
THE LIGHT

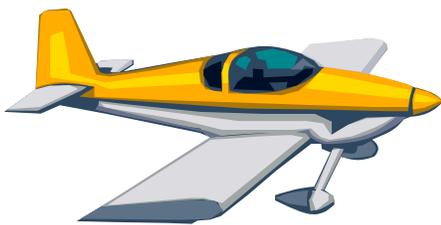
NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH OF CLIFTON AND PASSAIC

“A Church UNITED in faith, hope, & love!”

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A FLYING LESSON

Every Labor Day Weekend, Burke Lakefront Airport in Cleveland, Ohio, sponsors an air show. Vintage aircraft that span the last century of aviation are all on display. There are biplanes and WWII fighter planes, along with modern tactical fighters and even an occasional stealth jet. The highlight of the weekend is always an aeronautical display by the Blue Angels. People come by the thousands to sit in the bleachers or on the edge of the highway embankments to watch the planes fly overhead in close formation.



***As the plane lifted into the air,
my heart rose in my throat
and I spoke a fierce and proud
benediction,
“Fly, Jonathan! Fly!”***

During the 1980s, our family lived about two miles from the air show. In the week leading up to Labor Day, we often heard and saw the Blue Angels fly low over our neighborhood, practicing their maneuvers. For our 10-year-old son the best place to watch them was the pin oak tree in our back yard. When the Blue Angels were in town, Jonathan climbed 30 feet up into that tree, watched the fighter jets fly by and dreamed of flying.

When Jonathan graduated from high school, Sherry and I decided to honor his dream by giving him a flying lesson. On a late summer morning, I drove him to the local airfield to meet his flight instructor. After filling out some paperwork and paying for the lesson, he took us outside to show us the plane.

My first reaction was one of surprise and worry. I was expecting to see a medium sized plane maybe 15 feet long, with wings at least 5 or 6 feet off the ground, an enclosed passenger cabin with a door on it, and windshield on the front like one you might see in an old-fashioned car. My expectations were greatly disappointed.

The first thing I noticed was that I was taller than the plane. The wings came to waist height and weren't particularly long. There was no door, no cabin and no windshield. Instead, the pilot and co-pilot climbed over the side into the seats and then the ground crew fastened a clear plastic bubble over their heads. It looked like the whole thing would have fit into my living room if I could only find a way to get it through the front door.

I thought to myself, “I’m going to let my son go up in this??!”

Putting fears aside, I watched Jonathan climb into the airplane. After some instructions and a safety check, they fastened the cockpit over his head and started the engine. They taxied to the runway and then accelerated. As they approached the end of the runway, the plane lifted into the air. At that same moment, my heart rose in my throat and I spoke a fierce and proud benediction, “Fly, Jonathan! Fly!”

They circled the field once and flew off into the horizon while I remained on the ground to ponder what had just transpired. To be a parent is to help your children fulfill their dreams. It is humbling, frightening and thrilling all at the same time. However, if you do your job right, there eventually comes a time when they launch out on their own. The only thing left for a parent to do is to give your blessing and pray for them as they fly.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Mike