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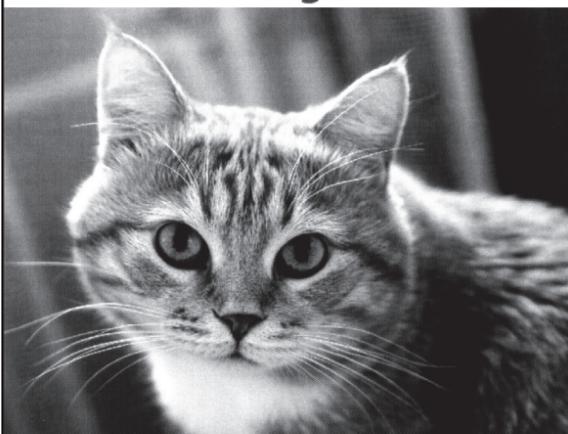
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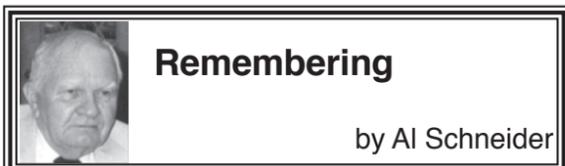
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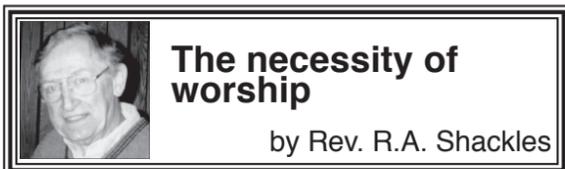
Remembering
by Al Schneider

One of the nation's most distasteful memories is that of the Vietnam War, a war that dragged on for far too long, only to end in disgrace. Few, if any, remember that war in a favorable light. The questions remain. Why were we there? What went wrong? Why couldn't we leave victoriously?

Few remember — or care to — that our country was a signatory of SEATO, a treaty that committed our involvement in case of a communist incursion into the region. Strangely, there was little mention of that treaty during the course of the war.

In my view, having signed on to such an agreement, we had no choice but to keep our promise and do all we could to help the South Vietnamese to stave off the Communist invasion. Wouldn't it have been dishonorable to do otherwise?

It may surprise many to know that it was the Eisenhower administration which signed on to SEATO in September of 1954. Was that a good thing? Does that make President Eisenhower complicit in the ensuing war? We could go back a few more years, to 1950, when the Truman administration first sent "advisors" into the region. Does anyone blame President Truman for the Vietnamese war? President Kennedy sent more advisors, including some to Laos and Cambodia. I'm not suggesting that we blame these ex-presidents for the carnage that followed. I am wondering whether their actions served our best interest and whether we



**The necessity of
worship**
by Rev. R.A. Shackles

Must I go to church to be a good Christian? We hear this query from every direction, especially with its familiar assertion that "I can worship God just as well in the woods or on the lake as in church." Then, too, we often hear the "clinging argument: "Besides, look at all the hypocrites in churches!"

Now, let us frankly agree — the Church is loaded with hypocrites! Even more, it is full of self-seeking, ambitious people who seem more interested in personal power and prestige than anything else. And, yes! We utterly agree that the Church is full of "miserable sinners!" All of these — and more — criticisms are unassailably true of the institutional church. But, we frankly ask, so what? If Christ came to save sinners, ought they not to associate where He may the more easily get to them? And if, on the cross, He conquered sin by conquering its servant Death, ought not sinners gather together that He may the more immediately apply His victory? And if power *does* control self-acclaimed Christians, is it not likely that when assembled in His name, in church, he may not the more obviously demonstrate that "wickedness in high places?"

An organizer is needed

By Richard Blackmer

I filled the gas tank in my car the other day. The cost was 50 dollars. That expenditure caused me to reflect back to my high school days and the price I paid for the first car I bought. It was a 1941 Plymouth and it cost me a total of 15 dollars. Back then, with a similar investment of 50 dollars, I could have started a used car lot.

The escalating cost of gasoline ranks near the top of the serious issues facing our country today. While we continue our efforts to dig our way out of a recession, the last thing we need is rising gas prices to force us further back into the recession. So that leads to the question: What can be done about the cost of gasoline? Recently, I received an e-mail that provides a possible answer to that question. A "Free Market" economy has served our country well for many a year. And, perhaps one of the strongest assets of a free market economy is that the consumer wields a tremendous amount of power.

With that thought in mind, the author of the e-mail suggested that the consumers in our country band together and use their powerful influence to bring about change in the oil industry. They do this by refusing to buy gasoline from one selected major oil company. The theory being that with the loss of sales for gasoline, that major oil company would be forced to lower its prices to bring back its former customers.

might learn from their short sightedness. All too often, "sending advisors" has served as a prelude to war. Maybe we've been too quick to sign treaties and send advisors.

We all remember the uproar in our country during those war years. The nation was angry. Much of that anger was directed (unfairly, I think) toward Presidents Johnson and Nixon who happened to be governing at the time. More anger was directed at the troops who were waging a war to the best of their ability under extraordinary circumstances. Anti-war demonstrators, who often engaged in criminal acts, were more popular than our soldiers.

Consider some sobering numbers from the National Archives. Of those who died in Vietnam, 9,705 were 21 years of age; 14,095 were 20; 8,282 were 19; and 12 were only 17. Those are staggering numbers, young lives wasted in a war that can only be meaningful if we learn from our mistakes.

Add to that, the shameful way the war ended. Can you forget those photos of helpless Vietnamese we left behind to be slaughtered by the enemy? Some clung to the last U.S. helicopters as they lifted off in hopes that they might somehow gain freedom. Others fled to sea with makeshift boats.

Many among us celebrated the end of that war. Maybe we shouldn't have. It may have been America's ugliest moment.

We should be asking ourselves, "Have we learned from this awful experience?" We don't need to learn how to enter a war. We're already experts at that. A more useful lesson might be that our country's involvement in a war does not guarantee a good outcome. With that in mind, exercising restraint might be something we could try. •

All of that may be good rebuttal to the non-attendees complaints. But none of that, truly, is the point of worship! True worship is needful because it is the supreme means of leaving off our natural, evil sin-producing self-centeredness. It is in worship that we practice directing our love to Christ; and, through such other-focused worship are at length able to fulfill the true work of love: To praise our holy Lord and share His infinite love with others — yes! *Even* all those "sinners" with whom we insist we do not wish to associate!

The simple reality of Christian faith is that Jesus did not die on the cross so that we won't have to associate with sinners! He died to open our lives to a love that conquers, forgives, cleanses sin and unites us to Himself so that by His love we may offer our forgiven lives and forgiving love to others — including, even, those who may very well not want it (because they are yet remaining in self-centeredness)! Indeed, the solitary concept of worship to which we first referred is the most self-centered of any worship, for it asserts, "There is only me and you, Lord!" *Corporate* worship is essential — regardless of how many sinners there gathered — because it is the most effective way to put off our self-centeredness and focus all our being on loving, praising the one, true and eternal Other. It is in such effort of worship that thus Christ enables us to be blessed gifts to others! That is the essence, the purpose, and the necessity of true worship of and in the Christ! The lonely heart is inevitably that: A lonely heart! •

The lower prices would then result in the return of the former customers along with new customers who would be enticed by the lower gas prices. The other oil companies would then bear the loss of their customers to the lower gas prices of a competitor. They would then be forced to lower their own prices.

This rationale makes sense to me. Speaking for myself, if I have a choice of buying gasoline for \$4.00 per gallon or going across the street and paying \$3.50 per gallon, I am going across the street.

However, unfortunately there appears to be a weakness in the approach. And that weakness is organization. I believe the adage that all politics are local applies also to this particular situation as well. This activity must start as a grassroots local effort. As the local effort gains momentum it will expand to other areas. This effort requires an organizer. It needs someone who is willing to pull together a team to set the guidelines for the endeavor, and then make it happen. So far, no individual has risen to answer this call.

Perhaps there is one among FAN readers who realizes the potential of this effort. And possesses the requisite desire to bring about positive changes regarding the continuous upward spiral of gasoline prices in our country.

Is there a retired union organizer among our readers who wishes to utilize those organizational skills once again? •