

# MM EMAIL BLUE SHEET

MOMENT MINISTRIES

CORVALLIS OR

MARCH 4, 2010

## MORGAN'S MOMENT....

"Do you have any trips planned"

An ice-breaking question  
people often ask...  
as if we're always traveling.

It puts me on the defensive...  
like maybe I'm not home enough  
or have nothing better to do.

I looked up 2010 on the calendar...  
12 away days in two months...  
all out of state.

I'm not counting next week  
when we're gone 7 nights  
making 19 days in 2 and ½ months.

That puts me at home  
50 days for crying out loud...  
for plenty of fireside time.

Besides we're not really traveling...  
unless you think I-5 driving  
is optional touring.

Life's a journey isn't it...  
And isn't it said in scripture  
"Go while you can?"

And didn't Jesus do his most good  
while on the road somewhere  
never at home on his own pillow?

• Art Morgan

## BOOK CORNER

***"Eternal Life: A New Vision • Beyond Religion, Beyond Theism, Beyond Heaven and Hell"*** John Shelby Spong

Spong, a retired Episcopal Bishop who has thus far avoided a heresy trial, tells of his personal story of seeking something he could believe about eternal life. The book will appeal to those who have moved beyond belief in a supernatural God who lives in the sky. He doesn't really say anything new to those who have kept up on biblical scholarship of the past century or so. Others may want to try him as a heretic. The first parts of the book will be easier to read and understand than the latter part in which he describes "the new vision" that we are part of God. He says, *"When I die I will rest my case in the 'being' of which I am a part."*

## SPEAKING OF HERESY

I've got to add something about John Shelby Spong. I mentioned that he had avoided heresy trials. You Episcopalians on my list, and others familiar with theological literature will surely remember Episcopal Bishop John Robinson, author of the noted ***"Honest To God,"*** written in the 1960's. As I remember it his church honored him with a heresy trial and removal from his position.

It was a popular book, second only to ***"Pilgrim's Progress."*** I thought he was being true to current biblical scholarship and particularly true to his own conscience. I honor that.

My roots were in a non-creedal denomination. In theory one could question the creeds and even the literal view of the Bible and still find inclusion. Differences were allowable. This has not been the case in Christian history, or even within many religious traditions.

People seem pleased to vote out those with differences and have been known to emphasize their opinion by burning, drowning, stoning, excommunicating "heretics."

I always thought of the early church "heretics" as those who lost the vote. I'm suspicious that they might have been right, at least sometimes.

Once I was in a Ministerial Association that required signing agreement to one of the creeds. I don't sign faith statements. I guess I was a heretic.

If one is to be a heretic one should try to be an informed heretic. So read Spong and Robinson and Borg. Even read Harris and Dawkins (famed atheists of our day), Read Epstein's ***"Good Without God,"*** on Humanism.

Or walk with me on the beach or look at the stars on a clear night or just watch the flames in the fire. Talk heart to heart with another human being. And get beyond all this worry about whether heresy matters.

## MOMENT EVENTS

Thursday Night Moment – March 18

Easter at Inavale Farm • April 4

**WANDERING THOUGHTS ABOUT WRITING GOSPELS**

A phone call came as I was trying to put a back page together. I was trying to see a connection between my attempts to retrieve last memories and conversations with cousin Bob, and the attempts by Gospel writers to retrieve last memories of Jesus. It's an annual Easter time dilemma preachers face.

The phone call out of the blue was from a fellow Roosevelt High grad named Dick Follis. I didn't remember him from those long years ago and I'm sure he didn't remember me. Our class had over 500 grads.

He was calling to get my summer zip code for a roster he was working on. I had signed up to become a member of the "Golden Grads" of Roosevelt High School. I've never bragged about my high school career. I just felt lucky to graduate. Because Bob helped found that group I thought I should pay the dues and join up.

Dick immediately started to talk about his friendship with Bob. He had known him personally for the last three years. He was surprised at the memorial event to hear everything that was said about his life. No one has the whole story about anyone.

I am sure that wherever Bob's name comes up there will be stories told. Conversations will be reconstructed. Each of the family remembers differently. We pass some of them around. One could write a book. I would like to read it.

I am also sure that the memories and conversations will have been altered by time. It's hard to remember things exactly as said and done. We color with our own interpretations.

The memories I'm trying to gather before losing them are those of my last talks with Bob. At news of a death we typically think of our last contacts. So I have two hospital conversations to remember. One when he was bright and lucid, the second the next morning when he was already fading in and out from sedation.

Such times are precious. How could we forget? Yet the words blur. The words I want to remember are not my words, but his. I'm afraid what we tend remember are our own words.

As years go by some memories and words will surely be passed on. There will be some notorious quotes. One that Chuck and Roelina (his brother and sister-in-law) will never forget was when the always loquacious Chuck opined to a nurse that Bob was the extrovert while he (Chuck) was the introvert. Bob, who was already on his journey and under heavy sedation, very clearly said, "Bullshit!"

We'll have a mental collection of sayings and experiences. These will live as gospel whether they ever appear in print.

Those who deal with ancient texts have to be honest and realistic about all the conversations reported in the various Gospels. It may not have happened that way.

I happen to believe that gospel writers often had their own agendas, theologies, ideals and purposes in mind as they told their versions of the Jesus story. Very little is considered actual history by biblical scholars. Few words are his own. We get a view of the gospel through a blurred lens.

I'm suspicious that many who read this could care less. Most others already know it. A few may still hold ideas of supernatural origin of texts. Some may still be trying to sort out "what really happened." It happens every Easter. One thing comes out of the blur, and that is how some people really loved and admired Jesus and wanted him to be remembered. Although they told different stories and passed on a variety of "conversations," they were agreed that his memory was worth keeping. Saying all of that we might remember that the desire to speak (or even invent) words is a sign of respect and even love.

My remembered words may not be exact, but the remembered person won't be forgotten.

That's the gospel truth.