

**January 7, 2011**

***“Echoes of the Heart”***

*Reflections on Life and Community Living*

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**What you do matters.** With the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century breaking upon us—always—hope and expectation abound. Still, it’s complicated because change and flux are always swirling around us and it is never easy to predict how things will play out.

For a moment, think about all the change we as a culture have been through in the past decade. To begin with, there was 9/11 and the new fear around global terrorism, all of which—in part—led to two wars from which we are still trying to honorably disengage.

Moreover, there is our new identity as a *debtor* nation and—for a people who do not like being indebted to anyone—how that resonates in our national psyche.

Beyond this, is all the hype and fanfare of new technologies and the *information age* in which we live. For example, how many of you over forty have heard of Mark Zuckerberg, TIME Magazine’s *Person of the Year*? Honestly, I hadn’t heard of him. He is, of course, the 26-year-old founder and CEO of *Facebook*, which most of you are probably *on* and which, along with other emerging high-tech fancies, is changing the way we live.

If we’re not careful, this new *information age* can be quite scary. Increasingly, we have to pay attention and be careful what we say and what we reveal. Instantly, almost, new information about us—carelessly acquired, perhaps—can change perceptions on us and impact our lives.

One of the most requisite skills for navigating through this *new age* is the skill of *adaptability*. Increasingly, it seems, we have to adapt to the change that swirls about us. And along the way, we’re reminded that *what we do* (or don’t do) *matters*.

**Doing our part.** A pastor colleague was remembering some wintry times up north in Lowell, Massachusetts. At the time, he was a teacher and he had the custom of waking up each morning to a radio talk show that—during the snowy days of winter—would inform the listeners in the event that school was being cancelled that day.

On this particular snowy day, a lady called in complaining to no end about the city. *Why weren’t the streets all cleared and the sidewalks free of snow?* She went on and on with her complaining: *the city this, the city that.*

A few minutes later, another caller called in with a response to the lady’s complaint. *To the previous caller, he said, Lady, I don’t know what your deal is; we ARE the city. For crying out loud, pick up a shovel.*

The second caller had a point. There's always much we can complain about. Our lives are seldom all we wish they would be. Still, doesn't there come a point where we each have to get off the sidelines and do our part to make our life-situation work?

Dr. Kark Menninger, the famous American psychiatrist, once gave a lecture on mental health and was answering questions from the audience afterwards. One man asked,

*What would you advise a person to do if that person felt a nervous breakdown coming on?*

People were expecting him to answer something like, *consult a psychiatrist* or *take a pill* or something like that.

To their astonishment, he replied, *My advice would be to leave your home, go across the railroad tracks to where the more needy people live, find someone in need and try, in some way, to help that person.*

What a concept! If you want to improve your mental or spiritual health, *go love somebody*. In other words, do something for someone else; give yourself to the love and caring of others.

**Being the change we seek.** Whatever our faith, God/the Spirit work through us. God works through our acts of compassion and generosity. God works through our spirit of hope and promise as we embrace the future. That's why our attitude and our ability to adapt and adjust—always with the larger picture in mind—are so important.

What we do matters. If we want to change our life-situation in whatever way, we have to *be* the change we desire. As the New Year comes upon us, our prospects in anything are as great and as high as our imagination and determination to achieve them in light of God's purposes.

A most happy 2011 to all!