

BAPTIST BY-LINES



First Baptist Church of Painted Post, NY

Gary McCaslin, *Pastor*

January 2009

From the Pastor ~ CELEBRATING ALL RELATIONSHIPS

BE NICE OR GO AWAY ~ *A sign in Champlin's Ice Cream Shop, Narragansett, RI*

When my daughters worked at the Gang Mills Institution for Fun and Good Times ~ otherwise known as *Peaches and Cream* ~ they would regularly come home with stories of people they had served who were occasionally "a little less than kind." This struck me as odd, because, in my life, when I am going to get ice cream, especially at *Peaches and Cream* ~ I am in a great mood.

In addition, I have found that being kind to the person behind the counter is often a way to make my ice cream experience even better. What a deal!

But nonetheless, my daughters assured me the sign noted above ~ that we saw in Champlin's this summer ~ was a light-hearted attempt to address a problem that is apparently a reality in ice cream stands across the country.

I took a picture of the sign and laugh whenever I come across it in my files. Doesn't it sound silly that the only rule posted which would allow a person to remain in the ice cream shop could be so simple? How hard could it be not to get kicked out?

Another thing that strikes me about the sign is its naive simplicity. The sign is saying: *The way we have decided to handle all difficult relationships is to just have all the mean people leave.* I have to admit, the plan is attractive in its simplicity.

While it may be possible in an ice cream shop, asking unkind people to leave is hardly a workable strategy in our world today, whether we are talking about governments, businesses, schools or churches. As the world gets more and more crowded, it only becomes more evident that there is no where else to go ~ we are all passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all together in this adventure called life.

Thank God we have been provided with many wonderful "Operations Manuals" for our air, dirt, fire and water vessel to help us with our relationships as we speed through the vast emptiness of space. As Christians, our "manual" is the Bible and the task before us everyday is to bring the teachings of the Love stories we read in the Bible into every part of our lives.

While it would be nice if we could tell all our problems to just go away, it is probably more realistic to keep our attention focused on the things we can do to build relationships even with those who do not share our interests. My friend, The Reverend Bill Kerr, who died a few years ago, embraced a motto that was shared at his funeral. I believe his words provide an excellent framework, within which we can live together peaceably ~ despite differences we naturally share.

In essentials ~ Unity
In non-essentials ~ Diversity
In all things ~ Love

