

A VISIT TO A CHANGED CHURCH

Recently I visited the websites of **Jeff Jenkins and the Shannon Oaks Church of Sulphur Springs, Texas**. I was greatly impressed. Since for many, “Seeing is believing,” I share with you my readers some of what I learned. (For those unfamiliar with the change movement, I offer a few observations and explanations, in italics, to focus the picture).

On the church’s page I read:

* About the Holy Spirit: “The Holy Spirit is present in the world, continually making men aware of their need for God” “He (the Spirit) provides the Christian with...understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right.” (*This is the Calvinistic doctrine of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the human mind, convicting sinners, enlightening Bible readers. The problem is, those who claim this enlightenment end up with different understandings of the Bible and guided into hundreds of different kinds of churches.*)

*About Salvation: “This Salvation is available for all who turn to Christ in faith and make Him Lord of their life...and baptism is our confession of the sufficiency of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to Save us from Sin.” (*Their doctrine is salvation by faith, before baptism and baptism to declare one’s salvation. Both borrowed from the Baptists.*)

* About the Church. “The church is the entire body of Christ on earth. Regardless of denominational titles there is one body; and, though it is diverse, it is empowered by the Holy Spirit...” (*This is an affirmation that all denominations are of equal standing before God, and that their church is also a denomination.*)

* Their “Core Values.” “Shannon Oaks Church is an autonomously led, non-denominational Christian Fellowship. We value and operate in the freedom to be flexible in areas that are not considered to be **permanent-core doctrine** (i.e. doctrines that are explicitly stated and are not understood to be bound to a particular time in history or culture...) Our non-negotiable doctrines lie solely in the matters directly related to a person’s salvation...In matters regarding gender roles, church structure and organization...as long as our actions do not directly violate the clear and permanent core doctrines and expressed will of God, we will operate freely...” (*“Core doctrine” is a major teaching of the change movement. It seeks to limit the essentials of Christianity to a few chosen items leaving all the rest open to change. Any doctrine or practice not directly related to salvation (by believing in Jesus) they feel free to change if they desire. Gender roles is the code term for women in leadership roles, church structure and organization has to do with the government of the church.*)

* Their “Vision.” “God is envisioning us to be a church that is open to change and emerge as God leads us.” (*Notice they attribute to God their desire to change the pattern of the church, her doctrine and worship. It does not matter to them that He has provided instruction for all of these in his divine Word.*)

* Don Shannon come for the church’s Memorial Day worship service and played Amazing Grace on his Bagpipes.

* Note that they no longer identify themselves as a church of Christ. (*This is a proper decision since they no long are a church of Christ in name, worship or doctrine.*)

On **Jeff Jenkins’** personal page for Monday June 28, 04 we read:

* “Yesterday morning was powerful as one of my friends shared his heart about how much he has struggled with the changes at Shannon Oaks in regards to the style of worship and instruments in worship.” (*They have already embraced the use of instrumental music in worship, although such did not enter Christian history until 600 years after Christ.*)

* At a special gathering of the church, one brother commented “there are many people hurting over the people who have left Shannon Oaks in the last year because of the changes that have been made and some because of the way the changes were made.” (*As in virtually every congregation, when the change agents move in with their agenda, faithful Christians are forced out because they cannot accept the errors being introduced. When such separations happen in a “traditional” congregation, they brand it as division. When it happens to them it is “a few folks left”.*)

* The preacher observed, “There is nothing we can do about people who disagree with processes and issues...but from this point forward we have to love everyone and keep on moving toward the mission of doing whatever it takes to honor God...” He closed with the strong affirmation, “No turning back!” (*Brethren may be forced out, but he will not be deterred from is goal of changing the church into a non-denominational denominational body. This spirit will eventually drive a wedge into the very heart of the church throughout the world.*)

* The preacher’s site offers lots of links to help his readers get on the fast track to change: There are links to **Wineskins Magazine** (*chief organ of the change movement*), Willow Creek Association (*Role model for those wishing to build a mega church*); Rick Warren and Saddleback Church (*Chief architect of the philosophy driving the change movement*)

and under Restoration Ministries he links to Farmer's Branch Church, Richland Hills Church, (*Prominent Changed Churches*) and John York, Rubel Shelly and John Mark Hicks (*Among the most daring promoters of change*). JHW