

## Don't be Anxious, Be True, and Get Involved

I wondered if Bob Froehle was still alive. It had been 40 years since I had talked with him—I'm terrible at staying in touch. Bob is a former boss of mine and he had a big influence on my early 20's. I credit Bob with keeping me in college (he threatened to demote me and make me do grunt-work if I quit school). I wanted to talk with Bob and let him know how much he meant to me, so I called.

I was glad to hear that his voice still has the same smile I remembered, and after a bit of memory jogging Bob said, "Oh yeah! Tony—skinny kid with dark hair and mustache!" I didn't want to burst his memory bubble, so I let him keep that mental image, "Yep, that's me!" Immediately, Bob answered my unspoken quest, "I'm still alive!" Then he added with what sounded like a grin I remember from 40 years ago, "If I'd known I was gonna live this long I would have taken better care of myself!"

Bob's words ring true for me too. Now that I am into my 60's—even though that is not old—I have to admit there was a time that I could never imagine living this long. Not many of us teenagers thought of growing old. We all knew we would die in Viet Nam, in some riot, shot by a sniper (snipers were the precursor of today's mass shooters), or be vaporized in a mushroom cloud. Our country had gone mad and it was just a matter of time; our troops were shooting protestors on a college campus; untold numbers of people were murdered in the south, marching for equality (untold until three whites were killed); the height of social status was having your own nuclear bomb shelter to survive the impending Russian assault....

And yet here I am, and here we are. Our country made it through the 20<sup>th</sup> century—whew! Was it just luck, or is there more to it? And what about our country today—are the threats we face, from within and without, that much different from 50 years ago? I think our country is an ongoing mixture of conflict and resolution, of bad and good, that is always moving into the future while dragging the past along. The past is important as we move into the future. The founders of our nation must have been inspired by God when they wrote the constitution. A nation governed by its people—that had never been done before! The rest of the world watched and called it "the grand experiment." Now some 240 years later, we are as strong as ever. We've made it through a civil war, a great depression, several recessions, world wars, social upheavals and change our founders could never have imagined. How could America have made it this long? I believe that God continues to inspire us.

God is still guiding, so here's a prescription for surviving today's conflict-filled culture. First, don't be anxious about the news today. When we are anxious, God has a hard time getting through with inspiration. Trust that our country will continue to thrive well into our future. Second, be true to ourselves. When we are troubled it is important to understand why. Take some time to look within and see what we truly believe and why we hold those beliefs. Too often, we give our peace away to someone else telling us what to believe. Finally, get involved. In the book of Amos, chapter 6, God is depicted as being most angry at those who are complacent. I suggest that there is something nearly all of us can do to get involved. Within this "grand experiment" the people have power—it's called a vote. So, don't be anxious, be true to yourself, and get involved.

Bob Froehle sent me a Christmas card last year. It was addressed to "Reverend Tony Hoefner." Smiling, I thought to myself, "I'm pretty sure nobody saw 'Reverend' in my future—nobody except God." As we continue into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century can we trust God for our country's future? As a nation, I figure we probably better start taking better care of ourselves—the United States of America might live longer than we think.

See you in church, --pastor tony