

TKJ Schematic

news & views for supporters and friends of



June 2005

Warm weather is upon us. This is our busiest season. Our ministry seems to be counter-cyclical. Most people think of the greatest need for the homeless being in the winter. And that is generally true. Because that is the way most people think, including those at social service agencies, churches and city hall; that is when their services are focused. A number of soup kitchens close for the summer. Philadelphia city shelters generally run out of funding and close down sometime beginning in June or July and don't reopen until the new funding year begins in September. This leaves wider cracks for people to fall through. Since our ministry is to those who fall through the cracks of the institutional system, our greatest need is in the summer.

We need more sandwiches, hundreds more, every Thursday. We can use more help to serve. As the crowds grow and the temperatures rise, it is better not to rely on the homeless to help serve the goodies and the cold drinks, as we have been for most of the year. Volunteers leave when they are done serving and are not as likely to be accused of showing favoritism as those who live among them.

So, anything you can do to help is appreciated. Make it a family outing. Make sandwiches and join us on the street on a Thursday night. If Tuesdays are better, you can join the folks at Word in Action. Please step out in faith and do something.

"The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." - Proverbs 29:25

Remember the Homeless on Your Vacation

Those personal care items in hotel bathrooms are much appreciated by those who have to carry all their personal belongings on their persons. If you stay in a hotel room, you paid for those little bottles of shampoo, soap and lotion. You probably packed your own so don't need them. Bring them home. Also those little kits they give you on airlines, if you are fortunate enough to travel first class, are much appreciated. Even the little bags of peanuts are a nice little treat.

If the place where you work has a sales or consulting department that travels regularly, ask if you can put a box for them to deposit these goodies when they return from trips, in their department. When it fills, either give it to someone connected with The King's Jubilee at church or drop it by my house; or join us on a Thursday night to help share them yourself.

Passing the Torch

A dear friend passed away last month. He is 98 years old. He prayed for us daily for more than twenty-five of those years. His name is Jacob Kulp. Even though he was still a Mennonite when he died, his life and testimony and prayers are a sizable part of why our family is Orthodox today.

Jake was so faithful in his prayers that when he missed a day, I could feel the difference. One day, back in 1987 or 1988, I was having just an irritating, off-kilter day. (At the time, I was Mennonite Chaplain for Philadelphia Prisons.) Nothing was going right and it seemed that there were spiritual forces that were just bringing everything down. As I pondered this, I thought of Jake. It struck me that there must be something wrong with Jake. I called his home and found out that he had been taken to the hospital. I went right over to visit him. As I entered his room, before I could say a word, he said, "Brother Cranford, can you forgive me? I was too sick to pray for you today."

I was humbled and amazed by this, and replied, "Jake, there is nothing to forgive. I could feel the difference. It's my turn to pray for you." This happened when Jake was a young man in his eighties.

It was around that same time that I helped Jake to wire a new house with electricity. In the middle of the work one day, he began to weep. He then raised his hands to heaven and looked up and said: "How long, O Lord, how long will you tarry your coming?" He then confessed to me how he thought it would be easier to live the Christian life as he got older, but that he found that it seemed the temptations were that much stronger the closer he got to the goal. This was very sobering to me, in my thirties, coming from a godly, prayerful man, in his eighties.

How did Jacob Kulp help me along the way to Orthodoxy? At Finland Mennonite Church, Jake was one of a generation of folks whom we had the privilege of getting to know. They still wore plain clothes. They sang four part harmony without instruments, sometimes in German. They were serious about their faith in Christ and dealt honestly and kindly with all they met. There were six couples who had been married over 50 years in this little church of 140 people.

We saw the church ignoring these people and their wisdom. They were listening, instead, to the college and seminary educated church growth experts. They dumbed down Sunday School. They introduced instruments into the services, and began to opt for a "worship band" repeating gospel choruses in the place of theology laden hymns.

We occasionally heard these older folks, gently, and oh so meekly, complain about some of the innovations. Then came the discussions over divorce and remarriage; then ordination of

women; acceptance of homosexuality; ordination of homosexuals; blessing of homosexual unions. At the same time, friends of mine in three different Mennonite colleges were getting flack for encouraging prayer and Bible reading in the dorms. And the seminaries were moving on to reconsider the inspiration of Scripture and the deity of Jesus Christ.

These simple, godly older folks just held onto their faith and prayed. One by one, couple by couple, they moved into church old folks homes where they could still sing the old hymns and hear the Scriptures preached. They are out of sight of the local congregations, so the churches can innovate as they please. One by one, they are passing away.

I still haven't answered the question.

The first time I walked into a service at St. Philip Antiochian Orthodox Church, the icons had an interesting message for me. At that point, it was just the iconostasis, the 24 medallion icons and the Platytera in the church, along with a few portable icons on the walls. I was immediately reminded of Jake and our other, older friends in the Mennonite church. The message that I got was this: This church belongs to Jesus Christ, to the Virgin Mary, to St. John the Baptist, to St. Philip, to St. Nicholas, to St. Cyprian, to St. Thekla, etc. And we dare not do anything here to make them uncomfortable in their church! I have never seen that stated in the defense or theology of the icons, but it was reassuring to me.

There were a number of comments at Jake's viewing and funeral that asked the questions: Who is taking his place? Who will take up his ministry of prayer? Who will delight in wonder and praise to God at the blossoming of an evening primrose?

As the older generation passes away, responsibilities are passed down. Am I preparing to be a wise old man or just an old fool? What legacy am I preparing to leave behind? What treasure am I sending on ahead? What kind of guidance and example am I giving for others to follow? Am I living in such a way as to finish the course to obtain the prize, before the cloud of witnesses beckoning me on?

What We Need

I feel it is long past time to start taking this ministry to the next level. We would like to be able to offer more service to the poor and homeless in and around Philadelphia and elsewhere. To do this The King's Jubilee needs some "infrastructure". If you can do any of the following tasks to help move things along, it would be greatly appreciated.

- Edit and update www.shoutforjoy.net.
- Assemble and maintain the mailing list.
- Address & stuff newsletters for mailing.
- Help serve on the streets of Philadelphia on Tuesday or Thursday nights.
- Be available to move household goods and furniture on occasion.
- Serve on the streets with instruments and songs.

Or you may have a task that I have not thought of that would be helpful. We are open to suggestions.

Evangelism

Some of us who came from evangelical churches keep asking the question: What does Orthodox evangelism look like?

This week, I finally heard and began to understand the answer that a wise priest gave me once again. "Keep the feasts and the fasts. Be faithful at the Liturgy. Live as a Christian. Pray."

Think about it. How did you become Orthodox? What drew you? Who impressed you? Now, become like that.

I'll write more in the next newsletter.

The Ad

"COME AND SEE" Icons, Books & Art was started with the hope that it would provide a steady income with flexible hours to facilitate my involvement in service with The King's Jubilee. After over four years, the website has over 1,000 different icons on it. We have signed royalty agreements with more than a dozen iconographers of a variety of styles. The collection is growing all the time. We have shipped to all 50 states, every province in Canada and to over thirty other countries on all six inhabited continents. We average about 7,000 hits per day on the website. Please come and browse our collection at www.comeandseeicons.com

The Appeal

We can only do what we do, because there are many others who share the resources God has given them with us. Donations are gladly and gratefully received. In addition to checks and cash, personal size shampoos, soaps & lotions are always welcome, as well as men's clothing in season.

Checks can be mailed to:



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East Greenville, PA 18041-1629

Our phone is: 215-679-7563

email: TKJ@shoutforjoy.net

Thank you. May the Lord bless you as you bless the poor in Jesus' Name. Have a great summer!

Peace,

Cranford Joseph Coulter