

But Then This ...

By Pastor John

A Brief History of “Building On Purpose”

Our editor, Ed Gabrielse, has asked me to write up a history of our “Building On Purpose” project. What follows is a narrative based on my recollection and items gleaned from various council, congregational, long-range planning, and building committee minutes. The items from minutes and dates are in italics. I apologize for any errors in fact or lapses in my memory.

In 1999, shortly after our congregation completed our first “Refocus Your Church” project, our council, in response to the results of that survey, and protracted discussion, decided to submit a survey on worship and worship related matters to the congregation. And just because we thought the congregation’s answers might be interesting, as a part of that survey were two questions about our property here on 711 E. Harrison:

1. We asked whether or not people thought that our worship space needed to be remodeled.
2. We asked whether or not we should seek a larger piece of land and build a new worship and ministry center.

The results of that survey were “neutral” on remodeling and a clear rejection of the idea of selling the property and moving to build on another site.

But realizing that we could not simply “do nothing” to our rapidly aging fifty year old building, in *November, 2000*, the council appointed a “Facilities Long-Range Planning Committee.” That committee, after meeting for several months presented three scenarios to the council which were to be shared with the congregation in the fall of 2000. The three scenarios were:

1. Stay here and spruce things up a bit.
2. Stay here and do a substantial remodel to the 711 structure and build a ministry center in place of ‘The House Next Door’ at 915 Howard.

3. Sell 711 and build in Winfield at the site of the Vietnamese Church—do church with the Vietnamese and call our new church ‘New Hope Community Church.’

Those scenarios quickly resulted in the dismissal of #1 as something that had no vision and no hope; and #3 because the Winfield property was not considered big enough for a modern community church building with ample parking. Also, after consulting with Pastor Huu, he made it clear that the VNNHCRC wished to try to eventually become a self-supporting church, something they could not do in scenario #3.

But scenario #2 got us thinking and talking and dreaming and we spent the next year and a half with the facilities matters never far from our talk about the future.

A very significant event happened in May of 2002. A few months prior, the council had asked Jack Kremers to do some thinking and sketching of what we could do with our lobby space and entry way. Jack prepared some sketches for the council and was invited to make a presentation on the possibilities that he saw at an adult Sunday Discussion Group meeting. Jack’s presentation and sketches highlighted two different areas:

1. The use and design of our current building entries as well as the image that the entries and the building itself project to visitors and passersby.
2. Our handicap accessibility. Other than the wheelchair ramp we are “inaccessible.” We have no restroom facilities and no access to the Fellowship hall or to the lower education wing for anyone in a wheelchair.

At the Adult Discussion group Jack’s sketches for an atrium, his articulation of the need to present a visually inviting place to the community, and the consciousness raising that we need to be a handicap accessible public building generated a tremendous amount of excited talk and some real vision among our leadership and our church at large.

In *May, 2003*, the council appointed a Vision Committee (which later was renamed to Facilities Planning Committee --“FPC”) whose mandate was to look at our church’s mission statement and at previous reports and then bring a list of options for

our church, to include but not be limited to “Staying,” “Remodeling,” “Building at a different location,” or “Buying a different building.”

After several months of meeting, the FPC, after surveying the various ministries of the church, and after considering realistic opportunities for church growth, recommended that:

1. *Add additional space: two – three more class rooms, more nursery space, more administrative space is needed.*

2. *No recommendation concerning accessibility issues at this time.*

3. *Demolish the house next door and replace it with an administration & educational facility.*
August 2003

In November, 2003, the council held a pivotal meeting. The FPC presented extensive reports on the background of their mandate, their research and their conclusions. The FPC's recommendation was to expand the current facilities along these four main priorities: (these are paraphrased--jfs)

1. Raze and rebuild the house next door to the maximum size allowed by zoning to add more classrooms, storage and offices.

2. Bring the church building up to ADA compliance by adding an elevator and other access improvements.

3. Remodel the current kitchen.

4. Rebuild the foyer atrium.

Other options: Expand sanctuary, improve audio/visual system.

Recommendation: Proceed with the next steps necessary to accomplish the four main priorities as presented.

Subsequent discussion provided rough estimates for the building projects:

- house next door - \$300,000
- elevator - \$80-\$100,000
- other access improvements - \$200,000
- atrium - \$800,000

At this meeting the following motion was made and supported and passed unanimously:

That the council adopts the scenario that we stay in our current location and expand our existing facilities. November, 2003

In 2004 the council appointed a “Financial Feasibility Study Committee” and also continued to receive reports from the FPC. At the council meeting of *March, 2004*, we heard reports on the progress in thinking about the various stated priorities. Also, the Financial Feasibility Committee reported on their surveying of the congregation.

Motion was made, seconded and passed to present all four main priorities;

1. *raze and rebuild the house,*

2. *become ADA compliant,*

3. *remodel the kitchen, and*

4. *add an atrium*

in one package to the congregation at the April, 2004, congregational meeting.

The proposed plan for consideration by the congregation at its April meeting would include plans for each project, proposed financing approaches, and schedules as they relate to both the construction issues and the financing issues.
March, 2004

After the congregation provisionally accepted these proposals in April, the rest of 2004 and early 2005 saw a flurry of meetings, feasibility studies and planning. The congregation was kept well informed through frequent posting in the bulletins about the progress.

At the council meeting of *February, 2005*, Chuck Schoenherr distributed the results of the informational survey of probable giving toward our building projects. His committee concluded that a \$1.5 million project would be within reach for the congregation.

Architect Mark Bushhouse distributed copies of three possible versions of the exterior elevation for the church with a west classroom addition and a new entry atrium. He also distributed a plan for a single story replacement for the house next door. Considerable time was spent discussing these.
February, 2005

At the Congregational meeting of *April, 2005*, we heard sobering new numbers of revised cost estimates:

1. Howard St. house replacement - \$550,000 (single-story with 2,400 square feet).
2. Atrium/foyer space - \$1,900,000 (includes expanded downstairs area, with levels removed; elevator; new ADA bathrooms and office reconfiguration).
3. Atrium project plus west wall expansion - \$3,900,000 (adds six new classrooms, and includes air, electric and water systems for both sides).

The finance committee chairman presented a recent survey of nineteen (19) families of the congregation regarding their giving commitments for the next three years. The implication from the survey is that a \$2,000,000 project is aggressive but feasible.

At the Council meeting of *June, 2005*, we met with architect Mark Bushhouse who heard our concerns about cost overruns and after asking us, "How small is still worthwhile?" commented that he believed he can get us into a plan that meets our price range. As Mark saw it, the smallest project to meet our basic needs was the following:

1. Expand the narthex by building two stories high continuing on the line of the education wing on the Harrison Avenue side.
2. Put a new stairway in the addition area.
3. Leave the education wing as is.
4. Do whatever work is necessary in the mechanical room.
5. Install an elevator to go from the narthex to the lower level.
6. Remove the lower landing to get to the level of the Fellowship Hall.
7. Build two accessible bathrooms on the lower level.
8. Move the cooling unit outside of where the building extension will be, or possibly put it on the roof.

At this meeting we decided to break the whole project into three phases, to be done sequentially as money and pledges became available:

1. The work described above;
2. The ministry center next door;
3. Major maintenance projects and upgrading the educational wing.

In a Congregational Meeting, *December, 2005*, the Congregation accepted the revised cost estimates with a nearly 90% approval rate. We also approved the following motions:

1. *Work on each phase will begin when 75% of the funding for that phase has been donated or pledged and 25% of the phase total has been raised in cash.*
2. *The council recommends that the congregation approve spending of up to \$50,000 for schematic drawings and architectural engineering work necessary to begin the zoning review process. These costs are included in the \$1.95 million project budget.*

2006 saw bi-monthly meetings by the FBC, the Building Committee, the Fund-Raising Committee, the Communications Committee and the Executive committee. All were really active.

At the Congregational meeting of *August, 2005*, we passed the following motions:

1. *Approve additional \$71,000 to Phase 1 to cover the cost of unexpected but necessary items revealed by the detailed planning and engineering studies.*
2. *Approve an additional \$134,000 to the Phase 1 to cover the cost of recommended additional options that have surfaced.*
3. *Funding for the additional \$205,000 (\$71,000 + \$134,000) be secured through long term loans from church members or from lending institutions.*

We broke ground *November, 2006*.

Phase One, (the lobby, and ADA accessibility) was completed in *May, 2007*.

Phase Two, (the Ministry Center) was completed *June, 2008*.

What became Phase Three (new windows throughout the building and sanctuary renovation) was finished *November, 2008*.

The people who need to be thanked publicly for this are many, many indeed. To name them all would name most all of the church. And despite the fear of leaving some very worthy people off of this list of people to thank, I name the following—without

whom and without the amazing grace of God—none of this could have been done: Dave Ridderhoff, Bob Hooyer, Paul Eldersveld, Dave Nyenhuis, Kris Tukker, Foster Rooks, Stephanie Disselkoe, Jack Kremers, Mike Richardson, Nancy Richardson, Chuck Schoenherr, Dave Nelson, Ed Gabrielse, Mary Sikkenga, Daniel Sytsma, Terry Tiesman, Floyd VanderMeer, and many – truly many – others. God bless you and thank you very much.

Missions

By Grace Huitsing

CHRISTMAS, 2008

“—He Came To Set the Prisoner Free”

After correcting any beginning lesson sent to WCRC, instructors for Crossroad Bible Institute continue with one incarcerated student for about two years of lesson review and letters.

“Tony” recently completed the lessons of Tier Two--Ten Men of the Bible, In God We Trust, and The Sermon on the Mount. “Tony” has often asked for prayer for his rather limited son, including prayer for school help or a construction camp in the summer. In an earlier letter, he described his quarters:

I live in a 5 x 8 cell and we are allowed our own T.V.'s. So I watch a lot, but only the basic channels. ABC-NBC-CBS-Fox WB, and Thank God for TBN. I also watch a lot of news on the Morning Show and late evenings.

You are right about growing discouraged in this place, but I stay focused with the Word of God and I allow the Spirit to enrich me daily. Psalm 118:17 says it all ('I will not die but live and proclaim what the Lord has done') and I voice that prayer to the heavens often because I know that God hears me and he also hears his son who is interceding on my behalf. Amen....

Tony wrote his final lesson and note in December:

'To the teachers and instructors at Crossroad. I would like to thank you and thank God for your Ministry. You all have truly helped me over the years to grow closer. As this chapter comes to a close in my life, I seek to find more of God in every place and every person I encounter. I have learned a lot and shared a lot over the years.

This has been the most interesting Ministry by mail that I have been blessed to be a part of. It has caused me to start my own mail ministry where I can share God's Word with others of like faith. I have learned to be a better Christian through this ministry. And I hope to be a part of you'all's family somehow, someday in the future. I may be on DEATHROW but I have chose to live on LIFEROW, with Jesus Christ as my cellmate.

It's been a great journey. With love on my side and in my heart, I feel that all things are possible. And all things are possible with him because, despite the circumstances and the sight of things, there's always a BUT. Before God and going into 2009, that will be my attitude. Yes, I'm on Deathrow—But GOD.

I love you all, and I'm praying for you all. God Bless . Born to serve, “Tony.”

Instructors Ed Bossenga, Carolyn and Lou Bommelje, Gary Clousing, Ted DeJong, Craig Hummel, Grace Huitsing, Bill Lothers, and Hildi VanderVeen would be blessed to have you join them. If you are interested, please see Craig Hummel.

Update on WCRC Refocus for 2008-09

By Dave Sikkenga

In the September '08 Cross Connections article, we introduced the Refocus program for 2008/2009. The program, previously conducted about 10 years ago, is a systematic method to determine the strengths of eight key elements of our church. The lower scoring element(s) then become the focus of additional study to understand reasons for the lower scores. This is followed by establishing an action plan to address the area(s) needing improvement.

After successful implementation of the action plan a follow-up survey is recommended to measure progress. The "Refocus" program of 1998 has now been renamed "Natural Church Development (NCD)" but the term "Refocus" still fits rather well. The eight key elements evaluated are:

1. Empowering leadership.
2. Gift-based ministry.
3. Passionate spirituality.
4. Effective structures.
5. Inspiring worship.
6. Holistic small groups.
7. Need-oriented evangelism.
8. Loving relationships.

On September 27, the NCD survey was given to 30 members of our congregation selected to match congregational demographics and comprised of members active in our church and in small groups.

We were supported in the survey administration and scoring by our "coach", Peter Kelder, from CRC Home Missions. He had received the needed training to handle this survey and to input the results into the software provided. The results from our survey were compared against thousands of other churches in the US and the scores were determined for each of the 8 elements. These results were shared with the Refocus committee and the elders.

Overall, our church scored a very satisfactory 49— with a score of 50 being average. However, there were some scores well above average and some below average. The table compares the highest and lowest two elements as scored in 1998 and in 2008.

	1998 Survey	2008 Survey
Highest scores	Celebrative Worship, Disciple making groups	Holistic Small Groups, Loving Relationships
Lowest scores	Functional structures Caring relationships	Need-oriented evangelism Inspiring worship services

The surprise to the Refocus committee was that one of the lowest scores from 1998 (Caring Relationships) had become one of the strongest (Loving relationships) in 2008. However, we were even more surprised that the high rating of "Celebrative Worship" in 1998 had scored the lowest in 2008 (renamed "Inspiring worship services").

This was a surprise because council surveys of our pastor and his ministry completed in 1996, 2004, and again as recently as 2007 have all indicated very strong scores relating to the worship service.

"Need-oriented evangelism" also scored rather low this year. The term refers to evangelism that is not pushy or manipulative but rather that which shares the gospel in a way that meets the questions and needs of non-Christians.

After discussion with the elders, the Refocus committee presented the findings to the Worship

Planning Committee. All groups agreed with the recommendation of the Refocus committee to proceed to the next stage—a more in-depth study of the lowest scoring element, “Inspiring Worship Services”.

A very useful survey last given to our congregation in 2001 focusing on the elements of worship is being updated (Pastor John's effort to coordinate this and to handle a lot of input is greatly appreciated) and will be given early in 2009 to the entire congregation. Please pray with us for honest and timely response to this large task by the congregation and for God's guidance as this effort continues.

The Refocus committee includes: Martha VanZee, Floyd VanderMeer, Pastor John, and co-chairs Scott Plaisier and Dave Sikkenga.

From the Pew

By Steve Vogel

This isn't my normal column this month. Usually I write "Council Notes" in which I try to communicate some of the recent activities of the Council, Elders, or Ministry Board. The main event of the past month was the passage of the 2009 budget, and the congregational meeting at which the congregation adopted it. This is not the most soul-moving stuff to write about, but it is necessary. The move of funding support for Christian Education from separate funds into the General Fund produced a lot of discussion, which was expected. I could write about that, but I think that the deacons are better able to do that, and will likely communicate more about it early next year.

So this month I'm writing about Christian spending. Last month's column by Ed Gabrielse, our fine editor, on the impact that our spending (or lack of spending) has on others got me thinking. Jane and I are both quite frugal by nature. We don't spend our money needlessly or spend on frivolous things. We just replaced our washer, after 27 years. I had managed to fix the old one several years ago when the pump gave out, and had hoped to get another 20 years out of it, but this time I was not able to do the repair. And when we do spend, we like to get a good deal. There must be something in our heritage, our upbringing, or our DNA that makes getting a deal so satisfying.

But lately I've been wondering if getting a great deal is always the best thing. As Ed's column last month pointed out, every spending decision has an impact on other people. Our spending enables others to provide for their families and employees, and may make life better for workers in third world countries. I realize that when I spend, I must spend responsibly. Every spending choice has an impact on others. I can shop for goods that are made in America, and perhaps help retain jobs in this country. Or I can shop for the lowest price, which usually means that the item was produced in China, and help that country grow.

And there are impacts beyond these. You can shop at a neighborhood store that provides a

higher level of service than a "big-box" store. Maybe you will pay a little more, but if you ever need service or repairs, you will be able to get it.

As responsible Christians, and as responsible spenders, we should try to gain a fuller understanding of the effects that our spending decisions have, and try to make those decisions in keeping with our Christian beliefs. Some stores will treat and pay their workers poorly, while others will pay at least a "living wage" and provide medical benefits. Often they sell the same or similar products at similar prices. Your spending decision on where to shop can have an effect on the well being of others.

We have decided to try direct our spending with stores that treat workers fairly by paying a decent wage and providing health benefits. We try to buy Fair Trade coffee whenever we can. We avoid the fast food restaurants that have had the most negative effects on workers and food producers.

Obtaining information to understand where to direct your spending, however, is not always easy. There isn't a simple list of merchants and manufacturers who follow Christian principles that you can get. And any list would over-simplify the matter. Making these choices often requires balancing different competing principles.

The important thing is to start doing some research so that you understand at least some of the impacts of your spending decisions.

We have found these resources eye-opening: The book "**Nickel and Dimed**" by Barbara Ehrenreich, the documentary film "**The High Cost of Low Price**", and the book "**Fast Food Nation**." I'm sure that there are other resources as well.

None of these are written from a Christian perspective, but they provide a more detailed view into certain areas of our economy to which you can then apply Christian principles.

So, go and spend to help stimulate the economy and help the lives of others. But when you spend, please spend wisely.

Hymn Stories

*O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home*

Author – Isaac Watts
Composer – William Croft

This hymn, considered to be one of the grandest in the whole realm of English hymnody, is a paraphrase of Psalm 90, a psalm of Moses. This psalm is a commentary of the subject of time. It originally consisted of nine verses. In its present usage the hymn is usually limited to stanzas one, two, three, five and nine.

The hymn was originally part of “The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament,” published by Watts in 1719. In this book, he paraphrased in Christian verse the entire psalter with the exception of twelve Psalms which he felt were unsuited for Christian usage.

This hymn undoubtedly ranks as one of the finest of all Watts’s 600 or more hymns. It is the one hymn that is still sung at all festive occasions in England.

Isaac Watts, often called the father of English hymnody, was born on July 17, 1674, in Southampton, England. He was the eldest of nine children. His father was a learned deacon in a dissenting Congregational church and at the time of his son’s birth, he was in prison for his non-conformist beliefs.

As a boy, young Isaac displayed literary genius, writing verses at a very early age. It is said that he had the annoying habit of rhyming even every day conversation. One day, as he was being scolded by his father for this practice, he cried out, “Oh, father, do some pity take, and I will no more verses make”.

One of his early concerns was the low ebb of music in the churches. The singing consisted of ponderous hymn-psalms only. His father, one day, challenged him to write something better for the congregation – a challenge he readily

accepted. For the next two years, he wrote a new hymn every Sunday.

Although Watts was in frail health during much of his life, he was a scholarly genius in many different fields. His writings include essays, discussions of psychology, three volumes of sermons, catechisms, twenty-nine treatises on theology, textbooks on logic and a variety of other works. He had a powerful influence upon the thinking of the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Isaac Watts died in 1748 at the age of seventy-four. His monument was placed in Westminster Abbey, the highest honor that any Englishman can have.

A great hymn text deserves majestic music. No one has every disputed the musical worth of the tune for this hymn, “St. Anne,” composed by William Croft in 1708. Croft was a well-trained church musician, having earned his Doctorate in Music at Oxford University. He was the organist at the church of St Anne in Soho, London, during the reign of Queen Anne.

The tune first appeared anonymously in the “Supplement to the New Version of the Psalms, 6th edition” in 1708. It was originally intended to be used with a version of Psalm 62. It was not until sometime later when set to Watts’s text that the tune gained recognition.

As evidence of the musical worth of this tune, master composers such as Handel (O Praise the Lord) and Bach (Fugue in E-Flat Major – often called St Anne’s Fugue) have used it for their works.

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”.

Getting to Know

John & Heidi Slinkman By Larry Kendrick

Names (including wife's maiden name), and any children:

John Slinkman, Jr.

Heidi Froelich Slinkman

We have no children; just a mutt named Nina.

Where we were each born and raised, and about our families:

John: I was born in Chicago and raised in Cicero and Elmhurst. I have two younger brothers and a younger sister who all live in the western suburbs. My mom lives only 5 minutes away.

Heidi: I was born in Highland Park, MI and was raised in Livonia, MI; Avon Lake, OH; Northville, MI; and Pella, IA. My parents live in Holland, MI; while my brother lives in North Carolina and my sister lives in Kansas.

Places we've lived individually or together:

We have never lived anywhere individually because we married after our sophomore year at Central College, Pella, IA. We lived in Kobe, Japan; Milan, Italy; Wheaton, and now Aurora.

How we met:

We were both P.E. majors who met at a picnic before our freshman year at Central College. I was impressed with John's good table manners and he was impressed with my long blond hair (Is that too shallow?). Later, we both worked for the food service at Central and became good friends before dating seriously.

When and where we were married:

We were married at Second Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa in 1976.

Occupations:

We are both teachers at Jefferson Middle School in Villa Park. Heidi teaches 6th grade language arts and John teaches P.E. and is the athletic director. We have taught in the same schools for our entire careers, except for four years when we taught at separate Christian schools.

Schools we attended:

John: Timothy Christian H.S., Central College, Oregon State University, National Louis University

Heidi: Pella High School, Central College, National Louis University.

Hobbies:

John and Heidi: Cooking, visiting ethnic restaurants, traveling, decorating (Heidi) cycling, walking, boating, watching the Cubs, and spoiling our dog

Favorite TV show:

Both: Deadliest Catch, Andy Griffith Show

Favorite movie:

Heidi: Sound of Music, Ben Hur

John: It's a Wonderful Life

Favorite book:

Heidi: Born Identity by Robert Ludlum, Loving God by Charles Colson

John: The Perfect Storm by Sebastian Junger

Favorite "pig-out" food:

"I am the original cookie monster!" munched Heidi. John loves Chicago-style hotdogs

Favorite vacation:

A week in Burma (Myanmar)

Favorite Bible verse:

Heidi: Joshua 1:9 (a great comfort when living far from home)

John: I John 5:20

How long we've been attending WCRC:

20 years

Favorite thing about WCRC:

The unfailing faith of the loving people

Additional things people may not know about us:

*While we were having dinner at a country restaurant in Milan, Italy, robbers forcibly entered and robbed all the patrons. As the bad guys were emptying a purse to stash the goods, one of their guns discharged accidentally. John was shot in the hip. After much recuperation, both in Italy and the USA, John was left with nerve damage in his leg and foot.

*Heidi was part of a TV commercial for PANAM, standing in front of a 747 on a runway in Osaka.

*We both appeared in a Japanese TV soap opera.

*John played semi-pro basketball for Kobe Torokai in Japan.

Insights and Encounters

By Jim DeHaan

“...I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois, and in your mother Eunice.” II Timothy 1:5a

Now that our own children are raising toddlers, I recall an example of the powerful impact that parents have on the developing relationship of their children to their Savior.

Here is a moment in time that may show that while we as parents may not be sure that our children understand, they can and do.

It was a year or two after the conclusion of WW II. The small town of my birth in the Netherlands was returning to a more normal life. The deprivations of the prior years of Nazi occupation were now things of the past. While goods and many consumables were still scarce, food was again available to all. The town had not been bombed, and even the old castle was returning to its former role of tourist attraction. Peace had returned.

Suddenly, one day there was a tremendous explosion. Many windows in the town were shattered. Amid the broken glass there must have been fear and panic among those who could not and would not forget the very recent war and occupation.

Mom gathered my three or four year old self and my “baby sister” on my bed. The children’s bedroom, on the second floor, faced away from the direction of the explosion and was not damaged in any way.

Our mother must have been badly shaken, but she prayed with and for us. I cannot recall what she said, but am sure that it included all those killed and injured in the explosion of the truckload of munitions, as well as for protection, comfort and safety.

That prayer, and many more since, have been answered by God’s continuing love and care,

expressed first in our young lives, through our mother.

We are thankful that in addition to having been giving toddlers, we may practice Joel 1:3. “Tell it to your children, and let your children tell it to their children, and their children to the next generation.”

By Wendy Geinosky

It came as a real surprise! “We are renovating the apartments. Either move to one we have already

done, or you will have to move out” my landlord told me a few short months ago.

This was the only home I ever shared with Mike. His memory filled each room. Now they were asking me to just walk away from all that meant so much to me.

I went up to the rental office and explained how distressful their action was. Of course, they had no idea and apologized for the distress the announcement had caused. But their position was firm, either move to one that was already done or move out.

I looked at one of the renovated apartments. It was nice, but it did not have some of the touches that Mike and I had enjoyed together. It just did not feel right. I began to look at other apartments and some condos.

A couple places were do-able but still something did not feel right. Suddenly everything fell into place. When I stepped into the last condo unit in the area it was warm and inviting. It belonged to a widow who had taken good care of it. She had recently passed away and so her children were selling the estate. It had been on the market for only a short period of time; but was already vacant. So I could move right in. And the price was right.

The condo felt like home!! And that is when I heard what God was trying to tell me: “I know that this is hard for you and that you are upset; but this is what I have in mind for you right now.”

I will be moving to the condo shortly. Everyone is very excited: I know friends from church will help; and friends from work have offered to help as well. My boss is even planning a housewarming party.

As many of you know, my family is very minimal. So friends at church, and those I work with, are like family to me. But I am not alone. I have learned through many difficult challenges that the Lord is constantly looking out for me. Every time something happens, He lets me know that it is part of his plan - and He is right there to help.

Our God is an Awesome God!

Activities WCRC Junior High Group

Small in Numbers but Large in Spirit

By **Dave Sikkenga**

One expert comments on Junior High kids: "Compared to grade school, middle school is a whirlwind of social changes, peer pressure and the growth of independence..... just as a baby will cry and cry from frustration while learning a new skill, the middle-school child will withdraw to begin to acclimate himself to new experiences." Thus the challenge: what type of activities can Christian youth leaders use to provide meaningful experiences for this age group?

Our answer has been to focus on doing the Lord's work and to pray that He will help our youth see the importance of serving Him. We don't promise the kids or the parents that the Junior High Youth group is first of all focused on "fun" or social activities—although these things are included in the program. Rather most of our activities seek ways to serve the Lord by serving others. Surprisingly to some, the result is that our kids typically find these activities rewarding and they feel good about doing them. I am convinced that the positive values established by our kids' Christian parents, teachers, pastors, and leaders are responsible for the good feelings our kids have in doing the Lord's work.

So far this year our events have included:

September - Kickoff Social with Games and Food at Memorial Park.

October - Lead a Worship Service at Rest Haven Nursing Home.

November—Help Distribute Thanksgiving Food Baskets + Bowling Outing.

December - Cookies, Homemade Christmas Cards, and Caroling at Senior Home.

A big event for Jan/Feb will be a retreat in Michigan which is being planned now.

While our group is small in number, they are large in spirit and participation has been great. Great support by our kids' parents has helped a lot and we are thankful for them also.

Our kids are: Blake Eiten and Amanda Temple in 7th grade and Sarah Dykstra, Kathryn Kmiecik, Amy Nelson, and Tyler Nichols in 6th grade (no 8th graders).

The leaders are Danette Temple, Rachel Lambert, Nate Bossenga, and Dave Sikkenga.

Bible Scholars

Over the past year, Kids Korner has asked questions of our young people between the ages of 7 and 12.

These questions have been selected from a publication called, "The Kids Bible Q & A". Some of them are questions that I could not answer with confidence and would have to look up.

Each month, there has been a running tabulation of accumulated points in the race for a \$25 gift certificate. The final tabulation is as follows:

Sarah Dykstra	69	1 st place	\$25
Kathryn Kmiecik	35	2 nd place	\$10
Dakota Nichols	23	3 rd place	\$ 5

The awards are in their mailboxes this morning. These are three very special young people. Please look for them after the service and take a minute to congratulate them.

Today a new contest begins. Every one who is 7yrs old anytime between January 1 and December 31, 2009, up to 12 yrs old at any time during next year is eligible to participate.

Young People's News

By Jane Vogel

Our youth group has received a great compliment! We are one of 3 youth groups in the denomination that CRWRC has chosen to participate in a special way in their Embrace AIDS initiative. They have identified Wheaton CRC's young people as "good and faithful servants, creative and willing to take a bit of a risk, able to commit and follow through, and willing to let God work through them." (Yes, I'm quoting. Aren't you thrilled that people see those qualities in them?)

The objectives of the Embrace AIDS campaign are:

1. Prayer for people affected by HIV/AIDS.
2. Education about HIV/AIDS.
3. Advocacy.
4. Financial support of CRWRC's ministries to persons affected by HIV/AIDS

An additional objective of this part of the project is to help this generation of youth--the generation that statistically is increasingly drifting away from the church--to connect and remain connected in the church and biblical responses to issue calling for compassion and justice.

CRWRC is giving our group \$1000 to use to facilitate the youth group and congregation's engagement with the global issue of HIV/AIDS. They are asking our Young People to use that money in some creative way to generate a positive return on the investment for the youth group, the congregation, and the Embrace AIDS campaign. That return may be measured by awareness, funding, learning, spiritual growth, service, or a combination of some or all of these.

The Young People have spent some time learning about HIV/AIDS and CRWRC's ministries. Now they're working some ways to share what they've learned, engage the

congregation in prayer, and raise financial support for CRWRC's ministries. One major project planned is an international dinner for our congregation that will include all of those elements. A sub-committee of the planning team is looking at dates in March. Watch for more information as the time draws closer!

Some of the other ideas still in the brainstorming stage include making a video to post on YouTube, establishing a prayer room in our church with prayer needs about AIDS and CRWRC's ministries, 24 hours of prayer, and chapels at the Christian schools represented in our youth group. You'll be hearing more about some of these plans as they develop.

You can find more information about CRWRC's Embrace AIDS campaign at <http://www.embraceaids.org>

The Wheaton CRC Legacy Foundation

You may recall that our new Legacy Foundation is a fund to which money or appreciated assets can be contributed. The money will be invested and grow over time. It will be distributed based on a triggering event or based on a percentage of the contribution each year over time.

There are five specific funds already set up:

- Building
- Benevolence
- Ministries
- Missions
- Christian Education

In the October issue, we looked at an example of a contribution to the Building fund. This month, we will look at an example of a contribution to the Benevolence Fund.

Benevolence Fund

This fund is used to meet the needs of people in local or national disasters or other individual needs as identified by the deacons.

Example:

An elderly couple was increasingly confined to their home. Over the past several years, they were no longer able to use the Michigan cottage that had given them so much pleasure over the years. They had always been enthusiastic supporters of Calvin College and the anonymous benefactors behind several hundred boxes of Thanksgiving groceries distributed to the needy each year.

After consultation, they decided to give half of the sale of the cottage to Calvin College and the other half to the Benevolence Fund of the Legacy Foundation for the continuation in perpetuity of the Thanksgiving groceries.

Because they had owned the cottage for several decades, capital gains tax upon the sale would have been due and the amount to these entities reduced by that amount. Instead, they

transferred the ownership of the cottage to Barnabas Foundation and asked Barnabas to handle the details of securing a realtor and selling the property. After the cottage was sold, Barnabas divided the proceeds.

In this way, they could see their gift used by Calvin and the continuation of their Thanksgiving gifts for the needy.

To fully realize the tax benefits, such assets must be contributed as assets, not sold with the proceeds given afterward. Even when contributed as a single asset, the proceeds can be directed on a proportional basis to a number of different charities. Before making these kinds of contributions, be sure to discuss the implications with a tax advisor and/or one of the attorneys at Barnabas Foundation.

If you wish to consider a contribution, a member of the committee can make the contacts for you. The members are Bob Hooyer, Floyd Groen, Paul DeGroot, Ed Gabrielse and Julia Tiesman

Humor Me

Recently, I was diagnosed with A.A.A.D.D. –

Age Activated Attention Deficit Disorder
This is how it manifests:

I decide to water my garden.
As I turn on the hose in the driveway,
I look over at my car and decide it needs
washing.
As I start toward the garage,
I notice mail on the porch table that
I brought up from the mail box earlier.
I decide to go through the mail before I wash the
car.
I lay my car keys on the table, put the junk mail
in

the garbage can under the table, and notice that
the

can is full.
So, I decide to put the bills back
on the table and take out the garbage first.
But then I think, since I'm going to be near the

mailbox when I take out the garbage anyway,
I may as well pay the bills first.
I take my check book off the table,
and see that there is only one check left.
My extra checks are in my desk in the study,
so I go inside the house to my desk where
I find the can of Coke I'd been drinking.
I'm going to look for my checks,
but first I need to push the Coke aside
so that I don't accidentally knock it over.
The Coke is getting warm, and I decide to put it
in

the refrigerator to keep it cold.
As I head toward the kitchen with the Coke,
a vase of flowers on the counter
catches my eye--they need water.
I put the Coke on the counter and
discover my reading glasses that
I've been searching for all morning.
I decide I better put them back on my desk,

but first I'm going to water the flowers.
I set the glasses back down on the counter,
fill a container with water and suddenly spot the

TV remote. Someone left it on the kitchen table.
I realize that tonight when we go to watch TV,
I'll be looking for the remote,
but I won't remember that it's on the kitchen table,
so I decide to put it back in the den where it
belongs,
but first I'll water the flowers.
I pour some water in the flowers,
but quite a bit of it spills on the floor.
So, I set the remote back on the table,
get some towels and wipe up the spill.
Then, I head down the hall trying to
remember what I was planning to do.

At the end of the day:
the car isn't washed
the bills aren't paid
there is a warm can of Coke sitting on the counter
the flowers don't have enough water,
there is still only 1 check in my check book,
I can't find the remote,
I can't find my glasses,
and, I don't remember what I did with the car keys.
Then, when I try to figure out why

nothing got done today,
I'm really baffled because I know I was busy all day,

and I'm really tired.

I realize this is a serious problem,
and I'll try to get some help for it,
but first I'll check my e-mail...

Do me a favor.
Forward this message to everyone you know,
because I don't remember who I've sent it to.

Don't laugh –

if this isn't you yet, your day is coming

Kids Korner

1. In the parable of the talents, how many servants were given talents?

2. How old was Jairus' daughter when she got sick?

3. How many warnings (or "woes") did Jesus give to the Pharisees?

4. How many wives did Jacob have?

5. How many pieces of silver was Judas paid to betray Jesus?

6. How many concubines did King Solomon have?

7. In the armor of God, what is the shield called?

—

8. What is the helmet called?

9. What is the belt called?

10. What is the sword called?

11. What kitchen ingredient did Jesus compare us to?

12. What book of the bible has the most chapters?

Look it up

1. Matthew 25 : 14-15

2. Luke 8 : 42

3. Matthew 23 : 13-36

4. Genesis 29 : 24-30 and 30 : 4,9

5. Matthew 26 : 15

6. 1 Kings 11 : 3

7. Ephesians 6 : 16

8. Ephesians 6 : 17

9. Ephesians 6 : 14

10. Ephesians 6 : 17

11. Matthew 5 : 13

12. Check it out

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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, January 11th.

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

The BRICK

A young and successful executive was traveling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door!

He slammed on the brakes and backed the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, 'What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?'

The young boy was apologetic. 'Please, mister....please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do,' He pleaded. 'I threw the brick because no one else would stop...' With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. 'It's my brother, 'he said 'He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up.' Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, 'Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me.'

Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out a linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay.

'Thank you and may God bless you,' the grateful child told the stranger.

Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home. It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent

there to remind him of the lesson he learned that day:

'Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!' God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice to listen or not.