

Why Deer Park

Our first Why Deer Park column was written over 30 years ago. Ira J. Porter, a longtime member and leader at Deer Park, wrote these words for the church's 75th Anniversary celebration. While Mr. Porter's words may at first seem dated, they describe the experiences of many of our members and his challenge for the church remains as relevant today as it was when it was written in 1981.

My Church

If there needs to be a subject for these few remarks, it shall be WHY DEER PARK?

There are 128 Baptist churches in the Long Run Associations, which for practical purposes is Louisville. And with the aid of the automobile any of them may be reached in a relatively short period of time. So why Deer Park?

It is almost coincidental that my religious pilgrimage began at about the same time as the founding of Deer Park. It started by my going to the mourners bench, profession my faith in Christ, joining the church and being baptized in Caney Creek on a cold November day.

Since leaving my home church 61 years ago, I have had only ten pastors in five different churches. Some pastors have been great pulpit orators. Some have been great pastors, giving minute attention to the needs of the membership. This I prefer. Some have remained my pastor for relatively short periods of time, while others have stayed and stayed and stayed.

Now to the question, why Deer Park? I have always had a sort of childlike attribute which claims everything for his own. The child says this is my ball, this is my bat, this is my bike, this is my yard, this is my team. So I like to say this is my church, this is my pastor and I prefer that no one speak ill of either.

We have had great soul searching sermons delivered from the pulpit in my church. We have had and do have great theologians in my church including Hersey David, Eric Rust, and Glenn Hinson.

It was here that my son professed faith in Christ and was baptized. It was here that my daughter was given in marriage. It was here that a deacon prayed his first public prayer. It was here that our members were taught to give generously without the need of pressure of personal solicitation. It was here that giving to missions became a priority.

It was here that my wife was given the privilege of leading the women of the church in their missionary efforts. It was here that prayers were offered up to God when I was desperately ill. So can't you see that this is my church?

It was here that the gospel has been preached for seventy-five years; where scores of men and boys and women and girls have been led from darkness into light. It is because of this church that heaven has been made richer because this was the training ground for many who have gone on before whose lives were turned into righteous living through devout ministers and dedicated Sunday School teachers.

Now the question is, do we dare feast on our glorious past and leave the future to itself; Of course not.

Deer Park need never to be a big church as bigness is measured today, but it must always be a good church. A sound foundation has been laid for a church which should always be interested in the local community; should always be interested in world missions; should always be interested in its great harvest of youth.

Today we are celebrating a victory. Today our cups are running over. Mark Twain once said that there was a need to stop and let our well fill up again. I believe we have done it today and during these past few weeks of celebration. And so that the future will be more glorious than the past, let us be guided by the words of the song writer Richard Blanchard when he wrote:

Like the woman at the well I was seeking for things that could not satisfy,
And then I heard my Savior speaking, "Draw from my well that shall never run dry."
Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord. Come and quench this thirsting of my soul.
Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more.
Fill my cup, fill it and make me whole.

Fill our cups, Lord. Fill all our cups. Fill them with love for our pastor and for each other. But above all, fill them with your love and grace and power.

Ira J. Porter
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