



Mustard Seed

August 2011

Thank You For Sharing

Volume XXI,
Issue 8

At this time in the church year, the Gifts Discernment Committee is busy placing people in leadership positions for the new church year that begins September 1. I am reminded of how blessed we are as a church to have people willing to share their gifts with others. Your willingness and faithfulness is greatly appreciated. Without the generous sharing of your time and talents, the life and ministry of the church would be hampered in so many ways.

I want to take this opportunity to do what we are called to do in Ephesians 5:20, "Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thanks be to God for your faithful and dedicated service this past year and for your willingness to share your gifts in the new church year. May we all serve with joyful hearts, always giving thanks to God the Father for every opportunity to serve and glorify Him.

Scott Swartzendruber



Special points of interest:

- ✓ I think convention is so important in helping young people realize that they are the future of the church. The decisions that we make today affect the outcome of tomorrow.
- ✓ the important things in life snapped into sharp focus and those important things are people and relationships and the connections with them.

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A Time to Remember -Denver DOOR, 2011

Saturday, July 2, at 6:30 in the morning, 20 MYFers and their parents, along with four sponsors, gathered at IMS to load kids and their luggage in two 15 passenger vans. This was the first adventure of our trip. After a word of prayer with the youth and their parents, final goodbyes were said, and we were on our way to Denver, Colorado. The trip went smoothly with games, giggles, and sing-alongs on the way.

Our second adventure began Sunday morning with a white water rafting trip! After a safety course with the leaders at Rocky Mountain Adventures, we were



all plenty afraid of falling in the 40 degree water, but most of us were excited for the ride, and we knew what to do if someone fell out. The first time down the rapids was smooth, but after lunch, we were glad we'd had the safety course when Levi Schrock got knocked off the raft! He hadn't fallen out too far, and John Adams was able to pull him back in while Ashlee Ferlitsch screamed, "Dunk him! Dunk him!" She had obviously heard that part of the safety course, as we were told that dunking the person with the life jacket on would help boost them back into the raft. We all made it safely back to the bus to go back down the mountain, and that evening we made it to the city of Denver for DOOR orientation. We were shown around the church, and got to meet the staff. Many of them were our age or not much older, and became fast friends.

Monday was then spent admiring God's creation during a hiking trip to Gem Lake. Usually, groups go to work sites on Monday, but since it was the Fourth of July, none of the agencies were open. However, the time was well worth it, as our

eyes were open to God's power, and we were reminded that He wants so badly to be a part of our lives.

Tuesday, we got to begin going to worksites. Our group of 20 had been broken into groups of 4 youth, with one sponsor and a DOOR staff member who would be working with us and being our guide. We stayed with the same groups, but had a different staff member each day. In those groups, we went to worksites and helped with kitchen duties. Each morning and afternoon, we walked or drove to the worksites, depending on how far away they were.

Helping out at Bus Stop Ministries was the first missions project my group went on. We spent the morning handing out breakfast to the homeless of Denver, Colorado. We then moved on to a Christian café called The Network Café where we heard a Bible study and got to spend the day interacting with the homeless and getting to know their stories. We were reminded that often, a few moments out of our day is the best gift we could give.

The next day, we helped out at Bridge Project, which is an after school program during the school year. During the summer months, they help children who are behind on reading. The majority of these kids lives in the projects and are refugees from Kenya and other African countries at war. We were told that many of them had seen friends or relatives killed, but that they act like regular, happy kids. It was fun watching them open up to us and enjoy playing with our hair or ask for piggy back rides in the morning and during recess. We got to assist the kids while they practiced typing, and later, reading brand new books that Bridge had ordered for each child.



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(Cont. from page 2) We were told that most of those kids have never had books in their home. Our final day was spent at the Sunshine Academy, an inner city daycare. While there, we got to help entertain the kids and give them some of the love and attention they may be missing at home. We also helped out with odd cleaning jobs around the place, such as washing dishes, and mopping floors. Josh Yoder even got to impress the instructors with his bathroom cleaning skills!

The other groups did projects much like ours, and we rotated each day, so it was fun being able to share stories and to put a face with names we'd heard the night before. Some of the groups also got to go to food pantries and thrift stores where they did more behind-the-scenes work sorting items and stocking shelves, or filling food orders for those without the money to buy groceries. We were usually done anywhere from 2 to 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

Our evenings were spent hanging out in the basement of the church, enjoying basketball and other games at the park across the street, playing hide-and-seek with the DOOR staff, and doing activities the DOOR program had lined up for us.

Tuesday night, we did a homeless simulation in which we were each given one dollar and told to get money for a good meal by interacting with the people of Denver. The only rules were that we couldn't tell them we were homeless, and we couldn't tell them it was part of a church group experiment. We started by splitting our small groups into two groups of two. The pairs then got money by working in shops and asking people they saw on the street for some spare change, while sponsors stood nearby to oversee things. After a few hours, we met back up and pooled our money together for a meal. While each person's experience was different, I think we can all say we have an entirely different view of homelessness. Instead of seeing a bum on the corner who wants money for alcohol, we see someone wondering where their next meal will

come from, or if anyone will even give them a smile instead of ignoring them. I personally had always thought if I just didn't look at the person, maybe that would make things less awkward, but I learned that a smile or friendly word can be as rewarding as a few dollars.

We also got to hear the story of Antonio, Denver's DOOR director. He told us about his struggle with drugs, greed, and the party scene, but he also told us of God's deliverance from those addictions. We were reminded that no one can sink so far that God cannot pull them up.

Thursday night we had a wonderful time of worship and reflection. The DOOR leaders asked us questions about the week, and that helped us process what we had seen and been through. It was amazing to hear how many different things God taught us, even though we were doing the same things. I cannot begin to share all of those lessons, but I trust you will get to hear a few first hand when the group shares about the trip some Sunday.

While this feels like a long article, I could not possibly write every detail, or memory, or lesson learned. It's always nice to be home after a trip, but my prayer is that this will have truly been a life-changing experience for each one who was there. I believe it has been. Thank you all so much for your prayers and donations! ...Talk to anyone who was there, and you will soon see that they were well worth it.

Nicole Murray

Instead of seeing a bum on the corner who wants money for alcohol, we see someone wondering where their next meal will come from, or if anyone will even give them a smile instead of ignoring them.

MYF Convention, 2011, Pittsburgh

The theme chosen for convention was 'Bridges to the Cross'. At first I was kind of skeptical...Why would you need to go on a bridge to get to Jesus? What was on the bridge? That first night it all became very clear. The bridge represents reconciliation. But what does it mean to reconcile? To reconcile is to compose or settle. Shane Hipps spoke to the adults and youth the first night about needing to reconcile with God, others and ourselves before we can truly come before the cross. How do you begin this process? It is a lot easier said than done. Throughout the week different speakers spoke about reconciling with ones self, others, God and perhaps most importantly the church needing reconciliation. I learned that all of these things work together, if you aren't reconciled to God, how can you reconcile yourself with others? Or, if you aren't reconciled with yourself how can you play an effective part of helping the church reconcile with itself?

This theme spurred on a lot of discussions- which was one of my favorite things about convention, listening to a speaker in the morning and then going to lunch and discussing what we

thought about the speaker, their thoughts versus our own personal feelings on the particular topic- What will happen to the church in 5, 10 or 20 years? What part am I playing in the church? How do I relate to others? Do I have a Christ-like attitude? Can people tell that I am a Christian? Where do I stand with God?

I think convention is so important in helping young people realize that they are the future of the church. The decisions that we make today affect the outcome of tomorrow. Are we going to take the easy path and blow off the cross? Or are we going to cross the bridge of reconciliation to the cross?

Carlie Bender



Library Notes

Most of us may not really know "the lazy days" of summer, but it is a good time to pick up a good book, relax after a day in the sun, and read. To round out the summer, take a look at some of the new and donated books added to the library.

A new resource packet for young families has been donated by Central Plains Mennonite Conference and is titled *Growing Deeper: Rooted and Grounded in Love* and includes a book *Sleeping with Bread*. The purpose of this packet is to teach families to form faith in children. "In youth ministry circles today, the strong consensus is that by the time a child reaches adolescence, their faith habits and patterns are already formed by the example of their parents." (taken from the packet introduction.) This packet gives young

parents practical tools for teaching your children spiritually.

Fiction books include *Learning*, the second of Karen Kingsbury's new Bailey Flanagan series, (if the book is out, you may leave your name with the librarian to reserve it.), and *The Amish Midwife* by Mindy Starns Clark and Leslie Gould.

Other books include *From Saigon to Shalom*, by James Metzler, *A Life God Rewards* by Bruce Wilkinson, and *He Still Moves Stones*, by Max Lucado. If you are looking for Large Print, check out *A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul*.

Be sure to stop by and see what is on the shelf, waiting for you to read.

Shirley Hochstedler

WHAT'S HAPPENING!!!

We had 2.5 inches of rain here at 411 F Avenue the last several days. So now we will need to start mowing again next week. Down home in Harper County, Kansas they only mowed their yards twice all summer. Now that is dry! Ok, enough about rain and mowing, now for the KMC news.

For the second year in a row, Ryan Miller volunteered at the John Deere Golf Classic in the Quad Cities. The one day he walked with a group of golfers and kept their score. On another day he sat in a small tower next to a green and measured how far away from the hole each person's ball was. Every time they hit the ball, he had to measure it with a laser transit until the ball was in the hole. On Sunday, Ryan was in the reserve pool and Althea got to go with him. However, he was not needed and so the two just had a good time together being spectators.

Whitney Christiansen has had quite a summer vacation this year. She was on the Mid- Prairie High School softball team that went to State and they tied for 3rd place. And before that Whitney was in a group of about 40 Iowa teenagers that went to Europe for 19 days. She was with an or-

ganization called "People to People," which helps young people get to know each other to promote peace between nations. They visited Italy, France, Austria and Switzerland and stayed mostly in hotels. Three nights they stayed with their host Austrian families and even went to an Austrian high school as well. Whitney will be a sophomore at MPHS this fall and is the daughter of Brian & Brenda Christiansen.

We got to visit with Kyle Graber who was in church last Sunday. Kyle returned from Afghanistan after spending one year with his National Guard Unit. It was good to visit with him again and he did say that it was hotter in Iowa (during that recent spell) than in Afghanistan. Good to have you back home Kyle.

Well the ball games should be about over and now hopefully some of the KMC families can go on vacation before school starts next month. Enjoy the rest of the summer.

Blessings to all,
Ed V. & Carol Miller



The Stuff of Life

'Stuff' is on my mind these last couple of weeks, and our attachment to it. Certainly we need an adequate supply of things for survival...and then a little more for comfort...but how much more than 'enough' becomes too much, and just clutter among the more important things in life? My parents were offered a few weeks ago to move into a lovely little cottage at the UP Home in Washington. My dad's Alzheimer's continues to progress in its vicious downward trend and my brother and I knew my mom was going to need more support in caring for him sooner rather than later. He still knows us but is less and less aware all the time. The morning after I requested prayer at our Bible Study group, my mom called that this quaint little cottage was available. After looking at it, it seemed perfect so the winnowing of stuff began in earnest at my mom's house, and in time tables of dishes

and boxes of artifacts were there to be sorted. Decisions were to be made on who wants what and where the excess should go. What to do with the stuff of a lifetime?

I told my mom from the beginning that there was very little I would be taking. I came home on the Saturday we sorted through all the things from her many china cupboards carrying only a glass vinegar cruet that was my great-grandmother's and a crocheted bedspread that my dad's mother made. I came home one night with my mom's engagement/ wedding ring and the glass angel-food cake stand that held my birthday cake each year growing up. I took one of the china cupboards. But mostly, our home is full enough and crowding in extra things wouldn't improve our quality of life.

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So my thoughts have been wandering to what is 'stuff' anyway, and why do we become so attached to it? For me it is the memories... the people associated with the stuff. But how much is enough to enjoy the memory of that person or event? Do I need to keep everything a special person ever touched or made, or are a few special items enough? I know that by nature I am more of a tosser than a keeper. I also know that I have things I keep in excess...my husband would point that out when standing in front of one of my bookcases...but mostly, I enjoy the simplicity of having enough, with only a little bit more, and I strive to keep it that way. If I buy some new clothes, I weed some out to go to Goodwill. If I buy a new book, I try to give some books away. Each summer I sort through things and take several boxes of things that are no longer needed or being used to the Crowded Closet.

In those dark days last fall when I learned that the cancer had spread to my lungs, plunging me into Liver Cancer Stage 4B, I came face-to-face with my mortality in ways I'd never had to before. The thoughts and emotions were so powerful and the sadness was so profound at times. But you can trust me on this...the important things in life snapped into sharp focus and those important things are people and relationships and the connections with them. Any regrets I had were about a hurt I had caused someone or a relationship I didn't maintain, or lives I would not be around to touch in the future. Grandchildren yet to be born and those too young now to ever remember the grandmother who loved them so much. Ian graduating and heading to college without a mom there to send him off. Not once did I agonize over 'stuff'....wishing I'd collected more of this or that. Of the many cascading thoughts that flowed through my mind and heart in those dark, gray days of facing the Stage 4 diagnosis, I will tell you

that I did NOT spend time regretting that I didn't get into some fight with my brother over who would get which dish or piece of furniture, and I did NOT wish I had collected more 'things', however memorable they might have been.

I had thought long and hard about what I could take of my dad's things that would most remind me of him, but there is little in the way of 'stuff' that comes to mind. He was not a man of many 'things'. He was always that strong and steady presence in my life, the patient, wise man, who was grounded in common sense with a strong work ethic, and a sharp sense of humor. He could fix most anything and was always willing to help, when I was a child and throughout all my adult days, where even yesterday, when there were moving boxes to be carried and later broken down, he was asking if I needed help. As he has slipped farther away, I have missed his help and working side by side with him on projects around the house, but I have missed even more being able to go to him for advice...being able to talk things through with him before making major decisions. So I really didn't come home with 'stuff' that had been my dad's. The only thing I might have taken would have been the set of vice grips that was ever-present in the pocket of his work pants. Everyone knows that many things can be fixed with duct tape and WD-40, which are even among the essential tools I keep in my desk at school, but my dad added a little pair of vice grips to that list of essentials. He was never without it, he pulled it out for nearly any 'fix it' job he was working on, and I can never use the vice grips I have or even think of them without fond memories of my dad. So I have decided that will be my 'thing' of dad's to stir my fondest memories of him. They are not my dad's vice grips...but I think that really doesn't matter...

When the final day of moving came for my parents we spent the day getting the last of their winnowed down things put away. With the limited space available, choices were still being made as mom decided which things meant the most to her and should be kept and which things were really just too much stuff and could go to Goodwill. My dad seemed to be adjusting pretty well but was just amazed at how familiar furniture had turned up in this new place and

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(Cont. from page 6) he kept puzzling over and over how those things had gotten there, having no recollection of my brother and his work crew, my son, and my niece moving all that furniture in the day before. It broke my heart time and again, spending these last few weeks helping my parents, seeing my dad for longer stretches of time than I had been able to this last year or so and seeing how far he has wandered down this horrible path they are having to walk, as the Alzheimer's steals away more and more of the dad (I knew, and more and more of my mom's time and energy. I know this move was the right thing to do and an answer to prayer but it didn't make it easier in the end and when I finally got home last night the tears had to flow for awhile.

But the tears flowed for the people and the memories, and not the things and the stuff. People, and our heart-felt relationships with them, are

what make life worth living. They are what should tug at our heart-strings and provoke tears of joy or tears of sadness. We know it, and then we go shopping, or we get into squabbles with family members over 'stuff' that, in the end, is nothing more than clutter among the truly important things that life should be about. I hope I have chosen carefully among the 'stuff' of my parents' that I want to keep. I know I will treasure those few things I kept. I will treasure more though, the life lessons I have learned and will continue learning from them; the memories, whether joyful or heart-breaking that I have of and with them; the fun-times, both past and future, that we will enjoy together. These are the important 'stuff', and I pray that lesson has been driven deep into my heart, that I never forget in the busyness of life what is truly important.

Glenda Seward

In Pursuit

This morning, as I was thinking about how I should be getting out of bed and get on with my day, it crossed my mind how comfortable my life felt at that moment. Sure, I knew I had more on my "to do" list than I could get done, I wouldn't mind dropping a few pounds, my house isn't as clean as I'd like and there are possibly more weeds in my garden than flowers, but over all my life felt really good in that moment in time. Why is it that at one time we can be utterly content and at other times we can be totally dissatisfied while the earthly circumstances are pretty much the same?

Three things from scripture have been rolling around my mind over the last few days. They seem entirely disconnected, but the more I think about it I am not so sure that is the case.

The first is about Joseph, son of Jacob. In Genesis 41, the Pharaoh had a couple of dreams that he can't find anyone to explain to him. Eventually, the cupbearer remembers Joseph who had previously interpreted dreams with success. (I encourage you to read about Joseph in Genesis. His story is quite an adventure and an amazing way to see more of how God moves in the lives of His people.) Anyway, Joseph once again has success interpreting the dreams. There must have been something very unique in the way that Joseph interpreted the Pharaoh's dreams because Pharaoh's re-

sponse in Genesis 41:38-41 reads like this:

So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours."

Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt."

There was something about Joseph that revealed itself to Pharaoh because of the Holy Spirit within him. The power was from God, not Joseph. Being filled with God's Spirit is a good thing and it should be very highly valued. (Cont. on page 8)



We are on the web:
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(Cont. from page 7) Now the second thing in scripture that has been on my mind is what I would consider an odd story that I didn't remember when I came across it during some reading. It is a story of Moses. It occurs after the burning bush, but before Moses is in Egypt to lead the Israelites. Moses has committed himself and his family to go to Egypt and they are on their way there. You would think that at that point in his life Moses' relationship with God would be at a good place. He was doing what he was told to do. But Exodus 4:24-26 tells us more.

On the way to Egypt, at a place where Moses and his family had stopped for the night, the Lord confronted him and was about to kill him. But Moses' wife, Zipporah, took a flint knife and circumcised her son. She touched his feet with the foreskin and said, "Now you are a bridegroom of blood to me." (When she said "a bridegroom of blood," she was referring to the circumcision.) After that, the Lord left him alone.

Moses was on his way to do God's will. The trouble was that Moses had an obstacle between him and God. Moses hadn't kept the covenant that Abraham had made with God through circumcision. That obstacle could have meant death for Moses, but God pointed out the problem to him so it could be set right and clear the road in Moses' relationship with God. This was vitally important. God had big plans for Moses.

The third part of the scriptures that keeps coming to mind is from Revelation. It is from the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3. In every letter, towards the end, He says, "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches." In the letter to Ephesus, "To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God" follows it. After the same phrase, in the letter to Smyrna this is written: "Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death."

So how can these three things tie together? Let me attempt to pull them together. It's up to you to look at the scriptures and determine whether or not I am on the right track or not.

The bottom line for me is that the Holy Spirit is vitally important to our spiritual walk. Revelation tells us that our victory over death depends on our willingness to pursue active listening and obedience to the Holy Spirit's guidance in our lives. If we do not do this, we will die.

The story of Moses shows me that even when I feel I am being obedient to God there can be areas where I am failing to obey or have previously failed to obey. There is Godly discipline involved with disobedience, but God will always reveal this disobedience to be in sufficient time for me to correct my ways so He can save my life.

Last of all, Joseph allowed the Spirit of God to work in his life to the degree that it was obvious to those around him that it was the Spirit of God that made Joseph's life stand out. That is what happens to everyone who actively allows the Holy Spirit to work in them. There will be visible evidence.

So back to the beginning, why is it that at one time we can be utterly content and at other times we can be totally dissatisfied while the earthly circumstances are pretty much the same? I think the difference is whether or not we are allowing the Holy Spirit to actively change us. Do we have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church? (That's us, Christians!) When the Spirit shows us our sins, are we like Moses' wife making things right? Are we like Joseph letting the Spirit freely work in our life no matter what the circumstances are? Can those around us see the Holy Spirit within us? I think God's favor in our lives often shows itself not so much in our circumstances, but more in how we react to and handle our circumstances.

Moses has a prayer in Exodus 33:13 that I think most of us could benefit from praying. It definitely touches my heart. "If it is true that you look favorably on me, let me know your ways so I may understand you more fully and continue to enjoy your favor." May you and I allow the Holy Spirit to have His way within us.

As always, in pursuit,

Dawn Wyse