

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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What Is The Pressing Need In Your Neighborhood?

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The Asbury United Methodist Church is moving their location to an area near us. They have recently mailed out a flyer announcing their move, and expressing their desire to be “*equipped to meet your needs*”. Enclosed in the flyer is a neighborhood survey asking their future neighbors to list the pressing needs in their neighborhood.

The pressing needs are listed under the heading of ten categories: Christian child care, Christian youth care, Recreation/sports, Christian coffee house, Free meeting space, Leisure learning-hobbies, crafts, etc. , Parenting classes, Practical life classes emphasizing Babysitting, CPR, Home safety and Support Groups for Grief, Parenting and Care-giving.

There is not one heading indicating that the pressing need in our neighborhood is salvation from sin. Yet, “*all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). Learning the answer to the greatest question one could ask, “*What must I do to be saved?*” (Acts 16:30), is not

one of the headings of pressing needs. Neither does knowing God’s love in the context of being reconciled and saved from sin (Romans 5:8-11) appear in the top ten list in Ashbury’s survey of likely pressing needs.

No doubt when the “Christian coffee house” is built, one could bring up these spiritual needs over a cup of espresso and receive the Methodist’s help. But where are the needs of the soul being emphasized in the survey?

Such a survey reveals much concerning the effects of the “Social Gospel” among religious groups today. First, where in these headings can one find the clear mission of Jesus and His church?

Jesus made His mission clear: “*For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost*” (Luke 19:10). Jesus clearly commissioned his apostles to “*go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*” (Mathew

28:18-20). The Lord’s church doesn’t have to wonder as to its authorized purpose. She continues the apostolic mission of making disciples by preaching the gospel, and being the “*pillar and ground for the truth*” (I Timothy 3:15).

Second, the survey shows how little “spirituality” is thought to exist in Asbury’s proposed neighborhood. If the Methodist Church believes that man’s pressing need today is to be saved from sin, why do they omit it as a possible need, or worst, slip up on her unspiritual thinking neighbors with the trappings of the “Social Gospel”?

The tenth category in Asbury’s neighborhood “*pressing needs*” survey is “*Other*”. It is sad when man’s greatest need, as revealed by God, is not even addressed as a possibility, but can only be included on the line labeled “*other*”. This is exactly where many churches are in their priorities. Saving souls from sin is the “*other*” mission for many churches today. Teaching Baby Sitting, CPR and Home Safety are advertised priorities.