

## Walking together with one heart.

### New Starts June 2009

The year 2009 is a year of change, from “Change We Can Believe In” (the theme of America’s new President) to the Northern Illinois District vision of “New Starts, New Believers” and “Walking Together with One Heart,” the thesis I have chosen for my monthly Voice article as newly-elected president of OSLC.

I think that we live in a world that is increasingly polarized; many people think in terms of “I win, you lose.” We, as part of the universal Body of Believers, and – more specifically – as Christians attending OSLC in Joliet, ought to be unified as were those early believers in Acts 4 **“<sup>31</sup>After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. <sup>32</sup>All the believers were one in heart and mind.”**

Doesn’t mean we are all clones, but it does mean, as 1 John says so well, **“<sup>7</sup>Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God....<sup>11</sup>Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”**

Final thoughts. When you get a moment, make sure you express your thanks to anyone and everyone serving Christ at OSLC – especially those outgoing Board of Director members, Howard Hamilton, ....., .....,.....



### Grow Up July/August 2009



**“Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”** (Ephesians 4:15,16)

What are the two most important aspects of our Christian life? Paul says they are “Grace and Knowledge.” What is “grace”? Simply put, it is God’s undeserved love towards us, His creation. How do we “Grow in Grace”? “Dear Lord, of you three things I pray, to see you more clearly, to love you more dearly, to follow you more nearly, day by day.”

And where does “knowledge” come from? Through reading, studying and meditating on the Bible; developing a personal relationship with Christ, and, of course, from God’s love we experience, reflected through the lives of other Christians. “Blessed is the man ...

whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” (Psalm 1: 2,3)

I encourage everyone to be actively engaged in our theme this year – Seeking Him, Through His Word.

## **Seasons** Sept 2009

Every Labor Day week, Kathy and I attend the Midwest Old Settlers Reunion in Iowa. It’s a reunion of old-time steam enthusiasts, farmers and rural people who like to look back at “the good old days” of Yesterday. It’s the season Kathy and I mark the passage of another year, when we look back and reminisce about the past, and look forward to the future.

The same is true for us at Our Savior, in the sense of one “education year” ending, and another beginning. Now is a good time to resolve to join that new Bible Study, or commit to that new Small Group or maybe even work towards more faithful church attendance. We enter into **God’s presence**, and we experience **His peace** when we are **connected through worship and Word**, with our Church Family.



I like the words of The Message in Hebrews 10: **“Let’s keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let’s see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshipping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.”**

Remember, try Our Sundays; they are better than Baskin-Robins!



## **Fortress** Oct 2009

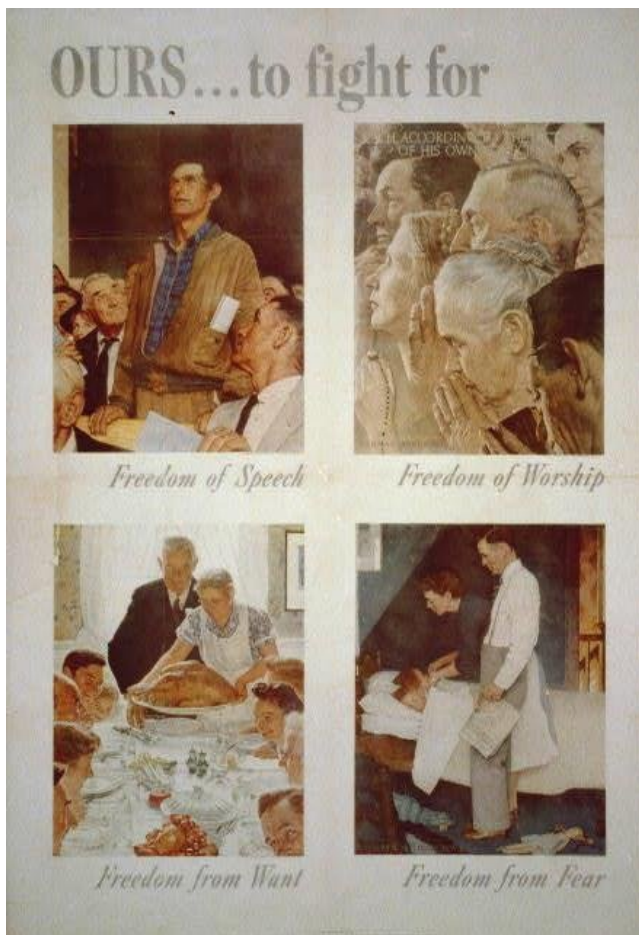
“A Mighty Fortress is our God...” What powerful words penned by Martin Luther those many centuries ago! He goes on to talk about our God in terms of warfare – a “trustworthy shield” and a “weapon.” Did you know that, as Christians, we possess the ultimate “Weapon of Mass Destruction”? And that would be God’s Almighty Word! The Apostle Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 10: **“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”**

As we commemorate and celebrate the Reformation and the work of

Martin Luther this month, consider the Power of God’s Word – the “Holy dynamite” we use to demolish arguments and pretensions through the work of the Holy Spirit! Hear again the word of Ephesians 6 as you’ve never heard them before: “Be prepared. You’re up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that, when it’s all over but the shouting, you’ll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You’ll need them throughout your life. God’s Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other’s spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.”



## Thanksgiving November 2009



Norman Rockwell was inspired in 1943 to paint a series of four pictures for the Saturday Evening Post, titled, “The Four Freedoms”: Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Fear, and Freedom from Want. Each picture depicts people expressing these freedoms. The illustrations are quite famous and have been reproduced frequently, over the years. If you have never seen them, I encourage you to Google them on the internet.

The theme for the pictures was derived from a State of the Union address delivered by Franklin Roosevelt. During the speech, he identified four essential human rights that should be universally protected and should serve as a reminder of the American motivation for fighting in World War II.

Ultimately, all of our “freedoms” are gifts given to us by God Himself. In this month, when we formally recognize and give thanks for the many blessings we have received from our Gracious Lord, don’t forget to thank Him for “The Four Freedoms” that we enjoy in this country.

David said in Psalm 119:45, **“I walk about in freedom, because I have sought out Your precepts.”** I like these words from (The Message) in James 1:16-18: **“So, my very dear friends, don’t get thrown off course. Every desirable and beneficial gift comes out**

**of heaven. The gifts are rivers of light cascading down from the Father of Light. There is nothing deceitful in God, nothing two-faced, nothing fickle. He brought us to life using the true Word, showing us off as the crown of all his creatures.”** (Of course, our greatest gift is God’s Own Son, Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer, and our Savior!)



## The Best Gift December 2009

I always enjoy thinking about all those Christmas' past and all the presents I got. I remember when the delivery man came to the door with that toy that I was just dying to get, only to have my mother tell me it was delivered to the wrong address! I was devastated, but I learned on Christmas morning that my mother didn't always tell the truth! Or the times my brother and I would sneak peeks at our wrapped presents when mom and dad weren't around! Or the time my uncle yelled at us kids because we were playing with the big box the toy came in – not the toy! But in all that, it really wasn't about the toys. It was, and still is, about the

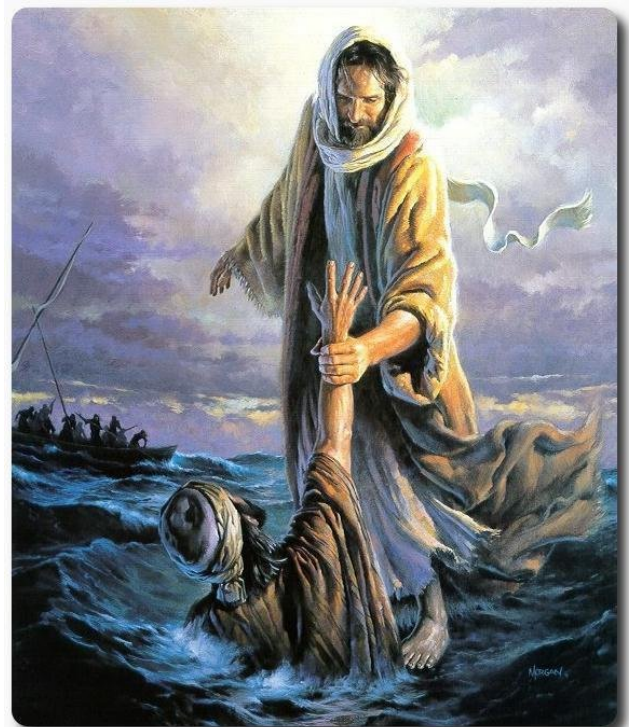
people – about kids, about parents and grandparents, aunts, uncles and family friends. They were and are what make our Christmas traditions – not the “stuff” we got.

This is a time of joy, of laughter and good cheer, but for many it is a darker time too. Jobs at risk; bills to pay; sickness; friends and family missing from the table — whether out-of-town, or home with the Lord. This is a good time to pick up the phone or send a card to someone and remind them how much they mean to you. There is no better gift you can give someone than yourself. Take the time to tell them how they enrich your life. 1 John 4:7: **“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”** Reflect God's love this season!

This is also a good time to open the best present of all – the gift of Emmanuel – God with Us! As they say, “He is the Reason for the Season.” Luke 2:10-11: **“And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.’”** Remember to give Him the gift of ‘yourself’ – by your worship – and by your service! Romans 11:36: **“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.”**

## Hope January, 2010

This past November, the Congregation approved our Theme for 2010: **“Get out of the Boat – Give Hope.”** As we begin a new year and anticipate all the good things that we will do and experience, it is the right time to consider how we can support the goals we have set for ourselves at Our Savior. First, consider the “tenor” of the Theme, one of **action**. “Get up.” “Get



out there.” “Give.” Albert Einstein said these words: “The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing!”

1 Peter 4:10 says, “**Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others.**” Elsewhere, Peter also says these words: “**Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.**” We have two important callings as Christians: We are called to serve, and we are called to give hope.

I would encourage each of you to write down how you intend to serve the Body of Christ and our Community this coming year and also “**Your Story**” – your account of the hope that is in you because of what Christ has done in your life.

Now, think about this: If those words only remain on that paper, what good are they? A thought that does not result in action is nothing much. When it comes to getting things done, we need fewer architects and more bricklayers. The Apostle John put it more eloquently: “**Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions (serve others) and in truth, (give hope).**”

## **My Story** February 2010

1 Peter 3:15 (KJV) “**...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you...**” Last month, I asked you to put in writing ‘Your Story’. Hope you did. Thought you might like to hear mine:

I like to say I was born in the Lutheran Church, but that isn’t exactly accurate. I was raised in the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, from the time I was two years old. I cannot remember a time when the Church wasn’t the main thing in my life. It seemed like my family had no social life outside Church; all of our friends



were there, and we were constantly doing stuff – working, playing, serving, worshipping – everything together there. (Almost) everything was accompanied by a meal too – oh, those potlucks and sauerkraut suppers!

I cannot remember a time when I didn’t feel God was real. I saw Him in a thousand faces: my Sunday School teachers, my choir leaders, the Pastors, the church-workers and of course, all those wonderful Christian people we knew at Church! Most of all, I saw Him in my mother, and my father. They lived God’s love, as an example to me and my brother. Were any of these people perfect? No, sinners all! But, somehow, for me, what I “caught” was “the saint.” not “the sinner.” What I felt was the love, joy, peace, patience – the fruit of the

Christian character. They didn’t only *tell* me about Jesus and His love; they *showed* me, everyone of them!

That’s why I’m a Christian and what my faith means! I hope I can pass along to others what was given to me!

## Stand and Wait March 2010

One of my favorite poets is John Milton, often compared with Shakespeare as one of the truly great English writers. After going blind, Milton wrote the poem “On His Blindness.” In the last line, he reflects that even with his disability he has a place in God’s world. He wrote these famous words: “They also serve who only stand and wait.” A more modern reading would be, “Those people who only stand and wait also serve.”

Did you ever notice at a “State dinner” that there are always servants (or “servers”) standing by, in addition to the servers who are bringing food, pouring beverages and clearing dishes” Or, maybe you haven’t noticed those other servers who stand in the background because they stand so still, they look like “part of the furniture,” “part of the wallpaper.”

I am struck by the number of people we have at Our Savior who provide critical services to us that we never think of – the bulletin folders, the altar people, the food preparers and servers, the drivers, the yard maintainers. The list goes on and on! These are the unsung heroes of Faith, the people who “Stand and Wait.” This is what the Lord says of them: (Matthew 25) **“<sup>34</sup>Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup>I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”** On behalf of a grateful congregation, Thank You for your service; your reward is great in Heaven! (verse 40) — **“<sup>40</sup>The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”**



## Donkey in the Well

April 2010

There is a story told about a farmer’s donkey that fell into an unused well. The animal cried piteously as the farmer tried and failed to get him out.

Rationalizing the donkey was old, maybe the best thing would



be to fill-in the well, with the donkey in it. The farmer began shoveling. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw. As every shovel of dirt hit his back, the donkey did something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up, eventually stepping out of the well.

The moral to the story? Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of the well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up!

It has been said that life's troubles are just one thing after another. That is wrong. If it was one thing after another, we could handle that! Life's troubles are a whole lot of things all at the same time! Remember, **God never promised** a life without pain, laughter without tears, or sun without rain. But He did **promise Strength** for the day, **Comfort** for the tears, and **Light** for the way. Matthew 6: <sup>25</sup>**“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes.....** <sup>27</sup>**Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life.....** <sup>33</sup>**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.”** Then there's Psalm 55:22 — **“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”**



## H.O.P.E. May 2010

For the past year, I have been a member of a HOPE Cell. HOPE stands **for “House Of Prayer Everywhere”**. Our group has committed to daily, individual, intercessory prayer for everything from our Church, to our Mission(s), to our Country; as well as family, friends and enemies alike! It is based on the book: ‘The 29:59 Plan, A Guide to Communion with God’. Our group also gathers together about every third Saturday at Church to pray. If we have a theme, it is this: **Prayer is our first resolve, not our last resort!** Our commitment to each other was to meet for 12 months and the 12<sup>th</sup> month is fast-approaching. **We need your help to continue what we have begun!**

What has your President learned from this experience? First, I have learned how to pray. I mean how to pray in a focused, intentional, way. I have learned discipline, making the commitment to pray everyday. I have learned about people, because when you pray for them, you think about them; when you think about them; you feel closer to them. In the process I have learned about myself too. Most importantly, I have learned that communication with God is a journey – a growing process. I will be the first to tell you, I am not an eloquent speaker, and it is hard for me to be ‘on-the-spot’ when it comes to prayer.

I have learned that prayer is not about inspiring words or articulate expressions that move the angels – it's about a humble spirit that seeks to honor our Lord.

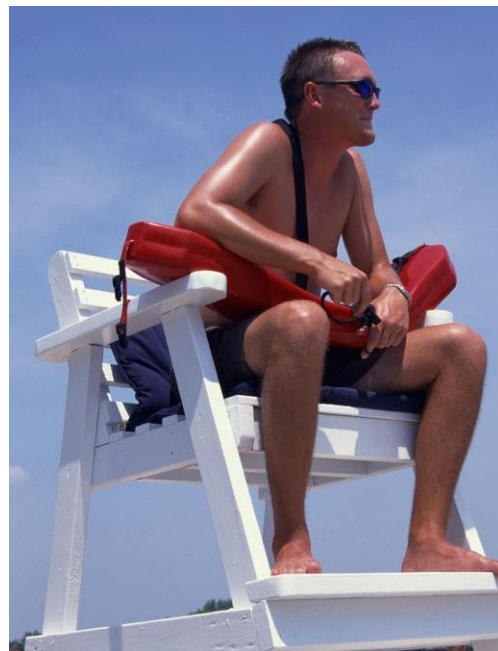
There are many verses in Scripture that command us to pray, Paul says this in 1 Timothy: **“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone...”** It is our duty, our mission and our obligation to pray! I would ask you to prayerfully consider joining a HOPE Cell. You can contact either me, or one of the Pastors if you are interested. Remember: When praying, don't give God instructions - just report for duty.

## Lifesaver June 2010

June, 1967. Sitting on the beach, watching people swimming in the lake — hundreds of them. Notice a kid on an inner tube who had floated out past the ropes. A minute later, I notice the inner tube, but no kid. Where did he go? What should I do? Do I get involved? Do I ignore what I saw?

I don't know why I got up and raced over the beach and swam like crazy through those hundreds of people, out into deep water - but I did. As I approached the inner tube, the kid was about 3 feet down, struggling to get to the air. I pulled him up. When he breached the surface, with a look of desperation, he said simply, ‘Help Me.’ Out of all those hundreds of people, that little boy was alive because, by the grace of God, I noticed his plight and I did something about it.

Are you a lifesaver? You can be. God has called us to follow Jesus' example and serve. Remember the picture of Christ washing the disciple's feet? We are called to be ‘Footwashers’ for Christ. The Book of James puts it this way: **“15Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?”** Remember our theme this year **‘Get out of the Boat; Give Hope!’** John Maxwell has said, **‘People don't care what you know, until they know that you care!’** Show YOU care by helping someone today! Matthew: 25:40 **“The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'**



## Vices July/August 2010



Do you have any vices? You know, those ‘little’ things you do, that you know you shouldn't. The dictionary says a ‘vice’ is an immoral, degrading, or evil habit or practice. I am as guilty as the next person when it comes to vices. I collect toy trains. Sometimes, I buy them when I know I shouldn't – especially when I hide what I'm doing from my wife. Then, I know I've gone too far. It's a little embarrassing when she looks at the



train layout and I have to fess-up about the purchase of a rather expensive engine that we didn't discuss beforehand.

Even the most 'innocent' habit can become immoral, degrading or evil. I looked up 'Shopaholic' on the internet, and this is what it says: 'Compulsive behavior, usually associated with an emotional high, or adrenaline rush.' Any 'compulsive behavior' can overshadow relationships with family and friends.

I don't know if I'm, by definition, a 'shopoholic', but I do know that, **if you dance with the devil, he will take you farther than you wanted to go and keep you longer than you wanted to stay.** The god of materialism has certainly enticed many in America today to value the worthless, while disregarding priceless wealth! Solomon says this in Ecclesiastes 5: '**Whoever loves money, never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.**' Paul says this in 1 Timothy: '**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**' I know for me personally, I am happiest when I take these verses in Hebrews to heart: '**Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."**

## **Spectator Sports** Sept 2010

Do you know what spectator sports are? They are sports that generally have people watching them being played. Spectator sports usually require a venue in which the watchers can view the event. Many times the venue is a stadium. Baseball is a spectator sport; NASCAR is a spectator sport. If television is involved, it is a spectator sport.



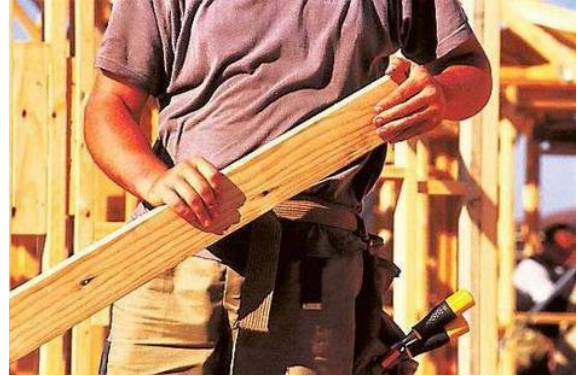
**Worship is not a spectator sport**, and yet, all too often, we attend services in the capacity of a spectator, not a participant. What is worship? It's an 'act' of religious devotion; it means to **do something!** **Worship is a participant-event** that requires us to act! What are acts of worship? Here are some I can think of: Confession/contrition/repentance; prayer; singing/praising; giving; hearing/active listening to the Word; testifying. The following are not my words but are worth repeating: '**Too often worship has become a place of safety and complacency, a narrowly private experience in which solitary individuals only express their personal adoration. Even when we gather corporately, we often close our eyes (and our voices) to those around us, focusing on God but ignoring our neighbor. But true biblical worship does not merely point us upward--it should turn us outward as well.**' Psalm 100: '**Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.**'

In our world today, **too many people are not singing God's praises but only sitting on His premises!** Remember that idea the next time you are at worship; inspire those around you! II Samuel 6: '**David...danced before the LORD with all his might...**' I Chronicles 16: '**Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.**' II Chronicles 5:

*The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever."*

## Crosses October 2010

I'm the son of a carpenter. ... No, I'm not writing about Jesus; I'm writing in the 'first person' about me; my dad was a carpenter. When my dad's church decided to remodel their 100-year-old sanctuary, my dad did the work. New altar, pulpit, lectern, communion rails, and, of course, new 20-foot tall oak cross. Beautiful white-stained oak, framed with a red and gold tapestry; very inspirational and 'modern' for 1962. One of my proudest accomplishments in life is having the opportunity to build the LCMS Cross in our sanctuary! For me, it's another connection to my earthly father — as in 'Like father, like son'. But it's more than that; it's a connection to my Heavenly Father too.



I think of the words to that well-known hymn I grew up with: 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross on which the Prince of Glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride.' Or those words from 'Alas, and did my Savior Bleed': 'Thus might I hide my blushing face While His dear cross appears, Dissolve my heart in thankfulness, And melt mine eyes to tears.' Or maybe the most inspirational of all 'The Old Rugged Cross' and these words: 'On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, The emblem of suffering and shame; And I love that old cross where the dearest and best, For a world of lost sinners was slain.'

In a way, the cross my dad built was a testimony to his faith, and I feel the same way about the one I built: It is a testimony to our Lord, and, when I see it, I think about these words in Hebrews 12: '**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**' In a month when we celebrate the Reformation and Martin Luther, let us fix our eyes on the Cross and on our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

## 4 Things November 2010



This is a month when we celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. We are thankful for so many things, so many blessings, so many gifts, so many kindnesses, so many friends. Seems like we focus on what we get – as opposed to what we give. I read this recently and thought it was pretty profound:

## 4 Things You Can't Recover:

The stone after it's thrown, the word after it's said,  
the occasion after it's missed, the time after it's gone.

I think it is proper as we celebrate with a thankful heart, to also reflect on the stones we've thrown, the words we said, the occasions we've missed, and the times we've lost. Let this be an opportunity to pray that we are a blessing to those around us. In the words of Étienne de Grellet du Mabilier: **"I shall pass through this world but once. Any good thing that I can do, or any kindness that I can show, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."**

I like these words in Acts 4: <sup>31</sup>*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.* <sup>32</sup>**All the believers were one in heart and mind.** *No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had... For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales <sup>35</sup>and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.* There is a wonderful, mythical law of nature that the three things we crave most in life -- happiness, freedom, and peace of mind -- are always attained by giving them to someone else.

## Caves December 2010

I'll bet you're wondering what caves have to do with Christmas. Let me see if I can make the connection. Ever been in a cave before? I love caves! When I was in college, I crawled through many caves in Indiana with a carbide light. I've been in passages shoulder-wide and shoe-tall! Once, my brother and I spent 3 days underground in a cave! Ever been in a cave when the lights go out? It's what they call 'total darkness' – you can't see your hand in front of your face – it's the complete absence of light! Unless you've been deep underground, you haven't experienced total darkness like that before! No words to describe it – utter, total, complete darkness! If you are lost in a cave with no light, there is NO hope of feeling your way out – NONE! Unless somebody finds you, you will die!



That's the best description I can think of to explain the human condition at the fall of Adam and Eve. A separation from God, so profound, so dark, that there can be no hope for survival unless somebody finds you. And God's promise to Adam and Eve was the promise of a Redeemer, a Savior. In Matthew 4, Jesus, speaking of himself, quotes the words of Isaiah: **'The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.'** Jesus is our Emmanuel – God with Us! Jesus is our light – the Light of the World! He says these words in John 8: **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

Just as He is the Light of the world, He has called us to be lights to the world, reflecting His light, just as the moon reflects sunlight on a darkened earth. In this season of Joy, share His love and the Hope that you have! I remember the words of that children's song we used to sing: **'This little Gospel light of mine; I'm going to let it shine!'**



## Vision January 2011

An old Chinese Proverb says, "If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help someone else." What does that have to do with Our Savior Lutheran Church? One word: **'Vision.'** Charles Swindoll said, **'Vision encompasses vast vistas outside the realm of the predictable, the safe, the expected.'** Proverbs 29 says, **'Where there is no vision, the people perish...'** A 'vision' is forward-looking; it calls us to the future. There is another saying regret looks back; worry looks around, and faith looks up. Without faith and hope, there can be no vision.

(From a sermon, *The Risk Taking Church* by Stephen Sheane) There are only 3 kinds of churches. There is the **under-taking church**. "The undertaking church is one that is always looking backwards. All that people ever talk about are the 'good old days.'" Franklin Field said, **"Poor eyes limit your sight; poor vision limits your deeds."** Then there is the **care-taking church**. "It seems to always be in maintenance mode, just trying to keep its head above the water. ... The number one questions is always 'do we have the money now to support this?'" Finally, there is the **risk-taking church**. "The risk-taking church is always looking forward. They believe that the best is yet to come. They invest all they have today so that they can be all that God wants them to be tomorrow. ... **A blind man's world is bounded by the limits of his touch; an ignorant man's world, by the limits of his knowledge; a great man's world, by the limits of his vision.**"

Lord, we do not want to be under-takers or care-takers of Your Church on earth. We do not want to be limited by our regret, or our worry, but, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, may we **boldly, by faith, be risk-takers**, empowered to bring a message of hope, healing, and new life to our congregation, to our community, and to the world around us, In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen. **A vision without a task is a dream; a task without a vision is drudgery; a vision and a task together is the hope of the world. Let us continue to be a church where God is seen, love is felt and lives are changed!**

## Valentines February 2011

I like February; February has my holiday – Valentine's Day! My middle name is Valentine! No, seriously, my middle name IS Valentine. Robert Valentine Harringer Jr. – that's me. My dad was born on Valentine's Day in 1922; he's Senior; I'm Junior. Some of the guys in college used to call me "Valentine" as a nickname. I didn't mind it, although I think their motives were less than sincere!



While the history of St. Valentine is shrouded in mystery, it has come to be a celebration of love, commercialized with sentimental cards and copious amounts of candy. When we were kids, we used to give Valentine cards to all our classmates and teachers; it was a nice, if somewhat corny, tradition. We're all familiar with the classic rhyme, "Roses are Red; Violets are Blue; Sugar is Sweet and so are you." Here's one of the sillier rhymes: "Chocolate is brown; hearts are red; if you won't be my Valentine, I'll ask another instead!"

Valentine's Day ought to be a reminder of God's unfailing love for us! God's ultimate Valentine was becoming a sacrifice for us. There is no greater love than this! It's a love that has produced a priceless salvation available to all mankind! John 3:16 is really the best Valentine's verse that anyone could ever receive: ***"For God so loved YOU that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"*** Or, think about it this way: If God had a refrigerator; YOUR picture would be on it!

### **T.I.M.E.** March 2011

Did you ever consider how rich you are? You are credited 86,400 dollars every morning! That's crazy, you say? Well, you have 86,400 seconds each day to spend, as you see fit, and every one of those seconds is more important than dollars!. Every night-time writes off as lost whatever you have failed to invest to good purpose. Time carries over no balance; it allows no overdraft; each day is a new account! You can make more money, but you can't make more time! **Treasure** every moment. You can't save time, you can only invest it. **Invest** wisely. God gives us all our resources; he requires us to manage them. **Manage** your time sensibly, and **enjoy** your time. Celebrate life; live each moment to the fullest; it is a gift from God!

**What is valuable in life?** Spending your **time** on something that will outlast it. What outlasts your life? The life of others, for one. One hundred years from now, it won't matter what car you drove, what kind of house you lived in, how much you had in the bank, or what your clothes looked like. The world may be a little better place because you were important in the life of a child. Well, you say, "All my kids are grown." Or, "I don't have any kids." Yes you do! They are called the Our Savior Church family! Take the time to know them!

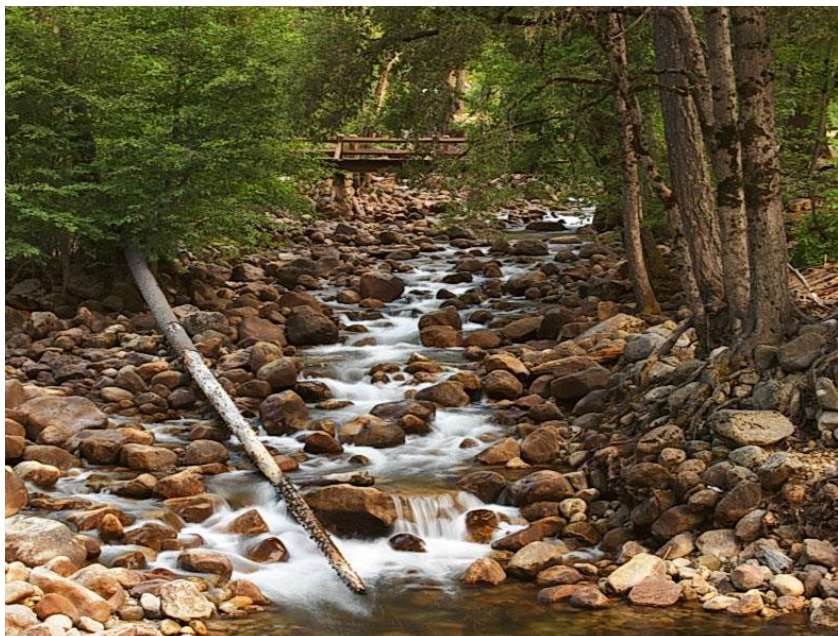
Ecclesiastes 3 says: ***"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men... <sup>12</sup> I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. <sup>13</sup> That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God. <sup>14</sup> I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him."*** Godliness is the result of a disciplined spiritual life. But at the heart of a



disciplined spiritual life is the disciplined use of time. Ephesians 5:15-16, paraphrased in The Message: **“So watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times!”**

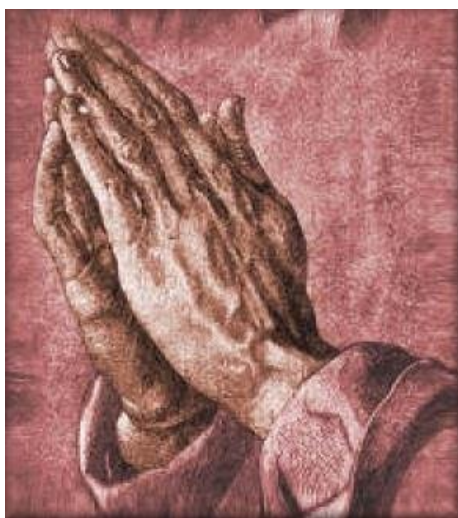
## **Rocks** April 2011

One of my hobbies is collecting rocks; I’ve been doing it since I was 7 years old. My dad would humor me on vacation by stopping along the side of the road to let me pick-up rocks. I couldn’t convince him that you had to go to special places to find special rocks! When Kathy and I got married, we spent our honeymoon camping in Colorado, collecting rocks. Most vacations we take are spent collecting . I’ve written many articles on rocks and I have put together many rock collections for kids and teachers – some of those ‘kids’ are now adults and still have their collection!



When I look at all the rocks in my collection - the beauty; the crystal symmetry; the order; the awesomeness of their variety and form, I am reminded of their Creator – the ultimate ‘Rock’. David says in 2 Samuel 22: **“The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.”** Isaiah 26 says this: **‘Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.’** It’s a common misconception that the rocks of the earth are solid and enduring. The truth is that sun, rain and wind will reduce every rock to rubble over time; but Isaiah says that the Lord is the eternal Rock! Recall the words of Psalm 78: **‘They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer.’** And the words of Matthew 7: **‘The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.’**

So, the next time you go rock-collecting; remember that our Lord is the Rock eternal; that our Lord, the Rock is also our Redeemer and when we build our house with Him as our foundation, the storms of life cannot destroy us. ‘Rock of Ages, Cleft for me.....let me hide myself in Thee.’



## **Praying Hands** May 2011

Ever hear of Albert or Albrecht Durer? They were brothers and both were promising artists.. Both wanted to go to college, but couldn’t afford it, so they hatched a scheme. They flipped a coin; loser went to work in the mines to help pay for the other’s schooling. Albert lost the toss and went into the mines; Albrecht went to school. He became famous; a wonderful artist. Time came for him to go home, and return the favor. Long story short – Albert was unable to attend

school because his hands were so broken and racked with arthritis he couldn't hold a brush anymore. This inspired his loving brother to produce one of the most famous artistic creations the world has ever known. We call his work 'The Praying Hands'. (A replica of his brothers hands.) The next time you see a copy of that touching creation, take a second look and remember, **no one** ever makes it alone!

**'Christ Have Mercy, How to Put Your Faith in Action'** (by Matthew Harrison) talks about relationships! We were made for a relationship with God and with each other. James 4 says ***'Come near to God and he will come near to you.'*** My daughter graduated Salutatorian from her High School class and there was a lot of haughty talk about her accomplishment until I reminded her it was a rather small class! She lost sight of the fact that self-made people often worship their creator. (Think about that one). I would urge you to do two things this week. First, make a list of 10 people who helped you become who you are today and thank God for their presence in your life. Second, pick someone who helped you in your life, and send them a thank you card. Thank You Lord, for all the people You have placed in my life; the people who have befriended me; who have nurtured me; who have helped shape my character!

## **Grass** June 2011

I have had the privilege of cutting the grass at church now for about the last 10 years. Pretty much, every Friday, sunshine or sprinkles; hot or cold; spring or fall, I have cut the grass. First, with that old Yazoo three-wheel lawnmower that could whip you out of the seat if you weren't careful; and – more recently – the new X-Mark, super-duper, hydrostatic drive machine the church purchased a few years ago. That one doesn't have a steering wheel and it takes some getting used to so it goes in a straight line!



Isaiah (Chapter 40) talks about grass; he says ***"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."*** Charles Swindall characterizes a life as a 'wisp of smoke'; here for a short period of time, then vaporizing into nothingness! (James 4:14 says: ***'...What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.'***) It seems to me that we focus our lifetime on caring for, and providing for, that candle-smoke, 'here today and gone tomorrow' body of ours, while failing to nurture that part of our nature that will live forever.

I like these verses in Matthew 6: ***'See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?..... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.***

Bullseye July/August 2011

Did you ever do target practice before? Shooting at something with a gun? My Aunt Sherri (2 years older than me) used to have a b-b gun when we were kids, and we'd target-practice all the time. As a teenager at Boy Scout Camp, they had a shooting range with 22 caliber rifle targets. My brother used to get in trouble there, because not only couldn't he hit the bullseye; he couldn't hit the target! He'd accidentally shoot the clothespins holding the target and the instructor would think he was doing it on purpose. My brother was a lousy shot!



What's a bullseye? Everybody knows it's the center of the target – the spot you aim for. As Christians, we have a bullseye too. Our bullseye – our center – what we aim for - is Christ; to be more Christ-like; to have an intimate relationship with Christ – to make Christ the 'center' of our life. **If we want to be in the center of God's will, we need to be in the center of His Word.**

Did you know the Bible has a 'literal' center – a bullseye, if-you-will? The shortest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 117; the longest is Psalm 119. The 'literal' center of the Bible – Psalm 118. There are 594 chapters before and after Psalm 118. Add  $594 + 594$  and you get 1188. What is the center verse in the Bible – the 'bullseye'? Psalm 118:8. What does that verse say? **'It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.'** We spend so much of our life hitting the clothespins and falling short of the bullseye. It's time to refocus, re-aim and seek the bullseye – Our Lord, Jesus Christ! Remember, **when things get tough, our relationship with God doesn't get us around trouble, it get's us through it!**



### **Scouting** September 2011

When I was a teenager, I was in the Boy Scouts. My dad was the scoutmaster of our Church-sponsored Troop – Troop 150 in Mishawaka, Indiana. My appreciation of nature; and accumulated outdoor skills were developed and nurtured during those 8 years as a Scout. I learned to swim during that time, and – as a result of that training – saved a little boy from drowning once. I earned lots of 'merit badges' for practical things I still use today. Over those teenage years, I achieved the rank of 'Life' Scout – falling short of my goal of 'Eagle' scout because of entry into college.



Parents, I would encourage all of you to consider Scouting for your sons and daughters. The values learned through scouting last a lifetime – learning accountability, self-reliance, teamwork and discipline are all good character attributes for any of us. Adults, I would encourage all of you to consider participating in Scouting as adult leaders. Hours of sacrifice to be sure; but the rewards are worth the effort. I was there, first-hand, to see what it meant for teenage boys to develop a close relationship with my dad, their Scoutmaster.

In a way, I can picture the relationship between Jesus and his disciples much like scouting, in the sense that this group of men were being molded by Jesus for a mission of service and outreach in the world, in much the same way that Scouting leaders teach young people to become responsible citizens. Proverbs 22 says **‘Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.’** While we think of this verse in terms of Bible-based training, our kids should be associated with role models and leaders and peers outside the home and church that exemplify the best in Christian behavior. (**Scout Promise**) On my honor I will do my best To do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; To help other people at all times; To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.)

## The Dash October 2011

Job 5:7 *‘Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.’* Job 8:9 *‘for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow.’* Job 14:1 *‘Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.’* You gotta hand it to Job, he sure could throw a wet blanket on life’s party! Course, you can understand that given his situation. Remember the story – Had everything, was on top of the world; then God took it all from him. You can understand why he said the things that he said. Funny thing though, this is what the first Chapter of the story tells us: ***‘In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.’*** Job lived by this philosophy: **‘You only control the Dash’.**



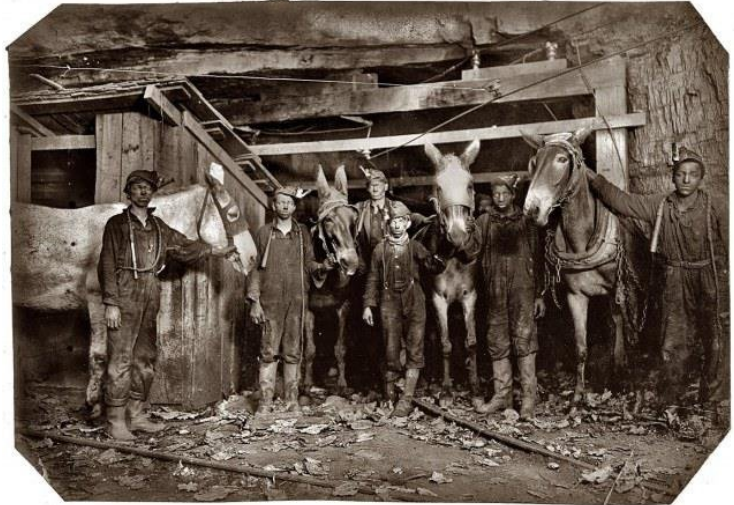
Ever look at a tombstone? They usually have a date the person was born, and a date the person died, separated by a ‘dash’. We only control the dash – the time in between. We do not control how God chooses to bless us, or challenge us, we only control our Attitude to the situations God lays before us. It has been said: **‘The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.’**

It’s times like these that ought to lead us to surrender everything to Christ. Even after loosing everything, Job said this in Chapter 19 **‘I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.’** What a great profession of Faith in our Risen Lord! So, when your eulogy's being read with your life's actions to rehash...Would you be proud of

the things they say about how you spend your dash?? ('The Dash' is a famous poem by Linda Ellis and can be read at this website: <http://www.sba.muohio.edu/snively/415/dash.htm> )

## Cherry November 2011

November 13, 1909, Cherry, Illinois (Mendota-area). 259 men and boys die underground in a coal mine fire; the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest mining disaster in America's history. Eight days later, 21 are rescued. This month marks the 102<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of that tragedy. (Google the Cherry Mine disaster for the details, or read Karen Tintori's Book 'Trapped The 1909 Cherry Mine Disaster' for an amazing account of the story.)



Kathy and I drove out to Cherry for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event. Not much to see anymore except the waste piles from the mine, and an old foundation or two. Some signs document the event, but not much else; not much else except the cemetery. It is an odd thing to walk thru that cemetery and see the gravestones of those mostly-Italian miners; row after row of tombstones with the same death-date. Some of the bodies weren't recovered for months, but nevertheless their markers carried the same date. This cemetery was created because of that tragedy – and originally was for the miners-only; although today, many of their descendants are buried there with them.

Just as in the days of Noah when almost all of mankind was wiped out – literally on the same day - we look forward to a future date when this world and all life will end. 1 John 2:17: ***'The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.'*** Those 21 survivors of the Cherry Mine fire, trapped in darkness for 8 days, described their feelings upon seeing the light for the first time after they were rescued, as if they were viewing the Glory of Heaven itself. They talked in terms of re-birth; or new birth – given a second chance at life. As we recount our blessings this Thanksgiving Season, let us put our personal relationship with a loving God who called us into His marvelous light, at the top of the list. We were dead, but now are Alive in Christ! **Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above, you Heavenly hosts; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Amen!**



## Manger December 2011

For the past 28 years, I have had the privilege of putting up the Manger scene every November and taking it down every January. (Sometimes, when it was 5 below zero, or raining or snowing cats and dogs the 'privilege' part was a little questionable!) I took-over from my friend and elder-partner, Bob Weber – now home with the Saints in Heaven.

Someday, someone will take-over for me. (You may consider that a request for help!)

Once, when we put up the Manger, I lost my wedding ring and we searched the straw for hours, trying to find it, but to no avail. Miracle of all miracles, when we took it down in January, with 12 inches of snow on the ground, we found my ring! God is Good! But, where else would you expect to see a miracle, if not at the Manger of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

When we see that manger, it is a reminder of 2 important truths. It Reminds us that THE BIBLE'S ACCOUNT OF JESUS BIRTH IS LITERAL AND RELIABLE and that CHRIST WILL LIVE WHERE ROOM IS MADE FOR HIM. Here in the manger is visible proof that God does keep his promises, that God loves each of us and all the world. God is faithful and loving! 1 John 4:10 **This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us we pray!  
Cast out our sin and enter in; Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels and great glad tidings tell;  
Oh, come to us, Abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!

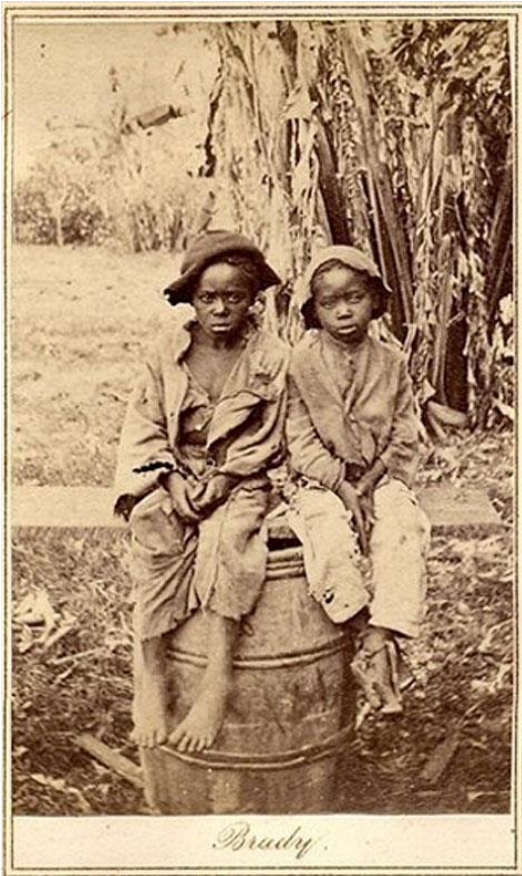
## Theology January 2012

'Moses led the Hebrew slaves to the Red Sea where they made unleavened bread, which is bread made without any ingredients.... Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the ten commandos.... He died before he ever reached Canada but his commandos made it.... Solomon had three hundred wives and seven hundred porcupines..... He was an actual hysterical figure as well as being in the Bible. It sounds like he was sorta busy too.'



While it's sometimes funny to read what little kids write about their Biblical knowledge, it's sad when we as adults have the same concepts. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3 talks about 'spiritual food' in terms of milk – something you give infants: ***'Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it.'*** The idea is that we are to progress from 'milk' to 'solid food' – we are to grow spiritually in our understanding of God's Word. These words are recorded in Hebrews 5: ***'In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.'*** I encourage you to make the commitment to read, and study your Bible and your catechism so that you are always prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have. Psalm 119: ***'I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.'*** Joshua 1: ***<sup>8</sup> Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it***

***day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*** Read the Book, read the Book, read the Book, Book, Book! It is Light, and it is Life!



## **Patches** February 2012

***'I was born and raised down in Alabama; On a farm way back up in the woods; I was so ragged the kids would call me patches.....'*** lyrics that begin a famous song by artist, Clarence Carter. I remember patches too – the kind your mother would sew on your clothes when you wore a hole in the knees of your pants, or the elbows of your shirt. My brother and I spent most of our time on knees and elbows; so mom was kept pretty busy patching our clothes – a task not high on her list of things to do, as I recall from the occasional swat after a particularly nasty rip!

Sometimes it seems we follow a 'patches' theology – the thought that if we patch-over the sin in our lives, the hole doesn't exist anymore! God does not call us to a 'patches theology' – as Christians we are not called to patch our old way of life, but to be made new again by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul says this in 2 Corinthians: ***'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.'***

If you take an old, well-worn garment that has a hole and patch it with a piece of new material that has never been washed, your patch will rip a larger hole in the garment. Hebrews 12 says :

***'let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.'*** Lord, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, create a new heart and renew a right spirit within me! Galatians 6:14-16 ***'May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.'***

## **40 Something** March 2012

Some years ago I reached another 'significant' birthday and they said 'Life begins at 40'; yet, the celebration was accompanied by 'black' balloons! Just recently, I had the honor of reaching a milestone all too infrequent in the modern world; I celebrated 40 years of service with my Company. I'll bet you didn't know that '40-below' is the temperature at which the Fahrenheit and Celsius scales come together and are the same. When

somebody wants to take a short nap, they say 'I'm going to get '40 winks'. To give someone 40 lashes was understood to be a death sentence. There's something about the number 40.

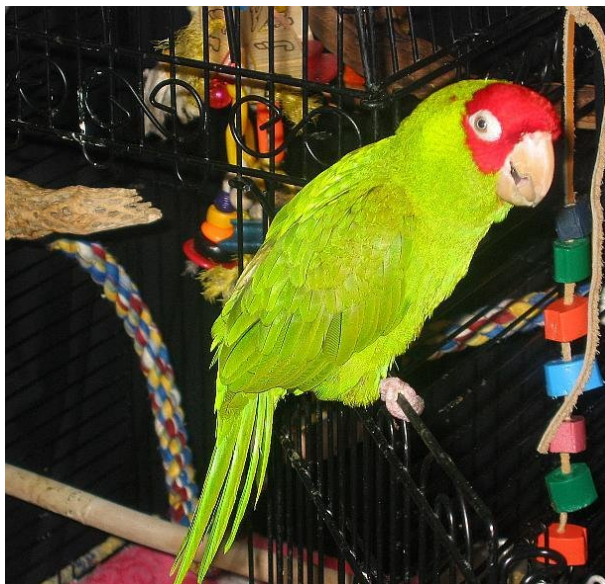
The Bible often talks about the number 40 too; rainfall at the start of the flood; Israel wandering in the wilderness; the defiance of Israel by Goliath; Christ's temptation in the wilderness; and His post-resurrection ministry. Much of the time in the Bible, 40 is associated with great stress and a period of intense testing. The exception being Christ's appearances after his resurrection.

That final forty-day period, after His resurrection, was a time of triumph and great blessing. He had come victoriously through the most intense time of stress and testing that anyone could ever experience, and now He could show Himself alive eternally to His disciples and promise them the same victory. Forty days of testing, then forty days of triumph! Even a lifetime of testing is more than balanced by an eternity of blessing. James 1:12 *'Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.'*

## Helpless April 2012

I have a parrot – his name is Chuckie. Like all parrots, he has the personality and attention-span of a 5-year old child - although he has lived 18 years with us. Chuckie has his own bedroom in our house – banished to the up-stairs because of his loud and obnoxious squawking. Chuckie spends the day on the outside of his cage and has learned to hop/fly (his wings are clipped) from his cage, to the dresser about 2 feet away.

Came home from work the other day to hear Chuckie greet me with his usual 'hello'. Went up to talk to him, but didn't see him on his cage – wasn't on the dresser either. He was definitely in his room, but I couldn't locate him. Finally I spotted him in the bottom of the waste-basket; unable to get out! Have no idea how long he was in there, or how he got there, but he was definitely over-joyed to be freed from his prison!



Reminds me of our helplessness as people; unable to free ourselves from the consequences of sin. Without the free gift of salvation, purchased by the blood of Jesus, we would be eternally separated from our Creator and our Lord. 'Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound; that saved a wretch like me; was lost; but now, am found! Was blind, but now I see.' (Ephesians 1:7-8) **'In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.'**

(Would you pray with me) Oh Lord, you are a God of second chances – Your mercies are new every morning!

Thank You for allowing me to experience Your Grace in my Life. I pray that, having received the ultimate pardon for my sins, You would empower me to serve You boldly in my church, my community, my country and to the ends of the earth. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

## Stand Up May 2012

***"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love."*** - 1 Corinthians 16:13-14. Ever hear of Dudley Tyng? His final words, before he died were **"Tell them to stand up for Jesus"**. Dudley was a 29 year old Episcopalian minister who preached during a time of revival in America during the late 1800's. Dudley uttered these words at one of his revivals: *"I must tell my Master's errand, and I would rather that this right arm were amputated at the trunk than that I should come short of my duty to you in delivering God's message."* Long story short – the following week, Dudley was involved in a farm-machinery accident that severed his right arm and led to his death a short time later.

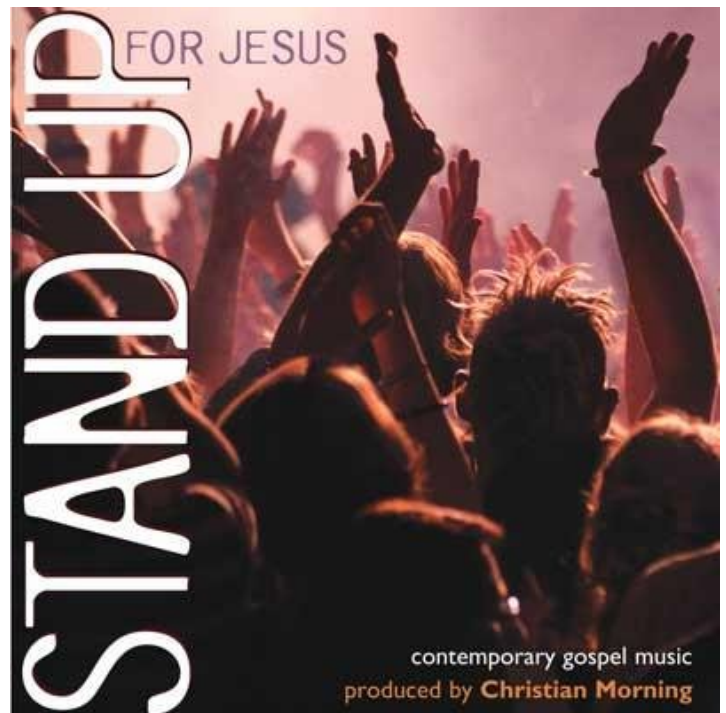
On the following Sunday, Tyng's close friend and fellow worker, the Reverend George Duffield, pastor of the Temple Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, prepared his morning sermon as a tribute to his departed friend. He chose Ephesians 6:14 as his text:

***"Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness."*** Duffield concluded with a poem he had written, inspired by his friend's dying words. The poem was widely-circulated and read by one Adam Geibel (a Baptist) who put it to music and created the classic we all know **"Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus, you soldiers of the Cross"**

How ironic that God used the tragic accident of one man to inspire another to write a poem and still another to put it to music, weaving a tapestry that is a testimony to the Glory of Jesus Christ. Life seems so often to be like that: Where's the sense in it all? What does it mean? It's only in hindsight that we at times glimpse God's purpose in our life. I Corinthians 13: ***<sup>12</sup>For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*** Jeremiah 29 ***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."***

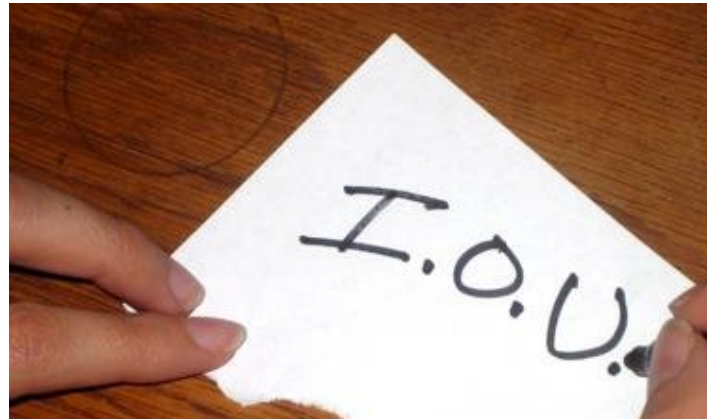
## I.O.U. June 2012

My brother and I agreed to do some work for Dad for 25 cents. We finished the job and Dad gave us each a hand written IOU for a quarter. I was secretly furious! Where's my quarter? Brother and I went out in the back yard and I tore up my IOU! My little brother- doing what little brothers do - went straight to Dad and told him. Sensing a

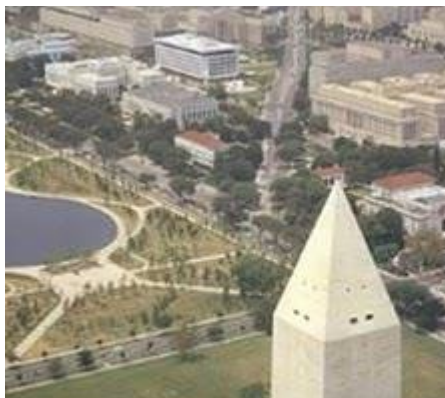


teachable moment, Dad called both of us into the house and said he was prepared to redeem our IOU's. He asked Davie for his and made a big production of handing him a quarter. Then he turned to me, asking for my IOU. You can guess 'the rest of the story'. I didn't have an IOU, had to tell Dad why not. I got no Quarter that day, but did learn a lesson or two about promises, trust, fairness and life in general.

Get's me to thinking about how much do I owe the Lord? Micah 6:8 answers that question: ***'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.***' I love the words to a Country and Western song by Paul Overstreet: "How much do I owe you?" said the man to his Lord. "For giving me this day and every day that's gone before. "Shall I build a temple, shall I make a sacrifice? "Tell me Lord and I will pay the price." And the Lord said: "I won't take less than your love, sweet love. "No, I won't take less than your love. "All the treasures of the world could never be enough, "And I won't take less than your love."



And finally, the words of Andrae Crouch: **"How can I say thanks for the things You have done for me? Things so undeserved, yet You give to prove Your love for me. The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude; All that I am & ever hope to be, I owe it all to you..."** Lord, help me to honor You with my life!



## **LAUS DEO** July/August 2012

I won't keep you in suspense – ***'Laus Deo'*** is a Latin phrase meaning **'Praise Be to God'**. You might be surprised to learn that ***'Laus Deo'*** is inscribed on the aluminum cap at the very pinnacle of the Washington Monument. You might also be surprised that – by law - the Washington Monument must remain the tallest structure in the City! In a time when many in our Country deny the faith of our founding fathers, recall these words of George Washington:

"Almighty God; We make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection; that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government; and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large. And finally that Thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without a humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation. Grant our supplication, we beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Alexis DeToqueville said: "America is Great, because America is Good." And where does that goodness come from? From God Almighty and our relationship with Him. Jesus says: ***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*** In the words of George Washington – without a relationship with Jesus Christ we can never hope to be a happy nation. **No Jesus – No Hope; Know Jesus, Know Hope!**

*"Unless the Lord builds the house its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain." (Psalm 127: 1) God Bless America.*

## **Wages** September 2012

When I was in high school, I had a drafting teacher who was a strict disciplinarian. One time he gave a homework assignment – a blank sheet to practice our printing. None of us in the class did our homework, so the next day, he gave us a lecture and 4 more sheets to do. I painstakingly did all 5 sheets in my very best printing and handed-in my work - but nobody else did. The next day, I got my graded work back and in big red letters were these words: ‘Initial grade ‘A’, reduced to a ‘C’ for turning in late!’

Instead of being angry at the teacher, I told myself I got what I deserved. To this day, that man is one of my favorite teachers! When I graduated, I wrote him a letter, thanking him for his guidance. Ten years later I sent him another letter when I received my first U.S. Patent – he wrote me back and included a copy of my high-school letter, which he had kept all those years!

When I think about getting what I deserve, I think of that verse in Romans 6: ***‘For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.’*** I have ‘earned’ eternal separation from God for what I have done. My Sin separates me from a Holy God. Isaiah, Chapter 64 puts it this way: ***‘All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.’*** But the Good News is that the gift of God – Paul calls it an ‘indescribable gift’ - is eternal life with Christ. And finally, those familiar words of Ephesians we all know: ***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*** ‘Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!’ By Grace, through Faith, for Works.

## **Blindness** October 2012

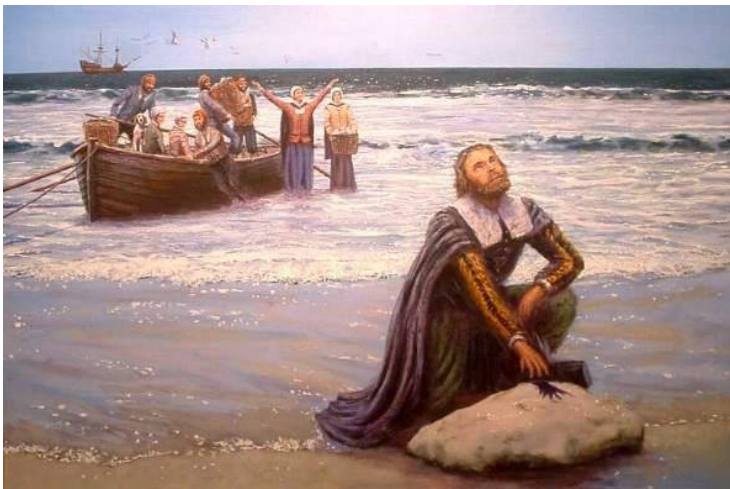
‘There are none so blind as those who will not see.’  
Matthew 13: ***‘Therefore I speak to them in parables: because they seeing, see not;...neither do they understand.’***  
A 1962 movie classic – ‘The Miracle Worker’ tells the story of Helen Keller and her teacher, Anne Sullivan. Severe fever at age 19 months left Keller blind and deaf and barely able to communicate. At age six Keller met Anne Sullivan, who taught Helen to communicate and opened up the world to her. Helen said: ***‘As selfishness and complaint pervert the mind, so love with its joy clears and sharpens the vision.... Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.’***





John 9 is an interesting account of Jesus healing a blind man, and his interaction with the Pharisees – men who were spiritually blind. Jesus said these words to them: ***“For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see...”*** God says these words in Isaiah 46: ***“I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, <sup>7</sup> to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. I am the LORD; that is my name!”***

‘Once I knew only darkness and stillness... my life was without past or future... but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness, and my heart leaped to the rapture of living.’ Helen Keller said these words, in reference to her teacher, but they also apply to us – and our relationship with Jesus. **A spiritually blind man cannot see** God's invisible revelation; love, truth, holiness, forgiveness, blessing, eternal life, grace, joy and peace. 2 Corinthians 4: ***“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*** Turn your face to God’s Light and the shadows of blindness fall behind you.



## **Pilgrims** November 2012

‘O beautiful for pilgrim feet’, - words from ‘America the Beautiful’ that remind me of Thanksgiving. That phrase ‘pilgrim feet’ always struck me as odd – I don’t know why. The original ‘pilgrims’ to our shores landed about 1620, seeking religious freedom and the term ‘Pilgrims’, was first used in about 1596 in reference to their own idea of life on earth as a pilgrimage towards heavenly bliss.

When I think of pilgrims, I think of the original ‘Biblical Pilgrim’ – Abraham. Genesis 12: **The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.”** God’s people have been on a pilgrimage ever since. Peter says: **To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout (the known world)....** Sometimes that word ‘stranger’ is connected with the word ‘sojourner’ – or - temporary resident. We are all pilgrims here, temporary residents on our way to a permanent home – a home already prepared for us by Jesus. Recall the words of the hymn: ‘I am but a stranger here, Heaven is my home; Earth is but a desert drear, Heaven is my home....’ John 14: (Jesus speaking) **‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are**

many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.' This Thanksgiving season, let us give thanks for all the pilgrims and sojourners who have walked before us, beside us and behind us, as we travel to our heavenly home and an eternity with our Lord, Jesus Christ! *'Therefore I murmur not, Heaven is my home; Whatever my earthly lot, Heaven is my home; And I shall surely stand, There at my Lord's right hand. Heaven is my fatherland, Heaven is my home.'*

## Harry and Elsie December 2012

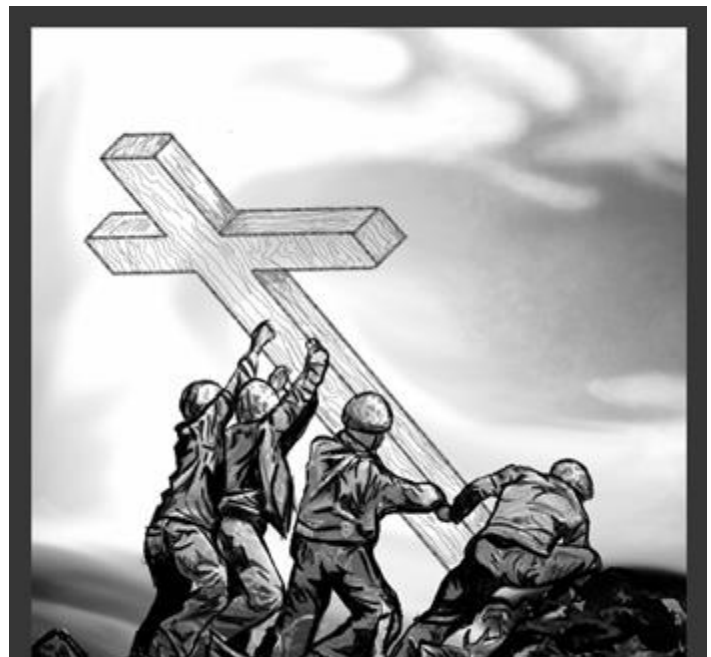
Growing up, Harry and Elsie were close family friends – they were a generation ahead of my parents. Harry was the church janitor and Elsie grew the best roses of anybody on the planet. Many Sundays, the altar flowers were Elsie’s roses. Harry and Elsie sat behind us in church and every week, as they entered the pew, Harry would have to mess-up our Brylcreem-slicked hair; and tip mom’s hat at a jaunty angle!

My Dad, a carpenter, didn’t like working on weekends, but whenever Harry and Elsie needed something, dad would drop everything to help them out. Asked mom one time why that was so and she told me something I never knew: Many times, when dad was on unemployment, Harry and Elsie helped get our family thru the rough spots. Every Christmas Eve - before we went to church - we would visit Harry and Elsie.

This Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, we enjoy family and friends and the special relationships we have with them. Take the time to think about those in your circle who could use a hand-up and help them out. Take the time to befriend someone who could use a listening ear, or your loving support. Remember the words of Paul in Galatians 5: ***‘but through love serve one another.’*** ‘O come, Thou Key of David, come, And open wide our heavenly home; Make safe the way that leads on high, And close the path to misery. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel’. (Matt 20) ***‘and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, <sup>28</sup>even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’***

## Occupy Until Relieved January 2013

Ever hear of Anthony Farrar-Hockley? A British Officer and fearless soldier who found himself in a desperate battle in the Korean War. His men were part of the UN forces, who were surrounded and greatly outnumbered, but fought like lions against an overwhelming number of Chinese and North Korean troops. His final order from his commander was: **“Guy, you will occupy until relieved. If your ammunition runs out, hurl rocks at them.”** As their ammunition ran out – Farrar-Hockley ordered the bugler to play every tune he knew – except ‘retreat’! Later captured by the Chinese, he escaped SIX times before the war ended. A citation issued to him after the war by the British government, held these words:



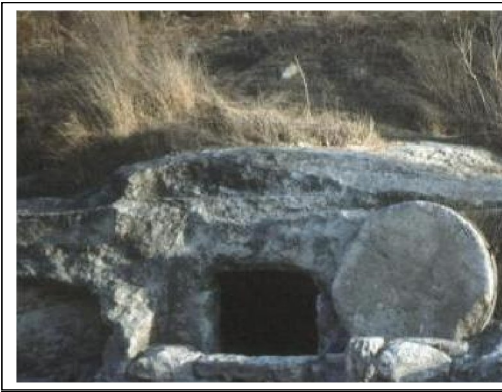
‘Throughout this desperate engagement on which the ability of the battalion to hold its position entirely depended, Captain Farrar-Hockley was an inspiration to the defenders. His outstanding gallantry, fighting spirit and great powers of leadership heartened his men and welded them into an indomitable team. His conduct could not have been surpassed.’

Recall these words to Timothy by the Apostle Paul: "***But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it***" This encouraging exhortation by the apostle Paul is in the midst of a most discouraging prophetic warning of things to come. "In the last days," he said, "perilous times shall come" **QUESTION: Should we today, tremble and flee, or perhaps compromise, or even surrender to such powerful and persuasive deceivers?** No, we should continue! We have been issued our 'marching orders' by God himself. **We are to Occupy Until Relieved.** We are called to be lights in a dark world. John 17:9-26 is the great 'Occupy Till Relieved' section of the New Testament, I encourage you to read it! (Jesus says) ***'May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.'***

## **Written in Stone** February 2013

When something is 'written in stone' we think of something unchangeable – something that is enduring. Many times, when we want to commemorate, call attention to, or witness something, we create a stone monument. The famous stone heads on Easter Island, the great pyramids of Egypt, Stonehenge in England or the Washington Monument or Lincoln Memorial – all images written in stone to signify something important.

Consider that **our God has written in stone for us** too. The **fossil record** laid-down in stone throughout the earth. A monument to God's judgment. The **10 commandments** – God's law, written in stone, to show us our sin; to measure our faithfulness and to limit our behavior. Then there **is the stone rolled away from the empty tomb** – to show us God's grace and Christ's victory over sin, death and the grave. These latter 3 are truly unchangeable and enduring witnesses to the eternal Truth of God's Word. This testimony of their unique importance is a sobering condemnation of any who ignore them or distort their meaning. **1 Peter 2: <sup>4</sup>As you come to him, the living Stone— rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— <sup>5</sup>you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**



But there is another writing of God - one of even greater personal significance. (2 Corinthians) **<sup>3</sup>You show that you are a letter from Christ.... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.** . No longer an external standard divinely engraved in stone by the finger of God, but an internal conviction inscribed in the heart by the Spirit of God!( Hebrews 10) **<sup>16</sup>"This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds"**

## **Persevere** March 2013

'Endeavor to persevere' – a line from a Clint Eastwood movie, and the title to a well-known poem by George Wootton: ***'When best-laid plans have fallen to waste and frustration abounds in their former place, when failure looms with doubts and fears we must endeavor to persevere!*** James 1 says ***'Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that***

***God has promised to those who love him.*** It is a fact that times of trials and stress produce character. General Douglas MacArthur wrote a prayer – a famous prayer – for his son. Some of the words go like this: **‘Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here, let him learn to stand up in the storm; here, let him learn compassion for those who fall.’** He understood the truth about challenge and character.

‘When all is lost, life’s cupboard bare, and seems like even God don’t care, His grace is sufficient in the trials and tears, still we endeavor to persevere.

This present life is hard at best but we must strive to complete the test, for our redemption draweth near as we endeavor to persevere.

A restful home for us awaits, we long to enter heaven’s gates, the promise of peace and never a tear if we endeavor to persevere.’ (G. Wootton)

Hebrews 10: ***‘So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay.”*** Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did. ~Newt Gingrich

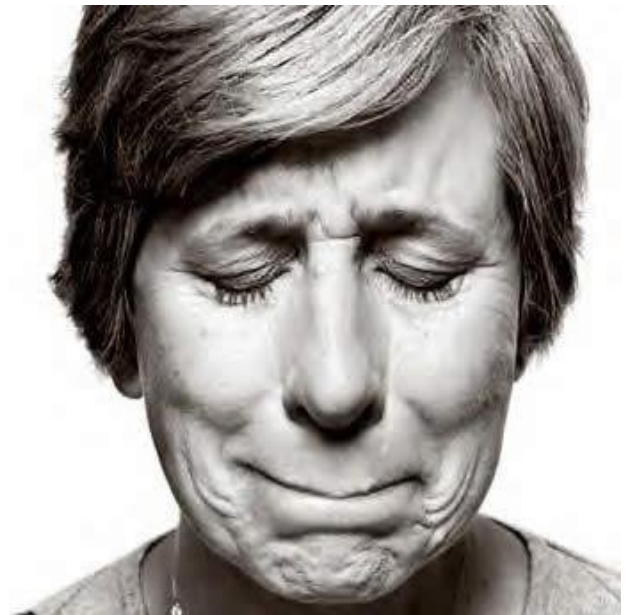
## Tears April 2013

Little boys don’t cry. That is how I was raised. My dad was ‘John Wayne’, and his two sons (Davie and me) did not cry! Wasn’t allowed. So, I grew up having learned to put my feelings in a box. I’m not making judgments about that – just telling you the way it is with me. Problem is, though, I’m quite an emotional person (as my wife can attest). I stay away from verbalizing things that will lead me to tears! That’s the great thing about writing – I can be as ‘weepee’ as I want, because nobody can see me!

Are there things that choke you up when you read them, or hear them? Are there Bible passages that are so precious and personal to you, that just thinking about them bring you to tears? There are a couple for me – the words to ‘Amazing Grace’, for instance or the closing section of Romans 8: ***‘...in all these things we are***

***more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’*** Don’t ask me to read those words out-loud in Bible Class – can’t do it; too emotional!

Generally, when do we feel free to be completely open? Probably most would say when we are alone, so nobody can see or hear. This is a truth: We all know that the Bible says the hairs on our head are numbered



(Matthew 10, Luke 12), but did you also know that your tears are numbered? Psalm 56:8 ***‘Record my lament; list my tears on your scroll—are they not in your record?’*** God is there in our most secret places, numbering our tears, how awesome is that! Charles Swindoll says ‘A teardrop on earth summons the King of heaven.’ Revelation 21: ***‘And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.’***

## **Mother May 2013**

These past 4 years, I have told many stories about my Dad, but not so much about Mom. This one is dedicated to my Mom (who is 86 this year), and all the mothers, step-mothers, foster mothers and grand mothers in our lives. My faith is a testament to my Mother’s tender and affectionate dedication to raising me to know and love the Lord. Whether nurturing, teaching, consoling or disciplining – every act was couched in love. I know the love of Christ, because I experienced my Mothers love first! When I think of a word to describe my Mom, it would be ‘unselfish sacrifice’ (OK, two words). My mothers life has been a life of unselfish, loving acts in service to others – my Dad, my brother, our family, friends and church. At 82, she ‘retired’ from her Sunday School Teaching job, saying, ‘I just can’t keep up with those 5 year olds anymore!’

“I have worshiped in churches and chapels, I have prayed in the busy street.  
I have sought my God and have found him in the waves of His ocean beat.  
I have knelt in the silent forest, in the shade of some ancient tree  
But the dearest of all my altars was at my mother’s knee.  
God, make me the man of her vision and purge me of selfishness.  
God, keep me true to her standards and help me to live to bless.  
God, hallow the holy impress of the days that used to be  
And keep me a pilgrim forever to the shrine at my mother’s knee.”

I’ll take a little literary license with Proverbs 31: ***‘A mother of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her family has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings good, not harm, all the days of her life...Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:.... Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a mother who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.’*** A little boy forgot his lines in a S. S. presentation. His mother was in the front row to prompt him. She gestured and formed the words silently with her lips, but it didn’t help. Her sons’ memory went blank. Finally, she leaned forward and whispered the cue, “I am the light of the world.” The boy’s face lit up and with great feeling and a loud and clear voice he said, “My mother is the light of the world.”

## **Final Thoughts June 2013**

This marks the 45<sup>th</sup> (and final) Voice Article for me, as your Congregation President. Where does the time go? It seems like only yesterday I was struggling with a Theme for these articles: **‘Walking Together with One Heart’**. I have tried to use these opportunities to tell stories that I hope you found interesting and to use those stories as a platform to point to our God as we know Him – Father, Son and Spirit. In the end, it isn’t about me, or what I think, it’s about our Heavenly Father and the amazing love He has for us! Let me leave you with these words; they are not mine, but say what is on my heart:

I love to tell the story of unseen things above, Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.  
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true; It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.

I love to tell the story; more wonderful it seems Than all the golden fancies of all our golden dreams.  
I love to tell the story, it did so much for me; And that is just the reason I tell it now to thee.

I love to tell the story; 'tis pleasant to repeat What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet.  
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard The message of salvation from God's own holy Word.

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.  
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song, 'Twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

Thank You for allowing me to serve, (and in the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:) ***<sup>3</sup>I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup>In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup>being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

Bob Harringer  
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