and a genuinely nice guy.

Edwin and his friend were on separate bombers on the same mission to Japan when they encountered a fierce storm that forced both bombers out of their flight plan and threatened to leave them lost and short of fuel on their return to the airbase. As it turned out, both B-29s made their way back to Tinian with crews intact. Edwin noted that his friend was shaken by this experience and offered to go with him as support on his next mission. The young man told Edwin that he was confident of his navigation skills and would be alright. Mr. Albritton then told me that his navigator friend's plane and crew were lost during their next mission. He told me he doubted he would have made a difference but was strongly affected by the loss of this promising young man's life. He said it showed him how the decision of one person during wartime could mean the difference between life and death.

"How did this experience affect my life? I had been an agnostic – neither confirming nor denying a belief of a God of the Universe. Those 30 minutes of flying at night in a terrible storm expecting to crash into Mt. Fuji at 200mph crystallized my thinking. I came to a belief that there is a God of the Universe. Upon returning, I bowed my head and my heart before him and promised to serve faithfully if I survived the war. I survived and this I have done."

Thanks for all you did and have done Mr. Albritton.

GENE CAMPBELL 1927-2013

When you visit with Gene Campbell what comes to mind...college professor or Merchant Marine. Well as a matter of fact he was both, and here is a little of his story. The Merchant Marines had

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the highest casualty rate of any of the armed forces during World War II. They were responsible for transporting the troops and supplies that fueled the American war effort in the South Pacific and Europe. Gene Campbell joined the Merchant Marines at age 17 and left for basic training on Catalina Island, California the night of his high school graduation ceremony in Dewey, Oklahoma. This was in May 1945 when there was no reason to believe the war would be ending within the year. It was on this island at the Boston Red Sox spring training center that Gene learned skills such as lifeboat and abandon ship drills, swimming under water covered with burning oil and the operation of 22mm machine guns. Upon finishing basic training he was assigned as an Ordinary Seaman and Deck Hand.

About the time Gene was heading to St. Pedro, California to board his first ship, the SS Pat Douhine, WWII ended in Japan. Of course so soon after the official end of the war, there were still submarines and mines in the waters which did not altar the level of danger these cargo ships were exposed to. During the next four weeks Gene got his sea legs making two round trips to Portland delivering diesel fuel. When I asked Gene if he had any humorous anecdotes he could tell, he recalled the first orders he received on the Pat Douhine...he was assigned the 4 to 8 watch by the Bolsen who asked if Gene would like to turn to. Gene said, "sure," not knowing exactly what 'turn to' meant. Fellow shipmates 'educated' him and directed him to his bunk for a nap. After finding him asleep the Bolsen ever so gently informed Gene that 'turn to' meant get to work...NOT take an afternoon snooze.

Following these round trips Gene hitchhiked back home to Dewey for a couple of weeks then on to Houston for the beginning of a nine month cruise on the S.T. Fort Matanzas. This trip took him from Houston through the Panama Canal and on to the Pacific where they discharged oil from Pearl Harbor to Tinian to New Guinea to Australia where they emptied their stock. From there they headed to Arabia to reload fuel and return to the U.S.A. via Ceylon, Singapore, Okinawa, Yokohama and Tokyo where as providence would have it Gene met up with two classmates from Dewey, OK. You can only image their thoughts as they all wondered how in the world three buddies from a small rural

town in Oklahoma ended up in Tokyo, Japan... much less at the same time. As his journey ended in New Orleans, Gene laughed when he told me that both of his first two trips as a merchant marine ended with the decommissioning of his ships.

After delivering a shipload of wheat to the starving citizens of Poland, Gene decided to wrap up his career in the Merchant Marines in September 1947 and get to the business of educating himself for the future. This is the story of the greatest generation that is as important to our country as the honorable military feats they accomplished. Gene, along with many other veterans under the GI Bill, enrolled in Northeastern State University at Tahlequah, OK, in 1947. Two things happened here that guided his future. Most importantly he met his future wife Willa in his first class in college which was a biology lab. Secondly, when faced with the prospect of nowhere to live because of the crowd of veterans enrolled, he happened to run across his hometown Boy Scout leader walking through campus. Gene was invited to live with his family which he and five other guys did for their entire college career. Following graduation from college, Gene became an educator for the next thirty five years.

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Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial just before taps



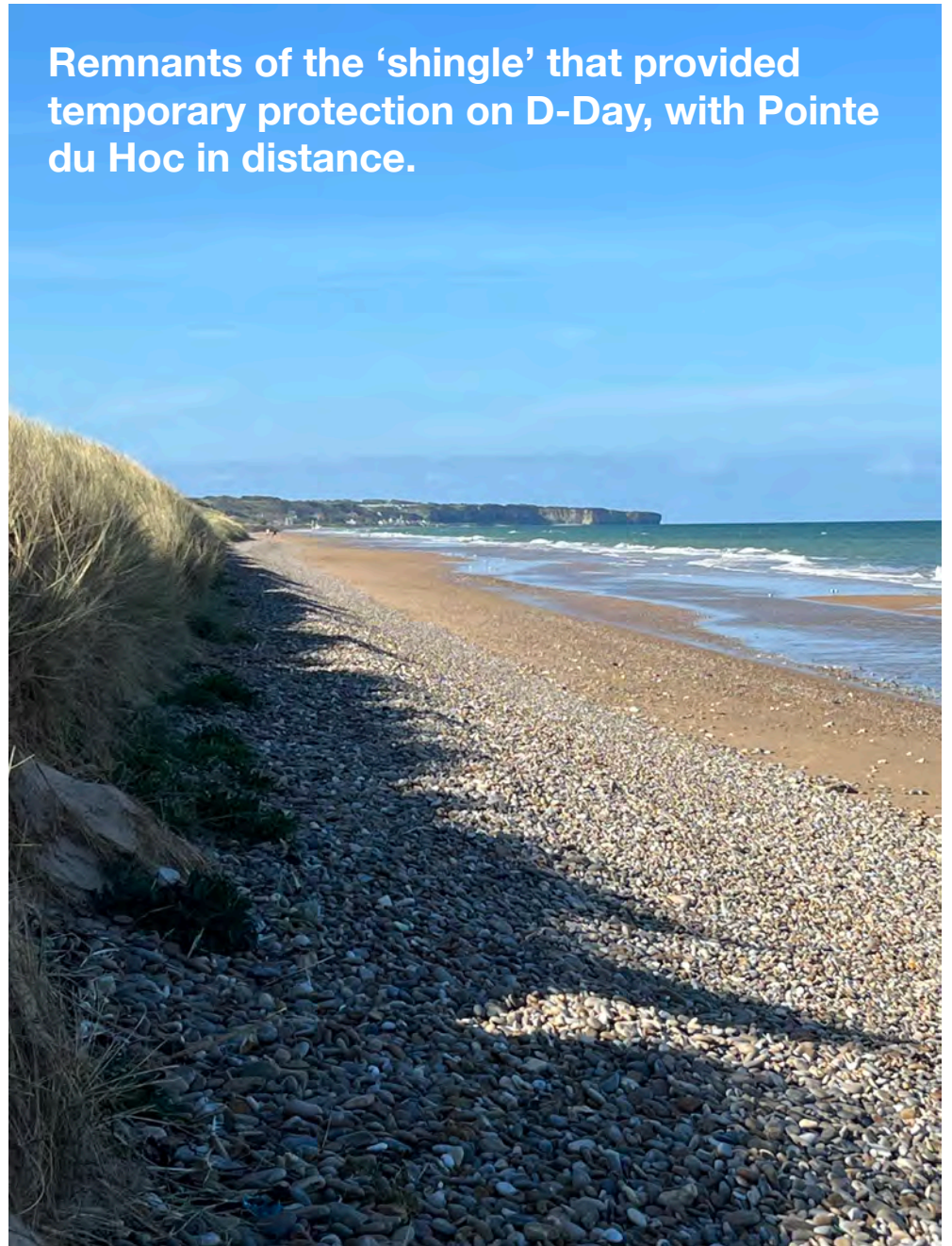
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His career ranged from elementary school teacher in Oklahoma to Assistant Professor at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. As America emerged from the post war era, it became obvious that education was critical to our society. From the time Gene began teaching at St. Cloud in 1963 until 1986, the student population rose from 1,500 to 16,000 students. I believe our country was blessed by having veterans educating and mentoring the baby boomers. I also believe the personification of the WWII generation is exemplified by the fact that Gene and Willa did not forget the generosity of his Boy Scout leader while attending college. The Campbells purchased a home in St. Cloud that was much larger than their family needed so that they could house students in need. Gene said that they routinely offered rooms to students that were members of Campus Crusade for Christ and Youth for Christ at little to no rent.

Even though Gene said he did not share many Merchant Marine stories with his students over the years, I'm confident that his experiences and service to his country formed a foundation from which he taught. When I asked Gene why the

Merchant Marines, he responded that he was ready to see more of the world than a horse pond in Dewey, Oklahoma. I believe he did just that. ■

Remnants of the 'shingle' that provided temporary protection on D-Day, with Pointe du Hoc in distance.



Normandy American Cemetery on bluff overlooking Omaha Beach. This sacred ground contains the graves of 9,387 of our military dead, most of who lost their lives in the D-Day landings and ensuing operations.



Omaha Beach view from a German bunker.



Photos by Fox Rawlings during 2022 Normandy Trip



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 fpclw.org

CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

2024

Daniel Hunt
 David Nelson
 Andy Hunt

2026

Stewart Hurst
 Ed Lamb
 Jimmy Seay

2025

Tony Woods
 Jim Underwood

2027

Chuck Loveless
 Willard Pearce
 Fox Rawlings

DEACONS

2024

Leah Gibson
 Dan Miller

2026

Aaron Nelson

2025

June Ullman
 Cindy Turner

Moderator: Rev. Mackay Smith
Clerk of Session: David Nelson
Chairman of Deacons: Dan Miller
Deacon Secretary:
Chm. of the Congregation: Jim Weaver
Treasurer: Michelle Hurst
Asst. Treasurer: Daniel Hunt