

WHEN YOUR PREACHER LEAVES: Interim Services for Churches Between Ministers

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Protecting “The Blind Side”, by John H. Parker

Foot racing provides Paul with an analogy in 1 Corinthians 9.24, and a report on a recent book on professional football suggests one here. Michael Lewis’ book *The Blind Side* observes that while the attention of football spectators is usually on the quarterback, running backs, or receivers, those who really know the game also place high value elsewhere. While the star quarterback may be the most highly paid player, the second most highly paid player is the left offensive tackle, a player relatively few people watch and one about whom some do not even know.

Why is this relatively obscure player paid so much money? Because he protects the blind side of the vulnerable quarterback. When preparing to pass, a right-handed quarterback stands facing right, and therefore he is blind to any huge opponents rushing to hit him from his left. Therefore team managers search for a 350-pound player with long arms and huge hands to protect him on that side, the left offensive tackle, and, except for perhaps the quarterback himself, they pay him the highest salary of any player: six to eight million dollars each to the top five of those players in the National Football League.

Some Christians protect the blind side: they may not be as visible as, say, the preacher or prominent class teacher, but they are valuable, and—by the discerning—they are highly valued.

Quiet but determined parents protect the blind side. In today’s youth culture, attention may be on the teenager, the youth minister, the coach, the popular speaker. But it is that mother who warns her daughter about innocent-looking but dangerous habits and companions that may blindside her when she is too excited to be aware (Pro. 2.1-5; Eph. 6.1).

Elders protect the blind side. Either well-meaning but uninformed and wrong-thinking people on the one hand, or else attractive but sinister and vicious false teachers on the other may approach the congregation with appealing but dangerous notions. The elders protect the church from unnoticed and unseen dangers (Matthew 7.15; Acts 20.26-31; Titus 2.9-14).

True Bible scholars and teachers protect the blind side. Every generation produces unbalanced, contorted, and often weird religious notions that capture the attention of the innocent, the unknowing, and the enthused. The Bible scholar of integrity calmly and methodically but courageously points out the deep truth of scripture as opposed to the shallow and distorted messages of the moment (Ezra 7.10; Acts 17.11; Heb. 4.12).

They may not be the most visible, but they are among the most needed. Value those who protect the blind side.

Shakespeare Quotations for Ministers, by John Parker

“Consider, as an example, the fact that congregations that have active evangelism or membership growth committees tend to grow and include new members at a slower rate and with more difficulty than congregations that do not have such committees. Much of this at first seemingly illogical situation is due to the fact that once a congregation has formed a committee (once they have ‘done something about our membership problem’), the motivation of the rest of the congregations is dissipated. The feeling is that the issue is addressed and ‘we’ do not have to do any more about it”, (page 37).

“Somewhere along the way in my training and my work with congregations, I picked up this operational definition of conflict: ‘Conflict is two or more ideas in the same place at the same time.’ I continue to remind myself and the congregations that I work with about that definition. It helps me and others to see that if we do not have two or more ideas to work with, then we are without life, without direction, without energy. If a congregation has lived with only one idea for an extended time, then it is committed to the status quo, to what already is. And it is fairly easy for people to be able to see that a long-term commitment to the status quo in an environment of great change is an untenable position with very little prospect for either faithfulness or survival”, (page 165).

Barber Clippings

Jerrie Barber

April 1 was the biggest and longest party I have ever had. I appreciate the Berry’s Chapel congregation for giving us a great send-off. It is wonderful to have that encouragement. They were gracious in every way. After morning services, we had a delicious meal. The 4ever Brothers quartet sang for an hour. During the afternoon services, former youth ministers at Berry’s Chapel spoke: Jeremy Houck and Chad Hedgepath. I appreciate their invitation and their willingness to travel to Franklin to participate. We are enjoying our gifts. The picture of Franklin hangs in our foyer. The Cracker Barrel rockers are already being put to good use. The gift of more than \$5,000.00 to Childhaven was a surprise and will be used to help children.

Due to the excellent efforts of Jill Parker, I now have a web site: www.barberclippings.com . Please see it to learn more of interim ministry. I am grateful to Jill for doing the work for that.

The first Sunday in May, we plan to start our work with the congregation in Eddyville, Kentucky. If you are in the area, please visit with us. The contact information for there: P. O. Box 630, 208 Fairview Avenue, Eddyville, Kentucky 42038, (270) 388-7948; <http://www.eddyvillechurchofchrist.com/> .

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I completed my interim ministry with the South Harpeth congregation on March 25. They are a fine and established church, the second or third oldest in the United States. John Cantrel began a new ministry on April 1, and our fervent prayers are with

him and this good and faithful church of Christ. Every interim that Jill and I have completed has left us with new and cherished friends. We are very thankful for the opportunities that we have had in the past several years, and look forward to others, the Lord willing. Our congratulations go to Jerrie and Gail on completion of their work at the Berry's Chapel congregation, and we are very excited about their full-time interim work in Kentucky beginning in May.

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