

THE POINT

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Kissing the Son FROM THE EDITOR

Presbyterians have always taught that God created people with several purposes in mind. Historically, man's chief purpose was expressed this way: *To glorify God and enjoy Him forever*. It isn't a word we use all that much anymore, but *glorify* simply means to exalt and honor, as in worship. Glorifying God in worship is a core function of the Church. For two thousand years, Christians all over the world have gathered each week to exalt and honor Jesus in corporate worship. Glorifying God and enjoying Him intersect when we exult (i.e. rejoice greatly, be jubilant — literally, leap for joy) as well as exalt in worship. I suspect that there will be lots of leaping for joy when Jesus returns and establishes His eternal Kingdom.

In this issue of *The Point*, some of Stony Point's leaders and thinkers offer their perspectives on the worship of God in Christ. We'll start with the Hundredth Psalm to provide a Biblical frame of reference and end with a Puritan prayer for worship.

A Psalm for Giving Thanks

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name.

For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations. PSALM 100 / NIV

I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for joy. C.S. LEWIS



Worth-ship

MARY-JO ELLIS

When someone asks me to define worship, I always remember what an old pastor friend of mine used to say — that it's really 'Worth-ship'... telling God what He's worth, giving Him His due. What's He worth? What do I owe Him? What does (should) that look like in my life? The default mode of my old heart is to limit that expression to what I do on Sunday mornings in the sanctuary. But in reality, everything I do, say and think expresses what I think He's worth.

Hosea 10:12 gives us practical wisdom for doing that on a daily basis: *Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.* ●

Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.

Biblical. Beautiful. Authentic.

RANDY HOLMES

Worship is a very broad topic. If we narrow it down to worship in Sunday morning services, we still find multiple expressions and dynamics. Focusing further still to the musical expressions of worship, we find a complex array of approaches and styles. We all have experienced various styles and expressions of music in worship. As one who has been involved with the evolution of worship music at SPC, I offer some personal perspective. I believe that the question of style, while important, is not the central question. We recognize that musical style plays a critical role in helping people feel comfortable and express themselves authentically in worship. But at the heart are three questions which frame a more fundamental perspective on worship music:

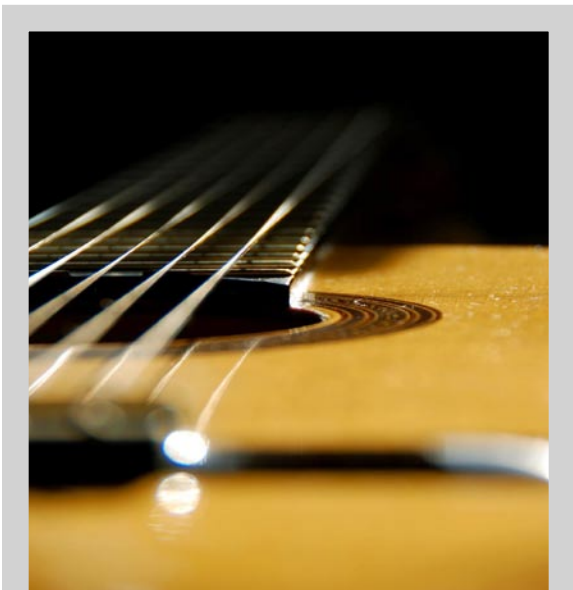
1 Are the musical selections expressive of the whole counsel of God and do they present an aspect of the Gospel? Put simply, the words must magnify God's glory and clearly articulate the Gospel. They must accurately reflect the heart of God. They must be Biblical.

Biblical. Beautiful. Authentic.

CONTINUED →

2 Is the music performed well and, more importantly, is it musician's motivation to glorify God or himself? The goal is three-fold: to present a worthy offering to God, to help God's people worship in truth and grace, and to encourage unbelievers to faith. Let's be honest - every musician has an ego. His heart must be tempered by humility and submissive to the greater good if he will serve God well.

3 Does the musical style speak in an authentic way for the particular congregation and to the culture of the broader community? Like painting, poetry, and architecture, music is language — a language of the heart. The goal is to tune the language of our worship music to say “come” to as many people in our church and the broader community as we can... come if you are seeking, come if you're a long-time disciple, wherever you are on a walk of faith, come! The great hymns and best contemporary worship music together give Stony Point a style that is a good fit for who we are and for who we hope to reach with the Gospel. It may require of me a willingness to worship with styles of music



I may not prefer. This is an opportunity to show grace and humility on the part of the listeners as well as the performers.

Biblical. Beautiful. Authentic. These words frame my perspective on music in worship at Stony Point Church. The heart of the matter is a matter of heart... but isn't this where our worship music should be focused? ●



Celebration

DAVE GRAY

Pastor Tony Evans says that

worship is the celebration of

who God is, what He has done,

what He is now doing, and what

we are trusting Him to do.

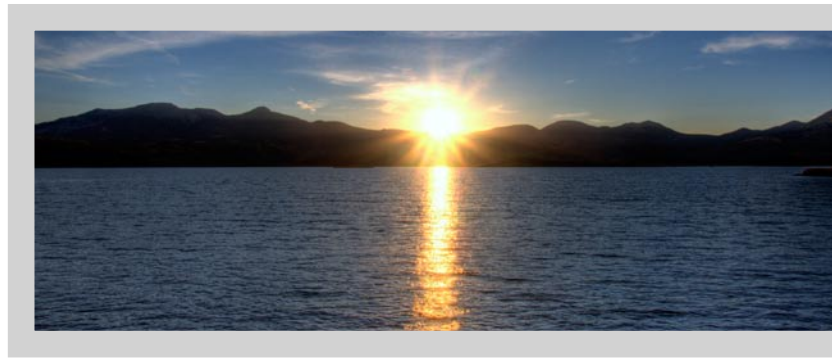
Awe

JOHN MORGAN

The primary emotion which prompts worship is awe. Awe leads directly to praise.

Atheists admit to being awed by the size of the universe, the forces of nature, the creativity of life, and human brilliance that conceives of elegant solutions to vexing problems. They praise the things they see.

Christians see the God behind creation and are in awe of His power, infinity, creativity and wisdom. Their awe is expressed in praise and worship of God, not nature. Christians are also in awe of the vast love God displays in Jesus. They are in awe of His willingness to sacrifice His Son, the completeness of His forgiveness, and the brilliance of the plan in which He justifies sinners and remains just. In this work of salvation, God's power, creativity and wisdom are more fully revealed. Christians are in awe of God every minute of every day. Each week they come together in corporate worship to express their awe. Praise be to God who alone has created such an incredible world and showers His creatures with such undeserved love. ●



“Be still and know that I am God”

RENEE BOSWELL

That verse from Psalm 46 was hanging over the small wooden chapel overlooking the lake at my childhood summer camp. We had chapel every morning and it was the only time during the whole week we were the least bit still.

Nowadays, it is still hard to be still, even — or maybe especially — on Sundays. Our church building does not inspire hushed silence as you enter. And we are such a friendly church. There are so many people to greet and important things to do. Stillness is sacrificed for cheerfulness.

In college, I heard *be still* translated as *cease striving*. Thinking about it that way has helped me learn to be a better worshipper. It is hard for me to be still, but I can cease striving. Stop trying to sing on key. Stop trying to have perfectly behaved children. Stop trying to manufacture feelings. Stop trying to have the perfect worship experience. Stop trying... and simply be. I can do that.

I have also learned that it's much easier to cease

striving during worship when I have planned well during the week. When I've gotten enough sleep, taken care of work and home, gone grocery shopping — then I can worship without a thousand cares and worries on my mind. Then I can be still and know...

Drop Thy still dews of quietness, till all our strivings cease; Take from our souls the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess the beauty of Thy peace.

– JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER ●

Magnification

MICHAEL BRYANT

The most God-exalting, saint-edifying, and world-evangelizing worship is that which magnifies God's glory as it is revealed in Jesus. Not the magnification of a microscope, causing very small objects to appear larger and more significant than they really are. But the magnification of a telescope, bringing distant worlds and vast galaxies, invisible to our unaided sight, nearer and clearer in all their unbelievable grandeur and beauty. People need worship that keeps their feet firmly planted — where God has planted them — in the world, but fixes their eyes on heaven. We need worship that brings the light of heaven to bear on our lives, here and now. We need worship that helps us see Jesus with an eternal perspective. We need worship that amplifies His Gospel in all its grandeur and beauty. We need worship that comforts and challenges us as only a clear vision of the perfect, crucified, risen, and ruling Jesus can. ●

Enjoying God Forever

ANONYMOUS

We were all created to worship God. The act of worship, as we focus on who He is and what He has done for us, brings us into His presence. In worship, we put God in His proper place and humbly serve Him. It's all about Him and not about us. Our worship of God takes many shapes. Sunday morning corporate worship is the most observable form. But less public forms of intentional worship, like listening to Christian music while driving down the road, reading Scripture quietly at home, or meditating on Him as you take a long walk, are just as significant. The coolest thing about worship is this: as amazing as it can be now in our earthly bodies, how much greater when we stand redeemed with Jesus in Heaven as sons and daughters in our glorified bodies, seeing Him in all of His glory, and spending all eternity worshipping Him. How I long for heaven! ●



What Will The Neighbors See?

SUE VAN DOORNIK

About sixteen years ago, I had the privilege of worshipping with a few hundred people in Malawi, Africa. We were outdoors on the lawn for anyone in the city to see. Most of us were on the ground. As in most of our worship with the Malawians, joy abounded.

I wonder — if our church had no walls, what would the neighbors see? Would they see us singing as if we wanted the melody to reach the sky, or mumbling as if the words meant little and needed to be directed toward no one? Would they see us focused and hanging on the Word of God, or distracted by our to-do lists and ticking watches? Would they see us bright and alert, or with eyes dull and at half-mast from the late night before? Would they notice the peace on our faces at the promise of the ultimate Sabbath rest, or the stress of fears and worries that mirrors their own? Would they want to join us because our joy is contagious and their curiosity about just who we are praising is so compelling? I wonder...

I am discovering that the joy and enthusiasm with which I worship on Sunday morning reflects the attitude of worship with which I live the other days of my week. Next Sunday, as we gather to worship, the neighbors won't see us (unless, of course, we invite them). But for the next six days as we worship Him with our lives, remember this — they are watching. I wonder — what will the neighbors see? ●



Part-time Worship?

ZAC COLLINS

Love. It's one of the most exhilarating emotions. Without love many great works of art and literature would never have been created — not to mention country music! I've heard it said that love doesn't make the world go 'round, but it sure does make the trip worth it. God agrees. But His is a very different kind of love than the world's. It's a love that engages all of the heart, soul and mind... the essence of true worship.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day relentlessly debated which of their 613 commandments were most important. When they tested Jesus with that question He responded with the words that were recited by faithful Jews two times a day and placed on the heads and wrists of men during prayer: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*" (Matthew 22:27). Jesus' answer gives us the divine perspective on true worship.

Christians today are tempted to abandon Jesus' whole-being vision of worship by subtly compartmentalizing it. We think of worship as a certain

style of music or a block of time carved out on a Sunday morning. But is that really what Jesus — in harmony with the rest of the Bible — thinks? We know that praying, preaching, bringing tithes and offerings, baptism, meditation, and Communion are all acts of worship. But narrowing worship down to these religious acts alone is another form of compartmentalizing — just one that seems more spiritual.

Consider the following passages from Scripture:

- *You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.*” (Matthew 15:7-9)
- *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.* (Romans 12:1)
- *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.* (1 Corinthians 10:31)

In other places the Bible commands us to do our work for the Lord and to obey all types of authorities as unto the Lord. True Biblical worship encompasses all we do, not just what we think of as spiritual acts. Every one of our actions, however mundane, is an act of worship! Jesus teaches us what worship really is: being totally and actively consumed by our love for God in response to His love for us. It’s much more than a Sunday morning thing. It’s much more than spiritual thoughts

and affections. True worship expresses itself in every minute of every day in everything we think, feel, say, and do.

If this is the real thing, then who can truly worship? Our righteousness is as filthy rags and even our most fervent efforts at worship miss the mark. Who can approach His holy hill? Think on this:

- *“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* (1 Peter 2:5)
- *For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.* (Ephesians 2:18)
- *“In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”* (Ephesians 3:12)

The answer to our worship dilemma is Jesus! He is the means to, motivation for, and object of genuine Biblical worship. We are totally forgiven and actively accepted by God through Jesus! Through Jesus we can lift our voices in joyful praise, write papers, repair cars, take out the trash, pray, change diapers, and study our Bibles — each act flowing from a heart of worship for God’s greater glory.

May we all strive by His grace in the gospel of Jesus Christ to be clenched in the depths of our being by His majesty, holiness, and amazing love. This is true Biblical worship. In Christ alone, it is all we are and all we do. It is not merely a part of life. It’s a way of life. And it’s the way to Life. ●

All Bow Down

JOAN PROROCK

When I first considered writing about worship for *The Point*, my reaction was that I am not someone who enjoys or has any inclination toward recreational writing. And anyway, I am way too busy. Because my back was feeling particularly tight and painful that day, I got down on the floor to do my stretching exercise. As I leaned forward in what I am told is a yoga position — prostrate on the floor with my arms straight out and my legs tucked up under me — I realized that I had assumed what I think is the ultimate worship position. How ironic that God would show me this at a time when I was convincing myself that I had absolutely nothing creative to say on the subject! I began to explore the similarities.

When I sin, I commit an act that I know is anti-God, but I usually try to convince myself that it's not that bad. I become defensive, deluding, self-justifying. My heart grows hard, like the knots in my back. When I stretch/worship I



am putting myself into a position of hoping that God will take away those hard and painful knots. I have faith that a loving God will heal my back and my heart, but I must risk exposing that faulty area. I am in a vulnerable position down on the floor like that. My arms and hands are lying in front of me as though I am reaching out for something,

but they are still. My hands are usually busy working or grabbing for something I think I need, but worship is trusting God for what we need. And, while I'm on the floor with my head bowed down there's not much of a view. So, I close my eyes, heightening my concentration and worshipful state of mind. Since my body is folded so compactly, I am subject to a minimum of outside distractions. It's easier to worship only one god that way and God gets all of my attention (when I take advantage of the opportunity).

In heaven we won't have bad backs anymore. So, that reason for bowing down will be eliminated. But, I think there may still be plenty of prostrate glorified bodies. "At the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." I'm looking forward to that kind of worship! ●

"But, I Just Don't Feel Like Worshipping!"

JOHN ANTHONY

I have heard it said many times in my life. And to be completely honest, that sentiment has been mine as well. Lately I've been thinking a lot about feelings and worship. What motivates me to worship? How do my feelings influence my worship? And how does worship shape my feelings?

Webster defines worship this way: *to assign worth to*



something or someone. It is derived from an old English word (12th c) that was literally *worship*. The Hebrew and Greek concordance gives us an even more interesting way of expressing what we call worship. *Shachah*, the Hebrew word that we translate as *worship*, means *to depress*. It is first used in the Old Testament by Abraham when he commands his servants, “*Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy (Isaac) go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.*” (Gen.22:5). No doubt, Abraham was feeling depressed — pushed down — by the command that God had given him. Yet he trusts and obeys. It’s written of Job that when he lost all of his wealth and children he tore his robe, shaved his head, fell to the ground in worship (Job 1:20). King David responded to the death of Bathsheba’s son that same way — he went to the house of the Lord and worshipped (2 Sam.12:20). The Greek word we most often translate as worship is *proskuneo*. It means to kiss. The Magi traveled to Bethlehem to express this type of worship. In the desert Jesus told Satan, “*Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.*” A Biblical picture of worship then, is depressed people approaching God with a kiss.

So what does this picture teach us about our motivation to worship? I think that we are reluctant to worship because we are unwilling to be depressed. It takes intentional and often uncomfortable effort to consider and acknowledge who we are in the light of what Scripture says about us. It hurts and humbles us. But when we come into the light of truth some amazing things happen. We discover that, although we were once dead in our sins, we are no longer children of darkness. Because of the finished work of Jesus Christ, Our sin and rebellion are forgiven. Our

sin had held us captive and bound for destruction, but God drew us to Jesus because He wanted to. He makes us His sons and daughters. He gives us eternally abundant life.

Salvation is all of God. He is the exalted One. I want to celebrate His worth because He has given me mine. I can’t manufacture joy in worship. But because I’m known and loved by God, I do know joy even in suffering. Pressed down, depressed, and of no esteem. For me, that’s where true worship begins. ●



Worship the World Can See

STEVE CONSTABLE

Many years ago I met a man who — under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile — regularly held church services in the open air. That in itself, of course, wasn’t so radical. What was radical was that he held church services in the middle of public riots. The Chilean army and police would be pushing back protesters and dispelling crowds with tear gas, and all the while his small band of

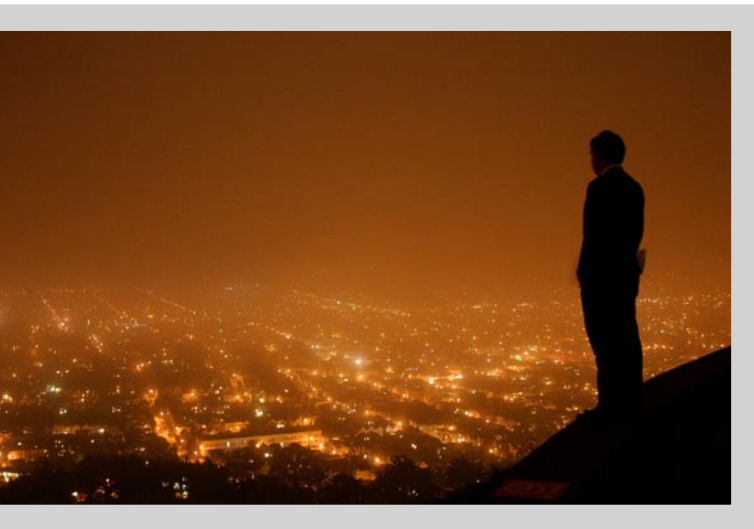
worshippers would be praising God as best they could amidst the confusion and the carnage. I've often thought that that picture of the church on display and in danger so clearly mimics the mission of ancient Israel and ultimately, the Cross of Jesus itself. It is the way of the Cross to conduct our worship publicly so that, as our Lord said, "your light will shine" and the world will "see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). We're not planning for quite that sort of riot worship on Sunday mornings at Stony Point, but that conviction has driven our sense of morning worship as we have pursued the vision of evangelistic worship.

What is evangelistic worship? Simply put, it is worship with an effective witness to a watching world. Evangelistic worship strives to make the *evangel* (that is, the Gospel of Jesus) clear both to believers and those who wouldn't yet describe themselves that way. Indeed, the power of the Gospel is that it challenges all of us to listen to God and, believing His words to us, to follow Him. It critiques the Church before the World — seeing us admit and turn from our self-righteousness, reconcile with each other in forgiveness, and confess that God is the only One who has it all together. Evangelistic worship also critiques the World before the Church - chastening the world for its arrogance, urging it to heed the message of the humiliated followers of Jesus, and warning it to make peace with God quickly. In evangelistic worship, we focus on coming to God's majesty, growing in the message of God's undeserved kindness to us, and then going in obedience to His commands to all the places His will takes us.

Allow me to clarify two common misconceptions. First, evangelistic worship is not evangelism disguised as Sunday worship. In that sense, it is not worship designed primarily for seekers. Our hope and prayer is that there will be people of every conceivable sort of response to God on Sunday mornings: from people who are questioning whether there is a God at all to people who have known the reality of His rescue in Jesus for many years. Yet our emphasis in evangelistic worship is not to use the occasion for evangelism. Second, evangelistic worship is not worship designed to speak narrowly to a certain sort of Christian subculture: namely, the Evangelicals. On the contrary, we are striving in evangelistic worship to effectively communicate the Gospel to all believers, whatever their background inside or outside the church. We will consciously try to avoid the buzz words of evangelical-speak. We will find ways to re-explain and commend the Gospel in ways that connect with everyone.

What will all this mean to you on a given Sunday morning? Hopefully, it will mean three things: 1) We hope that you'll go away from worship having been comforted and encouraged in a Gospel that welcomes and reaches out to all - whether you're new to the church or have been at Stony Point for years and needed someone to listen to a personal struggle and pray with that morning. 2) We hope that you'll go away having been challenged in a Gospel that stirs your soul, makes you maybe a little uncomfortable, convicts you of sin, and calls you to repentance and more faith in Jesus. 3) And we hope that you'll go away and, of course, come back! Seeking to go with God in any venture — be it looking for a job,

working at school, home, or in business, or volunteering to serve the poor in Richmond, West Virginia, or Africa — is exhausting. It makes us realize more keenly how we much need God's mercy and presence and guiding - far more than we had guessed. Worship strengthens us for life. So we must return, all of us, to worship. But don't come back alone. We all have family, friends, and co-workers who need to hear the same Gospel that has saved and strengthened us. Bring them along next time to worship with you — and let the world watch, wonder, and believe! ●



A Puritan Prayer for Worship

Glorious God, it is the flame of my life to worship You, the crown and glory of my soul to adore You and heavenly pleasure to approach You. Give me power by Your Spirit to help me worship now, that I may forget the world, be brought into fullness of life, be refreshed, comforted and blessed. Give me Jesus, Son of Man, Son of God that I might not be terrified but be drawn near with amazing love and holy boldness. He is my Mediator, Brother, Interpreter, Branch and Lamb; Him I glorify and in Him I am set on high. I don't have any crowns to give but what You have given I return, content to feel that everything is mine when it is Yours and more fully mine when I have yielded it to You. Let me live completely to my Savior, free from distractions, from worldly care and from those things that hinder my pursuit of the narrow way. I am pardoned by the blood of Jesus—today, give me a new sense of it and continue to pardon me by it. May I come every day to the fountain, and every day be washed anew that I may worship You always in spirit and truth.

– A PURITAN PRAYER FOR WORSHIP THAT HAS BEEN SLIGHTLY ADAPTED FOR THE MODERN READER.

BENNETT, ARTHUR, ED., THE VALLEY OF VISION-A COLLECTION OF PURITAN PRAYERS AND DEVOTIONS, EDINBURGH: THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST, 2002.

THE NUMBERS

JAN08



103 TOTAL / 12 NEW

JAN09



128 TOTAL / 15 NEW

FEB08




85 TOTAL / 15 NEW

FEB09



162 TOTAL / 37 NEW

 = 10 PEOPLE

PEOPLE SERVED IN THE SPC FOOD PANTRY IN JANUARY & FEBRUARY

Data reflects individuals only being counted once in the month, even if they were served more than once

UPCOMING

4/2 - 4/13 Dornoch Scotland Mission Project

4/5 Palm Sunday

4/10 Good Friday Service @ 7:30

4/2 Easter Sunrise Worship Service @ 7:15

4/17 - 4/19 High School Retreat - MODGNIK

4/18 Men's Fellowship Breakfast

4/19 Praise & Communion Service

5/1 - 5/3 Missions Conference

5/25 Youth James River Float

5/29 - 5/31 Chincoteague Beach Weekend

What's The Point?

Since the 1970s, when Al Gore invented the World Wide Web, the way people communicate with one another has changed a bit. A church that hopes to effectively reach out to its neighbors and to the next generation must adapt to this new reality. We must never change our message, of course, but we must be flexible and creative in how we communicate it. The only alternative is ever increasing irrelevance.

Stony Point Church has not exactly been on the cutting edge of the communications revolution, but the times — they are a-changing. Clay Asbury and Zack Bryant have been working hard to make our website more beautiful and useful. An up to the minute church calendar, photo gallery, twelve month nursery schedule, and audio sermon archive are just some of their recent enhancements. The website is communicating many of the things that used to be in *The Point*, our church newsletter — only better, faster, and cheaper.

As the SPC website begins to take a more significant role in the life of our church, *The Point* will not go the way of the smoke signal, pony express, and telegraph — but

its role will change. Instead of being published monthly, an issue will come out every other month. Each issue will feature essays, reflections, and stories written by SPC's leaders and thinkers on a topic of significance to our church and community. It will also report important dates and data of note. *The Point* will be published and archived on the website. It will also be available the old fashioned way, on the SPC book rack for local folks and mailed to out-of-towners and shut-ins. Please contact the church office to get on the mailing list.

Our theme for the upcoming June/July issue is Missions. We suspect that many of our readers have had remarkable experiences on the mission field. All are invited to submit their own short story, essay, or reflection for publication in *The Point*. The deadline for submissions is May 1. We can't promise that every submission will be included, but we can guarantee that each will be appreciated.

We hope that *The Point* will enlighten and inspire you to deeper measures of faith in Jesus and higher levels of commitment to the King and His kingdom. That, after all, is the point.

