



IPC Messenger

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Mother Church

Years ago I watched a series of interviews on the television of inmates at the state prison. They were asked about their background, their family life, their parents. Several of them mentioned what losers their fathers were: harsh, cruel, negligent, drunks, etc. Yet without exception they warmly commended their mothers. “She was a good woman,” they’d say. Or, “She had a good heart.” William Fox (1879-1952), founder of Fox Film, which eventually would merge into movie giant Twentieth Century Fox, according to his recent biographer hated his father, who was an adulterer and indifferent to his children. When his father died he cursed his corpse and spit on his coffin. Yet he adored his mother. Why the contrast? Because with few exceptions mother-love prevails. Those who bear, birth and nurture children establish a bond with those children that perseveres. Even hardened criminals, calloused to all that is good and worthwhile, recognize its depth and beauty and appreciate it. The unparalleled strength of mother-love lies behind the rhetorical question of Isaiah 49:15:

*“Can a woman forget her nursing child,
that she should have no compassion
on the son of her womb?
Even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you.”*

The Reformers enthusiastically employed the metaphor of motherhood found in Galatians 4:6 (“the Jerusalem above... is our mother”). The church, says Luther in his *Large Catechism*, “is the mother that

brings to birth and sustains every Christian through the Word of God.” Calvin entitles Book IV of the *Institutes*, “The true Church, and the Necessity of our Union with Her, *Being the Mother of all the Faithful*.” Calvin said of the *visible* (not the invisible) church,

[L]et us learn even from the simple title “mother” how useful, indeed how necessary, it is that we should know [the church]. For there is no other way to enter life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels. Our weakness does not allow us to be dismissed from her school until we have been pupils all our lives. Furthermore, away from her bosom one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation.

“Note that the church, here called ‘Mother,’ is the *visible* church,” says John McNeil in his footnotes accompanying the standard translation of the *Institutes*, “and that the mother function of the church, bearing and nourishing believers, is *necessary to salvation*.” “The church,” says Calvin in his commentary on Ephesians 4:11-13, “is the common mother of all the godly, which bears, nourishes, and governs in the Lord both kings and commoners; and this is done by the ministry.” Calvin endorsed another of Cyprian’s sayings, “that he who would have God as his father *must have the church as his mother*.”

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Puritan authors regularly utilized the nourishing metaphor of motherhood, portraying the believer as a child nursing at the breasts of mother church, those breasts representing the means of grace. “Lie sucking at this breast,” says William Gurnall (1617-1679) of the ordinances of the church in his classic *The Christian in Complete Armour*, “and that often.” John Cotton (1584-1652), minister of First Church, Boston, published in 1646 a catechism for children entitled *Milk for Babes: Drawn Out of the Breasts of Both Testaments*, a work which remained in print for over 200 years. This is typical of post-Reformation Protestantism. The Apostle Paul himself utilizes this metaphor in describing his own ministry.

But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. (1 Thess 2:7)

Believers are likened to “newborn infants” who “long for pure spiritual milk” which, of course, newborns access from their mothers (1 Peter 2:2). The metaphor of mother church, from which believers draw their vital sustenance, is fully justified from Scripture. Mother church conceives and carries us and bears us in her womb and feeds us at her breasts. Her love for us, our dependence upon her, and our indebtedness to her demands our loving affection in return. What we owe to our natural mothers we owe to our spiritual mother as well. This means not merely an annual “Mother’s Day” card. It means a consistent pattern of gratitude, care, provision, and service. A higher doctrine of the visible church, lest it be the overwrought Roman Catholic, is hardly imaginable. D. G. Hart, in his book *Recovering Mother Kirk*, rightly urges Presbyterians “to abandon the notion of the church as personal trainer” and to recover “Calvin’s idea of the church as mother.”

—TLJ

MISSIONS MINISTRY

40 DAYS FOR LIFE

Independent Presbyterian Church participated in the 40 Days for Life Campaign. Last year the campaign began on September 27th. I wondered, how did this campaign begin? What I learned encouraged me and I hope that it may encourage many of you as well.

Bryan/College Station, Texas, home to Texas A&M University, held the first 40 Days of Life Campaign. In 1998, one woman’s response to the Planned Parenthood announcement of a new clinic soon to open in Bryan Valley resulted in 60 churches joining together to prevent the establishment of this facility. These determined Pro-Life advocates formed the Brazos Valley Coalition for Life and began the work of opposing Planned Parenthood in their community. Despite their efforts, the clinic opened in short time.

In 2004, four members of the Brazos Valley Coalition decided to meet for one hour of prayer. What should they do to bring an end to abortion in their city? How would God use them to bring a message of the truth about the unborn to their neighbors? Compelled to begin the 40 Days for Life, these four outlined three clear objectives:

- 1) Prayer and Fasting
- 2) Community Outreach
- 3) Constant, Peaceful, Vigil

They knew that there was a possibility that the four of them would be the only participants, but they committed to seeing the 960-hour, 40-day vigil out themselves. To their joy, God sent over 1,000 volunteers. This host of faithful, hardworking servants put their hands to the task of reaching 25,000 homes with the message of protecting our unborn, our most vulnerable family members, in addition to praying. They witnessed a 28% reduction in local abortions that year.

In the years since, the 40 Days of Life has grown into a global event that includes 44 countries. Their website listed (at the time of writing this) the number of infants rescued since it began as 13,417 along with 90 abortion clinics that have closed and 154 abortion workers who have professed faith in Christ and left behind their careers in the abortion industry. And what about that Planned Parenthood Clinic that fueled that one woman’s determination to keep abortion away from Bryan Valley? It closed in 2013 and two former abortionists opened their practice in that building.

It is evident that fervent prayer and commitment pleases the Lord. After the manner of the coalition in Texas, members of Independent Presbyterian Church went to the clinic in Savannah on Thursday, October 12th. They prayed and shared the Gospel in peaceful vigil and community outreach. A few people accepted reading material, but most refused to stop. The laborers stayed through the heat and the heartache all day long. They represented us well. I was encouraged to read about this campaign, and I was encouraged by the involvement of our own Moral Concerns Committee and this congregation.

Submitted by Amy Orellana

COLLEGE MINISTRY

The experience of reading through the Old Testament as a new convert, and even a seasoned believer, is an interesting one. There is a lot of plowing, of pushing through seemingly meaningless genealogies, foreign place names, weird rituals, and blueprints for everything from tables to temples. It can be quite boring at times if we are completely honest. The reading can feel redundant, repetitive, and even forgettable. There are the moments of curiosity when we read the meticulous attention to detail – the kidneys go there, the blood is splattered here and smeared on the priest's right ear, thumb, and big toe?! God can appear hard and severe commanding the slaughter of nations, the dashing of babies on stones, and the stoning of the man who picks up sticks on the Sabbath. Doubts in his goodness are often stirred. The whole is filled with many strange characters. Often the righteous are odious while the wicked inspire compassion.

But then in the midst of all this, there are moments of illumination when suddenly we see the face of Jesus shining in the most unexpected places. Of course the righteous are odious and the wicked inspire compassion because Christ has mercy upon the wicked and clothes our detestable ways in his righteousness. In his light it is clear, the smallest reliance upon our own work in the Day of such salvation is deadly, even if only equivalent to the gathering of twigs. He has been hard and severe on his Son so that he might be merciful to us. Any who reject such mercy dash themselves on the hard severity of that mercy. We realize God is in the details for our sakes, numbering even the hairs on our head and all the more so as it relates to that once-for-all sacrifice for our sin which, according to the psalmist, outnumber such hairs:

“... *My iniquities have overtaken me... they are more than the hairs of my head.*” (Ps. 40:12)

Truly we find that in and through all these writings, stories, and rituals God the Father has been bearing witness to his Son. As we read, it was there all along and we had not seen it. He who is suddenly so clearly there now, was there then, and will be there again.

Why do I share this?

Because I think that life and ministry are like this. They are filled with a lot of plowing, repetition, strange curiosities, and a sense that nothing is happening. But then there come moments when we realize Jesus is, has been, and will be at work. So it is with the college ministry. Just recently one of the college students mentioned that the carriage house has been their favorite place in Savannah, and another sat at our table listening to and rejoicing in the Gospel.

These moments encourage us to continue. We keep on plowing through the boredom of repetition, in the midst of curiosity, and doubts, and confusion with heightened expectation and hope, knowing that he whom we have seen will come again. And such hope and expectation change everything as we, with the Spirit and the Bride, cry: “Come Lord Jesus!”

And when we say it, we mean everything that it implies.

We cry, “come here now” in our lives and among our friends, family and neighbors, come and remind us that even we Gentiles are swept up in the covenant love of the LORD who brought Israel from the house of Egyptian bondage and come, demonstrate as a foretaste now what will be on that final day – God in Christ by the Holy Spirit saves.

Thus with expectation and hope in the promise of the Lord's blessing, we will continue to have Saturday coffee at the carriage house, regular lunch gatherings on Sunday after the morning service, and we plan to add a monthly meal for any interested SCAD students (which, if it grows, may need more than one host!).

–Evan Gear

Children's Ministry

Please be in prayer for our families at Independent Presbyterian Church as they start a new year. With the snow melted and everyone back at their school work and extra curricular activities, please pray a hedge around them. It is so important and defining for children to have family time at home without the distractions of hectic schedules. Let us all pray that God would give them opportunities to fellowship, eat, and worship together.

Would you please pray for those that teach our children in Sunday School and Children's Church? What a blessing to have faithful members that come along beside our parents to teach our children. Thank you Linden Helmly, Sue Hinely, Charlie Martin, Bev Van Grouw and the host of others that teach our Children's Church.

Amy R. Martin

MEMORIZATION RECOGNITION

Congratulations to **Julia Grace Miles** and **Ruth Ann Sutton** who have completed Level 1 of the memorization program. They recited word perfect the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed. They will be recognized in one of our Sunday worship services where they will receive an award of achievement as well as a gift card and candy. Please take a moment to congratulate them.

Time Together

**W.O.C. SATURDAY MORNING COFFEES
FEBRUARY 17, 2018
9:30–11:30**

Continuing with the ideas that we spoke about during our W.O.C. Annual Meeting and Tea in November, we want the women of our church to have more time together for developing relationships. Our November meeting gave us the opportunity for all of the women of our church to be together at one time. Our coffees in February will give us the opportunity to break up into smaller groups for more conversation. We will break up into two groups for our coffees in two different locations. The Garmer Class women will host the Berean and Emmaus class women for coffee in Lucy Brannen's home (401 Suncrest Boulevard). The Agape Class women will host the New Covenant Class women and the College Class women for coffee in Tevis Garnett's home (13 Pinewood Avenue).

Women's relationships are important in the church, and since they are important, we need to spend some time developing them. We would like to see relationships develop organically as we take time to be together. Meeting women we don't know while deepening other relationships is the goal of our coffees. Our much beloved Elisabeth Elliot gave testimony to the importance of other women in her life. While Elisabeth was a student, she met Mrs. Cunningham, the mentor God provided for her. "Many were the afternoons when Mrs. Cunningham poured tea for me, and I poured my soul to her." Elisabeth remembered and cherished those times with Mrs. Cunningham all through her life. Perhaps time with other women like Mrs. Cunningham is what helped make Elisabeth Elliot who she was. We are hoping that many of our women will join us for coffee on February 17. Maybe we will meet a Mrs. Cunningham or be a Mrs. Cunningham to another woman.

Jane Boatright

R.S.V.P (janeboat@gmail.com)

**Be kindly affectionate to one another
in brotherly love, in honor giving
preference to one another; not lagging
in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving
the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in
tribulation, continuing steadfastly in
prayer; distributing to the needs of the
saints, given to hospitality.**

Romans 12:10-13

ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper will be on Sunday evening, February 4. Because of the exceptional blessing we have in this sacrament and the danger of eating and drinking unworthily, it is necessary that we come to it with knowledge, faith, repentance, love and with hungering and thirsting souls after Christ and His benefits. The congregation is encouraged to use all appointed means, public and private, to come to the Lord's Table, depending upon God for the gracious preparation of the heart according to His promise (Psalm 10:17). Our next scheduled Lord's Supper will be observed on March 4, in the evening service.

PRIMES' VALENTINE'S LUNCHEON

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the PRIMES' Valentine's Luncheon on Friday, February 9, 11:30 a.m. at the Savannah Golf Club, 1661 E. President Street. There will be a devotional and special music. Please R.S.V.P. by Monday, February 5. Cost is \$12 per person. Make your checks payable to I.P.C. and write "PRIMES" on the memo line.

HERITAGE SUNDAY

You and your family are cordially invited to worship at the annual Heritage Sunday which will be celebrated during our morning worship service on February 11, 2018, at 11:00 a.m. Members and friends are encouraged to wear Colonial costumes or Scottish attire. Our tartan banners will be displayed and we will have bagpipers participating in the service.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday morning, February 18, at 9:30 a.m. We will meet in the Telfair Hall.

SESSION/DIACONATE MEETING

Our regular Session/Diaconate meetings will be held on Monday evening February 26, at 5:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. They will meet jointly in the Assembly Room at 6:30 p.m.

DEAD THEOLOGIAN'S SOCIETY

The Dead Theologians' Society will meet on Wednesday, February 28, at 6:45 a.m. at the home of Terry Johnson, 110 Lee Blvd. The other group will meet on Thursday, March 1 at 12:00 noon in the Administration Bldg. Read *Holiness* by J.C. Ryle, pp. 135-285.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING AND DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING

Beginning Tuesday, February 6, Trinity Presbyterian Church in Statesboro will be sponsoring a 20-week Biblical Counseling and Discipleship Training course from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. This 20-week course will be taught by TPC's Biblical counselors and pastoral staff. Completion of the course will mirror Phase I of the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors certification. Cost for the course is \$150. For information call TPC at 912-489-8186.

TUESDAY MORNING CIRCLE

The Tuesday Morning Circle will meet on February 13, 10:30 a.m. at the home of Mrs. Melvis Edenfield, 111 Country Club Drive.

THURSDAY MORNING CIRCLE

The Thursday Morning Circle will meet on February 8, 10:30 a.m., at the home Mrs. Judy French, 111 Baymeadow Point (Southbridge) (232-7038).

CHANGES IN ADDRESS

The following are changes in addresses and/or telephone information. Please take note:

Mr. and Mrs. Bobo Mullens

343 Tattnell Street
Savannah, GA 31401

Mrs. Harriet Gonzalez

12757 West 110th Terrace
Overland Park, KS 66210

Phone # changes:

Sonny Longo's cell # 912-631-0735
Frankie Longo's cell # 770-655-3396
Disconnected landline
Bill Best's cell # 912-484-3798

CHURCH IN BEREAVEMENT

The congregation of Independent Presbyterian Church extends sincere sympathy to:

... **Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Milling (Amy)** and extended family on the death of Wallace's grandmother, **Eleanor Sease Milling**, who passed away on Tuesday, January 16, 2018, in Ridgeway, SC.

... **Mr. and Mrs. Andy Chisholm (Alice)** and extended family on the death of Alice's brother, **Albert M. George**, who passed away on Tuesday, January 9, 2018, in Manassas, VA.

... **Mr. and Mrs. Robert Loyd (Donna)** and extended family on the death of Donna's sister, **Linda Edmondson Edie**, who passed away on Sunday, January 14, 2018, in Joplin, MO.

... **Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Barrett (Tricia)** and extended family on the death of Tim's grandmother, **Mary Elizabeth Bowen**, who passed away on Tuesday, January 9, 2018, in Belmont, NC.

In Memoriam

Harriet Owen MacRitchie
Entered the Lord's presence
Thursday, December 2, 2017

*"Blessed are the dead,
which die in the Lord."*

— Revelation 14:13

In Memoriam

Florence Childrey Coleman
Entered the Lord's presence
Monday, December 25, 2017

*"Blessed are the dead,
which die in the Lord."*

— Revelation 14:13

In Memoriam

William Seymour III
Entered the Lord's presence
Friday, January 12, 2018

*"Blessed are the dead,
which die in the Lord."*

— Revelation 14:13

In Memoriam

Mary Elizabeth Adcock Young
Entered the Lord's presence
Tuesday, January 23, 2018

*"Blessed are the dead,
which die in the Lord."*

— Revelation 14:13

Weddings Congratulations to:

TSgt and Mrs. Daniel J. Frasure, who were united in marriage by Rev. Nick Bullock on Friday, December 22, 2017, in Van Astyne, TX. Mrs. Frasure is the former Miss Caitlin Foster.

Family Corner

FEBRUARY 2018

Year 1-10

PSALM 66:1-6

Based on *Scottish Psalter*, 1650,
the *Book of Psalms*, 1871
and *The Psalter*, 1912

Verses 1-6

- 1 All lands to God in joyful sounds
Aloft your voices raise;
- 2 Sing forth the honor of His name,
And glorious make His praise,
And glorious make His praise.
- 3 Say unto God, How terrible
In all Thy works art Thou!
Through Thy great power Thy foes to
Thee
Shall be constrained to bow,
Shall be constrained to bow.
- 4 Yes, all the earth shall worship Thee,
And unto Thee shall sing;
And to Thy name most glorious
Their songs of praise shall bring,
Their songs of praise shall bring.
- 5 O come, behold the works of God,
His mighty doings see;
In dealing with the sons of men
Most terrible is He,
Most terrible is He.
He turned the sea into dry land,
So they a pathway had;
- 6 They through the river went on foot;
There we in Him were glad,
There we in Him were glad.

TUNE: MILES LANE CM
("All Lands to God")
William Shrubsole, 1779

Year 11-15

PSALM 16

- 1 Preserve me, O my God;
I put my trust in You.
LORD, I confess, You are my Lord;
No good have I but You.
- 2 The godly ones on earth,
Those holy in Your sight,
- 3 The noble and majestic ones,
Fill me with great delight.
- 4 Their sorrows multiply
Who after idols seek.
To them I'll no blood off'rings make;
Their names I'll never speak.
- 5 The LORD the portion is
Of my inheritance.
He fills my cup, my lot prepares,
Secures to me His grants.
- 6 The lines that fell to me
Enclose a pleasant site.
The heritage that I received
To me is a delight.
- 7 I bless the LORD Who guides
With counsel that is right.
My heart within me He directs
To teach me in the night.
- 8 I always keep the LORD
Before me, Him to see.
Because He is at my right hand
I never moved shall be.
- 9 Thus gladness fills my soul;
My joy must be expressed
With my whole being, for my flesh
Securely finds its rest.
- 10 My soul You will not leave
In death's dark pit to be.
Corruption You will not permit
Your Holy One to see.
- 11 The path of life You'll show;
Of joy You hold great store.
Before Your face, at Your right hand,
Are pleasures evermore.

TUNE: LEOMINSTER SMD (25A)
("Not What My Hands Have Done")

Based on *Book of Psalms*, 1871, and *Psalm 16A*,
The Book of Psalms for Singing, 1973;
altered 1994

PSALM SYNOPSIS

Psalm 66:1-6

Another of the great missionary Psalms (with Pss 47, 67, 72, 96, 100, etc.), the 66th calls "all the earth" to witness the great salvation wrought by God for His people at the Red Sea (vv 6), and join in His praise (vv 1-12). It even affirms, "all the earth will worship Thee" (v 4). The voice shifts from the world to individual praise (vv 13-20) as individuals respond in dedication, testimony, and praise. The Psalm reminds us as well to keep short accounts with God, warning that

*"If I regard wickedness in my heart,
the Lord will not hear;"* (Ps 66:18,
NASB)

Psalm 16

David expresses the decisive insight of life: we have no good besides God (v 2). All the good things of this world are lesser goods that point beyond themselves to God the *summum bonum*, the greatest good. From this then follows love for God's people (v 3), repudiation of false gods (v 4), contentment with one's lot in life (5,6), embracing of biblical counsel (7,8), assurance of salvation (9,10), and delight in fellowship with God. All this comes to us through Christ, whom to know is of "surpassing worth" (Phil 3:8).

"The theme of having one's affections centered on God gives this Psalm its unity and ardour," says Kidner. The 16th Psalm is rich in devotional expression:

*"I say to the LORD, "You are my
Lord; I have no good apart from you.
... in your presence there is fullness of
joy; at your right hand are pleasures
forevermore." (Ps 16:2, 11b)*

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Jerry Campbell
 2 Clay Austin
 3 Sarah Brodmann
 James Stevens
 4 Brian Finnegan
 Ethan Crowe
 John Rigby
 James Gray
 James Scott
 5 Pat Adams
 Charles Brown
 Matthew Van Grouw
 6 Frank Brannen

7 Pam Dykema
 Gordon Hassing
 Gus Morgan
 8 Jennifer Daniell
 Jim Van Grouw
 Charles Jackson
 10 Eric Reed
 11 Matthew Moore
 12 Brad Fennell
 Miranda Gibson
 Forrest Williams
 13 Evan McKee
 Elliot Moody
 Sam Taylor

14 Dexter Brewer
 Emily Stevens
 15 Alyce Braun
 Wyatt Nolen
 Jim Woods
 16 Kris Warren
 17 Courtney Boerema
 Bobo Mullens
 Jorden Up De Graff
 18 Emily Moody
 Mark Nyce
 19 Beth Brown
 Josh Espinosa
 Bryan Wade

21 Jason Helton
 22 Sandra Helton
 James Saleeby
 Mearl McArthur
 24 Mitchell Waters
 Thomas Nyce
 25 Judith Rushing
 26. Tevis Garnett
 Elissa Sharpless
 27 Lauren Kenard
 28 Melissa McAlpine
 Bubba Moore

Thank You

Dearest J.P.C.,

On behalf of my mom, sister and me, we want to express our deep gratitude and appreciation for inviting us to be a part of Terry's 30th anniversary celebration.

We continue to reflect on the weekend with such fond memories. I.P.C. has been a loving community of believers who embraced Terry and his family.

I thought his sermon put it so beautifully when he said that he left his biological family and the dear folks at I.P.C. became his family.

So thank you for lovingly and generously supporting Terry and his sweet family. Thank you for making it possible for the three of us to be a part of the festivities. We deeply appreciate all of the time and effort you gave to make the weekend so special.

This was a trip that we will always treasure in our hearts, and we look at the I.P.C. family with love and gratitude.

Thankful for His blessings,
Peggy, Gail, and Ellie
 (Terry's sisters and mother)

Dear J.P.C.,

I had day surgery (hernia repair) on December 21, 2017. Thank you I.P.C. for prayers, calls, and delicious food, which is much appreciated as I am healing. I am praying for others on the prayer list.

Sincerely In Christ,
John Rigby

Dear J.P.C.,

It was a joy for Amy and me to see Turner and Stephen recognized on December 10 for memorization. We are grateful to God for the outstanding encouragement we parents have at I.P.C. to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We have been blessed in so many ways by so many of our brothers and sisters in Christ who help in this pursuit. Our pastors lead us and provide training materials from the time our children are baptized. Our officers seek to know the children whom they pray with and for often. Our nursery and Sunday School teachers provide consistent love, care and instruction. And so many others simply come alongside us to cheer us on along the way! All of this is to God's glory and we are grateful to you all for playing such an important role in the life of our family.

Wallace Milling

Dear J.P.C.,

I would like to express appreciation to a group of teenagers who came by my house before Christmas and brought me a Christmas gift basket. The young man in the group prayed for my impaired vision. Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness.

Be kind. Do good deeds and pray for yourself and others.

J. Mitchell Waters

The IPC Messenger

INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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UPDATING MEMBERSHIP ROLLS

Every year your Session expends considerable energy seeking to keep the church rolls updated. In-town members leave us for fairer in-town churches, others move out of town, still others just disappear; they stop attending and contacting them is difficult. We update the rolls regularly because we take membership seriously. Membership is a covenantal arrangement. Vows are administered. The preface to the vows speaks of entering into “a solemn covenant with God and His church.” Inaccurate and out-of-date rolls trivialize, or at least diminish the seriousness of membership vows. Keeping our rolls up-to-date is a concrete way in which we show our love for “Mother Church.”

Problem areas

Yet we have three classes of members whose current status is inconsistent with these principles and with which the Session is committed to resolving.

The first is *non-communicating* “children” who are now adults, yet who have never made a public profession of faith in Christ. They were baptized as infants so they are members, though non-communicating (they are not eligible for communion). Typically they progressed through the Sunday School, through the youth groups, and into their adult years. Some of them are now in their mid-to-late 20’s and even 30’s and beyond. We will be contacting them soon. Perhaps they are unaware of this deficiency. Perhaps they are ready to identify themselves as disciples of Jesus. Our hope is that our communication with them will result in a public commitment to Christ and His church. Absent that, they will of necessity be removed from a membership status that is of no positive value to them and possibly a negative impact, perhaps prolonging indecision regarding their relation to Christ. “Non-communicating” membership is by definition temporary, designed specifically for children and ends when a mature decision is made for or against Christ. Our gentle push may help.

The second class of members whose status is inconsistent with our principles is *communing children of the church who are in town but no longer attend*. They could attend services, but for one reason or another, they don’t. The goal of contacting them is to encourage them to renew the commitment to I.P.C. that they voiced in their fourth membership vow when they joined the church (“Do you promise to serve Christ in His church by supporting and participating in its worship and work to the best of your ability?”) –or– to encourage

them to join the church they are currently attending. Hopefully we will nudge them in a positive direction. Failing these two alternatives, we will take steps to remove them from the rolls.

The third class of members whose status is inconsistent with our principles is *long-term out-of-town members*. We have members who moved beyond the bounds of our congregation two, five, ten, twenty, even thirty years ago or *more* and have never joined another church. There are several obvious problems with this: 1) they have not become committed members of a local church, which we believe is the duty of every believer; 2) they may have an unhealthy attachment to I.P.C. that is inhibiting local church participation. Prolonged out-of-town membership doesn’t do anyone any good. Consequently, we aim to force the issue. Your Session long ago set as policy the following statement:

It is the policy of I.P.C. to review the rolls in February of each year to declare those members who have not attended or financially supported the Church in the last 12 months as inactive. It will be the responsibility of the Congregational Growth and Care Committee to make this review and notify each delinquent member both of his status and of any pending action of the Session.

We are contacting long-term out-of-town members, letting them know that they have a few months to join another church which we hope they will do. Regardless, after that period of a few months we will remove them from our church membership rolls.

Exceptions

We are not being hard-line or categorical about this. Missionaries and active duty military will be excepted, as will college students (undergraduate and graduate) and post-college members who are in the transitional period between graduation and permanent relocation (which we understand may require a few years to finalize). Keeping one’s spiritual “home base” is important. We provide “associate” membership for temporary residents (like military and college) for that reason. Yet we are convinced that we have been negligent in the past and that we must be more deliberate in pursuing long-term delinquent members.

Please work with us. Parents, begin now to have conversations with any of your children who may fall into one of these three categories. The impact of our correcting these membership anomalies may be beneficial for all. That, at least, is our prayer.