



The Lifeline

First Presbyterian Church of Blissfield
304 Franklin St. Blissfield, MI 49228
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February
2008



We have started a New Year, and as I look back, I can't help but feel good about many of the things I see, and feel hopeful about the future. 2007 provided us with the opportunity to take a mission trip to Guatemala, and it was a great experience for the ten of us that were able to go. That is something we are hoping to find a way of continuing into the future. During the past year, we continued to see people step forward and take on new responsibilities. One that has me very excited is a new outreach effort, to provide for the gathering of young adults (ages 18-29). Becky Breitner is spearheading the effort, with help from Francesca Mangine, and I believe it will be a vital new ministry of our congregation, and something that is greatly needed in our community.

As we look toward the New Year, the session will be trying to determine both short-term and long-term goals for the church. We will be receiving a bequest from the estate of Mary Emily Tuttle. We will be considering some major improvements to the

church, such as new storm windows, new carpeting for the sanctuary and enhancements to our sound system. Such projects may require additional support from the congregation, but we have seen in the past, a willingness to give to special causes. All are much needed improvements, and will benefit the church greatly.

The Session will be having its annual retreat on February 9th. If you have any ideas that you would like to have considered as we begin making both the short-term plans, and the vision for the church over the next 5 to 10 years; please share them with a session member, so they can be fairly and fully considered. The more ideas, then the more likely we are to be faithful to what it is that God is calling us to be and do. The voice of everyone, young and old, long-term member, or new to the congregation – God speaks through a variety of voices, and we need to listen to them all. Please give some thought to what you would like to see the church doing, things that might enhance worship or members spiritual lives, or ways for us to address unmet needs within

the community, and pass them along. As Denny put in his song for the church, "The church is not a building, it's the people you see. Everyone's an important part of this family." You are important, you count, and we count on you. We need your thoughts, your ideas, and your prayers. Together, with God's help, we have endless possibilities.

I'm excited about what this New Year may bring. I hope you are too. We have been greatly blessed, and have the opportunity to be a tremendous blessing to Blissfield and beyond.

Bob

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Lenten Study Pastor Bob is going to be leading book study, this time on the book, "The Ten Commandments for Today." It will basically be a Lenten study, and will begin the first week of February. There is going to be a morning group, meeting in Palmyra at 8:30 am on Mondays (which will include breakfast), and then an evening group, here in Blissfield. Pastor Bob needs to know what evening will work best for those who wish to attend. Suggestions have been Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. It has been suggested that we might even do a meal here also as part of the meetings. Please let Bob know if your interested, and which night you would prefer. Books are available for a cost of \$12.50 from Bob.



We Americans seem to be drowning in our stuff.

I read an article recently in the Wall Street Journal that helped me see the situation more clearly. Entitled "The Struggle to Contain Ourselves" (January 4, 2008), the article talked about a University of California study published in 2006. The study showed that there is "a storage crisis" in this country, in spite of the fact that Americans enjoy "the largest amount of private housing space per person in the history of urban civilization."

What came to my mind as I read this article was a story Jesus told about a man who also had more stuff than he knew what to do with. The man in Jesus' parable came to the conclusion that his problem was a storage problem. *WRONG*, said God to that rich fool. The parable makes it clear that too much stuff is really a soul problem or a soul opportunity.

It should bother us that people in the world, some very close to us, are going without necessities while we continue to spend our money to buy and store unnecessary things.

Anyway, this "storage crisis" has started bothering me.

Since the first of the year is a good time to take a long look at ourselves and make adjustments, I have decided to grab hold of a small piece of freedom from stuff by not buying any clothing in 2008. I've gone back through my records and added up the money I spent on clothes and shoes in 2007, and I will give that money this year to some Presbyterian mission project that helps and empowers poor people. Putting my bulging closet on a diet will not inflict great hardship on me. It's a very small thing, yes, but it's a start.

The bottom line is that God can lead us to see ourselves in new ways and to respond with actions that make the gospel visible in the world. I invite you to consider your own "barns" and see where you can push back against the stuff you really don't need. Use the money freed up to further God's agenda in the world.

It's not really a storage issue. It's a soul issue.

The winter Rummage Sale will be held on February 22 and 23. Start your spring cleaning now and save your items for the sale. Items can be dropped off at the church anytime between now and February 21. If you bring clothes, make sure they are clean and in good repair. Help will be needed to set up, price items and sell. Mark your calendar now.



The youth of our church collected money on Super Bowl Sunday, part of the Souper Bowl of Caring. Since 1990 more than \$41 million has gone to help people in need. The money collected on Sunday will go to our local Food Pantry, as well as all food brought in.



The adult Sunday School class is taking their lessons from the book **I'm OK — You're Not: The Message We're Sending Unbelievers and Why We Should Stop** by John Shore. The class comes together every Sunday morning at 10:00 in the church lounge. All are welcome and there's always a pot of coffee brewing. See Cathie Case to purchase the book.

The Annual Meeting was held January 27, 2008. Anyone wanting a copy of the Annual Report should contact the church office.

It was recently written in the Blissfield Community Schools quarterly publication, *The Communicator*, that Ben Hoagland's poetry had been selected for inclusion in the *Celebration of Young Poets Anthology*, to be published this summer. The poem titled "Crash" will be in the book. The poem, "CSI," was also submitted. Well done, Ben and Congratulations.

Crash

By Ben Hoagland

Driving down the road swerving all over
Out of no where a deer jumps into sight
I turn quick to run the dumb deer over
I hit the buck hard enough to kill it

All of the sudden we flip the Ranger
Everything happened way too fast to know
What actually happened that bad night
Later results helped jog my memory

I was driving one hundred and twenty
It was stupid of me to be reckless
I didn't mean to cause the accident
I truly regret everything I did

I would take it back if any way I could
I would love to make it right if I could

SCI

By Ben Hoagland

The bones brush, the pain starts, the cord is cut
The pain stops, the feeling stops, dread
Half the pain still remains until
The medicine kicks in
Time slowly fades away

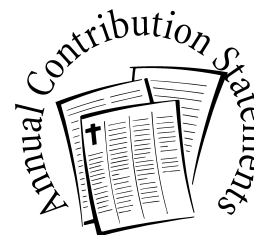
I wake up in the hospital, I'm lost
I have no idea where I am at
I try to move to get free fast
I can only move my arms
What's wrong with me?

I don't know what to do, I am all alone
I know that I am paralyzed
I start to cry, I was so dumb
I should have never done that
Bad decision

I think my life is over until I find out
My life is only ten times better
I have a new chance at life now
I love everything more
Love every minute



Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 6. During this 40-day period, Christians reevaluate their spiritual lives. It's a time for us to have a spiritual check-up and to strive to live the Christian life more faithfully and more intentionally. Our pilgrimage through Lent should inspire us to serve God more faithfully in our daily lives.



Offering envelopes for 2008 are in the narthex. Please pick yours up today. Don't forget to use the blue envelope in the front of the box to pay your per capita for 2008. It is our church's obligation to pay a per capita fee to the Presbyterian Church USA for each member. This money comes from the general fund. We are asking each member to consider paying their Per Capita fee of \$27 to help with this expense from our general fund. This cost equals out to just over 50 cents per week.

The Yearly Financial Reports are included in this Lifeline. If you have questions, call Mary Case at 486-4224.

Feet on the Pedals

by Doug Hickman

So, what are we to think when a man who had the faith to mountains passes on?

For one thin, a man who was given six months to a year to live, and lives 20 months through chemo treatments, and radiation, and more chemo treatments—HAS moved mountains for 20 months. So what good did all of that prayer do if he didn't get well? Prayer lifted us all, supported Andy, and our whole family. Prayer enriched our lives. During this last year and a half, every person I've communicated with to who has prayed for my brother Andy's healing and recovery has experience some kind of healing themselves. Family relationships have improved - people are talking to each other who had not talked in years. Even medical tests have come back without signs of malignancies.

But, we ask, Christ healed so many people—why couldn't Andy have been healed the way they were? Why hadn't flesh filled his bones, strength returned to his limbs, and all signs of the disease disappear?

I don't know.

I do know that every single person Christ ever healed later died. The blind, the lepers, the crippled people, and the demon-possessed all knew healing in their lives—and all died later in their own time. They may have died with Christ's other followers as martyrs to early Christianity, or they may gotten sick with something else and died quietly in their homes—but they all died. When they were done with their bodies they passed on.

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tse said, "Having a body, how can we avoid misfortune?" Having a body, we know it has limits—a beginning and an end. In the book Ecclesiastes we are told that there is a time for everything and that everything has a season. This leads us to learn that our physical being is not the be-all and end-all of Life. The scriptures tell us this. The Gospels give us some insights into what Life is like when we are finished with our bodies. The Apostolic writings give us an idea of how we are to live until then.

Andy loved to read about and watch professional bicycle racing on TV. He even wrote a "Cycling Update" for me and some friends for a few years on line. One time when we were talking about the technical improvements that the wealthier teams were using, and some of the drugs that a few riders had been found to take to cheat I mentioned that no matter what riders did, in order to ride and win they had to put their feet on the pedals and push! There is no substitute for direct action and participation. It didn't take long for us to begin asking each other what we were (and what had we been) doing to put "Feet on the Pedals." Our dad's motto was "Service Now." He made a little sign with that on it and had it on his desk, and for years Andy had that little sign on his desk as well. His new motto with me was "Feet on the Pedals."

What does that leave us with today? How do we put our feet in the pedals and continue to not just move through, but progress through life? What are we to do with our grief? How can we best help others who grieve?

Andy showed us how. He showed us how to be loving. He showed us how to laugh and find humor in things. Perhaps one of the important things, he showed us how to stay focused on principles and goals—despite circumstances. These aren't things that are lost because Andy has passed on. He gave them to US. They are ours to share—or let go of and lose. They are not lost because Andy has passed on. They are only lost if WE do not share them and pass them on to others. Passing on his gifts without concern for the outcome may be more important than the gifts themselves. There are a number of parables in the Gospels to tell us just that. Participation in the exchange—without concern for the circumstances or outcome—is putting "Feet on the pedals."

Joys and Concerns

Pray for . . .

Dave Wood as he recovers from surgery; Dick Werth and his family as the doctors search for other treatments; Doug Case as he recovers from blood clots; Don and MaryKay Snyder; Cliff and Barb Jackson; Sally Hagenbuch; Carol Seeburger's Uncle Fred; Carolyn Bettis's sister-in-law; Pastor Bob's sister and brother-in-law, Sue and Tracy; Colby Lievens; the Cadmus Presbyterian Church, whose pastor is leaving; our church; our Session; the state of Michigan; the USA; military personnel serving all over the world; our president and elected officials; world leaders; peace, tolerance, understanding and compassion for our world.

Sympathy for . . .

- Doug and Sharon Hickman and family as they mourn the loss of Andy Hickman
- The family of Ken Schaedler. Ken passed away January 24.

Remember . . .

Those who can't worship with us on a regular basis;

June and Andy Somes; Sally Hagenbuch; Esther Billington, Ann Reed, Mary Saxton, Don Snyder, and Marian Snyder.

Joys . . .

- The poinsettias that adorned the sanctuary during the Christmas season were beautiful.

Thanks to those who gave them in honor or in memory of loved ones.

- Thanks to everyone who delivered Meals on Wheels in December. This is a great ministry we support.
- Dave Wood for his faithfulness and dedication to ringing the church bell and taking attendance. Thank you, Dave, for your many years of service.
- The Praise Team is always a joy. Three of the Porter boys joined Denny Thompson on the guitar.
- Greg and Wetonia Jackson celebrated 25 years of marriage.
- Twenty-two folks made the trek to Pokagen Park in Angola, Indiana to ride the mammoth toboggan run. It was a beautiful day and everyone had fun, except for the walk back up the hill.
- Pastor Bob got the opportunity to fly to Washington and visit his sister and brother-in-law, Sue and Tracy. He said it was a good visit.
- Elizabeth Jackson turned 16!

Do you have dinner plans for the third Monday of the month? You do now. Palmyra Presbyterian serves a dinner from 5:00 - 6:30 every third Monday. The cost of dinner is only \$5 or \$6. You can't eat at McDonalds for that. Support our friends in Palmyra.



June Somes warms up in her prayer shawl while Andy pulls his from the bag.



June and Rebecca (Breitner) share a laugh. Rebecca and several other women from the church meet every Tuesday night, 7:00, at Mary Case's home to knit prayer shawls for members and friends. New knitters are always welcome. No experience necessary.

David Wood is retiring as the church bell ringer, and person who counts attendance and posts it on the board. Because of back and nerve problems, he simply didn't feel he could do it any longer. We now need someone else to step forward and take on these responsibilities. If you would be willing to make such a commitment, please let Pastor Bob know. And next time you see Dave, thank him for all that he has done, and continues to do. He still will be taking care of the alter candles.



February

- 1 Ken Graf
- 2 Chuck Cory
Matt Nieman
- 13 Ryann Eff
- 17 Doug & Sharon Hickman
Ann Reed
- 21 Ray Goodson
- 24 Jae Guetschow
- 26 Grant Martin
- 27 Susan Porter
- 28 Stacy Mitchell

March

- 5 Carolyn Saxton
Jan Wood
- 7 Logan Nieman
Don & MaryKay Snyder
- 8 Kevin Chont
- 11 Esther Billington
- 12 Emily Webster-Seely
- 14 Ben Hoagland
- 17 Frank Seely & Christine Webster
- 18 Sally Feldkamp
- 20 Pastor Bob Bidwell
- 23 Lee Feldkamp
- 24 Eric Thompson
- 26 Roger & Stacy Mitchell
- 30 Guy Goodson

February 17, 2008

*Sue & Brian Porter
Matt & Kori Nieman
Sharon & Doug Hickman

March 16, 2008

*Debbie Royal & Jae Guetschow
Joy Wonderly
Christine Webster & Frank Seely

*Chairperson



Prayer Chain Fan Out

If you have a person, situation, or a need for prayer, please call one of the following people and the Prayer Chain will be started.

- *Pastor Bob Bidwell - 517-605-2341
- *Carolyn Saxton - 486-3429
- *Peggy Nieman - 486-4116 (h), 486-4347 (w)
- *Mary Case - 486-4224
- *Wetonia Jackson - 486-4360 (h), 517-612-0322(c)



Choir Practice is each Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. The choir is working on Easter music. ALL are welcome!



Looking for a job? Interested in volunteering?

Got some extra time?

Connie Graf is still looking for someone to take over, or help with the publication of the LIFE-LINE. For more information, talk with Connie.



The Session will be meeting for their annual retreat on Sat., Feb. 9 at Adrian College. Pray for our Session as they set goals, plan and prepare for the upcoming year.

