

St. Andrew's (JKP) Monthly Newsletter
June, 2011

Edification: It was the practice in ancient times that whenever a person died within a little hamlet a bell would toll to alert all the living of the departure of the deceased. While musing upon this rite the Christian poet/preacher John Donne recommended that upon hearing the bell toll the living should *"Ask not for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee"*. His premise was that death is the shared common experience of us all so the death of any one individual diminishes the life of all the living and is a sort of death for all. Hmmm, that's deep! But is it true? Does the death of every other man diminish me? Can the death of someone in China, whom I'll never meet nor even know existed truly diminish me? Well, what is death? It is the shared event in which we all have a part, and when a loved one dies those remaining here are deeply affected sometimes irrevocably. In fact, sometimes the loss is so profound it hastens the death of the bereaved. So there is no denying the long and deep shadow death casts upon us all. But again, does the death of every other man diminish me? Well, what is it to be diminished? To be made less. To be reduced, cut down - to be weakened. So does the death of a stranger make me less, does it reduce and weaken me? Is your head spinning yet? Mine too. I warned that this was deep. And when things get too deep people drown. Perhaps a better muse upon the death of another is; *"Ask not for whom the bell tolls, but why does the bell have to keep tolling anyway?"* Why does death come to all? Why is it the haunting specter that casts its unwelcome pall over all the earth? Whether we hear a bell toll or not the certainty is this; death comes to all. It is no respecter of persons. But is death the real "diminisher", or is there another hand pulling the bell-rope?

Events/Information: Rev. Greg Poorman will preach for us on 07/03/11. We're also planning a potluck meal immediately following the 07/03 service. Please plan on being there for both!

"It is not persecution of the church in China that I fear. The church has always been able to weather persecution. My fear is love of money in the church." Chinese Pastor

Encourage: In Romans 5:12 Paul says that through one man's sin death entered the world and so death now spreads to all. But why does death spread to all? Because according to Paul all sinned in that one man's sin. It isn't Adam's death that diminishes or kills me. It is his sin. Ultimately it is sin that pulls the bell-rope announcing yet another death, another testimony to God's righteous judgment upon rebellion - Adam's rebellion and my own. So it's not so much that death is the shared experience, sin is the shared experience. Death is the shared consequence. We all share in Adam's sin and we all share in his "inheritance" i.e. death. And if this were the end of the story what a horrifying sound that death-toll would be. But sin and death do not have the final word. *"Death has been swallowed up in victory!"* If through one man's sin comes death, then through one Man's obedience much more will come life! If being in Adam means partaking of his wretched inheritance then being in Christ means partaking of His glorious inheritance! Paul says the sting of death is sin. To this the one in Christ says; *"O Death, where is your sting?"* It is removed by Christ Himself who bore it away in His own body. So the next time you hear (or hear of) the death-toll sounding its sad lament ask not for whom the bell tolls. Rather ask; *when will it toll for me?* That I might see with my own eyes Him who became sin for me, Him who died the death for me, Him who rose from the dead for me - to justify me now and forevermore! Amen!