

Part IV – South, San Mateo church

CHAPTER 13

Rev. W. Nockowski, pastor



(center, in dark glasses)



Rev. William Nockowski, at Slavic Camp, 1979-82

When I came back from serving my country (USA) in the Vietnam War as a “conscientious objector”, working in a M.A.S.H. (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) as a medical corpsman, I met Elsa Kowal (pastor Onisim Kowal’s daughter), and I went through the courtship process with her and asked her father for his blessing on our future marriage. He said, “Yes.” This was 1971. Elsa and I wanted to get married in the 17th Street church (RGT), where we had attended previously. There was a large hall downstairs, which accomodated several hundred people. We had been at weddings there where the entire church came to celebrate and partake in the feast that the Russian babushkies prepared.

However, after I returned from the army, I was living with my parents in Burlingame and going to the San Mateo church (Ukrainian offshoot from RGT), where Rev. William Nockowski was the pastor. We wanted Rev. Nockowski to officiate at our wedding. He agreed. At the time, I had been invited by my dear friends Peter Kolesnikow and Ben Delevan to sing and play the synthesizer in their group. I agreed. In fact, it was when I sang “Inside the Gate” at a youth gathering where Elsa was attending, that she first fell in love with me.

The people in the church knew me and my parents. Some might have been suspicious of “unchristian” activity in the army. Rev. Nockowski had me say a few words to reassure them that I was still a Christian. Elsa, however, needed to go through the ritual of water baptism in a church before she would be acknowledged as a Christian.





William K. Nockowski

SIGNATURE OF PERSON SOLEMNIZING MARRIAGE

On the day of the wedding, Feb. 19, 1972, Rev. William K. Nockowski read a beautiful scripture that we requested and performed the ceremony rightfully called “holy matrimony” for all the parishioners to witness. Elsa was adamant about having to repeat the words “and obey” in the wedding vows. Instead, we vowed to “love and cherish” each other the rest of our days as a married couple. Rev. Nockowski read the chapter we requested on love from 1 Corinthians 13:

13 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all

mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹²For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is **love**.



The wedding ceremony went by smoothly, even though Elsa was not able to have her cherished candles. The feast in the hall below the sanctuary was well orchestrated, as the people sang the Russian wedding song,

“В Кане Галилейской”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKRIrhAt2FY&t=111s>

<p>1.Христос! Ты в Кане Галилейской</p> <p>На брачный праздник приходил, И в первый раз средь тьмы житейской Ты славу там Свою явил. Припев: О Господи! Ты к нам приди И славу Свою яви. О Господи! Ты к нам приди И нас благослови!</p> <p>2 Приди и к нам, как гость чудесный, И радость всех благослови, И укрепи Ты связью тесной Союз по вере и любви.</p> <p>3 Ты радость брака освящаешь, Ты в Церкви вечной, как Жених На брачном пире восседаешь Среди искупленных Своих.</p> <p>4 Ты всех зовёшь на праздник славы, И дай, чтоб новая чета, Храня всегда Твои уставы, Могла войти на брак Христа.</p>	<p>1. Christ! You came to Cana of Galilee To the wedding feast, And for the first time amidst the darkness of life You showed Your glory there. Chorus: O Lord! Come to us And show Your glory. O Lord! Come to us And bless us!</p> <p>2 Come to us, as a wonderful guest, And bless the joy of all, And strengthen with a close bond The union of faith and love.</p> <p>3 You sanctify the joy of marriage, You sit in the eternal Church as the Bridegroom At the wedding feast Among Your redeemed.</p> <p>4 You call everyone to the feast of glory, And grant that the new couple, Always keeping Your statutes, May enter into the marriage of Christ.</p>
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The parents gave a short speech and blessed the newly married couple. In this photo, Onisim Kowal (Elsa's father) gives his blessing. Rev. Nockowski is sitting to the left of Onisim.



The feast lasted as long as the food kept coming. However, the biblical Wedding at Cana had one thing that our church prohibited: wine at the wedding. Jesus was welcome, but not to turn water into wine!

Several years later, we heard a knock on our door. It was Rev. Nockowski, paying us a visit. We welcomed him into our modest house on Huron Avenue in San Mateo. It turned out he had come to talk about church matters. It was a personal matter with him. He had helped us when we wanted to get married, and he helped us overcome any obstacles that some church people tried to put in our way. Now it seemed like he was coming to us to help him.



As Rev. Nockowski continued to tell us about the schism that was developing at the San Mateo Church on N. Ellsworth Avenue, I couldn't help but think about the time our church on Geary Street went through the same thing. However, it appeared to Nockowski that the members of the church were attacking him for not wanting to perform the ritualistic "washing of feet" on Communion Sunday. I remembered how we performed that ritual at the Geary Street church, and how some of our young people ran out of the church before the male members could perform the obligatory "brotherly kiss." It seemed humorous to me now.

With Nockowski's church, it seemed that there was a doctrinal dispute. Certain members stated that it was a commandment given by Jesus himself to his disciples, that they should wash each others' feet before communion.

John 13: 14-15

¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

Rev. Nockowski had been educated in the American way of interpreting scripture spiritually, not literally. So, he had attempted to persuade the members of the church one Sunday to accept his viewpoint. He used the

sermon of Charles Spurgeon to preach about the symbolic meanings of “washing feet.” His reasoning was that many Christians had quit practicing literal “washing feet” in favor of seeing it as a metaphor of being a servant, of serving each other through kindness, and good deeds. This reasoning followed the scripture that said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.”

Charles Spurgeon viewed the washing of feet in the Bible, specifically Jesus washing his disciples' feet, as a powerful symbol of Christ's continuous love and a model for believers to emulate. He saw it as an act of humility and selfless service, urging Christians to wash one another's feet, metaphorically speaking, by serving and caring for each other. Spurgeon also highlighted the distinction between the initial cleansing from sin (like a bath) and the ongoing need for spiritual cleansing (like washing feet).

Spurgeon called upon believers to imitate Christ's example of love and service by actively seeking opportunities to serve and care for one another.

He emphasized that love should be the motivation behind these actions, and that believers should esteem and prefer one another in love.

He encouraged a spirit of unity and mutual care within the church, where believers look out for each other's needs and burdens. Spurgeons words:

I invite you now, therefore, to see your Saviour's enduring and continuing love as set forth to us in this symbolic washing of his disciples' feet, and in like acts of which it is an emblem. I shall ask you to view it, first, as the type of his continuous love; and secondly, as the example of that love as it should be reflected by his people. This washing must be spiritual; no external form will suffice. Thus, I have shown you that this foot-washing is a symbol of our Redeemer's continuous acts of love. Jesus is always our host, and therefore he washes our feet; he always cares for our little matters, and in this sense washes even our feet; he is always providing refreshments for his people in their pilgrimage to heaven, and thus he washes their feet; he is always guarding the purity of his church and people, and so in the fullest sense he washes their feet.

It was never intended for us to carry out literally the example of our Savior; there is a spiritual meaning here, and what he means is this. If there be any

deed of kindness or love that we can do for the very meanest and most obscure of God's people, we ought to be willing to do it—to be servants.

<https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-teaching-of-foot-washing/#flipbook/>

I listened to Rev. Nockowski reiterate the sermon that he had preached on Sunday. His words were well chosen, and it showed a strong understanding of scripture. He was trying to show his flock, by using Charles Spurgeon as an example, that not all Christians practice “foot washing” as a ritual before Communion. And those Christians are not damned to eternal condemnation. They are saved by grace and by following the commandment to love one another as the highest form of spirituality. And that spirituality is always exemplified by the servant, who like Christ serves others.

I began to see something about the sincerity of Rev. Nockowski, and I sympathized with him. I understood that what he was going through was a battle for position and power, the lowest of humanity’s qualities. Someone wanted to take over his position as pastor, and they were using “foot washing” as the weapon to take him down. It was ugly to watch. I had seen it again and again, even in the holiest of churches.

I told him that the conflict had nothing to do with the scripture. It was all about competition for position and power. I think Rev. Nockowski began to understand what he was up against. Would he compromise and try to retain his position as pastor? Or would he give up and let the mob of unruly members “crucify him” and remove him from power?

Rev. Nockowski finally realized that it was time for him to leave, and he shook our hands and thanked us for listening to him and to his problem. He turned to leave. However, instead of leaving through the front door, he turned slightly to the left and opened the closet door that was near the front door. He realized his mistake, smiled back at us, and then opened the front door and left.

A year later I moved to Oregon to begin my teaching career. I never found out how the problem at the church was resolved after Rev. Nockowski left

our house. I learned years later that a new pastor had been chosen -- Anatoly Kozachuk. A new church was established later at:



The former church on 120 N Ellsworth Ave, San Mateo, CA 94401 was now a Spanish church:





1964 — First conference of Pentecostal Christians of Evangelical Faith, San Francisco, CA.



L>R Walter Daciuk, **William Nockowski**, __, Alexander E. Shevchenko, __, Alex Shevchuk

In 1964, the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination with Evangelical roots, celebrated its 50th anniversary. A World's Fair souvenir edition of the Assemblies of God's "Pentecostal Evangel" was also published in 1964, highlighting their history, beliefs, and ministries.

<https://wigowsky.com/images/misc/17thChurch1966.jpg>

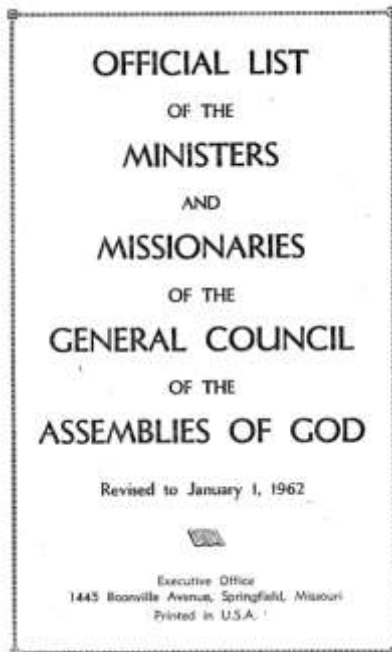
<https://pentecostalarchives.org/>

Ordained Ministers of the General Council of the Assemblies of God

Explanation of marks appearing before names :

Inactive

* Giving part time to secular employment



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