

Trinity extends Apology to NewSong after Twelve Years

I have been a Christian for over 68 years, but tonight I actually saw something happen in a church for the very first time. The pastor announced this morning that tonight would be a Prayer and Reconciliation service. After the service this morning, he said to us, "I'm sure you've never seen this, so don't miss tonight."



The pastor had shared in the morning service that another church would be attending tonight's service. They were coming to ask for forgiveness! Over 12 years ago, Pastor Jamie had resigned as the pastor of that church.

Tonight a lady shared she was new at that church more than 12 years ago. She recalled the service seemed fairly normal until after the offering when the pastor and all of the elders resigned their positions and walked out of the church.

Their resignations were the culmination of months of false accusations and rumors against the pastor. The pastor and elders had tried to resolve the issues according to Biblical instruction, but no repentance came from the congregation, so the pastor and elders did the only thing they knew to do...they resigned, all of them, unanimously.

Present at tonight's service was Pastor Glen, the pastor who had attempted to follow Pastor Jamie. At the time there was still turmoil and dissention among the congregation, and that pastorate failed as well

Also present in the service was Pastor Tim, the current pastor of the recalcitrant church. He recognized that healing must happen before the church could go forward. A man representing



the repentant church read a letter confessing wrong doing on the part of the entire church and an unwillingness to follow the leading and guiding of the pastor. The letter also asked for forgiveness of Pastor Jamie, his wife and Pastor Glen and his wife. Pastor Tim gave a copy of the letter to each of the former pastors. The letter was signed by the entire congregation. As Pastor Tim handed the letters to each man, the audience burst into spontaneous applause. The service then went into a foot washing ceremony. The congregation watched as each man removed his socks and shoes and the representative pastors washed their feet.



The congregation watched this beautiful ritual and tried to sing while sitting down, but soon the emotion of the event overtook all of us and we were on our feet as we sang:

*In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.*



*In Christ alone! who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones he came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied -
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.*

*There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave he rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine -
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.*

The service closed by those representing New Song laying their hands on those representing the repentant church and praying over them.



*No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath.
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.*

So what did I learn?

- I learned that it is never too late to forgive.
- Forgiveness needs accountability.
- Forgiveness needs to be specific and needs to include the phrase *Please forgive me/us for....*
- If forgiveness can include a symbolic act such as the foot washing, that is always good.
- Forgiveness needs a response from the victim such as the laying on of hands and praying over the forgiven.

Earlier in the service, the ushers had passed out cards on which were the words, *I choose to forgive*, and as God brought people to mind we were to write a name or names on the card. Later there was a fire pit outside where we could watch our cards burn. I did not put a card in the fire, but today I gave several people to the Lord.

Pastor Jamie was right when he said we shouldn't miss that reconciliation service. It was unforgettable and I was changed. I will always remember the picture of those men in bare feet, kneeling before those two pastors, washing their feet. Now that is true reconciliation.

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