



The Connection

Volume 8, Issue 12, December 2010

Farewell to My Washington Family

by Pastor Ray

I want to thank the Blue Mountain Church family for the opportunity to serve as your interim pastor this autumn. You have made Tina and me most welcome. I see great things in the future for this church. You are entering a new chapter in the life of the church. New leadership will bring new vision and new vitality. Make sure that you continue praying for the search committee. They are truly seeking the Lord's guidance. Encourage them and each other through these days. Keep hope at the front of your minds and let your expectancy grow in these days of waiting for the right leader.

A special thanks to Bret Larreau and the Board of Elders for their call and support of me. I count it a privilege to have worked with Richard Easton, Ken Paine, Bob Loar, Julie Caton, Kim Skifstad and Donovan Skifstad. They are all very dedicated to the Lord and the church and you are fortunate to have them. Thanks to Robin Ermacoff for finding very comfortable housing accommodations for us. Thank you, also, to all who had me/us to dinner, and to those who have given encouraging notes and gifts.

Blue Mountain will be in my thoughts and prayers. I hope that our paths cross again. Tina

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Next Steps

by Julie Caton

With the coming departure of Pastor Ray, several of you have been asking, "So What's next?" The Board of Elders has been working on a roster for the end of December and the beginning of January. Also, as announced last week, on January 9th Jerry Dickenson will return as interim senior pastor. The board continues their search for our new senior pastor. Please keep praying for this next pastor and for the search process. Below you will find a speaking schedule for the time between interims.

December 12 - Ray Houser

We'll have a potluck after church to thank them and send them on their way. Last name: A-R bring salad or main dish; S-Z bring dessert.

December 24 - Roy Clark

December 26 - Roy Clark

January 2 - Jerry Marvel

January 9 - Jerry Dickenson



Connecting to Life Stories

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By Mary Stephens

I remember my first year of seminary. It was a transition from the college dorm to my own apartment. It was a transition from working part time in a college art gallery to searching desperately for employment. I felt called to ministry and felt that I needed to pursue theological study to do justice to that call.

Somewhere, in the midst of transition and assurance, I began to doubt. The workload was different and challenging. I was responsible for my home: the cooking, cleaning, and extermination of mice, none of which I was an expert. The job search was disheartening as I was consistently rejected for being under- or overqualified. The transition became challenge and the challenge became doubt. I doubted my call, my abilities, and my relationship with God.

I called my mom in despair and during our lengthy conversation; she reminded me that God is with us. Doubt became questions. Questions became conversations with God. Conversations with God became comfort, strength and peace for the journey of life.

Church of God congregations across the country will begin celebrating Advent and the Christ's Birthday Observance. This year as we prepare our hearts for the Messiah, let us remember and rejoice

that Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. In our times of transition or comfort, assurance or doubt, peace or turbulence, God is with us on the journey.

God is with us as individuals and communities. As a community of faith, the Church of God is able to demonstrate "God with us" by observing the birth of Christ in a time that is often filled with commercialism and busyness. We can respond through prayer, devotion, and by giving generously to the Christ's Birthday Observance Offering. The offering supports frontline ministries of the Church of God. Each dollar given is a tangible way to be God with us to a student at one of our colleges, to a listener of CBH, a missionary, a national worker, a participant at the North American Convention or IYC, a partner of Christian Women Connection, or a neighbor in your community. Join Christian Women Connection and churches across the United States as we not only remember that God is with us, but explore ways to show God with us to the world.

BMCC will be receiving the Christ's Birthday Offering on December 19th.

Continued from page 1

and I will be going back to Kokomo for a few days, and then on to Georgia for Christmas with our son's family. (I hope those grandtwins have sufficient stuffing, because this big grandpa is going to hug it out of them.) After the first of the year, Tina will resume her traveling, and I will be taking some training for doing pastoral interim work; traveling with her; and seeking God's leadership for my next chapter.

God bless you all, Pastor Ray and Tina Houser

Celebrate Recovery

by Pete Erb

Celebrate Recovery at Blue Mountain Community Church is alive. I am not prepared to claim more than that right now, but we are alive.

We have had some amazing meetings with open hearts and hours of worship (thanks to Nate and friends). Yet we plod along because we know that we have experienced a release and a freedom that comes through the program that is Celebrate Recovery. What many do not know is that Friday is not the only part of CR.

In my opinion the most important part is the step study. This is a gender specific study time. There are 4 books that go with the step study and they allow the participants to look deeply into themselves and their lives to find freedom from past hurts. It has always been the most important part of CR to me.

In January we will begin a men's step study group. These groups can last anywhere from 6 months to a year. This depends on the size of the group and the depth of the discussions. The step study is an important part of CR but does not, necessarily, require Friday attendance. Through the Men's Ministry and recent conferences it has become clear to me that our men are not leading the church (please pardon the generality). Getting close with other men and sharing in a way that makes all future sharing possible is the path to freedom, spiritual growth and a strong church foundation.

I encourage anybody to see Pete Erb, Chris Osborn or Darlene Mings for a look at the step study guides and decide if it is something you would like to experience. We all have personal experiences to share from these groups and can describe our freedom. You can also call Pete 301-9219 to talk about what you can gain through the step study experience.

CR meets Fridays at 7 PM. The Men's Step Study will meet Sundays at 5 PM at the Home of Pete and Sara Erb (or elsewhere if we need the room). A women's step study can begin as soon as we have enough interest.



The Pastoral Care Commission is updating its calling list of those who would like to provide food for funeral and memorial receptions. If you would like to be part of this touching ministry, please contact the church office at 529-1212, Betty Hamby at 522-1624 or Karen Skifstad at 386-1528. Please provide a phone number.

Connecting to Ministries

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Everyone is invited! Meet Friday nights at 7:00 PM to share in support and encouragement to conquer your hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Dinner provided the fourth Friday each month at 6:00 PM for a small donation.



Grow close to others in relationships centered on our faith in Jesus. For more info on joining a home group, contact the church office at 529-1212.

Senior Adult Ministries meets December 9th at 6 PM for their annual Christmas party. Anyone 55 years or older is welcome to come and see what they're all about. Laughter is the best medicine. Come join in the fun and fellowship.

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Family Breakfast
All families welcome!

December 11th
8:00 AM

Sponsored by Men's Ministry



Mothers of Preschoolers
exist to encourage and equip mothers. Guests are always welcome!
Contact Shannon Naftzger at 876-1302.

Mothers of Preschoolers and MOMSNext meet December 9th from 9-11 AM in Baker Hall. They





Ladies Christmas Tea

Hats Off to Christmas

Monday, December 6th ~ 6:30 PM
Blue Mountain Community Church

Come Share After Dinner Treats
as we kick off the Christmas Season

Wear your favorite hat, old or new!

Tickets are on sale at Ministry Central.

Your \$6 donation benefits the
Agrellas family in Guatemala.

Youth News

by Ken Paine

As we slide into December, the sun shines less, the winds grow cold, and the snow often threatens. But we are always in the bright light of Jesus, and can bask in his glory. We approach the celebration of Jesus' birth with excitement and wonder. How can God be born as a baby and save us all? How does his time on earth 2000 years ago have so much affect on us? It is a time to ponder these great mysteries and many more.

It's also a time to celebrate. Besides the normal youth Sunday school, Sunday evening middle school youth group (6:00 - 7:30 PM), and Thursday evening high school youth group (7:00 - 8:30 PM), we'll have a high school Christmas party on Friday, December 17, from 6:00 to 9:00 PM in the gym, and a middle school party on Sunday, December 19 from 6:00 - 8:00 PM. We're also planning a sled-ding party on Tuesday, December 28, leaving the church at 9:00 AM and returning about 4:00 PM. Details on these events will be forthcoming.

In January we'll start the second round of Bible memorization. We also are looking forward to middle school and high school retreats some time in the winter. Once we get these planned, we'll let everyone know what's going on.

Keep praying for the youth of the church. They face many challenges daily, and we need to cover them in prayer.

Connecting to One Another

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Celebrating December Birthdays and Anniversaries

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Quinn Anderson
Debbie Sands | |
| 2 Megan Hoppen
Zamora Wilson | |
| 4 Skylar Sams
Hailey Sams
Matthew Skifstad | 17 Melvin Bowen
Carol McMillan
Jeffrey Spence |
| 6 Barry Culbertson
Paul Henline | 18 Claire Clark
Joey Stephens |
| 7 Charlie Greiner
Evan Walker
Olivia Watson | 19 Dora Gonzalez
20 Scarlett Figgins
22 Davin Jones |
| 9 Ruth Hicks
Sarah Jameson | 24 Bob Hoppen
Bill Thrasher |
| 10 Nora Carrillo
Ryan Evans
Bryce Henline | 25 Cristy McNeil
26 Paul Davisson
Hazel Pellicer |
| 12 Jean Bell
Vincent Cannone
Brandon Snider | 27 Carrie Schultz
28 Don Groat
29 Kevin Blair
Alex Jones
Vance Jones
Kathy Nelson
Cameron Spencer
Cyndi Walters |
| 13 Michael Clark
Amber Stratton
Neosha Guse
Zelda Kelso
Andrew Miller | 31 Don Lemons |
| 14 Ernest LaFont | |
| 16 Richard Easton | |

- 2 Jeff & Sandy Goodson
- 4 Ernie & Joy Hartl
- 23 Calvin & Cristy McNeil
- 28 Gene & Jinny Daniels

Special Christmas Offering

On December 12th, we will be receiving an offering to bless families within our church body who have lost their jobs this past year. If you would like to nominate a family to receive one of these gifts, please contact the church office at 529-1212.

December

At a Glance

- 1 Building and Grounds 6:45 PM
- 2 Celebrate Recovery Leaders 6:30 PM
- 6 Ladies' Christmas Tea 6:30 PM
- 9 MOPS 9:00 AM
SAMS Christmas Party 6:00 PM
- 11 Family Breakfast 8:00 AM
- 13 EOD Commission Meeting 6:30 PM
Worship Commission Meeting 6:30 PM
- 14 Quilter's Guild 6:00 PM
- 16 Ark Christmas Program 4:30 AM
- 20 CE Commission Meeting 6:30 PM
Board of Elders Meeting 6:30 PM
- 21 Missions Commission 6:30 PM
- 23 Office Closes at noon
- 24 Office Closed for Christmas
Christmas Eve Service 6:00 PM
- 31 Office Closed for New Year

Faith Promise Thanks

by Kathy Wood

Thanks so much for inviting Tod and me to participate with you during Faith Promise weekend! We all enjoyed our time back at BMCC again! It is always like “coming home” to us, which brings us joy. Even the kids cheered about the fun we had on Sunday.

It was exciting to hear that nearly 50% of the faith promise goal has come in so far with pledges. We hope you reach your goal, and with the goal, that each individual who steps out in faith to pledge will see God do things in their lives that wouldn't make sense unless it was GOD! That is what faith is about . . . knowing and trusting that God is there, even when we don't understand or can't see Him at work behind the scenes. I trust that He will reveal himself to the church body as a whole, as He begins revealing the work He is doing behind the scenes (or sometimes even in public). He is an amazing God and I am happy to be one of His.

This is a new outreach for BMCC missions. This year we sent \$1500 for a full year's tuition.



We started our new assignment at Kima International School of Theology in Kenya in February of this year. With students from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and South Africa, our graduates have made significant contributions in their communities across Africa. While some go on to be pastors, leading congregations and saving the lost, others seek to serve the vulnerable and the needy. One recent graduate left his job to solve the problem of education in his home village. Using his own resources, he started a school. Now, students who could not read or write six months ago can. Another graduate saw the needs of orphans and hungry children and set up a ministry that now feeds over 100 children. Still another graduate is working with vulnerable girls trapped in the sex trade industry. These are just a few of the examples of the impact KIST graduates are making in Africa.

From the Higgenbothams

Jennifer is a freshman we met through contact cards at the beginning of the year. My Bible study co-leader, Sarah, was able to meet up with her for coffee and share the gospel with her. She later started coming to our Bible study and asking lots of great questions about God and His will for her life. After lots of encouragement we talked her into coming to our Fall Retreat to meet new people. During our free time, Jennifer sat down and prayed with Sarah to trust Christ as her personal Savior and Lord. During our sharing time at the end of retreat she said:

I've never felt this way before! Before when I'd read the Bible, it was just something to read. Now it's like it's talking to me! All the things I've done for fulfilment in my life before don't compare to what I'm feeling now.. I'm all in! I wasn't planning on becoming a Christian this year, but God had another plan! This is the best thing!

Quick Connect



Ladies Christmas Tea

December 6th

6:30 PM

Wear your favorite hat!

Family Breakfast All families welcome!

December 11th

8:00 AM

Sponsored by Men's Ministry



Community Christmas

Eve Service

December 24th

6:00 PM

Everyone is welcome to celebrate the birth
of Jesus in this simple remembrance.

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