



1/1/07

Dear Friends,

As you begin your New Year, let me take you back to December 17, 2006. We wish you could have joined us and the congregation of Rocky Mountain Community Church, Billings, Montana, in their spacious sanctuary. Via, Noah, Jesse, Isaac and I arrived the day before – grateful that the roads between Helena and Billings were clear - mostly. It was our first winter travel outside Helena. Many of the mountains were brilliantly snow-capped.

That Sunday morning we worshipped at Rocky by joining with the angels in singing: “*Glory to the newborn **King.***” We joined the shepherds singing: “*Come adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn **King.***” In *Let Your Blood in Mercy Poured* we sang: “*You are my exalted **King**, by Your boundless love forgive me.*” I was mindful that I would be preaching from Psalm 2:6 where God graciously and emphatically tells us through the psalmist: “***I have installed my King.***” Jesus is the True King. What meaning and hope His profound installation gives us.

Although most of the service was focused on God installing Christ as King, part of this service was my installation as an evangelist to Helena for the Rocky Mountain Presbytery. Last April I had accepted their call and a commission was appointed. December 17 that commission acted. Like weddings and baptisms, installations include the taking of vows. Rex Clark asked me these:

1. *Do you now undertake the work of an evangelist, and do you promise, in reliance on God for strength, to be faithful in the discharge of all the duties incumbent on you as a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (Book of Church Order 21-11)?*
2. *Do you conscientiously believe and declare, as far as you know your own heart, that, in taking upon you this charge, you are influenced by a sincere desire to promote the glory of God and the good of the Church (BCO 21-9)?*
3. *Do you solemnly promise that, by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all the duties of an evangelist, and will be careful to maintain deportment in all respects becoming a minister of the Gospel of Christ, agreeable to your ordination engagements (BCO 21-9)?*

Would you cut out those vows and put them where you can be reminded to pray that God will give me grace to fulfill them – for Christ’s sake? Thank you.

After I had affirmed the vows, the elders gathered around me to pray. Ruling Elders David Petsch and Jeff Laverman led the prayer. I



stood and received “the right hand of fellowship” (as well as several hugs).

The “man from Macedonia,” Rev. Jason Barrie, read the declaration: *I now pronounce and declare that Rev. Stephen D. Bostrom has been regularly elected, ordained, and installed as an evangelist to the city of Helena, Montana, agreeable to the Word of God, and according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America; and that as such he is entitled to all support, encouragement, honor, and obedience in the Lord: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.* Rev. Dr. Alfred J. Poirier, who returned only the day before from Bangkok and Bangladesh, gave the charge.

Glory be to God. He planned that a Westerner – ordained to and experienced in the pastorate in the Southeast (29 years!) – would be sent to Helena, Montana, as an evangelist. God’s ways can be past finding out. I’m grateful He is the Author of this drama.



So, it is official. The Bostroms have a home in Helena. Like all Montanans we have phone numbers with 406 as our area code. We have Montana license plates for our vehicles. And, now - you - and Rocky Mountain Presbytery and Helena - officially have a new evangelist. More importantly, there are over 600 of you now praying for Helena. Again, we wish **you** could have been there. Thank you for your prayers and support. None of this would have taken place otherwise.

What’s next? God knows – for you and for us – in this new year. Certainly, as the last decades have shown and as you know from your own life, there will be hard work. After all, Jesus told us:

- "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62)
- "The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it" (Mt. 11:12).

However, mere sentences later Jesus declares: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:29, 30). Jesus, help us to understand when to draw on such “force” and when to enjoy such “rest.” So, although God uses “forceful men,” women and youth in “laying hold” of His kingdom, that kingdom is “forcefully advancing.” Can we rest enough to see God at work to partner with Him? Please pray that we will.

George MacDonald (1824-1905) asks: "Do you think the work God gives us to do is never easy? Jesus says His yoke is easy, His burden is light. People sometimes refuse to do God’s work just because it is easy. This is sometimes because they cannot believe that easy work is His work.

Some, again, accept it with half a heart and do it with half a hand. But however easy any work may be, it can not be well done without taking thought about it. And such people, instead of taking thought about their work, generally take thought about the morrow, in which no work can be done any more than in yesterday” (The Seaboard Parish, 1868).

Eugene Peterson puts it this way: *“This is slow work and cannot be hurried. It is also urgent work and can’t be procrastinated. At the North American intersection, slow and urgent are not compatible, they cancel one another out. But in the Christian way, patience and urgency are yoked. Urgent as this is, there is not hurry. There cannot be any hurry. There are no shortcuts to becoming the persons we are created to be. Otherwise, the faster we move the less we become; our very speed diminishes us” (Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places, p.337).*

Paul says: *“By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” (1 Cor 15:10).* Over sea and over land Paul poured his life out for the sake of the gospel. But toward the end of his life, God did not send Paul out but brought people to Paul - imprisoned in his own house in Rome. *“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:30, 31).* “Boldly and without hindrance” – what great words to marry with “preaching and teaching the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ!” As you begin a new year, would you pray them for us and for yourself?

Blessings,

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Vacation Bible School Poster,
Peace PCA, a few years ago