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# CHOICE BITS

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1320 MAIN STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77002

BRINGING THE GOSPEL TO HOUSTON AND BEYOND

## First Choice Ministries

Dear Friend;

Time, of course, doesn't fly as the old Latin, *tempus fugit*, is said to mean. Time, of course, moves at a constant and measurable speed, one minute is one minute, unless you are having fun and then it flies or if you are bored and then...well you know. The year is almost over, Christmas is just about here and it seems it was only yesterday that we celebrated the New Year. I am the exception to the rule, however, for me time is flying by but I am not having fun.

In just a few days our church services will have been broadcast for 54 years, 2,808 consecutive Sundays on Channel 13. The first televised service was December 4, 1955. Channel 13 had gone on the air in November 1954 and approached First Methodist some weeks before the December 4 broadcast. The decision to go on television was not an easy one for the church, for the broadcasts would be *live*. Taping a service at that time was not an option. It was on October 13, 1956, that a two and one-half minute video tape of singer Dorothy Collins was inserted into the live "Hit Parade" broadcast to see if the television audience would notice the difference. It wasn't noticed and so tape was born.

Today, we still broadcast live, unlike other churches which present perfect taped services. Our theory is simple. "What you see is what you get" and that is one of the things that viewers who visit us observe. We are as friendly as we appear, our Sanctuary is as beautiful as it appears on television and viewers turned visitors feel right at home. The world is not a perfect place and mistakes do occur in a live environment. Dr. Bill Hinson used to tell of the day that our Easter service was carried nationally by ABC and as he sat in the "Bishop's Chair" in the pulpit, thinking about the significance of a live **national** broadcast, watching the huge ABC clock count down the final 10 seconds before we went live he wondered, "where did we get that clock?" The clock reached zero and still he sat in the Bishop's chair. We were late starting that day. In a live situation you can't go back and start over. Bill recovered and the service was a beautiful triumph of a First Methodist service seen by millions of Americans.

It is a fascinating thing that television has become such a part of our lives that we don't regard it as a marvel anymore. Yet it is and over the years it has changed dramatically and its influence on our society is enormous and, in my opinion, its influence is both good and bad.

KHCB  
FM  
105.7  
8 PM  
SUNDAY

\*\*\*\*  
KTRK  
TV 13  
5:30AM  
SUNDAY  
(54 YRS)

\*\*\*\*  
KTBU  
TV 55  
11 AM  
SUNDAY  
(6 YRS)

Change has also come in the means of sound reproduction and duplication as well as video duplication. In 1983 we didn't have the equipment to record our services on tape. My predecessor taped our church services on his home VHS recorder using the extended 6-hour tape. Today we record on computer, on mini Digital videotape, direct to DVD, we make CD's, 60 and 90-minute audio cassette recordings.

We have tried diligently to keep up with the technology. Changes in that technology have been quite rapid. It wasn't too many years ago that television sets were "tube" technology. I can recall going to the 7Eleven store to use their tube tester. Well, our television cameras were tube cameras and huge. Our primary camera weighed 70 pounds and was nearly four feet long. Tubes gave way to computer chips and we acquired chip cameras, much smaller, and more efficient, then we acquired high definition capable cameras.

Sound reinforcement also changed over the years. In the earliest days of television, occasionally one could see the actor speaking but the sound flowed seconds later. All that has changed. Sound is now digital, no longer analog and travels faster than the spoken word. Our equipment delays the arrival of sound through the speakers in the rear of the Sanctuary so that the spoken word and its electronically transmitted counterpart arrive at the same time. We have replaced all of our sound reinforcement equipment in the television studio and the Sanctuary with digital soundboards.

I mention these changes, as we have been able to make improvements because you and others have supported First Choice Ministries. Of course, we didn't do all of this overnight, but over years. Today we use three JVC HDPro cameras with low light capability, and three Roland M-400 48-channel digital soundboards (Downtown and one at Westchase).

Earlier I mentioned I wasn't having any fun and that is caused by the necessity of mentioning our current budget problems. Through October 31, 2009, our budget anticipated contributions of \$654,688. Through that same date we had received \$586,379, leaving us with a budgetary income deficit of \$68,309. First Choice has other revenue from wedding fees, an annual gift from an estate, and book sales and those figures are also behind our projections. We have been managing expenses well and have postponed some items to a later date. But our principle expenses such as television time, newspaper printing costs, postage and salaries cannot be deferred. Among the items which we have deferred is advertising but considering the Christmas season ahead we must release some funds for radio and print advertising. Thus, the bottom line is we need your help. I know that the economy is troubling but I also know that the voice of First Methodist has been on television 54 years and in that "vast wasteland" it is one of the few consistent voices for our Savior on the airwaves. Please do what you can to help us.

As always I will be delighted to discuss the financial statement of First Choice with you at any time. Just give me a call at 832-668-1834.

Yours in Christ



Allen R. Houk  
Director