

## KEENER THOUGHTS - January 2008

*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. (Psa 116:15)*

I never read or hear this verse of Scripture without thinking, "Yes, but to me death is still an enemy and I can't enjoy its many visitations." Death is that last enemy of the Christian, but no matter how many others we face during this life, that one last enemy is still standing by, mocking us. 1Co 15:26 says "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Only then can I really say O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory? Meanwhile, death keeps on stinging and proving victorious. Death takes my friends and family, just as it will, and keeps on taunting me with the promise of its imminent, and most personal visit. I can understand why the death of the saints is precious to God, and by faith, I can say with Paul to depart and be with Christ is far better. However, today I am mortal, and while I have my mortality, or even the hope of it, life is precious and death is my enemy. I am sure God made us this way. I am wearied by the repeated experience of death, grieved by the ruthlessness of it, and held at attention by the presence of it.

On December 6, about 5:40 EDT Tina Graber went to be with the Lord. She was the wife of pastor Randy Graber, pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Fairborn OH. Tina was only 42 years of age, and leaves behind a loving husband and two children who seemed to adore her. She had become a very dear Christian sister to me. I do not remember for sure when I first met Tina. It was probably at a Bible conference somewhere, and with an introduction so casual that I soon forgot all about it. I do remember when I got acquainted with her. In May 2003, I was scheduled for a revival meeting at Grace Baptist Church, and was thus picked up at the Cincinnati airport by Brother Randy, and taken to the Graber home. She met me in her kitchen as we entered the house, and immediately set out to make me feel welcome in her home. When I went to the guest room, there was a beautifully hand written welcome note, capable of making me feel I had a message from John Hancock himself. She had a gift from God of drawing and writing beautifully. Meals were prepared throughout the week that would have made one think I was a celebrity. I was invited back the next year, and the next, for five consecutive years. She was always the same. Each time a special welcome note awaited me, and each time there was a beautiful thank you note for my wife, thanking her for sharing me with them, and a small gift of appreciation for her. Such things were not just actions of Tina, they were who she was. I have traveled up and down this country for many years, and have met many wonderful ladies like Tina. Many of them are preacher's wives. I have been married to such a lady for 54 years. Many of them are other members of the Lord's churches. They are God's instruments to help us in comfort and happiness, but each of them must go the way of all flesh.

I was in the Graber home the last time, in September, just four months ago. Tina was sick then, with severe breathing problems and a terrible cough. I do not think anyone, including her, knew how sick she was. I certainly did not suspect anything of such consequence. The worst speculation I heard was that, perhaps, she had walking pneumonia. Just a month ago, I was in a meeting in O'Fallon IL, when Brother Randy called me. Tina had gone to the doctor, and finally had received results from some extensive tests. She had breast cancer that had already spread into both the liver and the lungs. The Doctors really gave no hope, and the grim diagnosis proved not one bit overly negative. In only a month, she was gone from this life. So many friends are weeping over their loss, but our sorrow is somewhat mitigated by the knowledge that our loss is her gain.

Tina spoke frankly and extensively with Randy about her impending death and she even helped to plan her funeral. These were not just funeral plans of a person who knew they would die someday. She knew it was at hand, and she seemed to resign to it well before it arrived. She tried to prepare her husband and her children for it, and I think she did a wonderful job of that. Tina will be greatly missed, but I think she left us some good examples of how we should live and die. Death is still my enemy and I dread every encounter with it. Those who have died in Christ have made peace with it, and perhaps the value God puts on the death of His saints, and His revelation to us about the matter, will help us to make peace with it a little more readily. FLK

# Forrest L. Keener

## Preaching Itinerary

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January 13 - 16, 2008 Revival Meeting  
**PINE GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Houston TX - R. J. Coots - Pastor

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March 12 -14, 2008 Bible Conference  
**CHOCTAW MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Carthage MS - Gerald Willis - Pastor

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March 16 -19, 2008 Revival Meeting  
**GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Fulton MS - Bobby Amos - Pastor

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April 9 - 11, 2008 Bible Conference  
**IMMANUEL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Wapanucki OK - Mark Hodges- Pastor

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June 22-25 - 2008 - Bible Conference  
**SHERWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Oklahoma City OK - Paul Brown - Pastor

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August 31 - September 1 2008 Bible Conference & Sunday Service  
**GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Frankfort KY, Lonnie Bennett - Pastor

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October 1 - 3, 2008 - Bible Conference  
**CARMICHAEL BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Carmichael CA - Bill Brown - Pastor

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Dec 7 - 9 - 2008 Sunday Services  
**TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
O'FaLlon IL - Mel Kimberlin - Pastor

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**MISSIONARY - EVANGELIST**

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Lawton OK 73507

*Sponsored by Bethel Baptist Church  
1902 NW Columbia, Lawton OK 73507*

Jan 08, 2007

Dear Pastor Robinson, Church and Friends,

On November 11, 2007, I wrote and read to you one of the most difficult letters I have, in my entire life, composed. In that letter, I informed you that my wife and I would be moving to Oklahoma City. We had found a nice home with a very small yard, which our age was increasingly demanding, and which we just had not been able to find in Lawton. I said you should feel free to stop all financial support immediately, but requested that you retain our membership, and sending authority, until we were settled on a sponsoring home church. You were much more than just gracious in honoring my request, and in the way you did it. You went far beyond what we requested, in that you voted to retain our same level of support until we were settled on a home church, and one to be our sponsoring church. Your love and liberality has been wonderful, but it has also made it even harder for us to leave you.

In essence, this months report is a follow up of that letter, in that I am making my last report to you as our sponsoring and sending church. We have united with Sherwood Baptist Church, in Oklahoma City, Pastored by Brother Paul Brown. Brother Brown, and Sherwood Baptist Church, have been great friends of Bethel Baptist Church of Lawton, of her ministry, and of this preacher for many years. While this is a very difficult move for us in all kinds of ways, we believe that the Lord has led, indeed, has constrained us in this direction. I pray it will be understood by all, both within and outside Bethel Baptist Church, that this move does not result from any disagreement with the church, with pastor Robinson, or with any member, or members of Bethel Baptist Church. I expect to continue a warm relationship with Bethel Baptist Church, and all of you as individuals, as long as I live.

Brother Robinson has, just this week, asked me to be one of the guest speakers in Bethel's 2008 missions conference. I look forward, with great anticipation, to this engagement. We also look forward to seeing all of you again at that time. I appreciate the confidence he has shown in me by this invitation.

To all who might not know, our new mailing address is 9601 Crooked Creek Ln. Oklahoma City, OK, 73160. Our home Phone # is 405 378-2081. My cell # is the same at this point as when we were in Lawton. I may change that within a month or so. Our new home church, and sponsor, is: Sherwood Baptist Church, 2845 SW 39<sup>th</sup> St, Oklahoma City, OK, 73119.

In closing let me say, Bethel Baptist Church, we will always love you and pray for you, as a church and as individuals. You have been so good to us through the years, in putting up with our flaws and errors, and in caring for our physical needs. As time passes Forrest and Mary Keener will pass. So is the way of all flesh. You will remember us for a while but only for a while. It is my prayer that Bethel Baptist Church and her ministry will far outlive us. I pray that your hearts will be dedicated to this cause.

In brotherly love,



Forrest L. and Mary Keener