

# Reflections

Well, this weekend it was mentioned that the next church anniversary in September is the its 20th. Yes I know that is nothing compared with some churches celebrating centennials and more. The church I grew up going to is a church like that, but the one I go to now is kind of mega-ish. That is, it is quite large, expands four campuses, and has a couple dozen "plants" following its doctrines and leadership style, but is still nothing compared to the likes of Willow Creek or Crystal Cathedral. Anyway, When I first started going to the church it hadn't yet celebrated its 10th anniversary. I remember that celebration was done in the school it originally met at before they got their own building. It was still on only one campus, its campground was still in the hands of its previous owners, and even the building they were in wasn't yet fully utilized. Inside was a big fenced in area of, well, *nothing* which would soon become the second half of a new improved worship center. Since then much has happened. Besides being on four campuses now (one of which used to be a plant but joined up for a reason I never found out) and having a campground, it has a chapel that didn't used to be there, used mostly for weddings, a second floor in part of the building (the building was always one floor, with a roof high enough for two), a school, and has undergone much remodeling.

As for me, around that 10th anniversary was when I started working in the children's ministry. It started with an ambitious children's drama which took up much of the service time and was scaled back the following year due to the teaching volunteers wanting to, well, teach. I of course knew God wanted me there and so was part of the first cast. This lasted about three years. I even had a short stint at directing in the third year. Well, after the first year I wanted more so I started teaching as well. They put me in fourth grade with another teacher and we took turns week to

week teaching the lesson. On the weeks I was also in the drama (there were four casts- one per week of the month with any fifth weekends generally without drama) I would walk the kids down and then go backstage and get into my costume. Believe it or not, I wasn't the only one who did this. About that time a new combined program for 4th and 5th grades was just getting started. The prior year they had it as a Friday night program as a supplement to the weekend services, but now they were making it the weekend service. They started off with just one service on the weekend, but it wouldn't be long before it expanded to all weekends. Just why they did it this way I am not sure. Anyway, I switched to this service eventually. As I recall they went through a few staff members running it over the years to where it is at now with the current pastor hired about six years ago. I think I am the only one left still volunteering in that ministry from that first year (discounting the Friday night program). Like the church itself, this program has grown and is definitely in a mature state. I reflect on this because there is a high school student who volunteers in one of the services who was one of my first students in fourth grade. He is a senior in high school now. Well, actually from what he says he was a senior because he graduated in January.

I really enjoy working with the kids, and I know God placed me there and has kept me there. In fact, my best spiritual time I think was last summer when I volunteered as a camp counselor for 4th and 5th grade. Also the two summers before. I just wonder if God will ask me to move on soon like the others have, and if so where to? I am still involved with kids ministry drama as well, which after a hiatus of a couple of years came back as a different sort of program. Really, I am deeply immersed in this church and currently have no plans to move on, but eventually God may ask me to. Will I be able to if and when he does? Will I be willing to go where He wants me to? Would I be able to shepherd children myself as a pastor if called to do it somewhere? I can only make sure be ready I

suppose in case He does. And how about my own family? Has He been leading me toward this in a way? That is, I am single right now, but is this practice, along with subbing, to lead a family of my own one day, soon I would hope as I am not getting any younger...

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## State of our times

It is really a bit sad when a school feels it cannot post pictures of kids on the internet due to the possibility of something happening to one of the children in the photo. But what happens when a school feels this way but *really* wants to post the pictures anyway? One U.K. school has a stab at an answer... (click the picture for a link to the full story)



## Motivation

I am having some motivation problems with this blog- lately I just don't feel like writing about work. It seems like the things I go through are either just too uninteresting to write about when I think about it, or it is similar to something I already wrote. Sometimes I just don't get around to it and am too tired by the time I think about it. These past few days have really all been similar. I really only got to teach math for the last three days, and today we didn't even do that so I

didn't do much of anything except help out like a teaching assistant. Not that there's really anything wrong with that but it is rather unexciting to write about. The most tedious part I think was during the morning today, and again at the start of the afternoon when the third graders just played educational games on their laptops (only 4th-6th did testing today, and the other half of the multiage rooms were fourth grade). I of course had to walk around and make *sure* they were playing only educational games. They are not as devious as middle-schoolers, but fun will still win out over education if left unwatched, even with third graders.

Today was actually a very easy teaching day overall, even for the other teacher. In fact, the only subject actually taught/worked on was reading. The rest of the day was spend on laptops, read-alouds, silent reading, down-time packets, and classroom games. Sub + already messed up schedules due to testing = even even worse schedules. From the last four days, I would say the teacher I was subbing for really owes the other teacher big time for getting sick and leaving her pretty much all of the planning work and team teaching.

Hmm... This was actually going to be very short due to my lack of motivation, but turned out to be quite reasonable in length. Goes to show that once one gets started, the writing can just keep going.

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## **Multiday position!**

This morning I was woken up again at about 5:45 after failing to find an assignment before this. This definitely turned out to be a plus. Most sub jobs for me are a day at a time. The longest I have had in the past was five days, but that was the

only one that long. This morning I was offered one for four days. Not record-breaking, but still nice as it fills in my week- and no phone ringing before 6AM! It is especially nice as this is testing time and so subs are not needed as much. The test of course blocks out a little more than an hour each morning where I have to do next to nothing as a regular teacher has to administer the test. A couple other lessons are taught by the other 3/4 teacher to a double-size class (the wall between the rooms is a folding wall). In fact, I really only had to teach one lesson today, math, though I don't expect it to remain like that all week. Unfortunately the kids were quite chatty during math. That, coupled with only 40 minutes to teach an hour lesson means I didn't finish- I'm not sure how the regular teacher expects one lesson to be taught each day with the shorter time slot. Well, I think she's *hoping* for one a day in any event. I expect tomorrow besides math I will be at least doing *something* during reading other than going around keeping kids on task even though I think it's going to be a double-class activity again (though broken down into groups). If this post is a little nonsensical it is because I am running on fumes right now as it were. 5:45AM wakeup + lack of sleep = one tired sub. Signing off for now...

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## Waiting...

Subbing has traditionally been a waiting game, waiting for that call to come inviting you to take over someone's classroom for a day or sometimes more. There is one district that for some reason last fall seems to have just stopped calling me altogether. Actually, that is not strictly true- the sub for the sub caller (yes, even they have 'em!) actually called me a couple of weeks ago, but the regular caller hasn't called for over two months now. Well, at least I am blessed to

work in an age where I can grab jobs off the internet (by the way, I refuse to capitalize this as if "internet" is the name of a town or country). Unfortunately, that doesn't always work so I am left waiting until the morning of for some district to call (yes even the computer systems call) or for a last-minute bout before the day starts to at least find a half-day position on the online systems.

Well, this morning I indeed received a call from one of the districts. Enter password, this middle-school resource teacher needs a sub, yada-yada. However, when it got to the end and I selected "yes" for the job, the system said, "sorry, we are unable to assign to job- goodbye." Nice- why did you call me then? Another district's system locks the job when calling someone so someone can't select the job on the online system when it is offering it to someone by phone; I guess this one doesn't. Either that or the teacher canceled while I was listening to the instructions. Since I was then awake, I sat down at the computer and looked for a job. Fortunately I found one right away- and one I wouldn't need to be at until after 8:30, so back to bed I went for another hour. As usual, I slept for only half that- I don't know what it is, but I can't get good sleep lately. I constantly wake up and fall back asleep throughout the night, sometimes laying awake or half-awake for a while before going to sleep. It seems I have picked up this problem from one of my parents...

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## **New theme again**

The other was a bit too, um, lavender-y for my taste. The title is a bit minimalistic but I'll try it out for a bit. I also didn't like the comments line being by the post title and therefore harder to see. Now it is quite obvious at the

bottom when there are no comments and so you **should click to leave one**. Please. ☐

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## No teaching today

Normally I teach first weekend of the month at one of the morning services, but this month for some reason they have me down for next weekend instead. Of course I did have a surprise last night as I wrote. Today there was no leader problem either, just a normal day. For some reason though the boys are more rambunctious at the second Sunday service than Saturday night. I suppose it is probably for the same reason I tend to have more energy in the morning myself. The lesson if I didn't say was an introduction to the book of Judges. The kids were taught about the cycle that happened seven times in Judges and still happens today. When we get comfortable we tend to forget God and sin. Once in that trap, it leads to suffering. As we suffer we remember God and cry out to him to help us. He hears our cries and saves us, bringing us back to him. Unfortunately the cycle starts over from there. The message we got in the main service was part of the series on family first aid. It was about wrestling with God just as Jacob wrestled with God. While God could just crush us when we choose a path other than that which leads to Him (read: sin), He chooses instead to be gentle and let us wrestle a bit. However, no mistake is to be made on this: He leads us, His children, to a place of submission so we get back on the right path. The message can be heard here:

[This Week's Message](#)

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# When teachers go missing

Okay, they didn't go missing they just got sick, but "when teachers get sick" didn't quite have the same ring to it. Besides, they were missing tonight because they got sick.

So when I arrived at church tonight there were already about five kids waiting outside the door. Not a good sign as I was a few minutes late myself and someone more punctual than myself should have been there. I checked the kids in and waited for other leaders to arrive. And waited. Eventually Steve, the one in charge of the kid's ministry, popped in and informed me that the one set to teach the lesson tonight called in sick and asked another leader to fill in for him. And she was, up until about an hour and a half before the service, then *she called in too*. Now this was a bit unusual, and ordinarily Steve would then fill in since it was so last minute, but tonight he had other obligations, so the duty of teaching the lesson passed to me. Well, I didn't study the lesson beforehand knowing I wasn't on for this weekend, but I could do this- I've done it before. Hey, I'm a sub, remember? Thinking on my feet is normal practice :). So I had to miss the game time and study the lesson. No biggie- just another game of dodge-ball and I'm usually doing drama at this time anyway (we're off this month). Oh, I guess I should mention that another leader finally arrived and handled the game time. So anyway, They got back up, sang a few worship songs while I kept on studying, and ready or not I had to teach. It didn't go too badly but when we broke off into small groups (well smaller than the large group anyway, there were only the two of us after all ;) ) a couple of the boys mentioned they thought I was boring. Sigh.

Fortunately the other leader saved my ego and said she thought



the lesson went well :D.

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## Different theme

Trying a different theme. The other one didn't show italics, just two ways to show bold type...

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## Running into acrylics

Erm... Running into what?? It sounds like I mixed up two topics here... Well as to the second, since it's the least interesting, the position I wound up subbing for was art. After patting myself on the back for actually arriving a little early for once I ashamedly dragged my tail out the door and over to the school I was **supposed** to go to. Okay, though that scene has actually happened before, this one wasn't my fault. Really. You see, many of the specials positions in this district are itinerant, or traveling jobs. That is, the teacher works out of two schools. Having been burned before I meticulously checked, and rechecked both the message ("special instructions") the teacher left and the online system so I would *really* know where I was going. Real- okay, enough of that word. Anyway, the message told me all about how there was a student teacher and I would leave the teaching to her... yada yada. Been there, done that. No school mentioned. Check. Over to the online system, looked at the school, check. Go to the school, sign in, drop my lunch off, pass over the store-bought bagels someone brought in, go to the art room, and... another teacher is there who says she has the room Friday mornings.

Check in with the office, and sure enough all my careful detective work is shattered when they (now) inform me the teacher I am subbing for works out of a *different* school on Fridays. Oops... Sign out, collect my lunch, pass over the bagels again, travel to the other school which is fortunately only five minutes away hoping all the while it wasn't one of *those* schools that closes their parking lot when the buses start to arrive (seriously), fortunately again find out it is not, check in, put my lunch away, pass over... wait- *Panera* bagels? Grab bagel, go to art room, carefully verify with student teacher that I am indeed in the correct place this time, then finally take my coat off and plop down with relief. Hey, at least someone brought good bagels over here. ☐

So, it turned out there were eight classes to teach: four 5th/6th, and four 3rd/4th. Apparently all classes except kindergarten are multiage at this school. Well, the 5th/6th classes were in the middle of a project involving Crayola®-clay animal pots and acrylic paints. Yes, they looked better than that just sounded (most of them...). I of course assured them that yes, the olive green and yellow plaid shirt I was wearing was on purpose because I hate it and don't care if it got messed up in art. Through all four periods unfortunately it didn't. I guess with three wins ("fortunatelies?") I was bound to lose one.

The 3rd/4th grade classes started a new unit on movement. No, this wasn't PE or performing arts. Movement as portrayed on the canvas. They even got to draw a little, well, er, two of the classes did. Such a crime- art class and some didn't even get to do art! Well, that's unit introductions for you.

Okay then, until next post.

Wait, I'm forgetting something aren't I? Yes, really (didn't I ban this word earlier?). "Running into" doesn't actually refer to the movement, as they weren't allowed to draw people today anyway, only objects. Drawing people and showing their

movement is apparently for more advanced students, more advanced than 8-10 years anyway. And besides, I had to have added the church category for this post for *some* reason.

In this case "running into" refers to me running into someone I actually knew from church. No, not *really* (that word again!) running into him, adults don't run in school rooms now, do they? So anyway, It had been a couple of years, and memory for names and faces isn't exactly one of my strengths, or even neutral features (you know where I'm going with this...). Apparently his memory was only slightly better as I just "looked familiar" like maybe someone from camp. I one upped him and said "church camp?" still not recognizing him. Then *he* one upped and gave the name of the camp and his name. I of course pretended to recognize him before he said his name (secretly grateful he said it, ~~reall~~ truly recognizing him only *after* he said it). As it turned out, he was the one student from my cabin I spent a week with (yes I truly am pathetic...) and never saw again after that summer. There were two like that the following summer, but at least I *knew* I wouldn't see them again when they told me that the one was from another church and the other was a friend he invited to come with him. Anyway, since you have suffered through this entire post I will provide an obligatory picture of my cabin from that year, but you will have to just guess which one he is. All I'll tell you is he isn't the one on the right (that would have been a *really* (sigh) big 5th grader). The one on the right was actually my junior counselor (I was the adult counselor). I of course am behind the camera, so no picture of me- sorry! ☐

Note: The thumbnail picture is not so good, so click on it to see it in it's full glory!

