God will always be 'home'

REV. ROGER CAMPBELL

Returning to my home church brought many pleasant memories: Taking part in youth activities, singing in the choir and listening to sermons by young pastors with fiery faith whose zeal to do God's work sent me, along with a number of others my age, into the ministry.

The old white church on a hill isn't quite the same. Remodeling has changed its shape and appearance, but many similarities remain and my imagination easily adjusted the surroundings to those of the past when enthusiastic worship characterized that growing country congregation week after week.

The length of the church aisle hasn't changed, but it seems shorter than when I took the two most important steps in my life: Walking down it at the conclusion of a Sunday Morning Service to make my commitment to the Lord public and waiting at the end of it for my pretty young bride to make her way to my side. Those unforgettable aisle adventures still affect me positively every day. Memories can be great motivators.

In the last book of the Bible, our Lord told a congregation that had grown cold and mechanical in their worship to remember how they had once loved Him and called for them to return to their first love (Revelation 2:5).

Memory rescued the prodigal from the pigpen where he was working and sent him back to his waiting father who loved him and had been anxiously looking for his return. The pull of the far country that had lured this wayward one in the past and swallowed up his inheritance with lust and wild living was no match for his present longing to go home.

When Jacob, the patriarch of Israel, fled from his brother, Esau, he stopped overnight at the place that would always be special to him. There, he was assured of great blessings in the future and the next morning he named the place "Bethel," meaning "the house of God."

Many of us have Bethels, places we associate with faith's beginning or deepening. And when spiritual life is at low ebb, trouble overtakes us or we have become overcome with the business of living, we may feel the need to return to an area where we once felt closer to God: a church of our childhood or even a former family dwelling where uplifting memories beckon us home.

If this is one of those days, it may be time to heed that call.

Of course, there are times when it is impossible to respond to urges to walk down old lanes or retreat to Bethels of better days. Health problems, financial hardships or unyielding schedules may forbid fleeing to favorite places to be renewed in body and soul.

What then? How can we get back to what we ought to be when we can't get back to where we want to be?

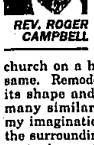
Memory may be enhanced by familiar surroundings, but it is not bound by them. In thought, I've often knelt to pray near the creek that flowed through the pastureland of the farm where I grew up and there poured out my heart to God as in the past, even though it's been many years since I walked along that sparkling stream.

God is not limited by location. And He's always waiting for us to come home.

The Rev. Roger Campbell is an Independence Township resident and author of more than 20 books. His radio program, Higher Ground, is heard at 8:55 a.m. Sundays on WUFL-AM (1030 AM). He can also be heard at 6:10 a.m. Monday through Friday on WMPC (1230 on the AM dial)

Pray for country, leaders, today

FOCUS ON THEOLOGY



JUDITH MILLER

When our country was ravaged by the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln said, "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." Where else do we have to go in our times but to prayer?

National Day of Prayer was established to encourage us to pray for our nation, its people and its leaders. "...The observance...encourages Americans to affirm our nation's spiritual roots...," said Gov. Engler when declaring May 2, 2002 as a Day of Prayer in Michigan. People in communities across America will collectively and individually lift their hearts beyond themselves in gratitude for blessings and in a desire for peace; for comfort and courage to the challenge of our times; and to support our nation's leaders in the tasks they face.

On this 51st annual national Day of Prayer, two places in Birmingham will be open all day for prayer. Stop in to pray in your own way for yourself, your family, the community, the nation and the world at First Church of Christ, Scientist and at the Christian Science Reading Room. The church is located at the corner of Willits and Chester in downtown Birmingham. Its doors will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. You can find the Reading Room at 335 East Maple between Woodward and Old Woodward. Come in any time between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. During the noon hour (Noon to 1 p.m.) favorite hymns from several religious traditions will be sung at an Interfaith Hymn Sing in the church auditorium.

Setting aside a national day of prayer is a long honored tradition in the history of the United States. It dates back to Feb. 19, 1795, when President George Washington issued a proclamation setting aside a day of public thanksgiving. President Lincoln proclaimed a day of "humiliation, fasting, and prayer" in 1863. In 1952, President Truman signed a joint resolution of Congress declaring an annual national day of prayer.

Then in 1988 the Congress and President Reagan specifically designated the first Thursday in May as the date to be set aside each year to observe National Day of Prayer.

In our observances let us cherish the idea expressed in this hymn-

"No mortal sense can still or stay
The flight of silent prayer,
Unceasing, voiceless, heart desire
That seeks God everywhere...".
Christian Science Hymnal 194:1

Judith Miller is a member of First Church of Christ, Scientist, Birmingham. The Church of Christ, Scientist, has no ordained clergy.

SINGLES MINGLE

If you want to submit an item for the Singles Mingle calendar, fax it to our Farmington office (248) 477-9722 or Livonia office (734) 591-7279 or write: Singles Mingle, Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335. The deadline an announcement to appear in the Thursday edition is noon Friday.

SINGLE MINGLES
Single Mingle dances are held selected Fridays throughout the month. For dates and locations, call the Metropolitan Single Professionals at (248) 851-9909.

WEST SIDE DANCES
West Side Singles hold dances hold Friday night dances at Burton Manor in Livonia. For dates and locations call (734) 981-0909.

BOOK TALK
Borders Books in Farmington Hills hosts a book discussion group 7:30-8:30 p.m. the second Wednesday of each month. Call (248) 851-9909.

CARDS & DINNER
Join the Farmington Single Professionals for euchre, pinochle and dinner from 6:30-9:30 p.m. every Monday at Crowley's Old Village Inn in downtown Farmington.

AFTER WORK PARTIES
Metropolitan Single Professionals host "Fun and Fine Dining" 5:30-7:30 p.m. every Thursday at restaurants throughout the Detroit area. To find out locations, call (248) 851-9909. Other activities include:

■ Dances held 8 p.m.-1 p.m., every Friday through May 3 throughout the Detroit area. Admission is $5 members, $8 non-members. Call (248) 851-9909 or visit www.mspac.com

n Euchre 6:30-9:30 p.m., every Monday through April at Cowley's Old Village Inn, 33338 Grand River Ave., east of Farmington Road, Farmington. $5 for members, $6 for non-members.

SINGLES WALK
Singles from First Presbyterian Church in Northville walk through Heritage Park in Farmington Hills at 10 a.m. every Saturday.

WARD SINGLES
Single Point Ministries of Ward Presbyterian Church (30 years and older) meet at 11:30 a.m. every Sunday in Knox Hall, for fellowship and encouragement. Ward is located at 40000 Six Mile Road in Northville. Call (248) 374-5920. Other Ward Singles events:

■ Classic senior Singles Bible Study meets 10 a.m. every Thursday.

LIGHTHOUSE CAFE
Single Point Lighthouse Cafe (coffee house) will be held 7-10 p.m., the fourth Friday of every month at Knox Hall in Ward Presbyterian Church. Free child care is available. Call (248) 374-5920

RELIGION CALENDAR

If you want to submit an item for the religion calendar fax it to (734) 591-7279 or write: Religion Calendar, Observer Newspaper, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150. The deadline for an announcement to appear in the Thursday edition is noon Monday.

WRITERS' FESTIVAL
The Birmingham Temple in Farmington Hills will host a Writers' Festival at 8:30 p.m. Monday, May 6, 13 and 20. David Lee Poremba, author of *Detroit: A Motor City History*, will be the first guest speaker. Paul Kavieff, author of *The Purple Gang* and *The Violent Years* will speak on May 13; and Judith Levin Cantor, author of *Jews in Michigan*, will speak on May 20. For more information call (248) 477-1410.

MISSIONS CELEBRATION
Forest Park Baptist Church in Farmington Hills will host an On Missions Celebration at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sunday, May 5, and 7 p.m. Monday–Wednesday, May 6-8. A different missionary will speak during each service including international, North American and state missionaries. Call (248) 476-0080.

MIDDLE EAST CRISIS
The First Baptist Church of Farmington will host Behind the Middle East Crisis with Dr. Ronald Showers of the Friends of Israel. The conference begins Friday, May 17 and concludes Sunday, May 19 and will include the topics: *Israel and God, Israel and the Abrahamic Covenant, Israel and Islam, Israel and Jerusalem* and *Israel and the Temple*. For directions and time of services call (248) 474-0360.

WIDOW/WIDOWER SUPPORT
New Hope Center for Grief Support, a Christian-based bereavement outreach center, offers support for widows and widowers with children on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. The group meets at 7 p.m., at St. Kenneth's Parish offices, 14951 Haggerty, Plymouth. New Hope for Kidz meets at the same time and place and is aimed at children, age 4-11. (248) 348-0115.

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER
Worldwide Marriage Encounter offers weekend experiences designed to help married couples improve communication and learn the value of intimacy, May 17-19 at the St. John's Family Life Center, 44011 Five Mile, Plymouth. Registration fee is $50. (248) 528-2512 or (810) 286-5524.

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Book your golf package for "Stay and Play" golf!
Per person package price includes:
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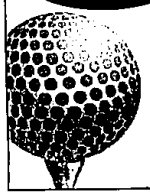

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All in-store, in-stock merchandise up to 25% OFF. Great deals on deck finishes, lawn and garden supplies, tools, hardware and much more.
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Show Mom She's Special

How many words and phrases can you think of to describe your mom, well here is your chance. The Observer & Eccentric newspapers is putting out "The Mother's/Mommy Day Page", and we want everyone to celebrate the person who loves you unconditionally!

Send in a picture of your mom with a special message for her on her day for: $25 for a 1x2 (2 inches x 2 inches) or $50 for a 2x2 (4.25 inches x 2 inches). If you rather write her a message or poem about how much you care, you can do that for only $1.50 a line. Approximately 20 characters per line, and also ask about our heart shape symbol for your ad. It is only $5 extra.

Trust us when we say that this is all she will want, besides for everybody to be happy and get along!

$25 1x2 (approx. 2 inches x 2 inches)
$50 2x2 (approx. 4.25 inches x 2 inches)

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers will be publishing this special page on the actual holiday of Sunday, May 12th.

Below is information on how to send in your payment, or you can call 1-800-579-SELL with any questions or to place your ad over the phone.

Call Dylan at (734) 953-2073 for information regarding this special section.

Deadline: May 7th

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