



Jill and I had a delightful visit with our son, Nathan, his wife, Lisel, and their son, Forrest, in Portland, Oregon. Nathan and Lisel are the adventurous sort, so we did some sort of adventure each day, whether visiting Mount Saint Helen, hiking on Mount Hood (where the photos were taken), hiking to various waterfalls in the Columbia River Gorge and elsewhere, or walking along the beach on the very northern part of the Oregon coast. We were there for his 38th birthday, which was also the day these photos were taken.

I am grateful to Pastors Ron Mallow and Andrea Taylor for bringing the sermons during my absence. I was praying for you and for them each Sunday.

We worshiped the first Sunday with the First Unitarian Church of Portland, which is where Nathan's family has been going of late. It has been a very long time since I worshiped with Unitarians, and I appreciated many parts of their worship, although I was also somewhat saddened by all they're missing if they choose not to experience all God wants them to know of God's heart and

purposes through Jesus and the Spirit. At the same time, we who follow Jesus so often do so with such contention and unpleasantness that I can sympathize with those who choose to join themselves to less particular groups.

My worship the second Sunday was also tinged with sadness. On that day I walked about a mile to a United Methodist church in the neighborhood, and found myself one of only a dozen worshipers at their regular morning service. I think churches close in these United States at about the rate of one per day, and that congregation will likely be on that list before long.

Although the Church will always prosper overall as God's Kingdom advances (Matthew 16:18), individual expressions of that Church ("churches," "congregations") have no such assurance. Our task is to keep our own corporate life so vibrantly connected to the Vine who is Jesus that His life ever flows through us into the world. Whenever "church" begins to be about what we want rather than about what He intends, we forfeit the right to His empowerment.

On another subject, some of you were probably amused by my being taken in by the Internet scam about which you received two emails while I was away. (I asked Neville to send them out because I couldn't do it without my laptop. Yes, I was away from the machine for twelve days in a row . . . but not away from my iPhone ☺.)

Had the scam solicitation been from someone I didn't know, I would have recognized it; but I was taken in by the fact that a friend's email account had been hijacked. I am indebted to Korva Coleman (whom Nathan listens to on NPR in Portland!) for her kind and urgent insistence that I call the person from whom I thought I had received the email. Korva was also kind enough to refer me to a very helpful article on the subject, which you can read using the link that follows. It's long, but well worth reading: www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/11/hacked/308673/.

The trip was wonderful, AND I am very glad to be back home with you!

Dave

Postscripts:

1. We're having a vigorous Backyard Bible Club at the Stevens Forest Apartment complex this week. We're having good attendance, both of our own folk and of the neighborhood children, and hopefully we're building good relationships for the future. I went to Food Lion after the club tonight and was greeted by one of the children who happily said, "I know *you!*" I was able to meet his parent, and that's how things are supposed to work. Thanks to Pastor Neville for coordinating this effort!
2. You're surely wondering about what's going on with the front entrance. The latest news is that some of the custom parts for the pyramid were incorrectly fabricated and had to be redone. Mike Shaw is pressing for completion before the Jewish High Holy Days, which are coming in September. Thanks for your patience!
3. The preaching schedule through September will be as follows:

August 18	<i>Summer Reading 7: New Testament History (Acts)</i>
August 25	<i>Summer Reading 8: The Pauline Epistles</i>
September 1	<i>The Way of Jesus: Celebration (Labor Day)</i>
September 8	<i>Summer Reading 9: The General Epistles</i>
September 11	Greg Barrett, <i>The Gospel of Rutba</i> (see attached flyer)
September 15	Mark Wakefield (Missionary to Guatemala)
September 22	<i>Summer Reading 10: New Testament Prophecy (Revelation)</i>
September 29	Youth Sunday, Neville preaching

