

# But Then This...

*As I write this, Pastor John is wrestling with pain killers as a result of the operation on his knee. Please accept his good intentions and my modest efforts for this month.*

## A Christian Response To Tough Economic Times.

By Ed Gabrielse

Upon arrival on the mission field, a young couple promptly dismissed the housekeeper and the cook that had cared for the retiring missionary. When the retiring missionary heard of it, he asked the couple if they knew what they were doing.

“Of course,” replied the young woman. “I have always done my own washing, cleaning and cooking. Why should we pay to have it done?”

“That is quite beside the point,” said the retiring missionary. “You have cut off the incomes of more than twenty extended family members of the housekeeper and the cook who depend on that income.” “Now, instead of thanking God for the joy of their work and their ability to help their families, they have to beg for food each day.” “You have shattered their dignity and brought them to the point of desperation.”

The housekeeper and cook were promptly rehired.

This illustration shows both sides of Christian financial responsibility.

On one hand, of course, is the evil of accumulation of vast amounts of things. We are warned constantly through Christ’s teachings about the foolishness of laying up for ourselves those treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt and thieves break in and steal. We are tempted to live beyond our means. The standards by which we gauge God’s bountiful blessings are continually ratcheted up by the life styles of our peers.

We look around at times like Christmas and see a bombardment of commercialism aimed at accumulation rather than the glory of our Lord’s coming. We see the corrosive influence on our kids, our families and our culture. And our reaction is to eschew all shopping and buying for our loved ones, to condemn the commercialism and ask God to forgive our sinful desires and those of our corrupt society.

But it is not quite that easy. Money does not cease to exist the moment it is spent on any product or service. So consider the other side of hiring a housekeeper and cook.

For the past several years, Jane and I have purchased two live Christmas trees for our home, one in the living room and one near the back door – an obvious extravagance to those who take a ten year old garage sale bargain down from the attic each year.

But what happens to the fifty dollars we give to the cashier at the tree lot. The owner/grower has a successful business and a job. He can feed, house and clothe his family and send them to a Christian School. He can employ a group of people to plant, fertilize, prune and harvest the trees. Our purchase, along with several thousand more each year means that a lot of people have jobs and can get up in the morning with a song of praise and thanksgiving on their lips and in their hearts.

Every purchase has a residual impact. Toy trucks and dolls at Christmas mean that someone, perhaps in a third world country, has a job and an income. Piles and piles of toys under the tree means that more and more of the world’s needy have a way to put food on the table and thank God for it.

The impact of a purchase is quite easy to see when a missionary helps indigenous craftsmen and women to carve figurines or weave baskets and then brings them back to sell to us.

The impact of other purchases may be harder to see, but the principle is every bit as operative when an executive of a company sets up a branch in another

country that enables the locals to achieve a higher standard of living.

It is sometimes noted that Bill Gates did more to eliminate world-wide poverty than a million Mother Theresa's could ever hope to accomplish. Maybe that is true, maybe not, but it makes you wonder how God evaluates the contribution of each. Does He, perhaps, take a real delight in the success of a business like Microsoft because He knows the impact it will have on thousands of His children?

Every Christian has to weigh the effects of each purchase in terms of nursing the evils of accumulation but also in terms of the impact on those who work in the sales, distribution and production of that item and thank God for supplying the "daily bread" for which they have so earnestly prayed.

So, realizing the impact of a purchase, what is the responsibility of a Christian during difficult economic times? Should Christians, like non-Christians, play it safe, hunker down and stop spending and then watch as the economy slows, hundreds of businesses close and thousands of people are terminated?

Or, should Christians who have the ability, step up and with confidence in their Lord, spend, spend and spend? Should they have the most lavish Christmas ever? Should churches launch bold new building projects? Should church parking lots glisten with shiny new cars?

Should Christians lead the way out of the recession as an expression of their love for others?

I don't know, it was just a thought.

# Christmas Memories

**By Heidi Slinkman**

Some of the best years of my life were enjoyed in Pella, Iowa. It is where I connected with my Dutch roots, met my loving savior, and wed my wonderful husband. Christmases in Pella were almost always magical. The cozy storefronts, dressed up in golden glory, displayed the warmth and charm of Pella's Christian heritage.

In 1988, John and I had just come back from ten years of living abroad. We were excited to finally be able to enjoy Christmas with our families. This Christmas, though, was to be the last one in Pella as my parents were moving to Florida the next spring. Their lovingly restored, old farmhouse had a 'For Sale' sign in the front yard and soon our connection to Pella would be changed. We wanted this last Christmas to be special.

Christmas Eve found the entire Froelich clan at Second Reformed Church singing carols and getting reacquainted with old friends. Afterwards, we rushed home to open the usual one present before going to bed. I was so happy to be back in Pella with my family that I secretly wished for a flannel nightgown like I had received as a little girl! How reluctant we are to grow up!

The next morning we awoke to the smell of cinnamon sticky buns. Dressed in flannel (shirts, not nightgowns!) and jeans, we made our way downstairs, hugged everyone and joyfully chimed, "Merry Christmas!" We

gathered around my dad's roaring fire to open the trinkets found in our hand-knitted stockings. At the bottom of each stocking was an orange which we were required to eat. During this stocking celebration we munched on the sticky buns. Shortly afterwards, my mom brought out an egg casserole and we proceeded to eat the real breakfast while young nieces and nephews handed out gifts one at a time to be opened and savored. This special family gift-giving time would take the entire morning.

Later that day, after more eating and game playing, our whole family walked two blocks to downtown Pella and admired the decorated town square. As we strolled through the park and under the Tulip Toren, we talked about the twenty wonderful years my parents had in Pella. We realized our family had grown closer because of the caring people and times we experienced in this friendly community.

The end of a lovely Christmas came with sadness. After this holiday, never again would my family unite in such a special place. However, our memories have lasted a lifetime, and ultimately, John and I agree. Our family time together seemed to be especially magical during the last Christmas in Pella.

**By Pauline Roelofs**

It's Christmas time! What a joyous season when we celebrate Jesus' birth with Bible passages, Christmas carols, twinkling lights indoors and out, and holiday decorations everywhere. Music plays an important part

of the celebration, with choir anthems added to group singing, and CD's playing at home with the sound of the season everywhere.

When our boys were young, the Christmas tree with gifts underneath was the attraction for many days. These were opened Christmas Eve with much excitement.

During that time, home made ice cream was served as a special treat. However, the boys knew that a special gift would be waiting to be opened Christmas morning. So they rushed in early while movies were taken as they discovered their special gifts.

As the years passed, our sons came home from college to join in the family observations.

Now, both boys and their families will be home to share in the 2008 celebration. Many prayers of thanks will be given for God's care.

### **By Floyd Vander**

We were so excited when we got to the airport for our vacation to Puerto Vallarta! All of our children were with us, ready for a great vacation together! We hauled all of our luggage up to the check-in only to find out that only a few of us would be able to fly. Of course there must be some kind of mistake! No, the attendant remained firm that those who brought birth certificates had to have originals – not copies.

The thought of dealing with different flights and customs and transportation all became overwhelming and there were some tears of frustration. As arrangements were made to

try and get original birth certificates, Kris and I moved *everyone's* luggage to the security area. Our distress must have been obvious. A man from the neighboring airline – which had been void of any other employees or customers – approached us and asked us if we needed help. I explained our situation; we needed original birth certificates for some of

our family members. He asked me if they were my children and I replied yes.

Then the least imaginable thing happened.

“Well, I'm a notary public. I can notarize their birth certificates as long as they are your children. Let me go get my stamp.” I turned amazed to Kris behind me and she said, “Mom, he is our Christmas angel!”

By the time the kids got back to the check-in counter there were only two seats left on the plane! Just enough for all of us to board together!

We believe this man was indeed our Christmas angel because he was from a different airline than we flew on and he was not even supposed to be working that day. He had come in voluntarily to help on an especially busy day.

That Christmas was so blessed, and we celebrated God's care for us by sending a Christmas angel to a busy O'Hare airport!

## **By Jane Gabrielse**

Nearly 25 years ago, we were asked by the Adult Sunday School leader to share some of the memories and traditions of Christmas in our family. Ed used that occasion to detail some of the more memorable Christmases under the title, “The Search for the Perfect Christmas Tree”. Each year, since then, he has added a paragraph that says something about each family member.

Every Christmas there comes that very special moment when the master copy is pulled out and we take turns reading these glimpses from our past. Finally, Ed reads the latest paragraph that he has written.

We love Christmas – everything about it. We love shopping for that special gift that expresses our love for each other. We love decorating the house. We love the music. We love going into the woods and cutting the Christmas trees each year. We love the fact that our kids have made a commitment to be here with us every year. And we love the food.

Pastor John preached a sermon some years back that captured for us what Christmas ought to be. He noted that Christmas is the observance of Christ’s first coming and a dim foretaste of his second coming. So we should celebrate with all the gusto and enthusiasm with which we expect to celebrate his coming on the clouds of heaven. Each Christmas is a chance to practice for that great day.

By some standards, I know we go overboard. But that is a part of our witness to the world and each other that while his first coming was really special, his second coming will be far beyond our wildest imagination.

Merry Christmas!

# Who Cares

**By Maria DeHaan**

***Who cares:***

*When people need a telephone call?*

*When the sick need meals?*

*When the automotively challenged need driving support?*

*When mom's-to-be need caring attention and multiple meals?*

*When single folks and "yesterday's youth" need cheery visits and seasonal surprises?*

*When those who grieve need a luncheon for extended family and friends?*

***It's the Care Committee!!***

Members include Co-Chairs, Stephanie Disselkoen, (630) 299-3082 and Leslie Sytsma (630) 653-3283; and members, Erica Plaiser (630) 782-1689; Bonnie Groen (630) 668-9382; Jane Gabrielse (630) 377-3258; and Maria DeHaan (630) 690-5323.

Out going members are Diane Teune and Gretta Anema. We thank Diane and Gretta for their excellent work.

Many church members have also helped with meals, visits and driving support, and we are so grateful. We are exploring ways to welcome new church attendees.

Should anyone have the need for medical equipment, we can help! The church has a supply on hand, i.e. walkers, crutches, a wheelchair, shower benches, etc.. If anyone has additional items that can be loaned to members when there is a need, please contact Leslie.

If you want to help, need information, need help or have ideas, call anyone of us!!

Oh, and one more thing: who do you think benefits most from the work we do? That's right, we do, because the joy of caring about and helping others is one of the greatest joys of being a part of the body of believers.

# While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night

**Author – Nahum Tate**

**Composer – Arranged from**

**George F. Handel**

*While shepherds watched their*

*flocks by night*

*All seated on the ground.*

*The angel of the Lord came down*

*And glory shone around.*

The singing of hymns was practically non-existent in England and the US from the protestant reformation to the dawn of the eighteenth century. During this time, congregational singing was the versification of the Psalms. The psalter used exclusively during this period was the “Sternhold-Hopkins Psalter”, published in 1562.

Although this psalter was known for its faithfulness to the original Hebrew, the crude, unpoetic character of its texts became increasingly offensive to many congregations.

Finally, in 1696, during the reign of William and Mary, two Irishmen, Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady collaborated in undertaking

a new metrical version of the Psalms, more in keeping with the literary tastes of the day. This new psalter, known as the “New Version” was met with widespread popular resistance.

Two examples of that resistance follow:

A pastor who asked a villager why he no longer participated in the singing in church received the reply, “Well, Sir, David speaks so plain that us cannot mistake ‘un; but as for Mr. Tate and Brady, they have taken the Lord away.”

And another time when Tate was at family prayers at the home of a friend, one of the maids explained her refusal to sing by saying, “If you must know the plain truth, Sir, as long as you sung Jesus Christ’s psalms, I sung along with ye; but now that you sing psalms of your own invention, ye may sing by yourselves.”

Eventually, the “New Version” was endorsed by King William III and supplanted the “Sternhold-Hopkins Psalter” throughout the Church of England. It was later adopted by the American Episcopal Church.

In 1700, Tate and Brady had already published a supplement containing sixteen hymns. One of these original hymns was Tate’s description of the angel’s appearance to the shepherds as described in Luke 2:8ff “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks”. All of Tate’s other hymns from this collection have since been forgotten.

Nahum Tate was born in Dublin in 1652, the son of an Irish clergyman. He was educated at Trinity College and in 1690 was proclaimed to be the Poet Laureate of England for the court of William and Mary. His intemperate living (as a drunkard and spendthrift) eventually led to his downfall, and he died in 1715 at a debtor's refuge in Southwark, London.

Nicholas Brady, another Irishman and Tate's personal friend was educated at both Oxford and Trinity Colleges and later served the Anglican Church at Cork, England.

"While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks" ranks as one of our most popular Christmas carols. It is found in nearly every protestant hymnal. Its purely narrative account about the shepherds is on a level that even children can visualize and easily understand.

Many of these hymns 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".

# Service in Budapest

Jack and Cindy Ippel

By Grace Huitsing

*Hildi Vander Veen speaks enthusiastically of her daughter, Cindy Vander Veen Ippel's reports from Budapest. When I suggested a few questions to ask Cindy for our Missions Page, she immediately responded with the following:*

## ***How did you come to go to Budapest?***

God put people and interests in our lives over the past several years that pointed us in the direction of ministering in Budapest. There have been doors all along the way that we walked through not really knowing what was on the other side but knowing it was what we needed to do.

Responding to a bulletin announcement about hosting an exchange student from Hungary was the first door. We welcomed Orsi into our home and into our lives three years ago. She became like a daughter to us. The second door came when Jack took a summer class at Calvin and chatted with the man next to him about the future. When Jack mentioned that we have always been interested in teaching overseas, Tim Farmer suggested that we consider ESI, the organization that he had gone to the Czech Republic with.

That night Jack "googled" ESI and found that they sent teachers to Hungary. After that, we had so many people mention ESI to us that we knew it was no accident. We

decided to apply with TeachOverseas (ESI) and asked to be considered for the Reformed High School in Sarospatak. God made it clear that we needed to be in Budapest instead. Here we are a part of a team, where in Sarospatak we would have been on our own.

We visited the Reformed Church in Sarospatak a couple of weeks ago and understood very little of a very somber worship. Here there are many English speaking churches and the one we have been attending has both English and Hungarian and is very vibrant worship. God knew that spiritually we needed to have the fellowship that we enjoy in Budapest. Orsi and her husband Zoli also live in Budapest and they are now coming to church with us. (Zoli has not attended church regularly until now.) So our decision to come to Budapest has been affirmed over and over again as being God-directed.

Another open door along the way was finding out that Christian Reformed World Missions was in partnership with TeachOverseas. This was very exciting for us to partner with the CRC, the church we had both been raised in and continue to feel a bond with.

## ***How are your tasks fitting your abilities and interests?***

Jack's job is to teach conversational English in a public high school. His students are 95% male because of the type of school that it is (technical training). He began teaching over 35 years ago in music education but

gradually has become more of an English teacher. As he has matured in his teaching, he's come to value the relational aspect of his teaching more and more. This is the main emphasis of his training with ESI. He is here to be an excellent teacher and to use that venue to build relationships with his students as well as his colleagues.

Cindy is working as an assistant to Anne-Marie Kool at the Mission Institute at Karoli Gaspar Reformed University. She has the responsibility of being hostess to the students who attend the Mission Institute classes. She also assists the Mission Institute with her organizational skills.

***Every culture has its own ways of greeting strangers, cooking etc. How have you found that in Hungary?***

Hungarian culture has been strongly influenced by communism. Strangers are not trusted or generally greeted or looked in the eye. There are very few smiles. When Orsi lived with us she couldn't get over how friendly people in America are. She would come back from a walk and say that everyone said Hi and smiled at her. Here in Hungary only friends would greet each other. Once you get to know someone then you are welcomed and treated as family.

We were treated to a traditional family meal at Orsi's grandmother's house, even as the family celebrated grandma's birthday. The traditional meal starts with palinka (homemade brandy) and then we have homemade chicken soup with sour salad on the side (marinated vegetables). Then there

is the main course with meat and potatoes and carrots and turnips accompanied with wine. For dessert a tray of all kinds of typical Hungarian pastries is served.

The food here is generally heavy and is often fried in oil (real "comfort food"). Sour cream is served with almost every meal. For breakfast, Orsi's dad would fry fish or a kind of liver sausage or bread dipped in egg and deep fried in oil. Bacon fat is also used extensively in Hungarian recipes.

***What are you especially thankful for?***

We are thankful for God leading us here. What an opportunity this has been! We are thankful for our teammate Scott Tiedeman who lives in the apartment next to us and is an ESI teacher at Trefort School with Jack. We are also thankful for the new friendships that we have made here already. We are thankful for the spiritual encouragement we have received from people here and the church we are going to. We are thankful for the internet and Skype that allows us to keep so well connected with our kids/grandkids and friends/family.

***Do you have any interesting stories about sharing your faith?***

Here is Jack's story:

During the first week of school, in one of Jack's 11<sup>th</sup> grade classes, a girl named Olga asked him why an American would give up a well-paid job in the U.S. to teach for much less in Hungary. She would be aware of this disparity because she and her family lived in the U.S. for two years several years ago.

Jack told her then that he would answer her in October, giving her the reason that they really needed to know each other better before he would answer her question.

That must have piqued her interest, because on the first day in October she reminded Jack of his promise to tell the class why he came to Hungary. Jack was able to use this opportunity to give his testimony to the students and explained that because of his love for Jesus his life was to be a life of service to others. He then added that it was why he wanted to help them become the best English speakers they could be.

Instead of the cold negative response that Jack had expected to his sharing his testimony, he was pleasantly surprised to see many smiling faces and even had some students talk to him afterwards about their own faith. Then, yesterday after opening the door for the same class of students, Jack found Olga erasing the chalk board. When asked if she was the hetes (weekly helper). She said, “No. But just like you came to Hungary to serve us, now I serve you.” Something is sinking in!

***Talk about Anne-Marie Kool and how her work is presently going?***

Anne-Marie is an amazing leader. Her job as director of The Central and Eastern European Institute for Mission Studies (CIMS) gives her unique opportunities to develop relationships with missions around the world.

The Mission Institute has gone through a bit of a change in the past couple of years.

Rather than working in conjunction with the Reformed University in Budapest, the Mission Institute now is a part of the Karoli Gaspar University. There are now more opportunities to connect with the students of the Reformed University. Anne-Marie teaches several classes at the university each semester and through her teaching is able to affect the future church leaders of Hungary. She oversees several future pastors as they work on their theological degrees.

The Mission Institute serves as a bridge between the theoretical and practical involvement of lay people and pastors in the mission of the church. The Mission Institute seeks to impact not just the missions of Central and Eastern Europe, but has actively been involved in learning from other international mission organizations and passing this learning on. Anne-Marie is well respected in her field and looked to for wisdom by mission leaders world wide.

***How would you like us to pray for you?***

The reformed church of Hungary along with the government of Hungary is facing a time of crisis. This crisis is not only an economic crisis but also a spiritual crisis. The leaders in the government as well as the church need our prayers.

Please **pray** with us that leaders will be humbled to do what’s best for the people that they have been elected to serve. **Pray** also for us in our relationships with all those we work along side with as well as the students we come in contact with daily. **Pray** that God will open their hearts so that they will wonder and then ask us “for the

reason for the hope” that they see demonstrated in our lives. **Pray** for continued good health and abilities to do the work we are called to. **Pray** for our safety in all the miles we will be traveling over Christmas to be with our families.

Thank you for your prayers and support!  
Jack and Cindy Ippel  
[www.hopeinhungary.blogspot.com](http://www.hopeinhungary.blogspot.com)

## Getting To Know

**Paul Whitley**

**By Larry Kendrick**

**Where were you born and raised? Tell us about your family:**

I was born in Middletown, NY, and raised in Sparrowbush, NY. My father is the pastor of a non-denominational church there, and my mother teaches at the Christian school affiliated with that church. I have two older sisters who currently reside in the Boston area.

**Places you’ve lived:**

Sparrowbush, NY  
Boston, MA  
Wheaton, IL

**Occupation:**

Piano Teacher

**Schools you’ve attended:**

Wheaton College  
New England Conservatory  
Northwestern University

**Hobbies:**

Reading  
Downhill Skiing (although not so much in Illinois)  
Walking/Running the Prairie Path

**Favorite TV show:**

I’m not big on having “favorites,” but I’ll give you general ideas for this and subsequent “favorite” type questions.

I like British humor – “Good Neighbors” and “To the Manor Born” are up there on my list.

**Favorite movie:**

Here are a few that I like:  
Dead Poet’s Society  
My Big Fat Greek Wedding

While we’re on movies, I’d like to mention that some movies are high on my list in large part because of their soundtrack. Many of these are animated – such as Prince of Egypt.

**Favorite book:**

Here’s a list of authors I really respect:

Tolkien  
Dostoevsky  
Tolstoy  
Dorothy Sayers  
And, of course, C.S. Lewis

**Favorite “pig-out” food:**

Cookies (various types) with lots of milk.  
Anything that Irene Bommelje or Mary Kok makes.

**Favorite vacation:**

My extended family used to rent a chalet at Gore Mountain, NY each year during President’s Day weekend. We would ski during the day, and then play games (cards, board games, murder in the dark, etc...) in the evenings.

**Favorite Bible verse:**

Psalm 33

**How long have you been at WCRC:**

4 years

**Favorite thing about WCRC:**

The people here are very encouraging and hospitable.

**Anything else people might like to know about you:**

I’d just like to clear up my student/teacher status, because there seems to be some confusion about this. I teach piano (individual lessons) in Wheaton and Hinsdale, and I am also a graduate student at Northwestern University (studying piano).

# Council Notes

By Steve Vogel

The Council has not met since August. The Council, which consists of the 9 elders and 8 deacons, has 4 regularly scheduled quarterly meetings each year, and the next one is November 24. In November, the Council will review a proposed budget for 2009 from the Business Board, and when approved by Council it will go to the congregation for consideration.

The Council also has a special meeting coming up in January. On January 24, the Council meets on a Saturday morning to start the process for nominating and electing new elders and deacons. Elders and Deacons serve for terms of 3 years and in June of 2009, elders Craig Buma, Steve Vogel, and Steve VanZee will be retiring, along with deacons Keith Ellens, Mary Hooyer, and Julia Tiesman. The Council welcomes the input of the congregation in suggesting capable men and women to be nominated for these offices. Please let any council member know of suggested nominees before the January 24 meeting.

In September and October, the Shepherding Board, Ministry Board, Elders, and Deacons had meetings. The Ministry Board heard from the Outreach committee which is planning an overhaul of the church's website with the able help of Tom Lynema. The plan is to have a site in which the content can be maintained by several different

people in the church, rather than just one "webmaster". So we can have a section of the website for information about community service events, and it would be maintained by someone from the community service committee. The overall focus of the website will continue to be outreach oriented.

We also heard very positive reviews of our new church lobby from election officials and voters. Our church serves as a polling place for 2 precincts, and this was the first election since our remodeling project. The Outreach committee had staffed an information table (with coffee and cookies) and about a dozen people picked up information on our church. We plan to staff this information table at future congressional and presidential elections.

The big item that's been on everyone's mind recently is our new pews, or lack of new pews due to the smoke damage at the warehouse. Our old pews were donated to a startup church in Aurora, and shortly after the last truckload left, we were notified of the warehouse fire. But now the good news is that the reworked pews will be available earlier than anticipated, and should be in place by Thanksgiving. That leaves just a few items to go and our Building on Purpose project will be complete. It's been a long road, but the new facilities that we have make all the work worthwhile.

# Insights and Encounters

By Bob Gerritsen

About a year ago, Dave Sikkenga wrote a piece for Insights and Encounters in which he reflected on his new role as a grandfather. His article resonated with me because I entered the grandfather role about 3 weeks after he did. He talked about the emotion that

was stirred within him when he contemplated that “his son was a dad.” I couldn’t have that identical experience because I have not fathered children of my own; however, I inherited a son and daughter when I married Barbara. We married when they were away at college so I never participated much in raising them.

When daughter Ann brought grandson Ryan into the world just before Christmas 2 years ago, the thought that hit me right in the center of my emotions was, “There is going to be a little guy running around here calling me ‘Grandpa’.” Even though I am not biologically his grandfather, nor have I done anything to qualify me to be a “Grandpa”,

God has seen fit to put me in that role. What a blessing!

Ryan’s father, Jim, works most of the time out of the country, and his mother is a flight attendant who typically travels 3 day a week. That means that Barbara and I have the privilege of taking care of Ryan for

almost half of each week. This of course is both a challenge and a blessing.

Technology has alleviated some of the challenge. It didn’t take grandma long to figure out that she really didn’t need to shop for rubber pants with today’s modern diapers. And since I had never changed a diaper in my life, I sure was glad that I didn’t need to deal with those humongous safety pins. And there are many educational things on TV today – like the segment that teaches a child how to brush his teeth. Ryan’s mommy took advantage of this piece the other day and quickly brought him his toothbrush in front of the TV. Unfortunately the piece ends by instructing the child to spit. He did.

We are bracing for the “terrible twos.” He is learning discipline so well that he intentionally does something wrong and gives himself a timeout. I don’t think it’s supposed to work like that.

But the blessings have far exceeded the challenges. Let me tell about one “insight” and one “encounter.” Both of these events occurred several months ago before he was saying much of anything that was intelligible.

The “encounter” made me realize that we can do our best at training a child but there is so much more development that God works out in a child. We had been trying to get him to say “Amen” after we prayed. He without fail would fold his little hands, but there was no “Amen.” Then one day I was sitting in an adjacent room watching him as

he took a book and sat down at his little table. Before he opened the book, he folded his hands and said, "Amen." It all happened so fast, it took me a few seconds to even realize what had occurred. I count it a privilege to have witnessed his very first solo prayer.

The "insight" is really a lesson in humility, because it involves Ryan's insight and his grandpa's humility (or humiliation). Ryan has a battery operated machine that plays music and blows little balls out the top. The machine stopped working and Ryan knew it.

Since he is such a curious guy, I thought I would take the opportunity to show him how to change the batteries. (Since they are behind a screwed on door I felt pretty safe at showing him this.) He watched intently as I unscrewed the door. But then the door would not open even though the screw was completely disengaged. Ryan watched me struggle with it for a bit, but then when an opportunity presented itself, he reached over and with a single push on the door popped it right open. "How did you do that?" I asked, knowing that I would get no answer. I replaced the batteries and screwed the door back on. I pushed the start button just to check things out. Nothing. I contemplated what I could have done wrong, "Did I get a battery in backwards?" As I sat there, Ryan reached over again and toggled the master on/off switch. I could hear him thinking, "There grandpa, now try it." Of course it worked just fine. It amazes me to watch his development.

May God bless all of the little ones that brighten our lives.

### **By Craig Hummel**

There are times in our lives when God's love shines like a beacon through some of our deepest, darkest hours.

It has been almost a year since my nephew Josh suffered a severe, traumatic, brain injury at the hands of still unknown attackers. I felt, at the time, as though I were walking along enjoying the splendor of a forest and suddenly a sink swallowed me up and deposited me into a pit of roaring lions. The lions were keeping me at bay and represented the vast array of emotions I was experiencing; anger, sorrow, helplessness, and the most debilitating emotion for me, a sudden pointlessness to my current occupation.

Suddenly, everything had lost its joy. I am ashamed to say it was hard for me to even be excited about the prospects of my new son. It was a pit of despair like I've never known and pray I never know again. As time marched on and Josh did not improve a song by the band, "Casting Crowns" kept reverberating in my head:

*"I was sure by now, that you would have reached down and wiped our tears away, stepped in and saved the day. But once again I say Amen and it's still raining...I'll praise you in this storm and I will lift my hands, for you are who you are no matter where I am. Every tear I've cried, you hold in your hand. You never left my side and*

*though my heart is torn, I will praise you in this storm."*

As the lions continued to roar still I knew I was not alone in that pit and that God would not let them devour me. Yet beyond His presence, something was slowly changing. God began providing supportive hands to pull me slowly, steadily out of that pit. Suddenly, it was obvious that out of horror God was creating something beautiful. Two of the churches my brother and sister-in-law were a part of, provided unbelievable support in numerous ways.

People we barely knew around the globe were praying for Josh. For me, my family, my friends in the church (many of you), coworkers, and Pastor John assisted God in carrying me out of the darkness. Finally, my wife helped me to see that I was in a downward spiral. She had the courage to confront me and helped me realize the darkness I was stumbling through stemmed from that traumatic event. I was so angry and unhappy. Once the source was identified the healing could begin.

Today I am in a much better place. Though Josh's recovery is slow, overall he is doing well and is at home. I know God is using this situation to mold me. It has made me truly evaluate my entire life critically again, to see if I am doing what really matters and to make sure I don't squander any moment of this life. Another song rings true in my head tonight, that of John Waller;

*"Let it be said of us as we walked among the living, let it be said of us by the ones we*

*leave behind, let it be said of us, that we lived to be a blessing for life"*

I thank so many of you who have been a blessing for my life and it is my prayer that we will all choose to be blessings for life, that we will seek to find what it is God is trying to teach us rather than wallowing in our sorrows in that pit of despair.

# Humor Me

*Thank God for church ladies with typewriters. The following sentences actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced in church services.*

1. Mark your calendars for Wednesday, March 16 for the National Prayer & Fasting Conference. The cost for attending the conference includes meals.
2. Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa, will be speaking tonight at Calvary Methodist. Come and hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.
3. The sermon is morning is “Jesus Walks on the Water”. The sermon tonite is “The Search for Jesus”.
4. Our youth basketball team is back in action Wednesday nite. Come and watch us kill Christ the King.
5. Ladies, remember the rummage sale. It’s a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don’t forget to bring your husbands.
6. The peacemaking meeting for today has been cancelled due to a conflict.
7. Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community. Smile at someone who is hard to love. And give a friendly hell to someone who doesn’t care much about you.
8. Don’t let worry kill you off – let the church help.

9. For those of you who have children and don’t know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
10. Next Thursday, there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.
11. Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Jack’s sermons.
12. The rector will preach his final sermon after which the choir will sing, “Break Forth Into Joy”.
13. Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24<sup>th</sup> in the church. So ends a friendship that began in grade school.
14. A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.
15. At the evening service tonite, the sermon topic will be, “What is Hell”. Come early and listen to our choir practice.
16. Eight new choir robes are currently needed due to the addition of several new members and the deterioration of some older ones.
17. Scouts are saving aluminum cans, bottles and other items to be recycled. Proceeds will be used to cripple children.
18. Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.
19. Attend and you will hear an excellent speaker and heave a healthy lunch.

20. The church will host an evening of fine dining, superb entertainment and gracious hospitality.
21. Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00 PM – Prayer and medication to follow.
22. The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.
23. This evening at 7 PM, there will be a hymn sing in the park across from the church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.
24. Ladies Bible Study will be held Thursday morning at 10 AM. All ladies are invited to lunch in the fellowship hall after the B. S. is done.
25. The pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday.
26. The Low Self Esteem support group will meet next Thursday at 7 PM. Please use the back door.
27. The eighth-graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the church basement, Friday at 7 PM. You are invited to attend this tragedy.
28. Weight Watchers will meet at 7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use the double door at the side entrance.

# Kids Korner

1. Where did Lazarus, Martha and Mary live?

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2. Who was chosen to replace Judas after he hanged himself?

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3. Who was a “wild donkey” of a man?

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4. What evangelist had four daughters who prophesied?

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5. At what hour of the day did Jesus die?

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6. How tall was Goliath?

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7. Who was the first Christian martyr?

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8. What 12 year old girl was brought back to life by Jesus?

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9. Who gave Moses his name?

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10. Who told Noah to come out of the ark?

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11. In what town was Jethro a priest?

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12. What was the name of the centurion Paul was handed over to?

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## Look it up

1. John 11:1

2. Acts 1:23-26

3. Genesis 16:11-12

4. Acts 27:8-9

5. Mark 15:34-37

6. 1 Samuel 17:4

7. Acts 7:59-60

8. Luke 8:40-56

9. Exodus 2:10

10. Genesis 8:15-16

11. Exodus 18:1

12. Acts 27:1

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Note: If you are between the ages of 7 and 12 any time during the calendar year 2008, sign your name and put your answers in my mail box (Gabrielse) by Sunday, December 14th.

Once again, Sarah Dykstra is in the lead in the race for the \$25 gift certificate to be awarded in the January (Dec. 28<sup>th</sup>) issue. The standings are as follows:

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Sarah Dykstra   | 57 |
| Dakota Nichols  | 24 |
| Kathryn Kmiecik | 23 |