Brian, Barb, Melinda & Austin Schrag Spring 1991

Encouraging old truths to be told and sung in new ways

AN UNEXPECTED TRIP TO CHICAGO

On March 1 Paul Grant, Music Minister and elder at the Rock Church died unexpectedly. He was 31. He was our friend. He taught us to sing gospel. He taught Brian to lead gospel worship and accompany on the piano. He taught us both alot about ministering in the inner city and loving God wholeheartedly. We stayed with him and his wife Du Rhonda when we visited Chicago in December, and even shared two meals with them - a miracle considering their overflowing schedule of giving.

On March 8 we attended his funeral. We are thankful to friends who made it possible for us to attend ... we needed to be with our Rock family as we mourned our loss. We cried and laughed and worshippped God in the midst of our denial and incomplete understanding. Paul impacted many people in his role as chaplain of Circle Urban Ministries and at the Rock. Most importantly he introduced hundreds to Jesus Christ.

He was always ready to say "yes" to people in need and to God himself. The following chorus became a theme for the weekend. We sang it softly, huddled together in the chilling wind and occasional snowflake, as they lowered his body into the ground. These were the remains, the shell, of a man full of life, who was always willing to give of that life. These words characterized Paul Grant, pray that they would characterize us as well:

I'll say, "Yes, Lord, yes."

To your will and to your way.

I'll say, "Yes, Lord, yes."

I will trust you and obey.

When your spirit speaks to me,

With my whole heart I'll agree,

And my answer will be:

"Yes, Lord, yes."

FAMILY TIDBITS

Melinda: "There was a farmer had a dog and bingo was his name-o. B-I-B-L-E ..."

Mommy: "Austin is it time for sleep?" Austin vigoursly shakes his head back and forth.

Tentative Summer Schedule

May- trip to California

June - Greek Course in Dallas

July - rest, travel to Ohio,

August - Illinois, Kansas & Colorado

Lesson of the Semester: God knows our needs better than we do. (Hmm, if I could only convince Melinda that we know her needs better than she does!)

WHAT WOULD YOU DO???

Wachira, your friend in the village asks you to bring him a guitar from the city. You do not want to damage your friendship, but you have already noticed that young people listen to the radio more than their own music. You know that a guitar in the village could make the traditional music disappear forever. Think about it, send us your ideas and look for more in the next newsletter.w

Songlines

Music and the Missionary

...they sit cross-legg'd...talking, and likely some poor musick passing up and down. The musick of Turky is worth consideration; thro all those vast dominions there runs one tune, and for ought I heard, no more, nor can every man play that; yet scarce any but hath a fiddle with two strings...will confidently play upon it, but he know not to what tune, nor can play the same twice over.

- An Englishman's description of Turkish music in 1634.

Though the words used are different, I often hear comments about music similar to those written by our English friend above: "It all sounds the same to me," "I wouldn't exactly call it music", or "He kept playing the same song, over and over." In fact, if I weren't so concerned about others' opinions of me, I'd probably say things like this when I hear foreign music. in Chicago

This semester I developed and taught a six-week course to help missionaries and other Christians understand and appreciate the music of people different from themselves. It was entitled, "Music and the Missionary", and included discussion of God's acceptance of all forms of music, what functions music plays in different cultures, how to listen to music that sounds strange to you, and the spiritual importance of encouraging Christians in other cultures to worship God in their own "heart-music" - the music that most fully expresses their heart.

Discussion was often lively, because issuequestions like "How can you use music to worship God that formerly was used to accompany sacrifices to ancestors?" do not have simple answers. (Did you know that the tune to the popular hymn, "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" was originally a love song, entitled, "My Heart is All Bewildered, the Work of a Tender Maid"?)

My motivation in teaching the course was the strong conviction that music plays a crucial role in the Christian's relationship with God. "Sing a new song to the Lord" is a command to communicate musically to God about your growing, deepening relationship with Him. Too often, missionaries - and church leaders in the U.S. - have assumed that the music meaningful to them is also meaningful to people in different cultures. This is not true. Trying to sing music in a foreign style is as irrelevant as trying to speak in a language you don't know. And when a new church in a foreign culture can't express itself to God in its own heart-music, it likely becomes emotionally and spiritually crippled in its relationship to God.

So, hey. When we get to West Africa, we want to encourage the people we're with to learn about God from the Bible in their heart-language, and worship Him in their heart-music. Nothing will give the Holy Spirit a better working ground.