

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Peerless educators

Two extraordinary events have dominated the news since the coronavirus first convulsed America nine weeks ago.

One is the remarkable skill and courage of our health care workers, as hospitals are deluged with critically ill patients. The other is the dramatic switch to homeschooling as schools across the country have closed and switched to distance learning.

No one I know has pushed the boundaries of excellence in both endeavors more than a 1960s classmate of mine, Christian Spencer, who is pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, NJ.

My jaw dropped at a class reunion as he told me how he and his wife, Judy, homeschooled their 13 biological children — “we wanted more, but that’s all God gave us” — before they all went to the same college and then branched out to various medical specialties. Eight are now physicians.

Back in the 1960s, there were a lot of religious kids at my school, Stony Brook, on Long Island, but I can’t say Christian seemed exceptional.

He went to a conservative Christian college in Massachusetts and earned a master’s in theology at Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas, where his father was a pastor.

During a study year in Israel, he met his future wife, Judy, a student of New Testament Greek with a master’s in logic and rhetoric. She was teaching at a Christian school in Jerusalem.

Returning to the U.S., Judy earned another master’s, in education, as Christian embarked on a ministerial career that took him to Texas, Alabama, and New Jersey.

“We decided we would home school before we had our first child,” Christian said.

The state of Alabama was not friendly to homeschooling, so Christian got a law degree from Cumberland Law School and helped create the Home School Legal Defense Assn.

“The finest educations have been tutorial education,” Christian said. “As we went along, the older siblings were role models, and the younger kids wanted to learn what the older kids were doing.”

There are plenty of curriculum materials available, Christian said, and as a teacher, “You only have to be one day ahead of your students.”

All the kids learned to play a musical instrument (Judy plays the piano) and learned to read Hebrew and Greek.

Meanwhile, the kids were enlisted to fix up an old 4,500-square-foot house the family bought for \$12,000.

All 13 children attended Pensacola Christian College.

Their oldest daughter, Netanya, earned a PhD and MD at U. Wisconsin and teaches at Harvard.

Their oldest son, Ariel, went to Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York and practices surgery in Tennessee.

Sons Philemon, Nehemiah and Hillard also went to Columbia and practice in Alabama, Florida, and California.

Daughter Anastasia, another Columbia graduate, practices in Tennessee.

Son Elijah, who is bilingual, earned a medical degree in Mexico and teaches at Pensacola Christian College. Evelyn is a dentist (Rutgers). Amana earned her MD at Ross University and practices family medicine in Georgia.

Sebastian has a PhD in medical science (U. of South Alabama) and teaches at Pensacola Christian College.

Anatoly is a nurse in West Virginia working on his doctorate in nursing.

Megaly just earned her MBA at Pensacola and hopes to become an MD.

Isaiah is a banker in New York. (He’s married to an obstetrician.)

There are a lot of ways to learn, and there is a wealth of information out there. The Spencers show just how far you can go.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton



PASTOR CHRISTIAN SPENCER and his wife, Judy, homeschooled their 13 children, eight of whom are medical doctors, one dentist and two PhDs.