

bread for the journey

Going Forward

What was once a catchy cliché has become commonplace parlance for up-and-coming organizations—like ours, for example.

During the 15 years or so I have been associated with Rosecrance, I have witnessed its astonishing growth and development.

Since its humble, heartwarming beginnings as a home for troubled youth, Rosecrance has become a first-class treatment center for persons who suffer from addiction and/or mental illness. “Going forward” best describes what we have done historically and what we intend—God willing—to do in the future. Most recently, people who follow Rosecrance can look forward to the development of an extraordinary vision for the city of Chicago. We anticipate opening a first-of-its-kind sober residence for young people who have experienced addiction and now recovery. They want to go to college and need a sober environment in which to resume their academic careers. Talk about “going forward.”

As you might suspect, I have some reservations about this catchy but useful cliché. “Going forward” sometimes feels like a runaway train. Once upon a time, there was a cord attached to my phone. It never left the house. Texting was something editors did as they pored over manuscripts readying them for publication. A car phone was for the rich and famous or the local cop. We have come a long way, baby. We are hot footing it to the future. We are going forward. Or, are we careening toward an uncertain end?

I was schooled in the 60’s wherein the craze of the day was *navel gazing*. It’s another word for contemplation and the sacred journey to the secrets of the soul. Instead of concentrating upon going *forward*, we thought it was important to go *inward*. There were lots of gurus to assist us in this endeavor, one of whom was the notorious Timothy Leary who advocated the use of psychedelic drugs during the journey inward. Some of us remember long days and nights of doing pretty much nothing while we contemplated the soul’s journey inward. We were not going forward.

Today’s culture is nutty with consumerism and a spirit of conspicuous consumption. The rich surely do become obscenely rich and the poor surely do become grotesquely poor. It is an indirect consequence of our lingering redemption-resistant self-absorption. Ask me. I live on the corner of Fat Cat and Poor as a Church Mouse. Funny how a shaking plastic cup held in the grimy hand of a homeless fellow and a \$1000 smart phone in the manicured hand of a middle income fat cat are symbolic of the “have-nots” and the “haves” on just about Any Street, USA.

Going forward or going inward? The journey inward seems to be merely a self-centered waste of time. Now, in the interests of *going forward*, we have screens to monitor, fantasy football to play and a cyberspace world to navigate, while we send OMG and LOL texts to friends and family. Here is my birthday card to one of my sons. It is a text: “HB, GTL. LOL. D. Short for, “Happy Birthday, Geoffrey Thomas Lenters. Lots of Love, Dad.” It was time-efficient and cheap. No sappy card. No drawnout conversation about how important he is to me and how much I love him. What a joke! What’s least harmful to the human spirit: to live quietly in search of a soul or to live frenetically locked into our cyberspace gizmos in our frantic effort to move ahead? Going inward or going forward?

I suppose I am a bit of an anachronistic geezer. Perhaps I don’t use Wesley’s words correctly whenever he inquired how it is with our soul but my meaning is the same. “How is your spirit?” My kids mock me whenever I ask the question as if it is foolish to stop and listen to the sounds and cries of one’s soul. Recently, I had a rare conversation with friends and colleagues. We spent all of five minutes talking about our dreams. It surprises me to this day when our dreams are hustled off to a room of forgetfulness as if they are trivial interruptions to a good night’s sleep, when in fact, our dreams are translucent windows to the soul. Is it not important for us to know what is going on—inwardly as well as “what’s happenin’ now” in our outer world?

During a recent conversation with an old seminary friend, we did more than reminisce. Joe talked about what an insufferable


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snob he was during student days. He was smarter than most of his fellow seminarians and he knew it. Finally, at 72, he confessed how lonely, inept and incompetent he felt during those days. It has taken him 50 years to come to the center of his soul. At last, he came into contact with his essential powerlessness and unmanageability. It took practically all of this time to arrive at the truth about who he is—his limitations, his character defects and the realization he had hurt so many of his loved ones along the way. Fifty years to be grounded in the realization that God loves him for who he is despite his flaws and not all his many accomplishments. And 50 years to discover how important true friendship is. After all these years, Joe is going *forward* because he risked going *inward*.

The secret of our spiritual wellbeing is a dance between going

forward and going inward. In order for one to go forward, it is necessary to go inward. The 12 steps of AA are a spiritual template in this regard. They help us negotiate the steps of the dance.





How? The steps teach us when we are at the end of our rope to let go and surrender to a power greater than ourselves. And then, almost simultaneously, we must hang on for the ride of our lives. It is hard work for us to admit to our flaws and defects. It is hard work for us to make amends to those whom we have hurt. It is hard work for us to pray and meditate. But we do it because for us to go *forward* it is necessary for us to go *inward*. 

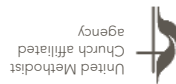


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Rosecrance offers the best opportunity for lasting recovery. If you know someone who needs help, please call us at 815.391.1000 or 888.928.5278.



is a bi-monthly news and views letter from Rev. Dr. William Lenters, Rosecrance Church Relations Coordinator. Bread for the Journey is written on behalf of people who live with substance use and mental health disorders. Together, and by God's grace, we will try to make a difference.

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