

Tulsa Beacon adventure, Passion Play are 2011 goals

by Randy Bright <http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=4883>

At the close of 2010, I am in my tenth year of writing for the Tulsa Beacon, and I hope that Charley Biggs, who is a good friend and a great editor, will continue printing it for many years to come.

Most of my readers know very little about me because, to be frank, I intend it to be that way. I don't share much about my family because we want our privacy. But I thought I might at least share a few things with my readers, and perhaps that may help them understand why I continue to write for the Beacon.

Charley was on the building committee of a church that I did some master planning for well over ten years ago. In 2001, just after the 9/11 attacks, I noticed the Tulsa Beacon in a QuikTrip store. After reading it, I saw an opportunity to write about issues I cared about, so I called Charley to see if he would give me a chance to write a few articles for the Beacon.

To say the least, Charley was skeptical, so I offered to send him a list of ten topics and asked him to pick one. So he graciously agreed to look at the list and to let me write one 500-word article. Later he called and said that all the topics looked interesting, and said to write a 1,000-word article on each topic! Well, I've been writing for the Beacon ever since.

At first I wrote about security issues surrounding the 9/11 attacks, but then topics began to shift toward other weighty issues. I resolved early in the process not to write a column that was a "how to" source for churches. I believed that architectural advice was best kept to my profession, and I wanted to write about issues that no other architects were addressing in trade magazines or journals.

My days, weeks and months are filled with long hours working within my profession, working on my own projects and more recently serving on the Oklahoma American Institute of Architects board. The time that I write for the Beacon is very limited, by necessity, to about five to six hours each week, much of it spent reading books and articles about issues that I feel will have an impact on American churches.

Because of the gravity of the issues I write about, I am grateful that my relationship with God and my trust in Him is what it is. It could be very easy to become discouraged at how so many people in this country want to remove God from it and want to take away our God-given rights. But I am at peace within, because I know that regardless of the outcome, He is in control. There are many people inside and outside of government who are planning our lives, believing that the key to our happiness is social justice, but to achieve that happiness requires subtraction of the role of God and His church from society and insertion of a human model that diminishes the individual.

So I have embarked on two extracurricular activities in an effort to do my part in seeing that they don't succeed in either case.

One of those activities is the Story of Jesus Passion Play in Wauchula, Florida (www.storyofjesus.com).

The play is performed ten times per year, two per weekend for five weeks, around Easter time. It averages about 13,000 spectators each year, and has seen as many as 20,000 per year in its 23-year history. It is done with about 250 to 300 actors and workers, almost all of which are volunteers. Its goal is to teach the story of Jesus from the time He was born to the time He returns in the second coming, all within a 3-hour play. Each year it leads many people to Christ, many of whom are baptized after the play in the Jordan River that is built into its set. At this time, I have begun designing a permanent theater on a 40-acre tract of donated land, and we are looking for about \$15 million in construction funds.

The second activity, of course, is writing for the Tulsa Beacon. Newspapers no longer have a readership that is constrained by geography, and you would be amazed at how many people read the Beacon.

During 2011, I plan to focus my articles on freedom issues that involve churches. Because of the direction toward sustainability that most cities, counties and states are taking, I believe that we are going to begin to see more and greater abuses of American churches than we have ever seen before in this country.

My goal over the coming years is to make certain that our churches are able to maintain their place in their communities. Even though I will be doing a lot of research in that regard, I have found that many cases go completely unnoticed, sometimes for years.

If you know of cases of church abuse, I hope that you will contact me.

As this is my first article for 2011, I wish you all a very safe, prosperous and happy new year. I pray that God will bless you and your households with the Peace that passes all understanding. Happy New Years and God Bless America!

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