

NEWS AND VIEWS
MOUNT OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH

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*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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Lately all the flap about flags has triggered some thinking for me. Something about a waving flag seems to stir something within people. Flags can be seen as either something inspirational or controversial. Being a son of the South, and South Carolina in particular, the Confederate Battle Flag seems to be a symbolic banner that sends a message these days. I guess it depends upon what one thinks about the symbolism. The Stars and Bars represent for some a heroic heritage...for others it provokes feelings of hostility and horror.

The story is also told that in 1814, there was a man who wrote the words to the Star Spangled Banner the morning after a horrendous assault on Fort McHenry from the harbor in Baltimore. Francis Scott Key had to endure watching from the deck of a British naval vessel during the War of 1812 and was elated to see the American Flag still waving above the fort. The Stars and Stripes symbolized hope for him. The enemy had not prevailed.

Growing up in mostly rural environments it was important to raise the red flag on your mailbox if you wanted the mailman to pick up the letter within. I guess you can say that flags can send signals about the delivery of messages. Then there are flags that are made to be signals. The flags used to communicate messages between ships at sea are still studied by folks in our modern era and rightly so. Who knows when email might revert back to sea mail?

When it comes to NASCAR, flags are of great importance. Drivers dream about being the first one to finish racing when the checkered flag is waved. But first, the green flag must wave which begins the race. If a yellow flag is displayed then caution is the message. A black flag gets a driver sent back to the pit...a NASCAR time out, so to speak. Then there is the white flag, which signals one more lap.

I think the white flag is my symbolic favorite in this race called life. I've flown enough battle flags...especially when I was at war with God. But the white flag appeals to me now...One more lap. The race is nearly run. Hoping to finish well. It also is recognized as a flag of truce, requesting a cessation of hostilities and negotiation, usually for surrender. When one is under the white flag it is supposed to provide protection from attack while peace is pursued. Lately we have begun to fly a flag at the church that has a large part of it colored white...I think for many of these same reasons. We have discovered that if you unconditionally surrender to Jesus, He grants peace in the midst of the war.

After some years without a flag flying from the campus flagpole, we have been blessed with someone to repair the damaged lanyard and someone to purchase a Christian Flag. I have been studying a little about the Christian Flag and learned that it is believed to have been proposed during an impromptu speech in 1897 from a Sunday School superintendent. As he gazed at the American flag, he started to talk about the symbolism of the flag and his desire for Christianity to be represented by one. Then about ten years later, the design and promotion gave us the flag we recognize today as the Christian flag. The white flag has a corner of blue surrounding a cross of red. There's a whole lot of symbolism there. A red cross representing the shed blood of King Jesus surrounded by the color of the royalty. We have begun to fly that flag once again at Mount Olivet...in the midst of the war that rages on about us in our culture.

When I see it waving in the breeze on some of our hardest days, I am reminded of the Breath of the Spirit of the Living God. I am reminded that if we are seeking peace, surrendered to the Will of God, we are trusting that He has won the war against our souls. And I am reminded that the enemy has not prevailed...nor has the gates of hell. We are called to battle and assault those gates when we are called to follow Christ. The more we truly worship, the greater the evidence of war because worship is where the battle is really waged. And the hotter the battle you can know that our Lord is really winning...long before and long after flags of men's designs are flown. Remember the Lord is our banner...
Jesus is Lord...and the Lord, He is God!

*May He grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your counsel!
We will sing for joy over your victory, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners.
May the Lord fulfill all your petitions. (Psalms 20:4-5)*

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam