

WHEATON

CROSS † CONNECTIONS

But Then This ...

By Pastor John Schuurman

I would like to tell you just a bit about my friend Patrick Paas who died recently. I communicated a bit with those of you who have email regarding him. He has a story worth telling. I was greatly honored to be a part of his life and a part of his funeral celebration. Pat was 55. He died very suddenly of septic shock. Everyone who knew him is in a bit of shock themselves because it happened so quickly.

Pat was born and reared in a Roman Catholic home. He quit going to church when he was in junior high. Soon after high school he left home and sort of "joined the circus." In reality he became what is known as a "Carni." A carni is sort of a roustabout who travels around the country to county fairs, to rodeos and circuses with carnival rides. It is a very rough life and only the roughest people survive in it. Pat loved it.

In October of 1979 Pat was sitting around in his home flipping through the TV channels. He settled in to watch Pat Robertson of "The 700 Club," and God used that time and that broadcast to move Pat to make a phone call to the ministry and commit his life to Christ. The next day while shopping for popcorn supplies for the carnival he ran into an old friend, Jocelyn Schneider, a Jewish girl, who, unbeknownst to Pat, had converted to Christianity about two years before. They fell to talking over old times and Pat told her what had happened the night before. After that it was a whirlwind courtship, engagement and marriage.

They said their marriage vows in Christ in August of 1980.

They were married at Jocelyn's church, (one associated with Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee), where they met Dr. William Shell who was a former Bible teacher at Timothy Christian High School, and who now taught at Reformed Bible College. Bill Shell saw in Pat an eager beaver of a Bible student and one who took to reading and talking about the scriptures very readily and he talked him into pursuing a degree at RBC.

Then Bill and some other professors at RBC saw more there yet and encouraged Pat to enroll in Calvin Theological Seminary. He came to CTS in the fall of 1984 which was when I met him. Pat and I hit it off famously. We just fell in love with each other's sense of humor and love for the Lord. We were pretty funny and pretty soulful together. Janet and I had married in 1984 and she fell in love with him and Jocelyn too.

I graduated from CTS in 1985 and took a call in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Pat graduated in 1987 and took a call to begin a multi-national ministry for the CRC in Toronto.

Then the story turns a little dark. After about six years of heroic and innovative ministry that produced a lot of fruit but for which adequate help and encouragement came at the wrong times and wrong places, Pat burnt out. Jocelyn was a great help to him and the area CRC's and CR Home Missions tried to help but church planting is supremely difficult work and trying to do it with multi-ethnic folks, who were all recent immigrants and all of whom had unique cultures and culture shock of their own going on, proved too much and Pat could not sustain the work. For physical, emotional and spiritual reasons, he felt he had to give up the church

planting work—an all too common thing among people who try to do what he was doing.

But God provided for him soon after that. Thinking he might want to pursue an advanced theological degree, Pat was taking a course at an Anglican seminary. For the class he was trying to find an extremely expensive book and remembered seeing the book during his seminary days in Grand Rapids. In a very “Paasian” way he jumped in his car and drove to Grand Rapids and bought a box of the books for cheap. He drove back to Toronto sold the books to his classmates for a good deal less than what they could buy them for, and CRUX BOOKS was born. The seminaries (five of them) in the U. of Toronto complex saw in Pat and his wide theological reading, his piety, his earthy good humor, and his business acumen, a valuable person and at first gave him a closet, then a old classroom, and finally a 2000 sq. ft. store space.

Pat had found his calling as a supplier of reasonably priced theological books for the divinity students attending the University of Toronto.

But there is one more (sort of—for me anyway) hard part to tell. Pat left the CRC and re-converted to the Roman Catholic Church in 2002. It is too complex a story to tell but the CRC could not continue to be his church just then. He felt God calling him back to the church of his childhood.

But there is a miracle of grace in it too. Pat went to St. Michael’s Cathedral in Toronto. At first he went just to have the sacrament, see the art, and to get out of there. But slowly on he got back into wanting to teach and minister. In the last year he had started teaching a newcomers class for the diocese and had written some materials and lessons on Paul and the doctrines of grace. Pat might have felt called back to the church of his childhood but he did not leave the reformed faith.

Here is some of the wonder of it all. There were probably 750-800 people at his funeral at St. Michaels. Indicative of Pat’s impact was that Cardinal Thomas Collins of Toronto, (colleague of Cardinal Francis George of Chicago) , said the Mass—a very rare thing to have at a layman’s funeral.

And here is a very cool part: At the memorial service at the chapel of the U. of Toronto at

which I was asked to speak and do the closing prayer, there were at 350 to 400 people there. Of the six speakers at that memorial service, five of us were CRC ministers. I mostly told funny Pat Paas stories and wept at an incredible loss.

I DIDN’T FALL

By Chuck Schoenherr

I made it through the winter months without falling. Hooray.

For us older people this is always a challenge and when we can get through a winter season unscathed, we rejoice. We are so fearful of falling on icy walks, slippery stairs, and the uneven surfaces caused by ice and snow build ups . We tense up when we are outside walking on the ice and snow and the tension itself makes walking more difficult. All this makes it harder to stay on foot. We can slip and fall so easily. Falling is one of the major causes older people break their hips, wrists, and arms. So when I can survive a winter without a fall, I rejoice. Oh, I know, I can fall in the house as well - loose throw rugs, poorly lit passageways, stairs without hand railings, baths without grab bars, etc., are all potential disasters, but I can handle these easier than I can the ice outside. So I use all the preventive measures I know to keep from falling. After a snow I shovel the walks as soon as possible , I spread ice melters on the sidewalks and stairs, and wear “ice grabbers” on my shoes, use my cane, and hold on to railings. Even then, I am never certain I won’t have a nasty fall. But, if I do fall, someone will help me up and I will be on my way again. A fall is not the end.

I give more thought and attention to falling physically than I do about falling spiritually. I am more concerned about falling and breaking my hip than falling away from God in my spiritual life. (Now, I am not talking about eternal security when I say “falling away from God” I am referring to my walk with the Lord.) We can fall spiritually just as easily as we can

fall physically. Then I say to myself, Charley, why don't you concern yourself more about falling spiritually? What preventive measures are there to follow to help me maintain my balance and upright position with God? There are slippery slopes in our spiritual lives that we must avoid because they eventually will result in a fall. God has given us preventive measures to follow in order to keep us in balance. These measures are his Commandments, i.e., do not lie, be honest in all relationships, do not steal, do not covet what your neighbor has, do not commit fornication, show love to your neighbor, all slippery slopes that will lead to a fall if we don't follow them. A believer who walks in darkness will stumble and fall and hurt himself every time. But when we fall spiritually, it is not the "end." By the grace of God, we can be restored as the prodigal son was restored in the gospels. Thanks be to God.

"My dear friends, you have been warned ahead of time! So don't let the errors of evil people lead you down the wrong (slippery) path, and make you lose your balance. Let the wonderful kindness and the understanding that comes from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ help you to keep on growing. Praise Jesus, now and forever. Amen." | Peter 3:17&18 (CEV)

Hymn Stories

O Master Let Me Walk With Thee

Author – Washington Gladden

Composer – H. Percy Smith

Oh Master let me walk with Thee,
In lowly paths of service free.
Tell me Thy secret – help me bear,
The strain of toil – the fret of care.

In hope that sends a shining ray
Far down the future's broad'ning way,
In peace that only Thou canst give,
With Thee of Master, let me live.

This hymn, published in 1879, comes from a

period of religious history in this country when there was much emphasis given to the social implications of the gospel. The Civil War had ended and our country was in the throes of a great industrial revolution. As is often true in such times, many of our country's liberal clergymen became enthusiastic champions for social justice.

One of the recognized leaders was Washington Gladden. Until his death, he was one of America's most distinguished liberal clergymen.

Gladden was born on a farm in Potts Grove, PA in 1836. Following graduation from Williams College in 1859, he was ordained to the Congregational Churches' ministry. While serving in pulpits in the East for eleven years, Gladden spent much time fighting such political groups as the corrupt Tweed Ring. It was largely through his effort that the Tammany boss himself was eventually put behind bars.

In 1882, he was called to the First Congregational Church in Columbus, OH. There he became known as one of the most powerful pulpit voices in America. He was known, not only for his influential pulpiting and writing, but also for his negotiations in various national disputes and strikes. In 1883, he arbitrated the Telegraphers' strike and the following year, the Hocking Valley Coal Strike. It was always his conviction that it was the duty of the Christian church to "elevate the masses not only spiritually and morally, but to be concerned about their social and economic welfare as well."

Through out his life, Gladden was the object of bitter criticism from many leaders of the business world as well as from the conservative factions of the church. Even his own denomination turned against him when he attacked John D. Rockefeller, Sr. for his gift of \$100,000 to the Churches' Foreign Missions Board.

His views on Biblical criticism were also strongly denounced by conservative churchmen when he preached that the Bible was not inerrant science and history, but rather a book of religion.

The hymn was originally published as a poem in a publication called "Sunday Afternoon", of which Gladden was the editor.

Although Washington Gladden was widely known in his day for his influential preaching and writings, he is best known today for this one fine hymn.

This and many other hymn stories were inspired by events which have been documented in a book called "101 Hymn Stories" compiled and written by Kenneth W. Osbeck, and its sequel, "101 More Hymn Stories."

Missions

The Women and Children of the Gwaimen Center

By Mary Sytsma

Editors Note: After reading the e-mails she sent back during her recent visit to the Gwaimen Center, I asked Mary to introduce us to some of the women and children she met. This is the second in that series.

Victoria and Joy

While I am in Nigeria, I often spend quite a bit of time with the smaller children who come to the center on a daily basis. They are always around and they love the attention. This past visit, Abigail asked if I would talk to some of the teenagers. Of course, I was eager to meet them and spend time with them. I love teenagers. Abigail sent messages to them asking them to come. They have responsibilities like school and work so they had to be summoned. It wasn't what I expected.

They have no reason to trust me. The only white woman who lived in our village and who has been a tremendous difficulty for the Gwaimen Center had mistreated these young people. They sat in the room with eyes downcast and unreadable faces. I wanted to hear their stories and to reassure them that the women of the Gwaimen Center would help them. I told them I didn't expect them to trust me, but that they could trust Gwaimen.

I asked them to tell me about the things that

scare them. I wanted them to tell me about their fears. They spoke so softly that often I had to strain to hear the answers. I listened as we went around the circle, hearing one sad story after another.

Two sisters, Joy and Victoria, spoke up at that meeting. They are both beautiful slim young women. Joy is 18, and Victoria is 24. They are related to Beatrice because their grandmother is a sister to Beatrice's mother. They are orphans. I don't think that word carries enough meaning for those of us who live in the US.

Victoria got pregnant last year by a man who had HIV. He also had another wife. When her little girl was born, Victoria nursed her and tried to care for her. She asked the baby's father to help by giving her some money to buy food. He refused. In order for her baby to have something to eat, Victoria was convinced to give the baby to the father and his family. She felt she had no other choice.

The father's family refuses to let her see her baby. She and her sister live together, and they have no close relative to help them. They are living in their family's compound alone. Both Victoria and Joy are HIV positive. They are taking ARV medication provided by the government of Nigeria. However, Victoria has a bad cough. She doesn't have money for that kind of medicine, and her immune system is weakened by the HIV.

For some reason God prompted me to ask them when they had last eaten. They both glanced up at me, and Victoria answered so quietly I had to think if I had heard the answer correctly. Two days. It had been two days since they had eaten. They had completely run out of food. I can't really put into words how I felt right then.

I promised them that we would help. I asked Abigail to come and to hear their story. She told them to follow her. We went right to the storehouse next to the center, where we keep surplus donations, and she prepared bags of rice, grain and flour. She gave them beans and some sugar. Then she went into the bags of donated clothing and pulled out some clothes for them. You might expect young women to have some reaction to the clothes being offered – either a smile or a frown or some sign of pleasure or disappointment. These girls were just stunned and received the gifts as if they couldn't believe what was happening. They left

with their arms full.

I was reminded of the story of Ruth in the Bible, which we study on retreat with the young people from this church. When that book begins, there is a famine in the land, and Ruth and Naomi have empty arms – Naomi's husband and sons are dead, and they have nothing to eat. But in just a few short chapters, we see how God can transform emptiness to fullness. At the end of the story, Ruth and Boaz are married. They have a little baby to put into Naomi's arms. They have food to eat.

Victoria hasn't seen her little girl in a month. Her baby's name is Endurance. We asked Victoria and Joy to come and help with the children at the center. We asked them to come around meal times especially, so they could help with the preparations and eat with the children. From now on, we will know when they are hungry. We will know when they are scared.

They won't be alone anymore.

Lawndale's Three- Part Ministry

By Grace Huitsing

A recent conversation with Pastor Jim Wolff brought encouraging news about our friends at Lawndale.

Pastor Wolff, we know the close tie between Lawndale Church and West Side Christian School. In these times of struggle, how is the year going?

Well, West Side's enrollment is about 160 instead of the expected 185, and the board is struggling/working hard to face this reality. But the school is having its best year ever. Morale is high, the staff is working hard, and the community is very supportive.

For one thing, we've been having wonderful chapel services. Our students know many individual Bible stories, but we said, "Let's tell

the big story." So each week Principal Mary Post has been writing the script and students have been acting out the successive Biblical stories. Can you imagine junior high kids begging to take part, and community members coming in for chapel?

The old building now houses YMEN, or Young Men's Educational Network. How does that work relate to Lawndale's ministry?

Several years ago, Wheaton graduate Michael Trout moved to the neighborhood and opened his apartment to support and mentor junior high boys after school, seeing them through high school, and even college. Then, in 2004, with our move across the street, YMEN came in and expanded its work in our old building. Now, with three or four on staff, they mentor somewhere from 50 to 100 kids, and have been able to offer computer training, entrepreneurial classes, and help with local public ministries. And some of young men follow Mike and family to our Sunday services.

Wheaton CRC always enjoys worshipping with your congregation. Again, in struggling times, what kind of year are you having?

While outside help is down, our attendance is up, members come consistently, and they see contributing to their church as a priority. It's been a huge blessing.

With our on-going service, Juan Flores is the minister of the Community. In cooperation with a group of Roman Catholics he has begun a hot-lunch program called "My Brother's Kitchen." Our R.C. friends come twice a month on Saturdays and serve lunch. This has provided opportunities for us to sit with community people and know them better. Also, Juan and my wife are a great team in keeping up the buildings. Last week they worked with a group of from Holland on a "serve project" and this week a group from MOSES in Grand Rapids.

Thank you, Pastor Wolff. WCRC members have been blessed by our long association with Lawndale and West Side School, and will continue to pray for this Chicago extension of God's Kingdom.

Council Notes

By Steve Vogel

I have not had an article for several months. It's not entirely my fault, of course, I am a natural procrastinator (National procrastination week is celebrated the second week of March, so I'm observing it a week late), and since council meets just four times a year (plus a special meeting or two), I sometimes have very little material for the intervening months.

In January, we had our annual nominations meeting. I must say that this congregation is blessed with an abundance of talented and qualified individuals. We have never had a problem coming up with a slate of nominees, and this year is no exception. In fact, it often seems that the challenge is in narrowing the field of candidates. But the list of nominees is usually not finalized until some time after the nominations meeting, as it often happens that there are circumstances, of which the council is unaware, that make it impossible for one or two people who have been nominated to stand for election. Often these circumstances are job related, and so it takes a couple more weeks to sort it out and notify the alternates.

Our slate of nominees for elder and deacon has been finalized and has been in the bulletin already. Please remember to pray both for those elected and those not selected.

Our regular council meeting was in February, and it was a meeting with a pretty packed agenda. Of significant focus was the financial report for the year 2008. The report for the congregation has been distributed, so you know that we ended 2008 with a deficit of around \$35,000. Compare this to 2007 where we had a surplus of over \$15,000 and you can see that things have changed. Through July 2008 we were almost identical with 2007 in offerings and expenses, so things really changed in the second half of the year. 2009 looks to be a financially challenging year, and council decided to take some actions to reduce our operating costs in a couple areas.

Our custodian, Thonglo, who has faithfully

served us for many years, will be retiring on May 1. His efforts have been a real blessing to us, and we want to thank him for his many years of faithful service.

Rather than replace him, we have chosen instead to use a professional cleaning service that will clean the entire facility 2 days each week. The use of a cleaning service will lower our costs by nearly \$30,000 per year. We'll realize a bit less than half of that in 2009, but all of it in the future years.

Another action that council took was to pay only one half of our first quarter Ministry Shares. Ministry Shares (formerly called quotas) is how our denomination funds ministries on the classis and national levels. To my knowledge, our congregation has always paid 100% of our Ministry Shares, and some years even a bit more. There are only 4 or 5 churches in our classis that are able to pay full ministry shares, with many congregations paying only a small amount.

This was not an easy decision, and there was a great deal of discussion on the matter. The council was not unanimous in the decision either. The rationale behind the action goes something like this: Since we had a deficit last year, we don't have any reserve general funds to draw on. By paying for ministry shares with money that we don't have, we are in effect borrowing money to send to the denomination. The denomination has always said that the local church ministry should come first. Holding off paying the full amount is a prudent step to ensure that we don't end up in a financial hole.

The argument against reducing the ministry share payment is that we should trust God to bless our congregation and that the money will be there. And it could be viewed that we are trying to shock the congregation into giving more.

It should be said that this doesn't mean that we will not be able to pay 100% of our Ministry Shares for the year. Assuming that the funds are available, we can pay more in the following quarters. We all certainly hope and pray that we will be able to meet this obligation.

In other council actions, we have decided to use Vern Geurkink as our Interim Pastor while John

Schuurman is on sabbatical. Pastor John's sabbatical is a fair bit shorter this time than the one he took several years ago. John will be gone for 5 weeks in April and May on a trip to Africa to lead a conference there and to visit son Micah in Egypt. Vern will be handling pastoral care, liturgy, and preaching the morning services. Several of our evening services will be led by Jon Hoekema of the Horizon church.

Council was also blessed to hear the profession of faith of Jim Nyenhuis on a Sunday morning when Jim was home from college. Public profession will likely be in early June.

Ripples of WCRC

By Ed Gabrielse

The impact of this congregation is far broader than any of us will ever know. We teach Sunday School, a Bible Study Group or work in any of the many programs of our church without ever seeing more than a tiny fraction of the impact caused by our efforts. Only in eternity will we see the impact of the ever widening ripples that our efforts have caused.

That is certainly the case of Jeanine Gasper. Jeanine teaches pre-engineering classes at Catholic Central in Grand Rapids. Her students beat out teams from 250 other schools in developing a device called a Hyper Typer. It is a device that was created for Mr. Mike Martin, a religion teacher who lost his hand in an industrial accident.

Because of the loss of the hand, Mr. Martin has been limited to the five fingers of his remaining hand for typing on the computer. Using brass and aluminum tubing, fingertips from a rubber glove, Super Glue, duct tape, metal bands and rubber pipe joints, the Hyper Typer can be assembled for about \$20 in 90 minutes. It gives Mr. Martin two additional fingers. This device has increased Mr. Martin's accuracy threefold with a 10% increase in speed.

The competition was the National Engineering

Design Challenge sponsored by the Junior Engineering Technical Society. The challenge was to create an "assistive technology" device that would improve the job performance or productivity of a person with a severe disability.

The invention is being submitted for a patent. Their win comes with a \$3000 cash award for the engineering program and an invitation to present their invention at a symposium in Atlanta in May.

Jeanine has a degree in engineering from Calvin and teaches regular and honors physics and pre-engineering at Catholic Central. Her parents are Mary and Stu Greydanus. Some current members of our church probably had Mary in one of their classes when she was known as Mary Sytsma (and Mary Sytsma was known as Mary Edema). The Marys are respectively the daughter, and daughter in law, of Len and Hermina Sytsma.

So now, as Paul Harvey would have said, you know the rest of the story.

AIDS Sunday

By Gordon Anderson

Clear your calendars on Sunday May 3! Well, maybe not clear them, but set aside an afternoon and some other time.

WCRC Young People have been selected, honored and challenged by CRWRC (a palindrome acronym for Christian Reformed World Relief Committee). CRWRC has entrusted WCRC YP to invest \$1,000 to spread the word about AIDS and to increase those funds.

You have all heard a lot about AIDS – in the USA over past years and across the world in the same period. It is serious, it is devastating, and it is something that we can all do something about if we work together in a sensible and effective way.

So here we are: The Young People have begun to plan for a campaign to engage you all to help us return some of the CRWRC investment back to help the people affected across the globe.

So, is “Watch your bulletin!” enough warning? Is “Save your Sunday noon meal to be at church!” sufficient? Can you be prepared for:

- * a half-hour video after morning worship that day
- * supervised nursery during that time
- * a program with crafts for younger elementary kids also during that time
- * a meal afterwards with entrees from several third-world countries
- * a challenge (funded!) to invest some of CRWRC’s money to go out and gain increase just as in Jesus’ parable of the talents

There will be some suggestions as to what you may choose to do, but our list will not restrict you and whoever from doing whatever else occurs to you

Of course, we will be thrilled to accept donations on behalf of CRWRC at the luncheon (for those of you who choose not to devise a “project” to raise additional funds.

Of course, we will give interested groups (e.g. GEMS, families, groups of individuals or families, or small groups) a \$20 investment, or multiples or such.

Since the meal is May 3, and since the HIV/AIDS pandemic is already here, and since CRWRC has programs in place for the acknowledged urgency to fund them, we have set May 31 as the “Deadline” for turning in the fruits of your labors. Are you ready to accept the challenge on that Sunday May 3?

Insights and Encounters

By Ed Bossenga

Recently, in my Sunday School class, we discussed Heidelberg Catechism question 55: What do you understand by the Communion of Saints? A week later, in my religion class, my students at Sacred Heart School were discussing Pentecost and the beginning of the church. The lesson focused on the church as

the Communion of Saints. Whether a coincidence or providence, teaching this lesson to students from a CRC congregation and to students in a Roman Catholic school gave me pause and a new insight to the church and the Communion of Saints.

The answer the catechism gives to question 55 is:

First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and all his treasures and gifts.

Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and cheerfully for service and enhancement of other members.

I’ve taught this lesson several times, but this time it had new meaning. The church by definition is a community of believers called from all places and all times united in true faith. The presence of three students from New Hope Vietnamese CRC drove the point home. These students are part of the community yet their culture and heritage is half way around the world. This week Rahwa is joining our class. She is from Africa. I also met Afee, an exchange student from Malaysia who is being hosted by a family in our congregation - truly, a gathering from all places.

Looking back over the past years God has allowed me to actively see the church community in action. First has been working at Outreach Community Center. The students at the center represent many ethnic groups. The staff and volunteers, although from many denominations, share in Christ and his gifts and use those gifts for the service of others. Two examples come to mind. The food pantry is faithfully stocked by several retired men and women, many who attend St Michael Church. My co-teacher this year was a very dedicated young lady who attends the Episcopal Church. From all places and all times we are the body of Christ.

The second example of a new insight of being part of the Communion of Saints is my teaching at Sacred Heart School. One of my classes is the New Testament. At the time I was a little apprehensive teaching the New Testament in a Catholic school. However, as I opened the textbook (BLEST ARE WE) I found these words:

"It is important to understand that we do not gain the joy of heaven through our own efforts, but through belief in Jesus Christ. It is only through God's grace, gained through Christ's death and resurrection that we have merit in God's eyes. God's grace is his free gift to us."

My colleagues surely fit in my understanding of the Communion of Saints. They are members of the community we call a holy catholic church and as members use their gifts for the service and enhancement of others.

Through this one Sunday School lesson God gave me a new insight – a bigger picture, a glimpse of what his kingdom is all about. We are not old, young, slave, master, Jew, Gentile, male, female, short, tall, Christian Reformed, Roman Catholic. We are all one, members of the church with Christ at the head. The church is a community called from all times and all places gathered to Christ in true faith; His church, the Communion of Saints.

By Shari Buma

Recently someone asked me what is the defining quality of Wheaton CRC.

"Service" immediately came to mind. It is a high priority. I began listing some examples: the Young People's project on AIDS, our connection with Canticle Place, Community Service Committee projects, 12 Step Programs, ESL, the Gwaimen Center in Nigeria, Outreach Community Center events, volunteering at New to You... But missions are also very important to Wheaton members. We have close, personal relationships with many of our missionaries. Two of our own kids are serving in Egypt and Thailand. Praying and raising funds for our missionaries are significant commitments at Wheaton. Vibrant, small groups are also a big part of who we are.

Most of our congregation is involved in small groups. We form close friendships with the people in our group. As a member of the Fellowship Committee, I think all of the meals we share together contribute to our identity. But we can't forget the outstanding music of our choir, Wheaton College student

participation, special worship services, adult Sunday School discussions.... The question was simple, but there are so many factors that make up the essence of our church. Attendance at the Celebrating on Purpose open house was a great introduction to what defines Wheaton Christian Reformed Church.

The open house really captured our church's personality. As visitors toured the buildings, they could see the wide scope of ministry that happens regularly. From Coffee Break to World Missions, our little congregation touches people locally and internationally. We enjoy each other at small groups, GEMS/Cadets, church campouts, and dinners. We also delight in friendships with Lawndale and Vietnamese New Hope members. We gather resources and food for local families and orphans in Nigeria.

The celebration highlighted the variety of ways our congregation honors God. Each participant offered service in an area that was important to him or her. Some planned great music, some scrubbed every surface, some cooked, some anticipated visitors' needs with signs, some prepared videos and posters, some planned activities for kids, and all

By Joseph Kok

I have been privileged to have many different relationships with different members of this church. Several of these have been with some members of the church decades and decades older than I am. I would encourage anyone to seek out these kinds of relationships and interactions, no matter what end of the spectrum you fall into. Those folks that are older have a great number of stories, life experiences, and instances of faith to share with those that are younger. And, dare I say, for the older folks, it might keep you feeling younger? Otherwise, it can help you keep your memories of your youth alive.

I was inspired to write this after thinking about the connected but unique and varied relationships spread through our church. I wanted to run with that idea a little bit to expound on my thoughts. One explanation of Christian community is that as members of a

Christian community live daily, they learn how to demonstrate and tell of God's life and reign to the world around them.

Older adults are invaluable sources of support for young people in guiding them in problems and navigating their way to growing up. It is through many of these interactions that we can grow. Through those that have been walking in faith for decades, we can learn of God's immeasurable faithfulness. It is also through these interactions that we can gain wisdom, discernment, and guidance in navigating life's twists and turns. We can gather information, possibly first hand accounts of being in a similar state, and how to seek God's plan and will for our life.

Below, I'll go into some detail of various people I have been close with, and how they have impacted my life.

One humorous, endearing example of my experience in having these types of relationships is that I have had a "date" with Gladys Zuidema before. Nearly 70 years older than me, she is still a busy, service-oriented lady. I have also had the opportunity to be her personal chauffeur on a few occasions.

I have been a part of the prayer small group with Grace Huitsing in the past. As well, I have always been touched and inspired by the commitments and service that she participated in with going to Humboldt Park, China, and Mexico. Upon hearing that she went to Mexico to serve there for a time, and with it being during a time I was out of state, I went to specially visit her to hear about it when I returned.

Gordon & Sue Anderson fall into an uncharacteristic category of relationships. Gordon has been a mentor and friend to me for years. Sue is just a sweet, sweet woman. She is a formidable expert in books & authors as well, and if you partake of a conversation of such, you can be sure it's worth the time.

I didn't ask any of the above people for permission to write or talk about them. I hope that it's okay with them, but don't see why it wouldn't be. I hope that you will all look around you, and cultivate relationships with those older and wiser than you, to cherish them in your own life and in your Christian walk. prayed. We prayed for God to be glorified and for God to send people who need to meet him. We asked

for our neighbors to see God in us.

We continue to pray that the defining quality of Wheaton CRC remains that of service. Service to our neighbors, each other and our Lord.

By Peggy Schoenherr

My most memorable Easter was here in Wheaton in 1939. Our family had returned to the United States from Siam where my Mother and Father had been missionaries. Because they knew that the Japanese were preparing for war, they decided not to return. While my Father looked for work, my Brother and I were enrolled in an elementary school here in Wheaton.

When Easter week arrived, my Grandmother invited me to go to College Church with her. At church, a missionary showed slides of the people in the area where he served. The last slide, however, was a cartoon of a man and a woman on the way to a party in a convertible car with the top down and a road sign with the words "TO HELL – STRAIGHT AHEAD!" Then the missionary admonished us that is where we would all be going if we did not commit our lives to our Heavenly Father.

As Grandmother and I walked home, I pondered what he had said. When I was ready for bed, I knelt by my bed and prayed to our Heavenly Father that I wanted to be His child too. Would he please think about it while I was sleeping and tell me His answer in the morning.

As I woke up Easter morning, a light touch went over my body from my feet to my head and in that moment, I knew that my prayer had been answered. I was His child too.

The joy I felt has been with me ever since.

Humor Me

Kentucky Funeral

As a young minister in Kentucky, I was asked by a funeral director to hold a grave side service for a homeless man, who had no family or friends. The funeral was to be held at a new cemetery, way back in the country. This man was to be the first to be buried there.

I was not familiar with the area and became lost on the way. Too proud to ask directions, I arrived almost an hour late. The hearse had already left but the men and the backhoe were there and about ready to begin filling the hole. I apologized for my tardiness and looked into the hole. The lid was already in place.

I assured the workers that I would not take long but that this was the proper thing to do. They gathered around the grave and stood silently as I began to pour out my heart and soul.

As I preached about the "brighter tomorrow" and the "glory that is to come" they began to get into it. The fervor of these men really inspired me. The more I preached, the more enthusiastic they became. I preached from Genesis to Revelations like I had never preached before.

I finally closed the service with a lengthy prayer, thanked the men and walked to my car. As I was opening the door, I heard one of the workers say to another, "I ain't never seen nothin' like that before, and I've been putting in septic tanks for thirty years."

Fig Leaves

A little boy opened the big family Bible and was fascinated as he carefully turned the pages. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible. He picked up an old leaf that had been pressed in between the pages.

"Mama, Mama, look what I found," he cried.

"What is it dear," she said without even looking.

With astonishment in his voice he answered, "I think it's Adam's underwear."

Overheard

While walking along the sidewalk in front of church I saw my five year old son and two of his playmates having an intense discussion. They did not see me as I slipped behind a bush to watch.

They had found a dead robin. Feeling that a proper burial should be performed, they had secured a small box and cotton batting, dug a hole and made ready for the interment.

My son was chosen to say the appropriate prayers and with sonorous dignity he intoned his version of what he thought his father would have said. "Glory be unto the Faaather, and unto the Sonnn, and into the hole-he-goes."

Conversation Starters for the Desperate

A raisin dropped into a glass of champagne will bounce up and down continuously from the bottom to the top.

7315 entries in the 1996 edition of Webster's Dictionary were misspelled.

Donald Duck comics were banned in Finland because he doesn't wear pants.

Celery and apples have negative calories. It takes more calories to eat them than they contain.

Chewing gum while peeling onions will keep you from crying.

The glue on Israeli postage stamps is certified kosher.

The Guinness Book of Records hold the dubious record of being the book most often stolen from public libraries.

Chocolate affects a dog's heart and nervous system. A few ounces will kill a small dog.

On average, 12 newborns will be given to the wrong parents every day.

40% of McDonald's profits come from the sales of Happy Meals.

Kids Korner

1. Who was Hosea's first son?

2. When the Israelites spoke out against God and Moses in the desert, what did God send them?

3. What brothers were given the name, "Sons of Thunder"?

4. What does the name "Isaac" mean?

5. What does the name "Esau" mean?

6. What temple did Samson tear down when he regained his strength?

7. Who said, "But if a man is already old, how can he be born again?"

8. Who said, "I am not guilty of this man's death. You are the ones causing it?"

9. Who said, "You will not die?"

10. Who said, "Teacher I want to see?"

11. Who said, "He must become greater and I must become less important?"

12. Who said, "No! you will never wash my feet?"

Look it up

1. Hosea 1:3-4

2. Numbers 21:4-6

3. Mark 3:17

4. Genesis 17:17 & 18:9-15

5. Genesis 25:25

6. Judges 16:22-30

7. John 3:4

8. Matthew 27:24

9. Genesis 3:4

10. Mark 10:46-57

11. John 3:23-30

12. John 13:8

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Note: If you are between the ages of 7 and 12 any time during the calendar year 2009, sign your name and put your answers in my mail box (Gabrielse) by Sunday, April 12th.

Running Totals

Sarah Dykstra	24
William Fan	36
Kathryn Kmiecik	34
Dakota Nickols	12

Once again, we have a contest for a \$25 gift certificate to be awarded in the January, 2010 issue. Don't miss an issue.