

But Then This...

By Pastor John

There are a lot of things happening this month in our church and in our world that just cry out, "Write about me! Write about me!"

Some of these things make their claims for attention out of sheer delight and hopefulness. Others say, "my primacy for attention rises out of seriousness and even threat—give heed." Here is my list. You could probably think of some issues that clamor for attention too:

We have the **international financial crisis** that is a mess and a turmoil and great cause for worry. It puts us at risk. It demands some sort of word.

We have **national elections** in our country that by sheer force of volume and weight shove their way to the front of anyone's line.

Closer to home, we have the long anticipated completion of our **Building On Purpose project** that rightly deserves all the ink we can give it. We need to give thanks and celebrate this great achievement.

We have our recently completed **Mission Emphasis Week** that always deserves its place at the top of our lists.

Additionally, we have lots of other church family matters on the mind.

We have the great joy and delight of being in the middle of **another baby-boom**. How can we not write about the pleasure and the hope of that?

Conversely, we have a significant segment of our congregation for whom **the aging process** might seem to have accelerated lately. We do all get older and at about the same rate, (it is sometimes important to state the obvious). But sometimes we note that we are "getting old" and the meaning and implications of that reality ought to win some "But Then This ..." space.

And, this space would have no integrity to it if we did not state this: we have great joy at seeing **new**

families and individuals come and worship with us. But it also hurts a lot when dear friends make initial (hopefully not final) decisions that they need find a different church.

And then, some of our young people have recently made decisions that show early hope of them entering **full-time service** in the ministry or mission work or Christian education. Those great facts probably trump all of the others and deserve rights to first attention.

Faced with such a such a prospect and sincerely wanting to offer something that encourages delight and offers hope and comfort, I would like to go to the only source that can actually do that: God's Word.

Here are two wonderful statements (and worthy of full acceptance), that apply to all of the above and to whatever other personal, churchly, or national/international concerns we might have:

Psalm 146:5-7 *Blessed is the one whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them — the Lord, who remains faithful forever. He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free.*

1 Peter 1:3 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

Now Thank We All Our God

Author – Martin Rinkart
Translation – Catherine Winkworth
Music – Johann Cruger

*Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom His world rejoices;*

*Who from our mother's arms
Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.*

Martin Rinkart, born on April 23, 1586, in Eilenberg, Saxony, Germany, was the son of a poor coppersmith. He was for a time a boy chorister in the famous St Thomas Church of Leipzig, Germany where J. S. Bach was later musical director. There Rinkart worked his way through the University of Leipzig and was ordained to the ministry of the Lutheran Church. At the age of thirty-one, he was called to be the pastor in his native town of Eilenberg.

He arrived there just when the dreadful bloodshed of the Thirty Years War (1618 – 1648) was starting. Because Eilenberg was a walled city, it became a frightfully overcrowded refuge for political and military fugitives from far and near. Through out these years, several waves of deadly pestilence and famine swept the city. The various armies marched through the town leaving death and destruction in their wake.

The plague of 1637 was particularly severe. At its height, Rinkart was the only remaining pastor, often conducting forty or fifty funerals daily. Yet, he was and amazingly prolific writer of seven different dramatic productions on the events of the Reformation as well as a total of sixty-six hymns.

During the closing years of the war, Eilenberg was overrun by invading armies on three different occasions, once by the Austrian army and twice by

the Swedish army. During one of the occupations, a large tribute was demanded of the already impoverished people. Rinkart interceded with the leaders of the army with such purpose, supported by the prayers of his people, that when his request was refused, he said, "Come, my children, we can find no mercy with man; let us find refuge with God."

Then on his knees, Rinkart led his parishioners in prayer and the singing of a hymn. This demonstration of spiritual fervency so moved the Swedish commander that he reconsidered and lowered the demands for the tribute payment.

Germany is the home of Protestant church music and no hymn has been more widely used, except for Luther's "A Mighty Fortress", than has this hymn. In 1858, Catherine Winkworth translated it into English which greatly aided its popularity.

The majestic tune for the text was written by one of Germany's finest and most prolific composers, Johann Cruger whose hymnal was published in 1644. It was the outstanding hymnal of the 17th century and went through 44 editions, the last in 1731.

This tune, with Rinkart's text first appeared in the 1647 edition.

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."

As many of us recall singing these beloved songs in Christian School and Sunday School, Cross Connections will include the story on one of them in each issue this year.

Insights and Encounters

By Jeri Kendrick

Often in social group mixers the ice-breaker question is asked, "How do you feel about your name?" I used to have a very hard time explaining my mixed emotions about my name.

My parents migrated from the Oklahoma dust-bowl to California in the '40s. They married young and I was born 13 months later.

They were quite sure I was going to be a boy. When asked what they were going to call "their boy", they answered "Jerry Joe", following the tradition of double names at that time. My mother's name of Jereva was too unusual for my father to use in public, so he called her Jeri. His name was Joseph. The perfect combination for their son would be Jerry Joe. Even when questioned what the name might be should they be surprised by the arrival of a girl, the answer was the same.

Obviously, they were surprised by my arrival but didn't waver in the name except to change the spelling to Jeri Jo. I discovered most of my schoolmates had double names as well, Billie Sue, Mary Ann, etc. I often was teased that my real name must be Geraldine Josephine Johnson.

I had many awkward moments at summer camps when I looked for my cabin assignment and found myself listed in the boy's cabin. Family all called me Jeri Jo to distinguish me from my mom in conversation.

I tolerated my name fairly well until we moved to a new area right before my sophomore year of high school. As I met new people and was asked my name, I responded "Jeri". It wasn't until years later that my mom told me how hurt my dad had been that I dropped his name.

Several years ago I had an experience that completely changed my perspective on my name and gave me an entirely new appreciation of my name. Every year the First Grade Bible curriculum, I was teaching, went from Genesis to Ruth. I had told the story of Joseph many, many

times and even had a "Joseph award" for students who did right even when no one was watching.

One morning during my quiet time I was reading Genesis 39:2-6, "the Lord was with Joseph and he prospered ...the Lord gave him success in everything he did.... The Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph....so he left everything in Joseph's care...he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate." I kind of chuckled and sighed and said "wow, Lord, I'd like someone like that to take care of me, so I wouldn't have to worry about anything except what to eat!" Ever so quietly, I heard the Lord say "that's what I want to do for you, if you would let me".

I was so humbled to realize that He wants to take my worries and cares; and I so foolishly take them back, rather than letting Him serve me. After confessing my lack of submission and recognition of His love and care for me, I began to reread the passage again. I was struck anew by how Joseph brought blessings to Pharaoh and took care of him. I said "oh, Lord, I would like to be a Joseph and bless others because you're blessing me", and again very quietly I heard Him say "you are a 'Joseph', remember your name?"

Needless to say, there were many tears as I realized the heritage I had been given and the longings of my heart to bless others were known by the Father.

Have I lived up to my name, no, but the Lord knows my heart and I am grateful for a new perspective on what I had so often resented as a child. Maybe someday I will be willing to introduce myself as Jeri Jo, not just Jeri.

Thanksgiving Memories

By Mary Sikkenga

When I was a young girl we would have my mother's family over for Thanksgiving dinner. After dinner we would play the card game Rook for the afternoon.

After David and I were married Thanksgiving became a little more difficult. We would have Thanksgiving with both families, which meant that we had 2 dinners. As time went on and we moved to Champaign and then to the Naperville/Wheaton area, our family would travel to Michigan to spend Thanksgiving with both families. This continued until our children were in high school and we had to be home for their sports. At that time my parents would come down for Thanksgiving.

About 8 years ago I started going to Michigan in November to take my parents back to our home for Thanksgiving.

In my mind there are 2 Thanksgivings that are special. The first one was in 1997 when we had both sets of Parents down and that was when we were told that David's dad had been diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. That would be the last Thanksgiving we would spend with him. The second was in 2005 when my parents were at our house and little did I realize that this would be the last Thanksgiving with my mother. The times we shared together will always be special.

We still get together with our children and grandchildren. Hopefully, my dad will continue to come, but that's getting harder for him also. Even though we have had a few tough Thanksgivings, I thank God for all the wonderful ones we have shared with family.

By Kris Wise

It was our first Thanksgiving as a married couple traveling to Carey's aunt's house to be with his side of the family. Excitement ran high as we joked about how we would finally get to have our own

room while we stayed at his aunt's house. We even had been put in charge of a part of the meal: dinner rolls.

The family time was wonderful. We laughed, played games, took walks around his aunt's neighborhood and admired the houses and trees already being decorated for the next holiday. Dinner preparations soon began and the ladies (and guys, too) were a buzz in the kitchen. Knowing that there would be several items in need of the oven, Carey's aunt enlisted the help of the vacationing neighbor's oven for our dinner rolls. She found me and told me to get the rolls ready for the oven. I prepared. I proudly laid my buns out on several sheets for the oven. I read the directions; "10 minutes until slightly brown." I was ready to contribute.

She walked them over to the neighbors and told me to check on them when they would be ready.

I forgot.

About 20 or so minutes later his aunt came in the house with several trays of more-than-slightly-browned dinner rolls. Her look was firm but kind. In the hurry and scurry of all the other dinner preparations she had remembered, but I hadn't.

I was mortified. I had been in charge of the simplest part of the meal (except for applesauce) and I failed! I apologized profusely. Everyone had a good chuckle over it, and even swallowed down some of the charred rolls with dinner (with a bit of gravy they weren't too bad...at least that's what they said).

In the years since then, his family has been kind enough to give me several second chances. Once, (just once) I even was given the highly acclaimed-major family tradition-recipe-passed-down-from-generations: Cinnamon Apples. That was slightly better than the buns experience, but I was under more watchful eye this time.

This past Thanksgiving I was given sweet potato casserole as my contribution. I used a family recipe again and supposedly it turned out great.

This year it is our turn to visit with my family.

They don't trust me at all...I'm in charge of applesauce.

By Joyce Verseput

Most of my memories of thanksgiving revolve around family, friends and food. Shopping for ingredients, preparing and eating, and feeling thankful for Gods providence. With additions to our family come changes in the Thanksgiving menu. Lonnie makes fabulous mashed potatoes. Mindy likes crescent rolls. Gary likes stuffing of any kind. Bryce asked me to give up pumpkin pie in favor of Dutch Apple. Lisa likes her great-grandmother's sweet potato casserole. More grandchildren meant adding jello salads. We try to make everyone feel that they had a part in choosing what will be served.

I also like remembering special people from the past, from great-grandmothers and other relatives to a wide circle of military friends, who have shared Thanksgiving with us through the years. This group includes many church friends and co-workers – especially those who were single or alone, particularly when stationed overseas. May everyone at your Thanksgiving table be blessed with the memory of your friendly, Christian welcome.

By Heather Bossenga

Thanksgiving Memories

When I was growing up, Thanksgiving meant Grandpa and Grandma coming to visit from Michigan. The entire weekend was a tradition that included barbecues on the special rolls from Michigan on Wednesday night, pumpkin pie with real whipping cream on Thursday, “the girls” shopping for Christmas presents on Friday (after making soup with the Thursday leftovers that could be eaten any time by “the guys”), and sometimes Grandpa shopping for a new car. Grandpa still comes to visit over Thanksgiving and we try to keep some of these traditions each year, even as my brother and I have started our own families.

By Pat Geurkink

Last Thanksgiving, Vern and I were invited by our grown grandchildren to come to Grand Rapids. Along with their maternal grandparents, we were to

be special guests for a dinner prepared and served by them! We eagerly looked forward to it.

However, on Monday evening of Thanksgiving week, I found myself in the ER at Edwards Hospital and then in ICU, with the diagnosis of a brain aneurysm. Since I was for seventeen years an Intensive Care nurse, I knew this experience from the “right side” of the bed, but this situation was beyond what I had previously known. I was in the hospital for 24 hours, then released after other test results were obtained and a neurosurgeon had been consulted. The verdict at that time was, “it’s not clear exactly what is wrong.” I needed yet one more appointment with a specialist at Central DuPage Hospital, set for Wednesday afternoon.

It was not until late that afternoon (with much persuading of technicians to do an MRI at the end of the holiday eve) that this doctor assured us that I truly did not have an aneurysm in a very vulnerable place in my brain. What joy to be able to go ahead with our original plan for Thanksgiving day!

I have always loved Thanksgiving and have had so much to be thankful for, but last year is unforgettable. Not only did we make it to the feast our grandchildren prepared and served, but our hearts were overflowing with thanks for my life and hope for a future.

We also thank God for these precious young people who love us and hosted us so graciously. Would I like to repeat the experience? Just the part about spending the day surrounded by loved ones gives us an acute sense of God’s grace and goodness in a time of trial.

Children's Worship at Wheaton CRC

Jaynn Tobias -Johnson

If you have ever heard kindergarteners and first graders talking about "Feast" or carrying around bookmarks, or if you have ever wondered why they belt out, "And also with you!" so easily, you need to know about children's worship at Wheaton CRC. For nearly 15 years, our children's worship program has been based on the Young Children and Worship model. Developed by Sonja Stewart and Jerome Berryman at Western Theological Seminary, this model is used by hundreds of congregations from dozens of denominations around the world. Using a multi-sensory approach, the program introduces children to the wonder and awe of approaching God in worship.

So, what does that mean for the kindergarteners and first graders attending children's worship and the young people and adults leading it? It means: **Preparing for Worship** After leaving the sanctuary, the children file to the door of the children's worship room, where they take off their shoes. The leader calls children into the room one by one, greets each, and directs each to a carpet square. Children learn to walk slowly and quietly and to sit in "packages" on the squares, with their legs crossed and their hands in their laps, so that they do not disturb anyone else's worship time.

Beginning Worship Once everyone is sitting, the leader for the day begins, "The Lord be with you!" The children respond, "And also with you!" Another block on the circular church calendar is added (Nearly every young person in our church from college age on down first learned about the seasons of Advent, Epiphany, and Lent during children's worship.), and a child worship helper is assigned. The child helper for the day gets to wear a cross necklace (with ribbon color matching the church season), take the offering, and—sometimes—play the lyre to accompany the singing.

Listening to God A robust round of singing concludes with "Be Still and Know That I Am God." The leader then slowly and quietly goes to the appropriate shelf and gets the materials for the Bible story for the day. The way stories are told is very intentional: using dimensional pieces, the

leader tells the story rather than simply reads it. Most stories begin with rolling out the background, a yard or so of felt, on the floor. Three-dimensional wooden figures—simple cut-outs with no faces—or two-dimensional pictures are moved by the leader across the background as the story progresses.

Of course, any veteran of children's worship will tell you about the very special stories, such as Noah's ark (with TONS of animals), the Transfiguration (with the HUGE mountain), the parables (in the beautiful gold boxes), and all of the stories—from Abram and Sarai to Jesus' baptism—told in the DESERT BOX ("So many amazing things happened in the desert that we just have to have a piece of it here" is the beginning to every story told in the sand.)

Reflecting and Responding to God's Word After the story, the leader and children spend time wondering about the story together ("I wonder why Abram and Sarai built an altar each time they moved to a new place?"). Then children spend time in individual response: some children choose to draw pictures related to that day's story, while others choose to select stories from the story shelves to re-tell to themselves, complete with words and movements.

Celebrating the Feast together As the response time draws to a close, children return markers and story materials to their storage shelves and sit back in the circle on their carpet squares. The leader lights a candle "to remind us that Jesus is with us here always," reads the day's story from the Bible, marks it with a bookmark, and leads the children in prayer. Afterwards, the candle is extinguished, the smoke wisps away, and "we remember that Jesus is with us at all times and in all places." Everyone then enjoys a Feast together—typically a cup of water or juice, some sort of fruit, and some sort of cracker or cookie.

Going in Peace Children's worship ends with all holding hands and singing "Go Now in Peace." Parents arrive, and children depart with a good-bye blessing from the leader.

We always pray that our children experience the wonder and awe of approaching God in worship during this program. And most leaders would probably say that they, too, experience that same wonder and awe.

A Timothy Graduate in Nigeria

Mike and Victoria Van Der Dyke

By Grace Huitsing

Victoria, We're so thankful with you and Mike for the arrival of your U.S. Green Card after so many years of hassling for a visitor's visa. No wonder you took Joy and Brian out to eat to celebrate that night. But how did your life adventure with Mike begin?

My parents came from Okene when my father began teaching in Serti. My mother was a midwife working with the mission staff, so we lived on the Serti mission compound. But my mother wanted her daughters to attend secondary school in Okene and, hopefully, to meet a partner there. When I finished high school, I returned to Serti to enroll in midwifery school. By now Mike had been transferred to the Serti field, and also lived on the compound. He was treasurer of the Maternity Center, and met weekly over finances with my mother. My brothers and sisters already knew him, and we met on February 14, 1985. After receiving my midwifery degree in '88, Charles Schoenherr helped me to finish work in Physical Assessment in Trinity's nursing program for a year. And on October 6, 1990, Mike and I were married at the Chr. Reformed Church of Nigeria at Takum, with my parents present.

Mike, What brought you to that field?

Before I completed my four year course at LeTourneau as an aviation mechanic, I had already applied and been accepted by Christian Reformed World Missions to serve as a mechanic in Nigeria. I worshipped in the local church and became an elder. In 1984, I received a one-year assignment to serve as church developer with the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria while Case Van Wyk was on home leave. When he returned, Case asked me to continue this work with him. When I moved to Serti, I continued to serve in the local church—in the clinic, Bible School, and as an elder. My position since 1987 is Director of the Missions Department with the CRC Nigeria, working with native supervisors, helping with

ongoing plans and budgets, and visiting evangelists in the various areas the church serves.

Victoria, I've heard that Mike speaks the Hausa language as a native? How is that possible?

Well, he was very young when he came, and he felt comfortable among the local people. (Mike adds) I was single while others had families, and evenings I would go to the market and the local gas station in Takum. The Muslim station owner liked me, would buy me a coke, and practice his English. Wanting to outshine his friends, he asked to learn a word they wouldn't know. When I pointed to his rarely found cufflinks and pronounced the word, he was proud to show off to his friends.

No wonder the church leaders have worked so successfully with you. I've read that the church in Nigeria is larger than the CRC in North America. How have you seen this?

When I was appointed Director of the Missions Department, there were 30 evangelists. I knew all the pastors by name, and now there are a couple hundred pastors. And with leadership development, the church has grown in maturity.

Since your marriage, Victoria, how have you served?

Until Brian was born, I traveled with Mike to all the evangelists' villages, and after that to places like Jos and Takum. Now that we live in Jos, I also help with PTA, etc., at Hillcrest, where the children attend school.

We hear about increasing danger in Africa. Have you felt it?

In the past, we could travel anywhere—at night too. Since the economy went bad in Nigeria in the late 90's, things have gotten worse, with robbery and break-ins. Like other missionaries, we have security at the house, and we very rarely go out at night.

About the children; Do they look forward to going home on January 3?

Yes, they do, but they've had a much better time this year, with friends and with sports. Joy has run track and played tennis, and Brian has done cross

country and track. We do have a prayer request for Joy. When we return next, she'll be ready for college. Pray for guidance for all of us as we visit and consider colleges this month.

Has the ordeal of waiting for the green card influenced your family?

Yes, we've learned the importance of perseverance, of patience, and of trust. When Joy, for example, would see me looking worried, she would say, "Don't worry, Mom. I prayed about it last night." We thought we knew about perseverance, but we've learned a lot more.

Mike, What would you say to high school guys who are looking for adventure? How did God challenge you?

When I was in 7th grade, I felt a call to ministry, but I didn't want to be a pastor. Graduating from Timothy Christian, I completed a four-year program in Aviation Mechanics at LeTourneau College. I remember the special day a professor spoke from Exodus 3-4 on Moses' experience. When Moses hung back from God's command, the Lord used the staff in his hand to change it to a snake and back again. The professor's question to us was, "What gifts has God given you? Use those gifts." I accepted the challenge to use my skills, and have been able to study further for the work in evangelism.

Given the troubled world, including the U.S.A., what would you ask of the family of God at W.C.R.C.?

I would emphasize the need for members to commit themselves to serving God in Missions, to increase prayer support, and, when possible, financial support.

Thank you for sharing your work and lives with us, Mike and Victoria. As you leave for home in January, we promise you our continued prayer for safety in travel and for blessings on work and study.

Humor Me

(No Groans Please)

1. The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.
2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
3. Boas was ruthless before he got married.
4. A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.
5. The butcher backed into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.
6. No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.
7. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.
8. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.
9. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.
10. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
11. Joseph was incrementally the straightest man in the bible after Pharaoh made a ruler out of him.
12. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.
13. Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other, 'You stay here, I'll go on a head.'
14. I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.
15. As he floated over the US, Noah actually named one of our states. "Noah looked out of the *ark-an-saw* nothing but water."
16. A small boy swallowed some coins and was taken to a hospital. When his grandmother telephoned to ask how he was, a nurse replied, "No change yet."
17. A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.
18. The first baseball game mentioned in the bible is in Genesis 1:1 "In the big inning..."
19. The short fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.
20. The man who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.
21. A backward poet writes inverse.
22. Noah was arguably the greatest financier in the bible because he was floating his stock while everyone else was in liquidation.
23. When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.
24. In Deutschland, they call pastors German Shepherds.
25. The first tennis match mentioned in the bible is when Joseph served in Pharaoh's court.
26. The only motorcycle mentioned in the bible is when David's triumph was heard throughout the land.
27. Did you know that all of the disciples once fit into a Honda? It says in Acts 1 that they were all in one Accord.

Kids Korner

1. On his third missionary journey, where was Paul arrested?

2. How many baskets of bread were left after Jesus fed the four thousand?

3. Who brought Dorcas, a disciple in Joppa back to life?

4. Who did King David send to the front line so that he would be killed in battle?

5. Who wanted Jesus' tomb sealed and guarded so that no one could steal the body?

6. Who threatened to kill all the believers of Jesus?

7. How old was Jesus when he was baptized and started his ministry?

8. How long was Moses on the mountain to receive the ten commandments?

9. When he was praying, how many times did Jesus wake his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane?

10. What piece of clothing did the soldiers make Jesus wear?

11. What woman led an army into battle?

12. What other name were the wise men called?

Look it up

1. Acts 21 : 15-36

2. Matthew 15 : 34-37

3. Acts 9 : 39-41

4. 2 Samuel 11 : 14-17

5. Matthew 27 : 62-64

6. Acts 9 : 1

7. Luke 3 : 21-23

8. Exodus 24 : 18

9. Matthew 26 : 39-45

10. John 19 : 2-5

11. Judges 4 : 6-9

12. Matthew 2 : 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, November 16th.

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

Sarah Dykstra	45
Dakota Nichols	12
Kelsey Uitermarkt	12
Kathryn Kmiecik	11