

The Link

No Pencils in the Pews!

When you and I enter the sanctuary on Sunday, where is our mind...our heart?

A few weeks ago, Candy and I visited a church near our home for their Sunday morning worship service. As I sat down on the pew, I eavesdropped on the conversation by a few ladies sitting directly behind us. Two women were having a very serious conversation about all the pencils missing in the pew pockets. "They must have taken them all out to sharpen," one lady commented, "and forgot to put them back." With some concern, the other lady blurted out, "What if someone needs a pencil?" A moment later a couple sat down behind the two ranting women. The first thing from their concerned lips was "have you noticed, there are no pencils in the pews." The topic of missing pencils went on for several minutes.

Dear Lord...the church urgently needs your help! I know we are all guilty of nonsense, but have we lost our way? A close friend asked me the other day, "What does it mean to be reverent in church?" WOW! This question is loaded and is controversial, opinionated and very thought provoking. Being in the church all my life and having been a pastor for over 25 years, my mind was flooded with past experiences concerning this very topic. Below are possible examples of how one can forget the sacredness of our Sunday gathering:

- As a little boy, I vividly remember a man having a small transistor radio in his coat pocket with a flesh colored ear piece listening to a ball game during the worship service.
- I can remember when First Baptist Church of Charlottesville hired their first music director. When the minister stood up to lead the congregation in a hymn, he did something that I had never seen before; he began swinging his arms and hands while directing the music. My brother and I thought this was strange but stood and did the same. (We also visited the "woodshed" when we returned home where dad swung his arms and hands on our bottoms....)
- Leadership tension: The deacons informed the pastor by letter (where I served as an associate pastor back in the early 80's) that they were suing him. Needless to say, there was great tension in the church until it was resolved. Hostility was felt in the church on Sunday morning, and during the Wednesday night prayer meeting it all ended in a showdown.
- There was once a disturbance over a woman who wore jeans so tight, it left little room for the imagination. What made it so bad was her late entrance on Sunday morning. She would "waltz" her way down the center isle to sit on the front pew. Men glared with curiosity and wives fumed.
- In today's church members are concerned about so many things that stifles unity and quenches the spirit: For example:
 - Young men who fail to doff (take off) their hat during the service
 - Members sipping coffee throughout the worship service from their thermal mug.
 - Older folk occasionally voicing their opinion that people should wear their best clothes to church (not shorts, jeans, mini skirts, braless tops, inappropriate signage on tee shirts, etc.)
 - Sleeping, eating, gossiping, daydreaming, clock watching, talking, writing notes to one-another, leaving during the invitation to beat the crowd at the local restaurant all are "stress points" for many.
 - "Preacher slamming" (Our pastor preaches too long, too loud, wrong Bible translation, wearing casual attire, etc.)

I Corinthians 14:26-b states, "Let all things be done (*in the church*) for edification." Paul even suggested that improper use of spiritual gifts can distract (eg. tongues). There is so much that can distract us from being unified/one-body as we gather on the Lord's Day to worship God. Without question, the church has changed and has challenges. Where does all this fit into missions?

A few years back, a missionary to Uganda, who had little or no training, tried to convince people not to use drums during their worship service. (I think the missionary thought drums were too worldly.) A very patient and kind African (a graduate of MLI Christian Study Center) taught him that drums are a part of the African culture and that it was okay to incorporate them into the worship service. Another example was when a seasoned missionary tried to teach members in a town church not to clap or shout (typical of African worship services). It seems that every Christian has his/her view of what it means to be reverent in church.

I don't have an answer or resolution for you—the reader of "The Link," but I do have a personal recommendation. Make sure your Sunday attire, words, thoughts, etc. do not detract from your worship nor distract others from their worship experience. Come to church rested, and "prayed up." In fact, we should live reverent lives each day doing our best to reflect our Savior. Our lives should be an attractant (a fragrant aroma to other believers as Paul suggests) not a life that detracts or distracts. Be careful that your words and deeds bring glory and honor to the King of Kings. Remember—people come to church not only to hear the Good News but to see, feel and experience the Good News. It requires each person to be reverent—recognizing the presences of the Living God.

CAUTION: Young people, be careful NOT to criticize an older person who appreciates/values the old hymns and quietness. Don't be like some who judge this as spiritually dry and barren. **Older people**, be careful NOT to judge the youth regarding their modern dress, raising of hands and loud worship. Always remember, it is the cross and the empty tomb that brings us together to celebrate our Savior. Enjoy the diversity and bring with you on Sunday an atmosphere/aroma of sanctity, reverence, peace and love. **In other words, smell good!** Yes, I do think wearing one's hat in the service shows disrespect as well as eating, sleeping and habitually leaving during the invitation. These are areas I believe most can agree are irreverent. **YET...**maybe, for example, the one sleeping had to work all night, or stayed up with a sick child and is exhausted, but did not want to miss being with God's people. Don't be too quick to judge others. Just make sure your life does not hinder another's ability to worship...keeping central that our loving/holy Savior is present and desires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Rick

MISSION LINK'S NEWS BRIEF:



STREET KIDS FUND NEEDING HELP: Pictured is Joshua. He is a 10 year old who lives near MLI headquarters. Each morning he comes for a chapati (bread). His life is begging, stealing and sniffing glue. Consider joining our Uganda team in February and spend time ministering to the street community. ANY GIFT TO THE "STREET KID'S FUND" OR "GENERAL FUND" IS GREATLY APPRECIATED. We have tuition coming up in September for several kids. One child is supported, but others need assistance.

PHASE II — MLI PASTORS SCHOOL IN ELDORET, KENYA — I realize that this is a repeated plea each month and may be a little redundant. Yet, it needs to be completed. Rick did not visit the engineer this trip due to lack of funds to commence construction. We are not discouraged believing God's timing is the best. **Any amount given is appreciated.**

DEAF SCHOOL IS MEETING A CRITICAL NEED: (On going needs) The sponsorship for this school has been a blessing. The ongoing monthly needs for food is around **\$370**. **Other monthly needs:** Dorm for kids **\$70**; salaries for 5 teachers "in total" is **\$250** (minimum). The school has increased the number of students requiring additional funds. Please pray for the staff, children & school. Please visit our web site (currently being remodeled) for additional information about the school—www.missionlink.org.

MEDICAL FUND HAS NEEDS: We continue to have medical needs on a ongoing basis. One of our pastors (Pastor Charles) was diagnosed with diabetes five months ago. Each month we help him purchase "test strips" for a glucometer (**\$19**). **Any gift to our medical fund is much appreciated and will assist MLI with various medical needs.**

COW TO PURCHASE FOR PASTOR JAMES (MLI'S HEAD TEACHER)— Pastor James has requested assistance to purchase a milking cow. A neighbor has to sell his cow, but it requires \$420. The cow produces 12 liters of milk per day that will give James additional and much need income. Would you consider helping this the man of God? He is a tremendous asset to MLI.



MLI VAN: The frame must be welded and remains parked at our headquarters. We now have an Indian that will fix it for \$135. Shocks are \$90 dollars installed (rear) and better shocks will cost more. The break leakage has been fixed.

GENERAL FUND'S — A BIG THANK YOU for all those who have helped our general fund. Rick will be back in Africa September 28 thru November 9. Daily, he will have many who come by the office needing school fees, seeds/fertilizer, food, medicine, help to fix a well, funds for rent, etc. It is never ending and a stress point in ministry. Children walk the streets because mom/dad cannot afford to send their child to school. We are very grateful for your generous gifts to this fund; however, PLEASE do not stop giving to the General Fund. This fund is used to meet many needs including operational requirements. **When giving to other projects or ministries, please consider a small gift to our general fund.**

Please check out our remodeled web site and share your thoughts: There is still more pages to add, and Rick is working on it when he has opportunity: www.missionlink.org PLEASE VISIT OUR WEB SITE FOR A MORE DETAILED LIST OF NEEDS. IT WILL BE REFRESHED ON A REGULAR BASIS. AGAIN, YOUR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT MLI'S WEB SITE IS ENCOURAGED AND WELCOMED.



Will you ask? By simply asking your friends and neighbors, work buddies, Sunday School Class, Church to send MLI their old cell phones (usually sitting in a drawer collecting dust), it will help us raise some much needed funds to fuel our ministry.

Used laptops (Mac/Win) are needed by January 10, 2018 for our Kenya mission. Thanks you—



TWO TRIPS FOR 2018

Uganda Mission Trip - February 9-23, 2018 — Dates are set and 25 tickets locked. Cost for the entire trip is \$2900. However, all those who sign up by **September 7th** will receive a \$150 scholarship. Each person will have three stow bags, which gives us space to carry computer equipment for Kenya. This will be an exciting trip as we will be going back on the island in Lake Victoria and work with several churches. Contact Rick if you have questions - thelinkoffice@gmail.com or call Cell: 434-981-9101 or Office: 434-984-1995.

Kenya Mission Trip - (fixed dates) June 16-29, 2018 — I have decided that we will all work individually to obtain tickets rather than group rates. At this point, our trip cost in June will be 12 days in country \$1450 (each getting their own ticket, insurance and visa.) If we should do extra things (eating out, safari, etc.) people will incur additional cost. We will have to arrange for different pickups at the Nairobi airport and departures. In other words, people need to leave the USA on the 16th, arrive in Nairobi on the 17th and fly out of Nairobi on the 28th and arrive in USA on the 29th. In country time is 12 days. This schedule gives returning the weekend to rest before they go back to work. We may ask people to surrender one stow bag for additional things for other ministry opportunities that our group may have in Kenya. I would encourage you to promote the trip, which will be 16-29 of June.



Bring Happiness to an African Widows for only **\$30** a Month!

For **\$30** a month (just a dollar a day) you can make a difference in the life of a widow. Your support will help pay for school fees, medicine and much more. **So very little makes a BIG difference...**

Nagudi Saidha is 65 years old. Her husband died October 2010 of HIV leaving her HIV Positive with 4 children. **Testimonial:** Saidha was a Muslim but accepted the Lord while fellowshiping with the widows MLI widows in Mafubira. Saidha thanks God for Mission Link for taking good care of her through basic necessities like water filters, cooking charcoal stoves, spiritual fellowship with widows. Because of these encouragements she feels a sense of belonging and full of hope. **Challenges:** Saidha is still renting where she stays and where she does some farming. One of the children is dumb and paying schools is a challenge for her. Treatments with ARVS is accessible but additional medicines is challenge.