

The Philadelphia Epistle

THE LETTERS OF JOE TUCKER TO THE CHURCH FAR AND WIDE
OCTOBER 2008

To God's people, strangers wherever He has placed you, yet called to be neighbors to the very ones who find our love-behavior strange.

Grace and peace through Jesus to you all.

Joe, writing from Philadelphia, while serving, living, loving, and relating to the people here. Both a stranger and a neighbor for the cause of Christ



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Myself,
Tim, and
Chris,
my two
room-
mates!

A Still Present Need

So I am finally getting around to revising my address book in the hope that this letter reaches a great deal of my friends and relatives who have hitherto not received a newsletter. (PS— Always feel free to pass this newsletter on to anyone as you please!)

Since I am reaching an audience that I haven't spoken to in some time I will mention a topic that some will find redundant, others slightly bothersome, yet others a message that they need to be reminded of. This message, as you may have already surmised, is about ministry support. I am presently around \$1000 short of my Ministry Launch Goal (which is \$12,000! So a great deal of thanks to those of you who have been active in supporting me and the ministry here in Philadelphia!!).

I'll go ahead and express that despite my attempts to write these letters in a similar fashion as to some of Paul's (or Peter's as I've been reading lately) epistles, I have a hard time bringing up the issue of support. Why?

Because we are in what some call a "financial crisis." Because so many of you have already given so generously. Because I know that unfortunately money has become a taboo topic of sorts in church culture. Because..the list goes on.

But I am pressed to continue writing. And for a good number of good reasons. Because Paul writes about money a lot. Because Jesus talks about money a lot. Because if we don't talk about it or write about it, we often do ourselves a disservice. Because I have seen a need here in Philadelphia that is present and real and know of a need that is present and real in the lives of my many friends and family who receive this newsletter.

The need for Philadelphia is for active ministries. I work at a medical clinic called *Esperanza* (that's Spanish for *hope*) in their billing and financial office. So I see their budget reports and analysis papers. I see the amount of Kensington residents who come in for free or reduced medical attention and know of the love, integrity and care that the staff shows for them. I also see how much people give (or don't give) to the ministry.

The need for the many I know is to actively be a

part in missions and ministry. I would claim that this is a two-fold challenge for you. One, get involved where you are locally in some fashion of service. Two, give of your resources to people who are presently in ministry. And I care not if you give to me or not. Give to *Esperanza*. Give to LOGAN Hope. Give to someone who is actively ministering.

Because in giving there is a freedom. A freedom of simplicity. A freedom from worrying. A freedom from independence that pushes us towards a Godly interdependence with each other and with Him. Grace and Peace.

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If you're still inclined on giving after the above rant...



You can send your tax-deductible contributions, made payable to Mission Year to P.O. Box 17628, Atlanta, GA 30316. Please make sure to designate your donation toward my support by writing my Account Fund # (08-0012) on the memo line of the check. Talk to my Mom for envelopes

if you need any extra!!
Or you can go to my Mission Year blog —>
and donate online.

And, truly, I thank you all for the support. The ministry here is incredible and I thank you greatly for supporting me in this endeavor!

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Philly'ng in the Blanks: What Do I Do All Day, Who Do I Live With, and Why Can't I Resist Such Horribly Awesome Puns??

From left to right the picture shows my roommates, Katie, Tim, Chris, Tina, Lindsey, and myself. We are all trying to live in Christian community together while we serve together throughout the city of Philadelphia. What exactly does that service entail? Everyday in the afternoons we serve at LOGAN Hope leading their after school program (tutoring kids, homework help, various outdoor/indoor games). In the mornings we work at different ministries. On Monday and Tuesday mornings I volunteer at *Esperanza* medical center in their billing and financial department. On Thursday mornings I volunteer at the Indo-Chinese American institute where I help young adults work towards their GED. (On Wednesday mornings I have Mission Year meetings!) In the evenings and on the weekends or 'job' is to be good neighbors. To intentionally befriend the people around us, serve them as we can, meet them where they are at, and enact the love of Christ for them (sometimes this means letting them serve us). This intentional outreach usually results in having neighbors over for dinner, hanging out with local neighborhood children, taking out the trash of elderly or handicapped neighbors, or some other simple act done with great love! This is my life in Philly!



Oxen Reflections

A proverb that has often been cited throughout my Mission Year experience is Proverbs 14:4

"Where there are no oxen the stable is empty, but from the strength of an ox comes an abundant harvest"

Essentially how I have translated this proverb is that ministry is messy. If there are no oxen, the stable is clean. That is to say that there are no oxen droppings, but there is also no harvest. Thus if one wants a bountiful harvest, one must have a strong ox, but with that strong ox and the rich harvest comes the crap of the ox.

And ministry is the same. We can choose to sequester ourselves from others and keep a clean house. But there is no reward, there is no harvest. However if we choose to minister to others, if we strive to serve and love and preach and teach and instruct and share and live

and love all the more, we will inevitably gain a rich harvest! And we will also gain the crap, the messiness that comes from trying to love people. Ministry is messy indeed (a lesson I am frequently learning in Philadelphia), but that should not be a hindrance from us serving!

So my exhortation for you, my readers, supporters, family, and friends, is that you would so desire the rich harvest of serving God, that the value of the harvest would be so present and forefront on your hearts, that you would bare the crap that comes from ministry. Whether it presents itself as annoying children, lack of support, emotional distress, or the many sacrifices that ministry demands, I hope that you would desire God's harvest above all!

Again my thanks to all of you and my love! It is my hope to see you soon, although for some of you I know not when that will be (if ever). Until then, may the grace and peace of Christ dwell richly in you and the community you are in!

Prayer Requests and Praises

- Please pray relationships to form with my students at Indo-China tutoring. (Math isn't always an easy bridge into relationships...)
- Pray for the unity and love of my house.
- Praise God for the church we are active (Living Water— a 2nd generation Cambodian church) in and the many youth that attend!!
- Pray for creativity and love in communicating with neighbors (not all of my neighbors speak English!)
- Praise God for the day-to-day supplements he provides for me here! It is truly by His hand that I get by every day!
- Pray explicitly for the children and youth at LOGAN Hope, that God would start and continue to grow in them His Spirit!