

CHURCH TURMOIL

What's Your Address? Where Are You Living?

Discussion

When Sherrie and I relocated to Virginia in 2001, it represented for me my 28th address. During my childhood, my mom and dad moved often. To the best that I can recall, the longest that I've ever lived anywhere was twenty-two months. Changing homes and schools became routine; and often these changes would occur in the middle of a school year, or the middle of summer vacation and with little or no notice. When I finished high school and began my career in the U.S. Air Force, things didn't improve. Many assignments ranged only a year or so each -- one assignment lasted only eighty-nine days. Over a twenty-year career, I have lived and worked in several countries in Europe and Asia, several states in the continental U.S., plus assignments in both Hawaii and Alaska. My civilian career hasn't seen much change in that pattern either, as Sherrie and I have lived in many states across the U.S. with Virginia representing my 28th home.



Upon reflection, I've come to realize that God was introducing me to change. In fact, my life has been a constant series of changes -- both physically and spiritually -- just as Christ intended it. Nothing in today's world is constant, nor is anything constant within us -- except the God who saves us.

I'm also sure that you, like myself, have thought back to your childhood days and have sometimes longed for those "simpler" times when everything seemed constant and unchanging. It's funny how our minds and memories play tricks on us -- filtering out all of the bad reflections of days gone by. The reality is, that if you've ever traveled back to past places that you've lived, you quickly discover that nothing is constant and everything is always in a state of change.

Yes, change is everywhere. I can still remember driving places using a folded paper map and keeping coins in the car, so that when I got lost I could pull over and use a pay phone. Buying something you couldn't get in a store, or because you weren't near one, was only accomplished through the Sears Catalog; and airline reservations required a reservation and a paper ticket that you'd better not lose!

As we face the days ahead, I'm asking myself "What's my address?" Where am I living? In the past or in the present? As I long for "the good old days", when it was comfortable, I quickly realize that if the church had stayed in the good old days, we'd still be wearing cloaks and sandals and singing psalms written by David as the harps and lyres played softly in the background. Can you envision our worship starting with the blast of a ram's horn and the unscrolling of the papyrus of that Sunday's Biblical text?

Today I invite you to look around at Southview and see the change that has already engulfed us. The new faces on visitors -- and even the large number of them -- is a change; the new demographics that surround the church is a change from just five years ago. Today we are surrounded by lots of young families just getting started raising a family, and a ton of young college graduates just starting a career. We have a new praise team, a new leadership team, a new form of governance called the Elders, and lots of new children and young people. New challenges surface everyday as the Lord grows the church at Southview and we are experiencing -- for a change -- a renewed sense of opportunity and excitement. All are happening at Southview -- we even have a new weekend celebration called "New Beginnings". Anyone can easily see that change is sweeping in and engulfing us all.

In Romans Chapter 12, Christ commands us to be transformed through the renewing of our minds. It is a transformation that takes time, and it is a transformation that will change us dramatically. Just as coal is transformed into a diamond, limestone into marble, and caterpillars into butterflies, we are to be changed and transformed into His likeness.

As I face the days ahead, I've pledged to Him that I will keep my address in the present -- always living there -- while striving toward the mark of the high calling of Christ, and watching diligently for His second coming. I challenge you to make that same commitment. Let's keep our eyes fixed on the Cross and go in search of the lost -- changing as we go -- not to conform to this world, but rather being transformed into the likeness of the very Jesus who died and rose again to give us a hope, a future, and eternal blessings. Change is coming to Southview and praise be to the God of Heaven and Earth who is bringing it.

In Christ,

Wes