

# But Then This ...

## By Pastor John

A couple of people suggested that I use my column here to talk about the standards that I use to judge whether or not a movie is something that I would watch myself, recommend to others, or include on a list that we would watch for "Movie Night."

For me, these questions probe the movie's world view. If the presentation in question stands up under the scrutiny of these questions, I feel comfortable seeing it and might feel comfortable recommending it. The film might still have objectionable language in it and may also have objectionable plot elements in it. The level and incidence of those things will determine if I recommend it for others.

My questions of a movie have to do with its view of humanity and its more general view of the future.

### ***1. Is it honest about the human condition?***

Does it avoid a pessimistic and unduly dark picture of us? And conversely, does it avoid painting a unrealistic and simple-minded goodness about us? And when the movie shows people sinning and at their worst does it revel in that? Does the movie or the book enjoy the fact that we are sinful? How does the movie treat the "Big Two" (violence and sex)? Movies are an art form and we can't expect them to be preachers. However if art's effect drags us further down instead of ennobling us then it misses its God-given calling and I need to bypass it too.

I believe two things about all people. First, all people are image bearers of God. As such their lives are precious and they are worthy of respect. Movies need to show this. If they make us out to be so villainous

or bestial or such fools that we are beyond help then it is right to put distance between yourself and such a movie. Secondly, all people are sinners and are damaged by the fall. Film and books do us no favors by trying to gloss over this hurt that we both experience and inflict on others. But they also need to show that we were designed for something better. This last point leads to my next question:

***2. Is it hopeful?*** Does it tell us through the character's lives and situations how to find our way to something better? Or if not that, at least hold up the possibility that something better exists? Or if not that, at least posit the thought that something better ought to exist? Is it hopeful?

***3. Can the language be tolerated?*** It must be faced that all movies other than children's movies that are rated "G" will have language use in them that is objectionable to a Christian. I put "bad language" into three categories. The three escalate in "badness." The first two are categories of bad language that I will notice, but will, under most circumstances, tolerate in a movie. The third category demands that I walk out on the movie and seek a return of my admission money.

*Obscenity.* To me, obscenity is the rough talk of the barnyard and the locker room. Obscenity includes but is not limited to the rude and crude talk about body parts and bodily functions. It includes the "f-word." Filmmakers find such talk useful in portraying rough and crude people whom nobody would believe if they talked nice.

*Profanity.* Profanity is more objectionable than obscenity because it is abuse of the Lord's name. Profanity is taking the Lord's name in vain. In other words it is a careless or thoughtless use of the Lord's name almost as if it were punctuation. An example is the vacuous exclamation, "O my God!" Writers

often have actors use the Lord's name as punctuation to show that they are shallow and don't have the ability to express themselves with emphasis without using the Name and it's shock value. As I say, I hate this but do tolerate it in a movie. However I find it important to take strong mental note of such usage. When I find myself "not noticing" things have gone too far. If I am going to be a consumer of popular culture it is important to stay vigilant.

*Blasphemy.* Whereas profanity is vacuous and careless and "just" punctuation, blasphemy is pointed and direct and quite intentionally malicious. Blasphemy is a deliberate attack on things that are holy and sacred. A film that is blasphemous is intentionally anti-God and malevolent towards things that are good, true, pure and holy. It does come down to a judgment call sometimes as to what is blasphemy and what is profanity—but for me, I know it when I see it and I walk out and demand my money back.

## Book Review

### **Rough Crossings - Britain, The Slaves and the American Revolution**

#### **Simon Schama**

This book is a history of one of the lesser known facts of the American Revolution.

Just before the war, Britain had outlawed slavery by the slimmest of margins. This meant that any slaves in the US who could get to the British lines would gain their freedom. British generals who were hoping to foment anarchy in the colonies, especially in the South, actively promoted the escape of blacks from their owners.

What they could not predict or control was the tens of thousands who escaped, but then needed to be fed, housed and clothed. With the massing and resulting diseases in places like Tybee Island, Creek Indians were employed to eliminate tens of thousands – at least that is the unsubstantiated claim.

Other groups were sent to Nova Scotia, an area to which they were unusually ill adapted. Still others were sent to Sierra Leone in a well meaning attempt to set them free while keeping them out of sight. In both cases, abject poverty caused many to sign indenture agreements that resulted in something almost indistinguishable from slavery itself.

The abolitionist movement in both countries was well established. In fact, by the time of the war, three colonies had made slavery illegal. The political turmoil in London over what to do with slaves, both in Britain and in the colonies makes for fascinating reading.

Schama is not an easy author to read as anyone who has picked up his earlier book, *An Embarrassment of Riches – An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, can attest. But I found my interest in the historical events helped to bridge the sometimes erratic story lines. And I suppose that is the way it should be.

# Missions

## A SURVIVOR – Ena Vander Molen

By Grace Huitsing

*You came home for six months to help your Mom and your family. You also spoke to school children and churches about your work of translation. But you mentioned in an earlier memo that you took along a machete. Whatever did you do with that?*

Many tasks! It made a great tool to wedge under and uproot grass (to reduce the area that needs mowing). My Mom's property has a lot of trees. I also used the machete to chop off dead branches and get rid of "Junk" or weed-like small trees that sprang up (some 7' to 9' tall) between raspberry bushes.

*Is a time back home with family an important part/dimension of a missionary's ability to carry on?*

Absolutely. I feel that's particularly true for a single. Couples have each other and children. Overseas it's difficult knowing family members are struggling and you can't help. It's also important to get reacquainted with nieces, nephews, etc.

*Were you able to keep in touch with the work in the Philippines while you were home?*

To some extent. Co-worker Vera sent me 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians (which she checked) and I sent back 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians for our Manobo co-translator Melchor to hone further, while another co-translator (Pastor Roy) is getting Matthew ready for further check.

*While about 22% of the New Testament remains to be checked before publication, are the people learning to read it?*

Well, there are currently 65 on-going classes in literacy. Recently, to encourage the use of the translated Word, Vera and Manobo coworkers have used the translated books of Ruth and Jonah to teach a values class at a local high school.

*A few years ago you presented to the Philippine government—and to us—the book you prepared on the traditional stories the people have told for generations. Do the Obo Manobo people also love music?*

Yes, in fact, Vera and Melchor had an interview with individuals from Heart Sounds International for a possible recording of their music.

*Last February, as the flood waters raced through your house and destroyed it, you clung to a tree against the force of the water. You knew your life was in danger. Can you share what thoughts went through your mind?*

As I was hanging on, I thought God put me in the path of this particular tree - the only one that was the right circumference to wrap my arms around - the one with deep roots. Since He spared me, He must still have a special purpose for me.

*Your letters to supporters are always creative and interesting, but also honest. Though you purchased your return ticket in January, you admitted recently that for a while, your desire to return was at an all-time low point. Yet you have decided to return.*

Yes. The translation of the Obo Manobo New Testament is not finished yet and I still believe that Scriptures in one's own language are vitally important for spiritual growth of the church and the individual. And I still believe that God called me to complete that task.

*Twenty some years ago, you left a successful business career to train to be a Wycliffe Bible translator. Have you a word of encouragement or challenge for any young person who is asking, "Am I being called to serve the Lord in a special ministry?"*

I would encourage any young person to listen to their heart. A burden for a particular ministry or people group is often an indication of the Lord's leading. God will provide the grace to see them through.

I am reminded of a story of a US Navy Chaplain who interviewed those who wished to enlist for the chaplaincy service during WWI. When asked what qualities were essential for the success of a chaplain, he replied, "Grace, Gumption, Grit, and Guts. You provide the gumption, grit, and guts. God will provide the grace to see you through."

*Thank you, Ena, for these insights. We will miss you. We pray that our Lord will supply an abundance of grace as you return to complete the work of translating His saving Word.*

## **Small Group and Evangelism Conference** **July 18 – 20, 2008**

**By Larry S. Kendrick**

What used to be Coffee Break's bi-annual National Conference, now includes small groups and evangelism, and this year's program was held at the Westin Hotel in Lombard, Illinois. We initially had 10 paid registrants, but as registration wrapped up, CRC Home Missions said we could bring an additional attendee for each paid registrant – buy one, get one free. We ended up with 21 attending this wonderful and very helpful conference.

The conference began at 7:00 pm on Friday July 18, and ended at noon Sunday, July 20, with a pre-conference at Lombard CRC Friday afternoon. Over 500 attended, with most being from the mid-west. Keynote speakers included Dr. Timothy Brown, the new President of Western Theological Seminary, who gave a workshop on Scripture memorization, and modeled this in Plenary sessions. Worship was lively and joyous, food was good and plentiful, resource tables appropriate, break-out sessions practical and beneficial for all who attended.

At two pre-conference training sessions, small group coordinators were encouraged to help groups pick curriculum based on "purpose," and were exposed to books like "Organic Community." Leaders shared that small groups are like a garden, with lots of perennials, some annuals, all in a community/garden of variations of small groups needing planning, weeding, watering, fertilizing, and occasional splitting of plants for greater health and impact. In all, leaders/coordinators need to be patient, and understand we can't always predict when plants will blossom or end their life cycles. Busy people, can

take small amounts of information often, but shouldn't be drowned by a fire hose. Small group ministries need to be kept in front of the congregation.

One hand out from the breakout sessions entitled, "Community at its core – the DNA of a Healthy Small Group," listed three things that keep people coming back to our small groups:

**Connecting to one another** When we connect in a group we enter a growing relationship with an identified group of people where we meet, then commit to them, and hopefully belong to one another over time. What kind of small group would you change your schedule for?

**Changing into the likeness of Jesus** Real life change happens within the context of community. It is where people can help each other learn, grow, and experience transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ. God is already at work growing people. Find out what God is up to. Then follow.

**Cultivating a missional life** We help each other explore how we are uniquely made, apply that to life, and impact others for Christ through a life of service.

Other random thoughts about small groups were:  
*People grow in small groups! Churches grow because of small groups – a key to their health! Small group ministries connect people through – prayer, purpose, vision, freedom, resources, fellowship.*

*One size does not fit all – but principles of small group ministry do transfer*

*Small groups are more than Bible studies – they're also about meeting people's needs*

*It's about growing people, not programs; start where people are and create conditions for growth.*

*Small groups keep changing; people change; small groups are organic; people grow at different rates.*

*What if no one shows up? Call everyone or send them an e-mail reminder. Start & end on time.*

*Your house does not have to be an immaculate mcmansion to be a center of Christian hospitality.*

*Accept each other for where we are; provide a safe environment, and guard confidentiality.*

*Food brings people together, breaks down barriers, lightens the mood, and provides comfort.*

# The Wheaton CRC Legacy Foundation

Last month, our new Legacy Foundation was described in some detail.

You may recall that it is a fund to which money or appreciated assets can be contributed. The money will be invested and grow over time.

There are five specific funds already set up:

- Building
- Benevolence
- Ministries
- Missions
- Christian Education

Over the next several months, this column will look at some hypothetical ways in which the foundation and these funds can be used.

## Building Fund

This fund is used for capital building projects and unusual maintenance or repairs for the church. The Foundation will release these funds for a qualifying expenditure upon the request of the Foundation Committee.

Example:

A business owner is selling his business after 30 years. One of the assets of the business is a fleet of 8 delivery vehicles. Before selling the business, he gives the fleet of vehicles to our Legacy Foundation.

The result is that he will not have to pay taxes on the value of the fleet as part of the sale, and he gets an immediate charitable tax deduction for the value.

Barnabas Foundation then sells the fleet and adds the proceeds, \$50,000, to our Legacy Foundation balance. Four years later, the Wheaton CRC decides to resurface the parking lot and uses the money, as the donor requested, to make it possible. By this time it has grown to just over \$63,000. And we are able to undertake the project without seriously affecting other church programs.

Other examples of asset contributions could include a percentage ownership in an unused Florida condo, an unneeded life insurance policy or an appreciated portion of a stock portfolio. To fully realize the tax benefits, such assets must be contributed as assets, not sold with the proceeds contributed afterward.

**Before making non-cash contributions, be sure to discuss the implications with a tax advisor and/or one of the attorneys at Barnabas Foundation. Any member of the committee can help you make these contacts.**

# **“Refocus” 2008-2009**

**By Dave Sikkenga, Chair**

Ten years ago, the WCRC Refocus project was an intensive effort involving many of our church leaders. There were many subcommittees formed to explore WCRC history, demographics, survey the neighborhood, review internal survey results, and provide prayer support for the entire venture. We held three Saturday “Leadership Summits” followed by three meetings with congregational members in “Congregational Pulse” groups to review the Leadership group findings and recommendations.

After this intensive project was finished and the 32 page report was issued, the WCRC council approved the top six recommendations for action from the process listed below:

- 1) Assess the Council Structure*
- 2) During the next 12 months, Wheaton CRC will explore the hiring of a part-time, second staff person to focus on the coordination of small groups and local evangelism*
- 3) Provide for coordination of Music Program*
- 4) Appoint a music coordinator who will work to smooth out the “human elements” in the WCRC music program. She/he could also work to recruit and utilize the musical gifts of our people in appropriate worship services. Another possible responsibility*

*could be reviewing service music for theological consistency*

*5) To be a praying church--with the aid of a prayer coordinator and a printed prayer plan for certain areas each day of the week*

*6) Address the needs of our Aging Congregation*

If you have been at WCRC for the past 10 years, you know that items 1 and 2 were completed and this has changed many aspects of our church life. Item 3 and 4 were approached in various ways including hiring of a music coordinator for a time. Currently, the use of several “worship teams” has provided a way of addressing the need of utilizing more of our congregation’s gifts in worship planning.

The large percentage of our congregation using e-mail has provided a wonderful way for rapid communication of prayer needs (item 5). In addition, prayer time is emphasized as a key element of our small groups and has become a blessed sharing time in our evening worship service.

The needs of the aging congregation (item 6) has been addressed by the council reorganization—providing Shepherding teams, by the very important Care committee, and by the formation of the special small group—Senior Moments.

While there are always more things that can be done, I believe that WCRC has acted upon all of these recommendations from 10 years ago.

However, times and needs change and the WCRC council believes that we should

reassess our church needs and strengths. Thus, a new Refocus committee was appointed which includes: Scott Plaisier, Martha Van Zee, Floyd VanderMeer, and Dave Sikkenga—with pastor John as the council contact and communication person.

Floyd and Dave co-chaired the Refocus process from 10 years ago and Scott and Martha provide the new and “next generation” perspectives that the team wanted. We met for the first time on July 7 with the council executive board and have had 3 subsequent meetings this summer.

Originally, we sought an update to the Refocus method from 10 years ago (a program that we bought and which provided most of the helps and directions for the program). However, we found out that the old Refocus method had been discontinued.

Our CRC Home Missionary for the area, Peter Kelder, informed us of the “Natural Church Development” (NCD) program, the current process recommended for churches in our situation. The NCD program is not as intensive as the Refocus program, yet it includes some of the key items and helps that allow a church to formulate recommendations for improvement. After researching the NCD program both with several Lombard CRC members (who have used it for the past year) and with Peter Kelder in a face-to-face meeting, we decided to adopt the NCD program.

An important first step in the NCD program is to have the pastor and 30 lay leaders, (small group involvement was required), to fill out a survey. Our committee selected the survey takers so that there were an equal number of both gender and that the age

distribution was representative of our church membership.

The survey was given on September 27 (yesterday) with Peter Kelder present to help administer it. Following completion of the survey, Peter will send the survey back to the organization “Church Smart” that developed the program. Our church results will be compared to thousands of other churches from around the world. The results of the survey, expected by late October, will help us identify which of the 8 major aspects of our church needs additional attention. The program literature will also provide suggested methods of addressing the areas needing the focus.

**We plan (and need) to keep the congregation informed as we proceed with this most important task. We also expect that more input from various committees will be needed as we move forward.**

# Decisions of Synod, 2008

Following is a summary of the decisions made by Synod this past summer.

1. The 2008 version of the Contemporary Testimony was adopted. This statement summarizes our faith and speaks to the concerns of our day in agreement with scripture and approved confessions.

2. The revised "Form of Subscription" was not accepted. Instead, an enlarged committee was assigned to rewrite it once more and send the draft out to churches for review in 2010 and possible acceptance in 2011. This is the form that all church officers sign indicating agreement with the confessions of the church.

3. The New Living Translation of the Bible was approved for use in CRC worship services.

4. Help and prayer was requested for the Faith Formation Committee that is working on ways to deepen, revitalize and celebrate the three milestones of a Christian life – baptism, the Lord's Supper and profession of faith.

5. Changes to the Church Order were approved that allow "Ministry Associates" to be called to serve as solo pastors in ministry contexts where enforcing the usual standards for ordained pastors is impractical. These contexts include ethnic, social, economic, educational and language differences with the dominant culture of the CRC. The guidelines help ensure consistency and fairness as they are used by congregations, classes and synodical deputies.

6. Congregations and classes are encouraged to consider including all gender and races in their nomination and appointments, including delegates to synod.

7. Because Synod 2007, approved the appointment of women delegates to synod, the appointment of women advisors will no longer be necessary.

8. Synod encourages the churches and classes to commit to at least one hour of training in abuse prevention for all those in leadership roles this coming year.

9. Synod did not agree with a proposal to develop guidelines for environmental awareness. It pointed out the wealth of other resources already available and will ensure that a webpage is developed and maintained which includes such a listing.

10. Synod encourages all churches, classes and CRC institutions to celebrate All Nations Heritage Week, Sept. 29 – Oct 5, 2008 with special services on October 5, 2008.

11. The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Elim Christian Services was recognized with gratitude. Churches are asked for prayers of thanksgiving for its many years of ministry to persons who are mentally and physically challenged.

12. Local congregations are strongly encouraged to produce minutes of council, elders, deacon and congregational meetings, as well as, membership and baptismal information and to send copies to the Archives. Such records are especially important for legal purposes. Access to these records is most helpful in the event of catastrophic events or the cessation of a ministry.

13. Synod noted the availability of reading services on the CRCNA website.

**The services of interim pastors are often secured through direct contracts and may differ significantly from church to church. The compensation for these services will no longer be established by the Board of Trustees.**

# Council Notes

**By Steve Vogel, Clerk**

This is the first of what I hope will be fairly regular articles in the WCRC newsletter which will attempt to keep the congregation informed on some of the business of the church council and boards. I am, by nature, a procrastinator, and Ed Gabrielse, our editor is a stickler for deadlines, so there may be an issue here or there where I don't get my article in on time. In fact, now that I think about it, that seems highly likely!

Council met twice in August. One meeting was a special meeting on Sunday morning, August 24, prior to the morning service for the purpose of hearing the profession of faith of three of our young people. Kelly Buma, Joel Sytsma, and Jon Sytsma all came to Council and told their "story" of how they came to belief in Christ and how they have made the faith that they have inherited their own faith. I can recall how I, as a high-schooler, thought that going in front of church council would be an intimidating experience. But our council is truly delighted when someone comes to make profession of faith and never really "grills" anyone on the finer points of doctrine.

The regular council meeting was on August 25. Council meets quarterly for its normal meetings and deals with a lot of routine business. At this meeting, we formally approved the Sunday School teachers and other education program leaders for the coming year. There are a lot of familiar returning teachers this year, but also some new faces. A couple Wheaton College Students will be involved this year. John Shackelford will be teaching 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade with Floyd Vander Meer, and Tom Fowler will be helping to lead the Youth Group.

The council reviewed the financial reports for the past quarter. In general, we are about at the same position we were at last year at this time. So we have some ground to make up before the end of the year. One good item is that our interest rate on the funds borrowed for the Building on Purpose project is lower than expected, so our expense for interest is well below budget.

The Deacons reported on our methods of Christian Education funding and issues associated with that. There are some potential issues regarding the way

that we provide Christian education support for Timothy Christian schools parents. Parents in supporting churches can pay 55% of tuition and the balance is made up by the church. Donations made by those parents to the Timothy fund are not tax deductible. The church needs to ensure that its tax status is not jeopardized, and that the parents fully understand what is deductible and what is not. The deacons will continue to study this issue and may make recommendations in the future.

The council acted on a recommendation to name the Ministry Center rooms. The Project committee recommends 4 small rooms be named 'Europe', 'Asia', 'Africa', 'The Americas', and the big room be named "Fireside". The rooms will be decorated in accordance with their name and will likely include details such as maps and pictures of the missionaries we support in each area.

**Well, these are the highlights for this month.**

# The Worship Planning Committee

**By Pastor John**

something that you might like to try your hand at, we invite you to see Pastor John about investigating the process further. We are open to your questions and comments.

The Worship Planning Committee of our church is a highly dedicated and energetic group of people who take very seriously the Lord's mandate to "Worship the Lord." And we take all of the attendant commands and exhortations ("with thanksgiving," "with joy and praise," "with awe and wonder," "with reverence and fear," etc. etc.) very seriously too. We recognize the very high calling that we have to provide worship services that bless the Lord and bless his people.

The Committee is composed of six or seven "teams" that are composed of either one or two people. At our worship planning meetings we assign the upcoming worship services to a team. In our planning, we generally follow the New Common Lectionary (NCL) for the morning services. Thus we generally know well ahead of time what the scripture readings and the preaching text for the day will be. We have every option to change this when expedient to do so, but the NCL gives us the advantage of being in step with a great segment of Christian churches around the world and also of making readily available lots and lots of wonderful service and sermon planning resources.

The planners then plan the services by choosing hymns and songs and by composing or finding litanies that fit the theme of the day as prescribed by the assigned texts. Here is where the lion's share of the work occurs. As anyone might guess, it is hard work to plan a service. Each of our planners is very aware of the fact that there is a wide range of people who come to worship and that they all come with different personal stories, educational backgrounds, and individual likes and dislikes. Our goals are to bless the Lord and bless the people in our worship and we are continually looking for ways and means to better do that.

We are also very eager to introduce new people to the worship planning experience. If you think that it is

# Donate that Car

## By Carey Wise

Give me your tired, your poor... your rusted scrap of iron? Well not exactly, but if you're ready to turn in that trusty old jalopy for something more trendy or gas conscious, why not consider donating that vehicle to a needy family?

For the last several years, Wheaton CRC and Orland Park Church Car Ministry have teamed up by assisting individuals or families to attain personal and/or financial self-sufficiency by providing basic transportation.

The Orland Car Ministry has been providing this service for the last 8 years and have carefully modeled the program from other successful organizations such as the Willow Creek CARS ministry and other area churches. Much time is involved in such a ministry as theirs. Bruce Harnew, an Orland Car Ministry staff member, states "A dedicated lead person is needed, that is committed to 10-15 hours per week, that has solid computer skills, knowledge in cars and repairs and a passion to help people in need."

I asked Bruce if it is often difficult to find car donations or to keep up with the demand. He replied, "No, it seems like God always provides for the most urgent of needs. The word travels quickly that a church based car donation program which gives cars to needy families is the best tax advantage over other programs that sell or auction donated cars. While there are many on the waiting list and not enough cars to meet all the needs, cars seem to always appear to meet the most urgent needs as they are presented to us."

All the donated cars that go through the Car Ministry are checked by a licensed mechanic. Non-cosmetic repairs are made before the vehicle is given to a qualified applicant on the waiting list. The vehicles are meant to provide a family at least one year of service.

Unlike other car donation programs, the Car Ministry distributes vehicles to needy families in the Chicagoland area, which allows for a tax deduction on the Full Private Party Value of your vehicle. It is through these efforts that Christian mercy is shown to

those in need of reliable transportation to be able to get to work, bring children to daycare and school, or to get families to church.

If you would like to be a part of God's plan for someone in need of transportation, there are many ways to help. If you have a car to donate, please contact your deacon. There might be a current need within the church. You may also consider a donation to the Orland Park Car Ministry. Their website is [www.opcrc.org](http://www.opcrc.org) or call 708.532.4900 ext 300. If you're handy with cars you could donate your time by helping someone in need of brake work, an oil change, or other minor repairs.

If you have more questions about this ministry or how to help in this way, let us know. The deacons would be glad to help out.

# From the Pew

## Girl Talk

By Emily Dykstra

Yesterday I had an amazing conversation with my sister, Noel. Normally we bombard each other with girl talk: friends we love, friends we struggle with, good recipes, husband talk, outfits that went horribly wrong, etc. Yesterday wasn't much of an exception, (except) that when she asked what was shaking down in the Dykstra household, I had to think a moment.

It's not that I didn't have news. I had plenty. It's mostly that the news that rose to the surface of my mind first was the juicy kind that borders on gossip, the kind of news that doesn't always bring out the best in others or bring out the best in life and gives me that sour milk taste in my mouth after saying it. Not all the news was gossip, per se, but just, you know... negative stuff.

My artistic roots normally thrive on the dark, deep meanings of life, but I didn't want to talk about these things. I didn't want to wrestle with deep cultural issues or analyze words said in haste. I didn't want to express disappointment or talk about my silly pregnancy sickness. I didn't want to give voice to the not-so-great thoughts in my head that might put them in hers. I wanted those thoughts to vanish.

So for a few moments as I was searching my mind for something to

tell her, I was honestly struggling with what to say. At first I cobbled together a few lame stories about, oh-I-can't-remember... Dan's travels or a few quasi-interesting Morgan stories. But then, as she told me about my funny nephew and his 4-year old birthday party, the conversation started flowing. It trickled at first, but then we were nearly interrupting each other with topic tennis, laughing at human behavior and the world of children.

Eventually we talked about a few issues with life, but they weren't dwelled upon. We didn't really gloss over them, just kind of stripped them of their sting and left them in Someone's hands who are far greater.

Today there will be too much mail for my liking. But there will also be fun blogs to read.

There will be smells that send my pregnancy schnoz to the moon. But there will also be cupcakes.

And, most likely, the gas prices won't drop the \$2.00 a gallon I'd like them to. I'll still drive.

If I'm brave, I'll strain out the good from the not-good and see a world worth enjoying. It may come as a trickle at first, but there's bound to be a flood of good.

# Insights and Encounters

By Bruce Johnson

(At bare minimum, Mother Teresa's phrase underscores the importance of one's job.)

Hands. . .waiting. . .yielding. . .compliant...expecting. Not young, but experienced at passivity.

My student—nine years ago. And beyond any stereotype, and even individual person, the story is the question: What do “Jesus’ hands” look like? So, how do you know when you are touching “Jesus’ hands?” The answer is that they may be yielding, or they may be head-strong: they defy preconception.

I teach kids, in an art room, in a special-ed school. I remember learning to teach these kids. The boundary was blurred between what they would receive in help from me and what they would do on their own. It had to be that way because I needed to learn too. I was learning that there were more ways to cut a circle; many more ways than I had known or invented, yet.

While I tried to learn how to safely control scissors in the hands of another person—through the stages of apprehension and excitement that could leave that construction paper both cleanly cut around, on the line, and cut clean through its middle—I had to do this in a manner both considerate to my pupil and safe for my own hands. And that was not all. It also needed to be an exercise in exploring untried territory—for the student, and an opportunity to expand repertoire—for me.

Students constructed Fish Hats made from cut and glued construction paper strips (depending on what skills each could handle either themselves or in collaborative hand-over-hand teamwork). I learned that given the opportunity to explore, and to try variations, with a mind open to accepting reasonable facsimiles (which when really mattering could be trimmed of errors, or enhanced with glitter embellishments) that the best thing happened: we had success. Students knew it. I knew it. And all the adults that saw the finished product admiringly told the students how good the Fish Hats were. Even better were the accolades of other kids in the hallway, who seeing heads decked out with colorful paper fish,

enthusiastically wanted to make theirs too. . .and soon.

The formal design unity of the Fish Hats derived from the use of each student's own fingers: selections of one, three or four of them traced around. Fish-scale patterns on each side of the fish bodies were looped out by tracing crayola markers around and between their fingers. Row upon row of three or four traced finger tips lined up in ranks bearing tropical colors. A pair of deep plunging long looping shapes were drawn and cut out—in a fashion particular to each scissor operator's manner.

Particularly, some cut neatly on the line traced over the curves of the finger's profile; while some others notched a triangle from the general gap between the fingers' ends. Some edited the number of fingers with a quick swooping cut—anything could be directed into becoming a success. Then, finally, the first digit of the index finger provided an oval trace for the fish eye. And once more for a mouth. And then the fish was ready for its tail.

Take a task, break it down, and then begin asking yourself if there are other ways to do things than how you imagined doing them before. Invent. . .make a game of it. . .and lead it as a parade. Sing if necessary. . .or, sing if you can get away with it. The tune “The Farmer in the Del” has worked well; with adaptations stemming from particular needs and timely projects. . .for each student. Sometimes I sing “I cut the circle round...” (Can you hear it?) or “I cut right on the line...” But I can also change strategy and sing “I cut the corners off...” or “I cut the corners small.” Those last two describe slowly reducing a square into an approximately round-ish shape, attacking first at the corners, and then slowing down that attack to make small snippets on the remaining corners so that the other paper sticking beyond the traced circular line finally yields.

But that does not begin to exhaust potential possibilities. “I let the papers fall...” describes working on a prepared square where a circle has been traced and then a matrix of sun-rays has been pre-cut from the outside to extend up to, and stop at the circle's lines. Each and every snip results in a shower of at least one and maybe six or ten triangles, or trapezoids, or pentagons of colored constructions fluttering down to the table.

Lots was learned. Lots was practiced. Much was reinforced through repetition. The process was unique for each student, as they engaged in their own way to build toward a totality that was common to

all. They decked their heads with aquatic decoration. And I realized that in some fashion of speech, my job description could be summarized as “inventing games and leading parades.”

The “hands of Jesus” might be apprehensive or aggressive, or hesitating, or in a rush. They may need help with steps “2” or “5.” Or they might just need help with “3” to embellish what was accomplished with “2”, or require prep with “4” so that “5” is a snap; an opportunity to show off rather than to struggle. More is taught than scissors and glue, markers and shapes.

Each of these would by themselves be vitally important for kids who so strongly need to learn by hands-on processes and materials. But they also learn that they can do projects that are not all completely prepared for them.

**They learn that they can face new challenges and draw from their experiences. . .how to try, and sometimes fail at this or that approach. . .but how mostly to succeed, and then work back more into something that they themselves originally planned. . .and so to inspire a parade in others too.**

## By Lyn Kmiecik

Where have I seen God?

In the power of a storm on Lake Michigan.

While sitting on the deck of my dad’s boat as we crossed Lake Michigan on a perfectly calm day.

In the beauty of a sun set that I watch from my kitchen window and the ability to share that moment with a friend 10 miles away.

Being able to drive past a friend’s house and pray for them.

In the opportunity to ask a long-time friend to Coffee-Break – He had to put me there.

Being able to watch the sun rise or set from the 85<sup>th</sup> floor of the Sears Tower and being able to share that moment with my Christian boss.

Looking back across my life and seeing His hand. A lost job the led to a much better one. The ability to be home when I needed to be there. Finding Christian friends who are willing to try to understand and care about my special needs child.

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful. Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it. I Corinthians 10:13.*

My translation:

**I know nothing will happen to me that I will not be able to handle.**

## By Linda Miller

In June, I had the opportunity to travel to Germany for my job, in order to work on a project with colleagues in the office there. I was also able to arrange a stop in London. on the way home, to visit with my Australian “sister”, who had been an exchange student with my family when we were both in high school.

Even though I have traveled out of town many times and have left my daughters at home with my parents, it was going to be different this time. I was going to be gone for twelve days, as opposed to the usual five when I travel to Iowa, and thousands of miles away, across the ocean, as opposed to 350 miles away. Cailyn was going to stay with her father, who would be at work most days, leaving her on her own to make plans and keep herself busy. Carissa was going to stay at the house by herself and check in with my parents every day.

I was concerned that there might be a “crisis” while I was out of town, e.g. a health issue requiring phone calls to the doctor, a house repair that would need to be handled, or some more serious issue that would require me to return home early. I was concerned about the water heater, which had been leaking and repaired, but not certain to remain in good working order.

On my way to the airport that Saturday evening in June, I was feeling very anxious, despite the excitement I felt about my first trip to Europe. I was praying for God to calm my nerves and to keep everyone safe while I was gone, but I did not have much peace of mind.

As the chauffeur drove along I-294 towards O'Hare, I looked out the window and saw a billboard. I do not remember what it was advertising, but clearly remember seeing the word TRUST in very large letters, larger than anything else on the sign. At that moment, it was clear to me that God was telling me to trust Him that all would be well while I was gone and that I did not need to worry.

As it turned out, I had a fantastic trip! There were no problems with travel or luggage, my daughters stayed safe and healthy, and the water heater didn't need to be replaced (yet!).

Sunday, June 29, was a beautiful summer day in London. As I sat on the lawn of Westminster Abbey that afternoon, after being in the magnificent St. Paul's Cathedral for Evensong earlier that day, I thought how truly blessed I was to have the opportunity to be in London, seeing the awesome sites and visiting with my sister, whom I had not seen in 22 years.

**God is truly good!**

## **Come Thou Fount**

**By Robert Robinson  
Composed by John  
Wyeth**

*Come Thou fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing thy grace.  
Streams of mercy never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet,  
Sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount – I'm fixed upon it.  
Mount of Thy redeeming love.*

Robert Robinson was born of lowly parents in Swaffham, Norfolk, England, on September 27, 1735. His father died when Robert was eight. At the

age of fourteen, he was sent by his mother to London to learn the barbering trade. Here for the next few years, he was associated with a notorious gang of hoodlums and lived a debauched life.

At the age of seventeen he attended a meeting where George Whitefield was preaching. Robinson and his friends went for the purpose of "scoffing at the poor deluded Methodists." However, Whitefield's strong evangelistic preaching so impressed young Robinson that he was converted.

Several years later he felt called to preach and entered the ministry of the Methodist Church. Subsequently, he left the Methodist Church when he moved to Cambridge and became a Baptist pastor. Here he became known as an able theologian through his writing of many theological works as well as several hymns.

The hymn text, written when Robinson was only twenty three, contains an interesting expression in the second stanza, "Here I raise my Ebenezer, Hither by Thy help I'm come." This language is taken from I Samuel 7:12, where the Ebenezer is a symbol of God's faithfulness.

An expression in the third verse, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love," seems to have been prophetic. Robinson's later years were characterized by lapses into sin, unstableness, and an involvement with the doctrines of Unitarianism.

The story is told that Robinson was one day riding in a stagecoach when he noticed a woman deeply engrossed with a hymn book. During the ensuing conversation, the lady asked Robinson what he thought of the hymn that she was humming. He burst into tears and said, "Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote those words many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then."

**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".**

# Humor Me

## When you thought I wasn't looking...

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you hang my first painting on the refrigerator and immediately wanted to paint another one.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you feed a stray cat and I learned that it was good to be kind to animals.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you make my favorite cake for me, and I learned that the little things can be the special things in life.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I heard you say a prayer and I knew that there is a God I could always talk to and I learned to trust in Him.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you make a meal and take it to a friend who was sick and I learned that we all have to help take care of each other.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you give time and money to help people who had nothing, and I learned that those who have something should give to those who don't.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you take care of our house and everyone in it, and I learned that we have to take care of what we are given.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw how you handled your responsibilities, even when you didn't feel good, and I learned that I would have to be responsible when I grew up.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw tears come from your eyes and I learned that sometimes things hurt, but that it is alright to cry.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw that you cared and I wanted to be everything that I could be.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I learned most of life's lessons that I need to know to be a good and productive person when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you give Daddy a big hug and I knew it was alright to love someone without holding back.

**When you thought I wasn't looking, I often wanted to say, "Thanks for all the things I saw when you thought I wasn't looking," but I couldn't because then you would know I was peeking.**

# Kids Korner

1. How many chariots and horsemen did Solomon have?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Where did Adam and Eve first live?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What did Paul have in Troas?  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What does the name "Abraham" mean?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. How many days did water flood the earth?  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. How many people were killed when Samson destroyed the Temple of Dagon?  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Who rolled back the stone from Jesus' tomb?  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. In what city that Paul visited was there a sign that read, "To an Unknown God"?  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Who had a vision of a great throne surrounded by 24 elders?  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. What was Uriah's occupation?  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Who is Beelzebub?  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. What did Moses do to get water out of a rock?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Look it up

1. I Kings 10:26

2. Genesis 2:8

3. Acts 16:8-9

4. Genesis 17:5

5. Genesis 7:24

6. Judges 16:22-30

7. Matthew 28:2

8. Acts 17:22-23

9. Revelations 1:1 & 4:4

10. II Samuel 17:15-17

11. Matthew 12:24-27

12. Exodus 17:5-6

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Note: If you are between the ages of 7 and 12, sign your name and put your answers in my mail box (Gabrielse) by Sunday, October 12<sup>th</sup>

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	33
Dakota Nichols	12
Kelsey Uitermarkt	12
Kathryn Kmiecik	11