

October—November 2005

The Gathering Net - 2005

Dear Saints,

As I was musing over the theme of this newsletter I realized what a great and Sovereign God we serve. It is so assuring that the Lord ordained and created me for such a time and place as this. He designed us at birth just the way He wanted and it was wonderful. (Psalm 139) That encompasses our brain with its intelligence, our bodies with certain talents, and our inner man with the gifts to fulfill the destiny He has ordained in our lives. This includes our unique personalities and individuality plus when and where we were born. God does not make mistakes. Some of us may not be satisfied with how we look, who we are, or where we came from, but that is our problem—not God's responsibility. If we were more grateful we probably would be more content and joyful. Now let me really get to the point of my excitement.

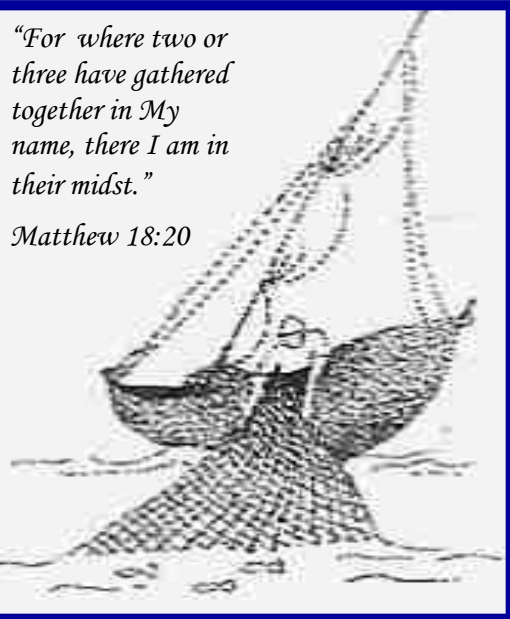
I was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, nurtured in a Godly home by good parents, thank you Jesus. By the age of eighteen I was off to the Air Force stationed in Mississippi, Alabama, and Alaska. The Mississippi/Alabama time was from 1964-1975 and except for a three year season in North Carolina I have been here in Montgomery from 1979 till the present.

There is something very significant about my years in the sixties. They were years I spent here in the Deep South, specifically here in Montgomery, the so called 'Heart of the South,' or the 'Cradle of the Confederacy.' During this time I witnessed much hatred and division, particularly through cross burnings and injustices. I was almost killed by bigots in Mississippi because of my stance against racial inequality.

But nothing I experienced was an accident. I don't regret any of it. In fact as I am writing this today I realize how the Lord put a seed of compassion and reconciliation in me so that I could be a part of the wonderful work He is going to accomplish NOW. By the way, one of the critical and very important aspects of this is that God gave me my wife, Elaine, who has the same calling, desire, gifting and tenacity for reconciliation and healing. Born in Arkansas in 1943 God destined her to be a teammate with me in this process today.

"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst."

Matthew 18:20



Now let me close this part of the newsletter with a timely and appropriate testimony. On December 5, 2005, this city will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Rosa Parks Bus Boycott. In 1955 it sparked the much needed Civil Rights Movement for our nation right here on the main street of our city. Now, fifty years later there are going to be many events throughout the year to celebrate this "Jubilee." God spoke to the heart of some of us in the body of Christ to think of something that the CHURCH could display that was different than the previous years. That is how the "**One Montgomery Movement**" was birthed. It has a number of facets. In this newsletter there is a guest article I strongly encourage you to read by my close brother in the Lord, Jay Wolf. This article will explain beautifully the heart of "One Montgomery." Jay is the pastor of the predominantly white First Baptist Church located in downtown Montgomery. It is literally in the inner city. Jay is co-leader along with another good friend, Kyle Searcy, who is pastor of Fresh Anointing International which is predominantly a black church. Our mayor, Bobby Bright and his wife, First Lady Judge Lynn Bright are also great supporters of "One Montgomery."

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Now back to my personal testimony. One of the goals of “One Montgomery” is to bring churches of different races together for pulpit exchange, worship, and sharing meals. First Baptist Church and Fresh Anointing International recently came together on a Wednesday night to share a meal. Their combined worship teams blended in as they worshiped together in each unique style. I had the privilege of being invited that evening and was able to participate in this great event. There were approximately 250 members from each church and mixed seating was arranged so that conversations made it easy to get acquainted. Now here is my most thrilling moment! As we were singing together the timeless song and chorus, “Alleluia,” the Lord took me back in time to the mid-70’s when we were singing that same chorus and I was thinking to myself at that time just how wonderful it would be if some day in the future I could be a witness and experience ‘the divided’ body of Christ coming together in ‘unity’ to worship Him in Spirit and Truth. A desire and prayer was once again seeded in my heart that day. Now with a nudge from Papa God that brought me back to the reality of standing in Montgomery, Alabama, 2005, in the midst of these mixed believers singing that same Alleluia chorus, the Father through the Holy Spirit, spoke to me at that moment and said, “Son, this night is a partial fulfillment of your desire and prayer so long ago.” I could not stop weeping. I could only raise my hands in adoration of His goodness and faithfulness giving Him ‘Thanks and Praise.’ He is truly a covenant keeping God. So if these words have touched your spirit man please read Jay’s article.

Also, as a bonus, Mary Risen, a board member of The Gathering, had a vision at her church recently. Mary is white and is now a member of a predominantly black church. She e-mailed us the words and vision she had heard from the Lord. I confirmed that it was appropriate for the theme of this newsletter. Please read and receive your own affirmation. Praise God for these intercessors who are open to the Word of the Lord.

Whew! I know this is a lot of information but I believe that the Holy Spirit wanted all three articles to be shared with you. Again, I say thank you, Jesus, for allowing me to be living in “such a time as this.” Esther 4:14



The Cross of Christ is the ultimate symbol of love and brings unity.



The Ku Klux Klan tried to high-jack the cross and make it a symbol of hate and prejudice and disunity.



Secure in His timing,
Carmen



Above: Carmen shares the importance of *One Montgomery*.

Right: Pastors and leaders unite in prayer around the black and white *One Montgomery* cross.

From the pen of Pastor Jay Wolf

First Baptist Church, Perry St.

Montgomery, AL

Dear Friends,

I am convinced that God is calling us to a season of spiritual harvest. It seems to me that the prerequisite for the Lord's energizing a great spiritual awakening is the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer in John 17:21, "Be ONE...so the world may believe."

In Montgomery that equates to learning and living God's call for racial reconciliation. Racial reconciliation boils down to this simple objective: having an *open heart of inclusion* and an *open hand of partnership*.

While racial reconciliation will never be perfectly achieved--let's have the faith and courage to declare that Montgomery- a place known for division- is striving to be a living illustration of reconciliation. Let's actively transform the Christian community into barrier breakers and bridge builders.

Flowing from our John 17 fellowship is the proposal for the **ONE Movement**. The ONE Movement is focusing on the *ONE TABLE* and the *ONE CROSS*.

The *ONE TABLE* is simply having Black and White churches meet for a meal and prayer. For example, On a Wednesday night in June, our First Baptist of Montgomery family hosted pastor Tony Peoples and the Love Church. Then in August we hosted pastor Kyle Searcy and Fresh Anointing Church. The meetings were a slice of heaven! Old bondages were broken and new bonds were formed. The ONE TABLE is a simple idea that could work anywhere and we are urging churches to connect with each other and share the bonding agents of food and prayer.

The ONE CROSS is a black and white cross that proclaims we are functioning as God's reconcilers, not because of a *Judge's law* but because of *Jesus' love!* The KKK tried to hijack the cross and transform it into an ugly symbol of flaming hate. Let's actively reclaim the cross. The ultimate symbol of love, sacrifice, and reconciliation is the CROSS. Our proposal is for black and white work groups to make and distribute thousands of black and white crosses this fall and prominently display those crosses for the 381 days of the Bus Boycott commemoration. So when the world comes to Montgomery in December of 2005 to recall the faith and courage of the Civil Rights catalyst, Rosa Parks, thousands of crosses will proclaim that Jesus is the author of authentic reconciliation. On December 1, 1955 Rosa Parks turned her *moment* into a *movement*--let's pray that our moment will become God's movement of far-reaching reconciliation and revival.

First Baptist Church (FBC) will seek to create a "cross factory" in the old Harbin's building by our church on Perry Street. During the month of October, Fresh Anointing and FBC work teams will build 1,000's of crosses and then in November we will distribute them. People can display the ONE Cross in their yard--at their work places--ONE crosses everywhere will be our holy goal. The Crosses should be left up for the 381 days of the bus boycott that goes from December 2005 until January of 2007. We are praying that other churches will partner together and blanket our region with the ONE Cross which will serve as a powerful and provocative illustration of reconciliation and revival. Jesus promised in John 12:31, "If I am lifted up, I will draw all men to Myself." As we lift up the cross with ONE hand and heart, we will be positioned for God's energy of spiritual awakening to travel over the fused wiring of His united church and see the ignition of far reaching revival fires!



Rev. Jay Wolf shares at Sept. John 17 Meeting.

In His Love, Joy and Service--Jay Wolf

Carmen invited the John 17 pastors and leaders to join with others in the community in using the upcoming Narnia movie as an opportunity to share Christ and the gospel story after children, adults and youth alike have seen this reenactment of C.S. Lewis's book, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. Promotional resources are still available. Contact Jan Niel at Frazer after Oct. 10 if you would like some posters or other resources. (334) 272 8622 or janniell@frazerumc.org.



At the September John 17 meeting, First Lady of Montgomery, Judge Lynn Bright, shared her passion for unity and racial reconciliation and cooperation in Montgomery and how ONE Montgomery fits into that passion.

Praise God for the great crowd and wonderful fellowship at the September John 17 Pastors' Fellowship!



October/November Schedule

- * Monday, October 3, 5:30—9:00
RSA Tower Prayer, Fasting and Worship for City
- * Wednesday, October 12, 7:30—11:15
Bible Study, Canaan Land for Boys
- * Wednesday, October 19, 10:30—11:30
Servant Leadership Meeting (Frazer UMC)
- * Wednesday, October 19, 11:30—1:00
John 17 Pastors' Luncheon (Frazer UMC)
- * Wednesday, October 26, 12:00—1:00

- Bible Study—Beasley Allen Law Firm
- * Friday, October 28, 7:00—9:00
Harvest Time Jubilee—1st Baptist Church
- * Thursday—Saturday, Nov. 3—5
Lydia S.E. Regional Conference, Jackson, Miss.
- * Wednesday, November 16, 10:30—11:30
Servant Leadership Meeting (Frazer UMC)
- * Wednesday, November 16, 11:30—1:00
John 17 Pastors' Luncheon (Frazer UMC)
- * Thursday, November 17, 12:00—1:00
Bible Study—Beasley Allen Law Firm

Connective Tissue

By Mary Risen

As Father God GATHERS us together in our local churches, prayer groups, Bible studies, etc. let us give Him praise and thanksgiving for HIS perfect plan. Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 5:4. As I was gathered with my brothers and sisters in Christ at my church, Family Life Bible Fellowship this past month, the Lord gave me a 'word picture' while we were in prayer together. I heard Him say, "**connective tissue.**" After I went home I started researching the meaning of connective tissue in the human body.

I discovered that connective tissue:

1. provides general support;
2. holds organs in place;
3. forms ligaments and tendons;
4. provides cushioning and insulation;
5. transports dissolved nutrients.

It is the '**cellular glue**' that **helps** tissues do their work. As I pondered these attributes I thought about them in relation to the body of Christ.

As we at church were joined physically by holding hands, I also thought of the bigger picture,

1. **general support** - we must lift each other up; pray for each other; exhort and encourage one another. Eph. 5:120; Neh. 4:13; Acts 12:5-16
2. **holds organs in place** - as we are connected to the Vine we respond by being bound together in unity; responding and walking in our individual giftings for the body. Eph. 4:12,16; John 15:5
3. **forms ligaments and tendons** - we must speak forth the Word of God. We must use the power He has given each one of us to speak forth His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Mt. 6:10; Mark 11:22-24
4. **provides cushioning and insulation** - we are cleansed and covered by the Blood of Jesus and have the full armor of God to stand against the assignments of the enemy. Heb. 10:225; Col. 3:12-16
5. **transports dissolved nutrients** - we must usher in God's blessings to one another through our brokenness and our journey with Him. John 12:24, 32; Phil 2:13; Acts 2:42

The '**cellular glue**' reminds me of the Holy Spirit, our Helper. "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever." John 14:16, 26

Don't miss this special opportunity to unite with the Body of Christ in Montgomery:

HARVEST TIME

JUBILEE 2005

One Montgomery

An Interdenominational, Multicultural

Worship Celebration Will be held at

First Baptist Church Perry Street

Montgomery, Alabama



Friday, October 28, 2005

7:00 P.M.

Speaker, Pastor Jay Wolf of

First Baptist Church

Theme:

**When Montgomery is ONE in
Christ the world could be
WON to Christ.**

For more information

Call:(334) 281-4657

Or log on to www.miracledt.org