

The Harvester



*Preparing Souls
To Serve The Lord!*



Volume 39

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Number 5

Have Some Local Churches "Called in Hospice"?

Brian R. Kenyon

Hospice organizations are of great help to those who are in the last stages of terminal disease. In 2010, when this writer's wife was nearing the end of her battle with cancer, hospice was of great help as her life ended. Usually, hospice organizations are called when there is no more that can be done except making the patient as comfortable and pain-free as possible for the short remainder of his or her life.

On a sadder note, it seems that "spiritual hospice" has been called in for some local churches of Christ because they are nearing the end of their existence as a congregation. Truly, some congregations are struggling for survival on what seems to be no fault of their own, though only the Lord knows for sure. For example, some are in communities that were once bustling with activity and commerce, where families sought to locate but those communities have now been isolated for several years due to farming or major businesses moving out. The few young people who remained left the community in pursuit of better career opportunities. Unfortunately, some other congregations seem to have given-up and "called in hospice" to keep them comfortable until they pass away! The church at Sardis at least had a reputation of being alive though they were dead (Rev. 3:1-6), but some of these congregations "on hospice" do not even have a living reputation!

Signs of Terminal Illness

The most noticeable sign of a congregation "on hospice" is its contentment to remain comfortable

and "pain free" in a dying condition. These congregations barely "keep house." Outward signs involve their buildings looking rundown; their grass or weeds are constantly unkept; and perhaps worse of all, their baptistry has been completely out of commission for years! How can a person familiar with the Bible not think of Jesus' words to the Laodiceans, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. ... because you are lukewarm ... I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16, NKJV)?

Second, a congregation "on hospice" has given up on reaching out to the community. It may be they tried in the past to no avail, so now they have entirely given up. The preacher may still have a desire, but no one else gives him the slightest help. There are only three ways a local church can Scripturally grow or even just sustain their numbers. It can grow by faithful Christians moving into the area and placing membership. Of course, people scarcely move into the smaller, remote communities. Also, a local church can grow by children, still living in their parents' home, learning God's word and being baptized into Christ. However, many of the congregations "on hospice" no longer have members with children at home. Finally, a local church can grow by going into "all the world [their community]" with the Gospel (Mk. 16:15 cf. Mt. 28:18-20) and by "praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47a). A congregation's relying solely on the first two ways may indicate a terminally ill congregation!

Third, a congregation "on hospice" may have strict rules on expedient matters such as making

men wear coats and ties while publicly serving or only allowing the King James Version or the American Standard Version of 1901 to be used in services. To be clear, there is nothing wrong with wearing a coat and tie or using the KJV or ASV (1901). Furthermore, an eldership has every right to make such requirements. However, having these requirements, especially outside the "Bible Belt," definitely contributes to the false notion that the Bible and Christianity are antiquated and out of touch with people today!

Some people with physically terminal diseases have "do not resuscitate orders," in the event they need life support. It seems that some congregations have spiritual "do not resuscitate orders" on the local Lord's body. Local church members must not give up on spiritual life-support!

The Road to Recovery

There are some basic life-support measures that a congregation can apply to come out of their impending terminal illness. Although some things may have been "tried in the past," consider these with new vigor and enthusiasm. First, realize that spiritual growth matters. Numbers are not the only measure of growth. In fact, numbers can be misleading. Spiritual growth, first and foremost, is needed (2 Pet. 3:18). When church members are spiritually mature and zealous for the Lord, they will see to it that "hospice" is not needed. Church members must never be content with just "keeping house"!

Second, realize the power of the Great Physician. Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mk. 2:17). The Lord is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20). When it comes to doctors and physical diseases, humans and their bodies are limited. Jesus, however, raised the dead! He can surely help struggling churches regain strength!

Third, realize that a change in expediencies is not necessarily a change in doctrine. Changing from one Scriptural expediency to another is not equivalent to changing God's law. The ways local churches carry out God's expectations are filled with human traditions (cf. worship and times of services, order of services, songs, song books, etc.). As long as human traditions do not violate God's will and are used expediently, they are good. However, human traditions must not be considered immutable! While coats and ties were a way of life in the past (men in the 1950s mowed grass while wearing ties!), it may not be wise to require them today, especially when trying to reach newer generations who have no previous connections with "Christendom." The same can be said of the KJV. No doubt it has been the most influential Bible translation in the English- *(continued on page 4)*

The Harvester

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Special Contributions: Atlantic Christian Fund

*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.



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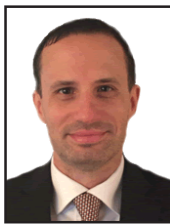
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Do You Understand the Christian's Relationship to the Civil State?

44th Annual Lectureship

January 21-24, 2019

Brian R. Kenyon, Director

Monday

- 9:00 Purpose and Function of Civil Government Stephen Atnip
- 9:40 Evil Influences and the State Jeff Miller
- 10:20 BREAK
- 10:50 "Separation of Church and State" David W. Hester
- 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Civil States of Mind

- 1:30 Learning to Respect Authority Hiram Kemp
- 2:00 The Right Time to Rebel Forest Antemasaris
- 2:30 Counter-Culture Character Caleb Glenn Coley
- 3:30 **Ladies Class:** Christian Involvement with Politics Sheila Butt
- 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
- 4:30 DINNER
- 6:30 Congregational Singing
- 7:00 God's People in High Places: Joseph Dylan Johns
- 7:45 Resisting Radicalization Sidney Moore

Tuesday

- 9:00 Civil Leaders Who Disobeyed God Jason Jackson
- 9:40 The Christian and Voting David W. Hester
- 10:20 BREAK
- 10:50 Civil State Challenges in Revelation 2-3 Dewayne Bryant
- 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Christians and Culture

- 1:30 Holidays: Secular or Sacred? Bruce Daugherty
- 2:00 Gender Roles in Religion Emmanuel Daugherty
- 2:30 Civil Law and Marriage Vince Daugherty
- 3:00 BREAK
- 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
- 4:30 DINNER
- 6:30 Congregational Singing
- 7:00 God's People in High Places: Daniel Andrae L. Smith
- 7:45 Submitting to Jesus as King Jimmy Clark

Wednesday

- 9:00 When Civil Disobedience Is Scriptural Jason Jackson
- 9:40 How Should "Society" Respond to Homosexuality (1)? G. Beals
- 10:20 BREAK
- 10:50 "Render to Caesar" Jimmy Clark
- 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Civil Questions of Life and Death

- 1:30 Is Abortion a Right to Choose? Melvin Sapp
- 2:00 Is Capital Punishment Scriptural? William Howard
- 2:30 Can a Christian "Bear the Sword"? Jake Sutton
- 3:00 BREAK
- 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
- 4:30 DINNER
- 6:30 Congregational Singing
- 7:00 God's People in High Places: Nehemiah Will Vann
- 7:45 Christianity and Patriotism Bill Davis

Thursday

- 9:00 Evangelism and Civil Government Shane Fisher
- 9:40 How Should "Society" Respond to Homosexuality (2)? G. Beals
- 10:20 BREAK
- 10:50 The Bible and "Social Issues" Melvin L. Otey
- 11:30 LUNCH

Forum: Controversial Civil Circumstances

- 1:30 Preaching That Disturbs the Status Quo Niipaak Laar
- 2:00 Christians Taking Christians to Court David Stearsman
- 2:30 When Involvement with "Social Issues" Goes Too Far S. Moore
- 3:00 BREAK
- 3:30 Questions And Answers On Forum Topic
- 4:30 DINNER
- 6:30 Congregational Singing
- 7:00 God's People in High Places: Mordecai and Esther H. Kemp
- 7:45 Harmonizing Our Dual Citizenship Melvin L. Otey



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December 2018

Page 4

(continued from page 2) speaking world, but does that mean it is the best one available to influence the masses of common people today? Church leaders must be willing to change expediciencies, not just for the sake of change, but in order to reach more people with the Gospel!

Fourth, local churches must *deliberately* reach out to the next generation. Whether brethren actually realize it, a local church in most American locations without a presence on the internet or social media has issued “do not resuscitate” orders! If new generations are social-media-driven, how can churches expect to reach them without a presence there?

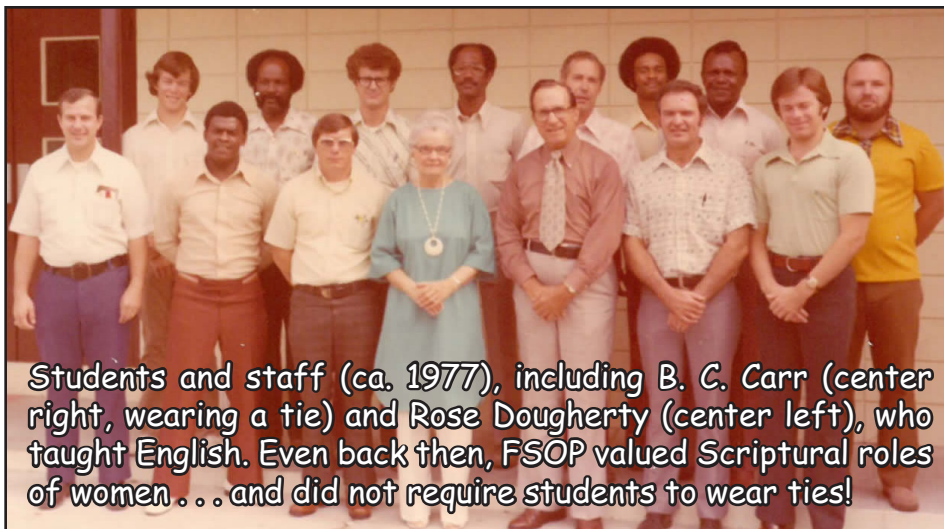
Conclusion

Terminal illness is a terrible physical consequence of humanity's separation from the tree of life (cf. Gen. 3:22-24). There is no need, though, for spiritual terminal illness, if God's people choose life (Deut. 30:19-20; Jn. 11:25-26; 14:6). May local church members invigorate their spiritual immune systems through God's word to fight off spiritual terminal illness. God is better than “spiritual hospice”! 🙏

**We
Want
Pictures!**



If you are an alumnus or have visited the lectureship, check your old photo albums, and copy and send us your old FSOP pictures! **Thank you!**



Students and staff (ca. 1977), including B. C. Carr (center right, wearing a tie) and Rose Dougherty (center left), who taught English. Even back then, FSOP valued Scriptural roles of women... and did not require students to wear ties!