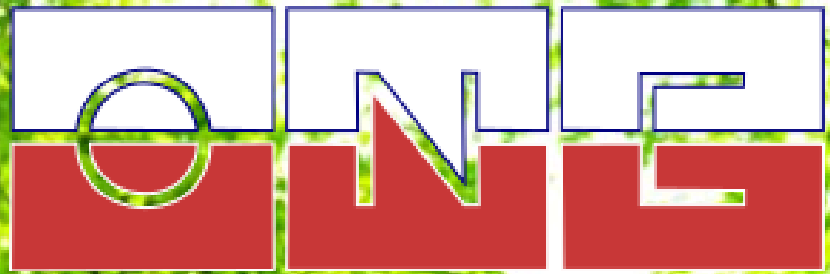


INSIDE:

**+ Christian Faith in
the Workplace**



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Ellis County Ministerial Alliance

ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

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Editor's Note:

In honor of Labor Day, we asked our writers to tell us how Christians live out their faith in the workplace. Some writers chose to pay homage to specific individuals; others singled out workers in specific fields.

They Were Just Clunky, Ugly Brown Shoes

Written by:

Linn Ann Huntington

I'm not sure why, but when I was a kid growing up, my father was always the one who took me to buy my school shoes each year.

I normally got three pairs of shoes a year—dressy shoes for Sunday, tennis shoes for gym class and sports, and school shoes, which Daddy said had to be “sturdy and reliable.” My mother always took me to get the first two pairs, but Daddy was the one who took me to get my school shoes.

My father, William W. “Buck” Elston, grew up during the Great Depression and the “Dirty Thirties” in a small Oklahoma town. The youngest of five children, he had two older brothers. I can remember Daddy talking about getting clothes and

shoes handed down from his brothers. According to Daddy, his older brothers both had long, narrow feet. Daddy's were short and wide—like mine. (Or, I suppose, mine were like his.)

Daddy said he never remembered having a pair of shoes that were comfortable when he was a kid. That's why he was so particular about my school shoes. He would tell the sales clerk that he wanted a strong arch support, and he wanted the shoes wide enough to accommodate my feet.

The year I was 13 and starting seventh grade, I went to a new school. I grew up in Tulsa, Okla., where my mother taught elementary school. For grades one through six, I went to school with her, even though it was outside my regular school district.

My dad was a sixth-grade teacher in a small rural community north of Tulsa.

Seventh grade was the beginning of “junior high” in those days, and my parents and I had decided it would be best for me to go to the junior high school in my district. That way, by the time I went to high school, I would know more of the kids.

The shoes that Daddy picked out for me that year were dark brown, suede, lace-up shoes. I thought they were a little clunky, but they were soft and very comfortable. Daddy was very pleased that we found a pair of shoes wide enough for my feet.

The first day of seventh grade I wore my best dress and my new shoes to school. I knew no one in any of my classes. I discovered that many of the girls were already friends with each other from

They Were Just Clunky, Ugly Brown Shoes (Continued)

grade school. I also discovered that most of the girls wore beautiful leather penny loafers. The girls had placed bright, shiny pennies in the slots on top of their loafers. As I saw them laughing and catching up with each other, I felt very alone.

There were many new things to get used to in junior high. We changed classes every 50 minutes. Unlike my grade school, this new school had three floors. I found myself scrambling up and down the stairs several times a day.

We also had combination locks on our hall lockers and our gym lockers. One day, as I fumbled with the hallway lock, I tripped, and my books went sprawling on the floor. As I hurriedly picked them up, a boy and girl whose lockers were near mine, chuckled. "Can you believe those clodhoppers she wears?" one of them said. "No wonder she's always tripping over her own feet."

After that, I became convinced everybody at school was looking at my shoes.

For several nights, I perused the ads in the newspaper. (My father firmly believed that I should read the newspaper every evening after he and Mother finished

with it.) Finally, I saw that the loafers were on sale.

My father had another firm belief. If my parents refused to allow me to do something I really wanted to do, I was allowed to "research" the issue and write up my "findings." Daddy would hear my report and then make a final decision (and it was, indeed, final).

Simply arguing that "all my friends are doing it" was the surest way to lose an argument. No, Daddy would demand "facts" about how the activity in question would benefit me.

The next day, armed with a notebook and pencil, I made the quick bicycle ride to the shoe store. I explained my quest to the sales clerk and carefully copied down all the information he gave me about the materials used in the loafers.

That evening I carefully wrote my report. Surely Daddy would be convinced!

The next night I read my paper at dinner—how the clunky brown shoes were hard to navigate the stairs in; how the loafers were durable, high quality shoes; and, finally, how they were on sale.

Daddy listened carefully. Then he said, "I don't know, Linn Ann. The shoes we

bought you are good quality shoes. How did the loafers fit? Did you try them on?"

I felt all the air drain out of me. "Uh, no, Daddy. I wanted to wait until you could go with me."

We visited the store the following Saturday. The same clerk was working, and he brought out my size. He explained that they didn't have the loafers in a wide width, only medium. The shoes in my size were rigid and tight, but the next larger size I could barely keep on. The clerk assured us that the leather would expand over time.

As I walked around in the loafers in front of the mirror, all I could think of was how now I would make more friends with the other girls at school. Now my shoes were just like theirs.

Daddy looked at me. "Do they feel OK?"

I nodded excitedly.

"Are these the shoes you want?"

'Oh yes, Daddy!' I watched him slowly count out the money at the cash register. For a moment I wondered if he had enough bills in his wallet, but he did

That night I firmly pressed pennies into the slots of my

They Were Just Clunky, Ugly Brown Shoes (Continued)

new shoes. I had fully believed the sales clerk when he said the leather in the loafers would expand over time.

But he was wrong.

I wore my new loafers to school the next day. By the end of the day, I had blisters all over both feet. That night I put Band-Aids on the blisters, hoping the padding would alleviate the problem.

It didn't. The next day the blisters broke.

Thus began my campaign of subterfuge. I would wear the loafers to school, then run to my locker in the girls' gym and change into my tennis shoes. I would wear the tennis shoes all day, then change back into my loafers before I went home.

One night I decided that maybe I could tolerate the loafers better if I wore my old, clunky brown shoes one day and the loafers the next. I searched the bottom of my bedroom closet, but I couldn't find those ugly lace-up brown shoes anywhere.

Then Daddy walked into the room. "I need to tell you something," he said, clearing his throat. "I gave away your old brown school shoes."

I stared up at him.

He sat down on my bed.

"You know that rain we had a few days ago? Well, one of the girls in my class came to school with her feet soaking wet. Her name is Mary. Her shoes had holes in the toes and in the soles. Her mother had put newspaper in the bottoms of the shoes to cover up the holes, but the rain soaked through the newspaper.

"I talked to the school counselor, who talked to the girl's mother," he continued. "I told them you had a pair of school shoes you weren't wearing anymore, and the shoes still had good wear left in them. I told them I would be happy to give them to Mary. Her mother agreed. I took them to Mary yesterday. They just fit her perfectly."

Daddy patted a spot on the bed next to him. "Here, come sit beside me," he said. "I have something for you. Mary gave this to me today."

I sat beside Daddy on my bed. He pulled a folded sheet of notebook paper out of his pocket and handed it to me.

The note was handwritten in pencil and included a few smudged places where Mary had obviously erased some misspelled words.

"Dear Linn Ann," the note read. "Thank you so much for giving me your old shoes. They are the most beautiful

shoes I have ever had. I like them very much. I like having Mr. Elston as my teacher because he is so nice. I think that you must be as nice as he is. Your friend, Mary."

I felt something stinging my eyes. Then I looked up at my father. "I'm glad you gave those shoes to Mary, Daddy."

For the first time in our conversation, Daddy smiled.

For the rest of that school year, I continued my deception—wearing the loafers to school in the morning, then changing into my tennis shoes for the rest of the day. I don't know if my parents ever suspected. They never said anything.

For several years I kept Mary's note in a box in the bottom drawer of my desk at home, the place where I kept all my treasures. But over the years, with moves made here and there, the note was lost.

My father has been gone many years now. But I have always fervently hoped that Mary's note was right—that I am just as nice as my daddy was.



Linn Ann Huntington is a retired journalism professor and attends North Oak Community Church in Hays.

For Christians, No Work That We Do Is Secular

Written by:

Rev. Josh Gelatt

For centuries, Christians have understood that Scripture is God's truth meant to govern our lives. We turn to it for strength, guidance, and wisdom. We naturally go to it regarding matters related to forgiveness or kindness, but sometimes we forget that Scripture speaks into a far broader range of issues.

For example, have you ever stopped to consider what the Bible has to say about work? Many of us labor in our places of employment: in factories, ranches, office cubicles, schools, hospitals, or oil fields. Work hours can be tedious, or often the tasks we must perform are emotionally draining. Yet, God is the one who invented work. I don't believe it was His intention that work be life-draining or dangerous. The second chapter in Genesis tells us that *"God put man in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it"* (Gen. 2:15). At least in the beginning, work was intended to be a life-giving, sacred activity.

I grew up in a faith tradition that divided everything between the "secular" and "sacred." Sacred work was becoming a priest/pastor, a missionary, or a nun. By contrast, "secular" work was everything else. Under this schema, while secular work was respectable, those who were REALLY dedicated to God engaged in "sacred" work.

I remember hearing one well-meaning pastor boldly declare in the pulpit, "I don't care how many electricians or teachers we have in this church; I only care about how many pastors and missionaries we are producing and sending out!" Yikes! I was a young seminary student at the time, and I remember looking around at the congregants and seeing defeated looks on their faces. They had just been told they were second-class Christians.

The Bible never even remotely suggests we are supposed to divide work into sacred and secular categories. Instead, it teaches us that everything is sacred to a follower of Jesus Christ. We recognize that

God created us. He directs our lives. He gives us various abilities and interests. Colossians 3:17 could be called the "Magna Carta" of the Christian's view of work: *"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus."* We are meant to be sources of light, whether we preach sermons or answer phones at a doctor's office.

As I sat through that pastor's sermon all those years ago, my mind reflected on my employer at the time. In those years, I was working my way through seminary as a married man with three young children. I took a job at a local plumbing and drain cleaning company, as they were kind enough to be flexible with my school schedule.

Cleaning out sewer pipes wasn't glamorous, but it was honest work that paid our bills. As I listened to this pastor drone on and on about the superiority of being a missionary, I thought about the quiet, but consistent, faith of my employer. He strove to live a life of faith and kindness. I watched as he forgave past

For Christians, No Work That We Do Is Secular (Continued)

-due bills of single mothers, prayed with senior citizens who were lonely and afraid of their declining health, and respond with kindness and grace to customers who were irate.

As I would often need to rush off to my seminary class, he would put on work clothes and take over for me until I returned. When the van of a competing drain cleaner in town broke down, he

loaned him one of ours (even removing the van signage so the man could operate under his own business name). I watched him forgive and restore an employee who was caught stealing, preferring to give this young man another chance rather than press charges.

Our well-meaning pastor (mentioned above) believed it was superior to be a missionary. My former boss

was a far better mentor, demonstrating daily in front of me how a plumber could make a difference for Christ. When Christ is the Lord of our life, nothing we do is secular. Everything is sacred.



Rev. Josh Gelatt is the pastor at North Oak Community Church in Hays.

God Does Not Call Everyone to Be a Minister or Missionary

Written by:

Cheryl Glassman

“Lord, when did we see you hungry and forsaken, helpless and imprisoned, a stranger in need?”

“What you do for the least of these, you have done for me. When you care for the least of these, you have cared for me, you have cared for me,” From the song, “The Least of These” by Bob Hurd.

My career as a nurse has come full circle in many ways. I started out as a nursing assistant/nurse’s aide in the mid-1970’s. I have always had a soft spot

in my heart for the elderly and was drawn to work in a local nursing home. It was quite an eye-opening experience. Many were happy in their surroundings, but there were others who had undergone extreme mental or physical hardship. Some residents could not walk, feed themselves, care for themselves, or speak. Others were stricken with dementia and did not remember family members. Some of the residents had not seen family members in months--some even years. Still others were the only ones left in their family. Christmas and other holidays were sometimes

quite disheartening. The nursing staff would purchase gifts for some of the residents who might be left out.

After five years, I made the difficult decision to leave the nursing home to further my knowledge as a nurse in a hospital setting. I became a charge nurse at the local hospital. I eventually left the hospital when 12-hour shifts were implemented, as I needed to be able to attend my children’s activities.

I still longed for the nursing home and eventually returned, working in the Alzheimer’s

God Does Not Call Everyone to Be a Minister (Continued)

Unit. It was during this time I got to know someone in a new and different light. This person was my sister, Jan.

My sister, Jan, has been a nurse for 42 years. Many years were spent at St. Anthony Hospital (where HaysMed is now) as a nurse on the surgical unit. When Hadley Hospital downtown and St. Anthony merged to become Hays Medical Center, Jan worked days and I worked evenings.

Eventually Jan also went to work at a local nursing home. I was there too, but was providing care in the Alzheimer's Unit. I would come out to the nursing home side from time to time and when my sister was there, she was always with a resident, either giving medications, feeding, holding a hand, praying, or helping someone understand things a bit better.

Watching her, even for just a minute, made me so proud to be her sister and

made me work even harder to provide for those in my care. As I thought about whom to write about in this article, I realized my sister might not be a minister of liturgy or a missionary overseas. But she truly is a minister.

The definition of the word "minister" as a noun is "a member of the clergy or head of a department." The definition as a verb is "attend to the needs of someone." That is exactly the definition of many nurses, doctors, and other medical or essential personnel I have had the honor of working with.

My sister Jan exemplifies it. Jan not only attends to the physical needs of those in her care, she understands their emotional and spiritual needs. She has an innate ability--a true gift-- to see beyond the obvious. Many times I saw her go to a resident and ask if the person were OK or needed something, and the person

truly was in an emotional or physical crisis. The person didn't ask for help. Jan knew. Her heart and mind were guided there, in my opinion, by the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who resides within each one of us and who waits for us to allow His presence to guide, nurture, and provide wisdom and strength.

The elderly in nursing homes truly are angels for us to learn from. Their lives are such a gift to us, and my sister embraced each one individually. That is what we are all called to do in this life. Thank you, my sister, for making the words from Dan Schutte's song "Here I Am Lord" ring true: "I will go Lord, if you lead me; I will hold your people in my heart."



Cheryl Glassman is the Director of Music at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.

"Decisions, demanded by work, become easier and simpler where they are made not in the fear of men, but only in the sight of God. He wants to give us today the power which we need for our work." - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Many Schoolteachers Are the Hands and Feet of God

Written by:

Becky Rogowski

Ministry and mission work are often referred to as "accepting the call." I also feel this applies to teachers and educators. When asked to think of an example of people who live out their faith at their workplace, I had several people come to mind--almost all are teachers.

Teaching has become a complicated profession over time. It encompasses so much more than it used to. Teachers now see so many more "needy" children. They are fulfilling parental needs, therapeutic needs, medical needs, emotional needs, and, of course, educational needs.

Technology has changed the picture of education in the last two decades, as well. The argument can be made that technology makes it easier, but imagine having to get the attention of a room full of teenagers on their cell phones. That's a lot to compete with.

In considering how teachers use their faith in the classroom (even in

public schools), the following things come to mind. All of these are based on living a faithful Christian life.

1. Teachers have a strong sense of mission. They know why they're there. They care for children --not just teaching them reading or math--but being part of their extended family. Teachers spend a great amount of time with children while parents are at work. They fulfill many roles. *"Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven,"* Matthew 5:15-16.

2. Teachers strive for excellence, not perfection. Teachers are realistic about the expectations they set for themselves and their students. Each day is a chance to do better than the last. Perfection is never the goal because perfection is not attainable. *"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the*

inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ," Colossians 3:23-24.

3. Teachers love their students. This one can be a lot tougher than it sounds on the surface. Teachers love their students even when the students are struggling and are not very lovable. Love is not a feeling. As shown in the Bible, love is an action. Love is how we choose to act toward others. Teachers choose to love their students--all their students, all the time. *"By this, all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another,"* John 13:35.

4. Teachers are striving to make good people of their students. They aren't there just for crowd control for the day. They want their students to develop into dedicated, caring, hard-working, truth-telling, truth-seeking individuals. The goal isn't simply to get children to behave for the day to get stickers on a sticker chart. The goal is to make them into good citizens in the long run. *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man*

Many Schoolteachers Are the Hands and Feet of God

out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks," Luke 6:45.

5. Teachers are humble

and real. Genuine humility and real faith inspire respect in students.

Teachers are well aware of the chance they have to be great influences on their students. *"He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble,'"* James 4:6.

6. Teachers are encouragers.

Encouragement is more than praise. To encourage means "to make someone more determined, hopeful, or confident. *"Teachers encourage students to do their best. They encourage them to be hopeful about their personal growth and confident in what more they can accomplish. Teachers*

encourage parents and their fellow educators, as well. "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing," I Thessalonians 5:11.

7. Teachers trust God. This is truer than ever given the current state of our society. Bullying and violence in our schools are on the rise. School shootings are occurring more than ever. Teaching can be a field filled with fear, stress, and worry. A good way to handle some of this is by trusting God to find that place of peace. I've seen a lot of videos on Instagram and TikTok lately of teachers praying over their students' desks before the school year begins--and some say they do it daily before the students arrive. There is value and credit to be given to this practice. *"Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be*

wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their own craftiness'; and again, 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile,'" I Corinthians 3:18-20.

Teachers, even those in public schools, may not be able to openly discuss God or their faith, but suffice it to say there is evidence that God is in many of our classrooms. Many of our best teachers are the hands and feet of Christ. They are living faith-filled lives in our classrooms, and our children are the better for it.



Becky Rogowski is the Generations in Faith Together Coordinator at Hays First Presbyterian



"What you do in your house is worth as much as if you did it up in heaven for our Lord God. We should accustom ourselves to think of our position and work as sacred and well-pleasing to God, not on account of the position and work, but on account of the word and faith from which the obedience and the work flow." - Martin Luther