

Harrisonburg Mennonite Church

Tidings

"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds." Hebrews 10:24

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New Day Dawning at HMC

---Lawrence M. Yoder, Transition Executive

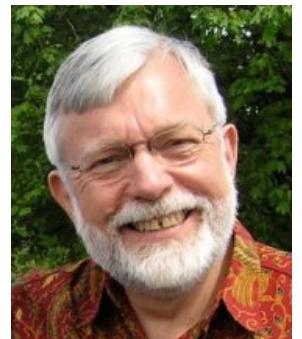
I see a new day dawning at HMC. It is a day in which we together are becoming more aware of who we are and who we are becoming. We are a body of people who have accepted Jesus Christ as our savior, our Lord, master, healer, redeemer and coming king. As a body of believers in Jesus we know ourselves to be a particular local expression of the Body of Christ in this time and place through whom God desires to speak and work and demonstrate his grace, glory, love, forgiveness, his work of reconciliation and bring all things together with Christ as head (Col. 1:20).

These last years we have struggled with questions of how we should be organized in order to facilitate our participation in the grace of God in all of its different forms. We have developed several different worshipping fellowships to provide opportunities and possibilities for us to worship and express our faith in a variety of ways. This is more than doing things in different ways in different parts of the same building; it is recognizing that we are a single body with a single head, with a variety of members and gifts but the same Spirit.

So as we mingle with one another in our various circles—for worship, for study, for ministry, planning and administration, for fellowship and food—let us practice brother-sisterhood in Christ; let us walk and work together as leaders and followers. Let us honor each other in our various roles and positions. And, more than all else, let us seek to get on board with God's own agenda for us, for who we are as agents of God's own mission here in Harrisonburg and beyond. Let us strive to see people and communities around us as God sees them. Let us seek to see what God is doing and do that. Let us seek to hear what God is saying in particular times and places, uttering those words ourselves and following his instructions.

Jesus himself often said things like, "You see me do remarkable, powerful things because I only do what I see my father doing." "You hear me say startling and amazing things because I only say what I hear my father saying." And it is clear from the text of the gospels that Jesus fully expected his disciples to learn to function in a similar way in the present, active guidance of God's own Spirit. He expects no less from us.

God wants to inhabit every aspect of who and what we are. God wants to engage and heal the brokenness within us, among us and in the world beyond us through our active, willing responsiveness to the Spirit. God wants us to love enemies and heal the sick, which we can only do in collaboration with God. This is what the new day a-dawning among us is all about. Our challenge is to get on board with God's purposes and mission and flow with God's Spirit.



THE SUN NEVER SETS ON GOD'S KINGDOM (Part 2)

---Pastor Craig Maven

ON THE MAINLAND

It was very easy to know what time it was in Virginia when I was in China. It was twelve hours ahead. I never bothered to reset my watch. So as the sun set in China, it was rising in the eastern sky in Rockingham County. The sun is always shining somewhere in God's kingdom. Jesus said (John 9:4), "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work." Jesus was using day and night as metaphors of God's timing for salvation, and experiencing this day/night shift made that metaphor more powerful. God is at work all over the world, all the time.

Traveling Adventures

In Part 1, I recounted my time in Hong and Macau. I must admit to some apprehension in making the trek over the border from Macau to mainland China. Technically, I had been in China since my arrival in Hong Kong. These two cities still enjoy economic and cultural freedoms that the rest of China does not, so I wondered what I would face. All my stereotypes of a totalitarian state lurked in the back of my mind.

I had stood at the border between Macau (then a Portuguese colony) and the Peoples Republic of China in 1997.



Port of entry between Macau and Zhuhai from the Zhuhai side.

The crossing then, was a simple and small structure. The city of Zhuhai was not much of a city. What I recall is mostly open ground and a few squat buildings. **The crossing now is a very large new building, designed to capture classic Chinese architecture.** We approached the building through a nicely kept promenade. Inside were manifold lanes in which to line up, with quite a few reserved for citizens of Macau, and others for Chinese citizens, with the rest for "Visitors."

When George Veith (missionary in Macau), Bailey (the Chinese pastor of the Macau Mennonite Church) and I emerged on the other side into Zhuhai I was standing in the midst of the hustle and bustle of a very large city. Yes, it was different than Macau or Hong Kong, but it was not so different as to feel I had stepped into a different country. George and Bailey took me to the bus terminal where we bought tickets to the airport. This was the start of my first adventure in China!



Left to right: Bailey, the pastor of Macau Mennonite Church, George and Tobia Veith, Mennonite Missionaries in Macau, and Pastor Craig. This is at the bottom of one of the accesses to the Great Wall.

The Zhuhai airport is large, new, modern, and clean. George and Bailey shepherded me to the gate area and bid farewell. We would see each

other again in Beijing in a little over a week. Though I was now alone in China, I felt no anxiety. I knew where my gate was. My flight was posted in English on a large electronic board as "On Time," and I had over an hour before boarding would commence. I found a seat in the restaurant area where I experienced the first real difference between Macau and the mainland – I could not get on the internet! The internet is highly monitored and restricted. No problem, I had brought several books so I spent the time reading.

I boarded the flight to Chengdu, which is a city almost exactly in the middle of China, where I was to meet, Jeanette Hanson, the Mennonite Partners in China staff person, who had coordinated my time in China. The flight left on time, but we were soon descending to land. Too soon! By my ticket I knew I was landing more than two hours before I was scheduled to be in Chengdu. I still do not know where we landed, but it was in the middle of nowhere! **The head flight attendant announced everyone was to get off the plane. My ticket did not mention a layover. But here I was, all by myself, somewhere in China, with no way to communicate.** I approached one of the flight attendants and asked what was happening. He motioned in a way that indicated to me he did not understand English. I then approached the head flight attendant and she explained that I should get on the bus, go to the terminal where I would receive a ticket to get on the bus that will take me to my plane to Chengdu. OK. At least, I had some idea of what to do.

The terminal I was taken to was one large room with multiple double doors with gate numbers over them in English and Chinese. Which gate is mine? The small electronic board had flight numbers in English, but the city names were only in Chinese. I went to the desk in the middle, which I correctly surmised was for customer service, handed the young lady at the desk my ticket and said, "Which gate?" She blinked, took my ticket, typed furiously at her keyboard, and then stared at her screen. She then looked up at me, took a deep breath and slowly said, "Nine gate." Good enough for me! I thanked her and headed to Gate 9. Shortly after my flight number appeared, I got my bus pass and was returned to the very same plane to finish the trip to Chengdu!

Jeanette met me as I left the immigration area of the airport in Chengdu. We went by taxi to the hotel. I arrived on my birthday so we went in search of a restaurant where I could get a real Sichuan meal. Jeanette would later learn that I will eat almost anything and the spicier the better. So this meal was very mild on the spice scale for Sichuan cuisine.

English Teachers and Students

The next day we were off to Dazhou by train so I could spend time with MPC workers who are placed as English teachers. **MPC very deliberately places teachers in third tier universities.** The students at these universities see their acceptance denied at first and second tier universities as a personal failure. These universities also do not have the resources of the higher schools. So MPC places native English speakers here to help provide these students a better opportunity to learn English. Also, these students are very open to talk about life and their apprehensions about life because some view their prospects as limited.



Some of the English Majors at Sichuan University of Science and Technology. The couple standing is Phil and Julie Bender, MPC workers.

I had a wonderful time with the university staff at a banquet given to celebrate the relationship between MPC and the staff who had been at EMU as visiting scholars. The next day was even better. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with Philip and Julie Bender in their English classes. The students were very excited to have a guest from the United States and I was invited to have lunch with a select few who represented their class.

That afternoon I spent time with the Radical Journey participants (a Mennonite Mission Network program) who would spend the next 10 months in Dazhou. These four young adults were there as English teachers and peace advocates. My time also coincided with a group from Goshen College who were there on a cross-cultural trip. We traveled to Nanchong by train where I spent time with Don and Marie Gaeddert. Don was teaching English, and Marie was making connections to use her nursing in doing basic health training.

The church in China

In Nanchong I had my first real opportunity to connect with a church in China. I met with Wang Ying, the pastor of the 3-Self Church, or registered church in Nanchong. I heard for the first time the experience of these pastors who reopened their churches in the 1980s as the repressiveness of the Cultural Revolution faded with social and economic reforms. **During the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s every place of worship was closed.** Church buildings were confiscated. Some become factories and were left in shambles. This building in Nanchong was new. It was built to capture the residential housing boom, which meant that it was already used beyond capacity. When it was built a few years ago it was all by itself. Now it was surrounded by large apartment buildings. It was also the registered church in the city. That means it was trying to minister to thousands who identified themselves as Christian in the city.

I went to China with the notion that the registered churches were dead and the unregistered, or underground churches, is where the rapid growth and life was. I was wrong. What I learned is that the underground or unregistered churches have a history that goes back into the last part of the Qing Empire.

Missionaries from Europe, and later North America, started churches in all the major cities in China, and spread out into the villages and countryside. These churches were registered with the government. A movement emerged that

wanted a true Chinese church that would be free from Western influence. Since western missionaries often had influence in the Chinese government, these churches did not register (went underground) to avoid all Western or governmental interference.

At about the same time, Western missionaries began to embrace the idea that the church in China needed to become self-propagating, self-governing, and self-funded. These are the three *selfs* of the term 3-Self Church. The fall of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912 brought little change to the registered and unregistered churches. However, the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949 brought great change.



The first gate into the Forbidden City. From here Mao Zedong announced the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

The Marxist government of Mao Zedong expelled all foreign missionaries. The registered churches were suspect because of their western roots. In order to make them truly Chinese the government created the 3-Self Patriotic Church. All registered churches were to join this structure, leaving behind any western denominationalism and connections. Most did join this new church structure. The unregistered churches, even though they started with the intent on being Chinese, were repressed because they were not, and did not join the 3-Self Patriotic Church.

The reign of terror carried out in the Cultural Revolution by the Gang of Four ended with Mao's death in 1976. Deng Xiaoping emerged as the most influential leader in China, though he never held official government or significant party office. He pushed for the reforms that lead to economic growth

and greater liberty. His reforms allowed the 3-Self Patriotic Church to reopen their doors. Located primarily in cities, these churches experienced thousands flooding in. Evangelistic zeal ran high and many new believers also flooded into the church.

The unregistered churches found greater freedom to share their faith. The underground movement is more rural than the 3-Self movement, and it has taken longer for the reforms to have an impact. Therefore, persecution and repression of the unregistered churches continued through the beginning of the 21st century. What I learned is that now even the unregistered churches face little to no persecution. There are isolated incidents that are related to government officials zealously enforcing laws that the underground churches seek to live outside of. But, the government mostly ignores these churches.

The unregistered church is facing new challenges. First, is urbanization. People are moving out of the country and into the cities at a rapid pace. Cities are exploding with new residents. Many of the Christians who move to the city find the registered church to be a good place to be. The Saturday evening youth service that I attended in a registered church was packed to overflowing. Second, the evangelization of China is reaching its saturation point. The church, registered and unregistered, has done a great job of getting the basics of the gospel message out. There are still millions upon millions who can and should be challenged to believe. But it is getting harder and harder to find people in China who have never heard of Jesus.



The registered churches face challenges, too. One of the greatest needs is leadership. The registered church lacks trained and qualified pastors. Many of these churches do on-the-job training for lay ministers who carry the ministry. The pastors carry immense responsibilities that take a heavy toll on their personal lives, and the lives of the families.

In response to the needs of leadership training and encouragement, **a small group of Chinese church leaders had a vision for a network that would help pastors** of both registered and unregistered churches in the task as pastor, and more importantly, in their lives as pastors. China Vision is the English name for this organization. **I attended and spoke at a China Vision conference in Beijing.** What I experienced was far more than I expected.

The sun never sets on God's kingdom!

.....Part 3 in March Tidings

MISSION REPORTS

FROM JAMES AND MELANIE

Son of Lowell and Janet serving in Central Asia

As we wish you each a Blessed New Year, I want to share a few recent stories. It is a blessing for us to live in a community where relationships are prized highly and where the community supports each other so well. This frequently challenges us when our work focus leads us to miss relationship building opportunities. As we take time to build deep relationships, we pray that they will result in bridges to share about our relationship with our Savior.

During the beginning of December, we had two community tragedies where we missed initial opportunities to show support. First, Timothy's 2nd grade Uzbek teacher wasn't at school for about 3 weeks. When we finally stopped by the school to find out more information she had returned and shared that her husband (32 yrs. old) had passed away leaving her and her widowed mother-in-law with two children under 10 to raise. All of the other parents of Timothy's classmates had known and visited during the first week of prayers but we didn't even take the time to stop at the school to find out why she was absent until 3 weeks later. We did have a good visit yesterday bringing her a large bag of rice, cookies, and an Uzbek Children's Bible. She appreciated the Bible and plans to read it frequently to her kids to help them not focus on their grief so deeply. May the Word draw this family to faith!

As I prepared for an internet meeting at 9pm just before Christmas, a phone call from our neighbor and "family of peace" who introduced us to this community came letting me know that they had just had a fire in their kitchen but that now all was calm and no one was hurt. I thought I was told the fire had been small and chose to continue with my meeting and didn't go to visit them till noon the following day. It turns out that the entire kitchen burned down, many neighbors had formed a bucket brigade trying to keep the flames from spreading, two fire trucks came (but both were empty of water), and many relatives had already joined together to remove the charred beams that remained. We praise God that no one was hurt.

Today they are slaughtering a cow and having special mystical prayers to ward off the evil spirits that they feel must have brought this disaster. May they come to truly understand Jesus as Lord and Savior!

While we felt some guilt for not being relationally oriented enough to give timely support in these two situations, we've had a few other opportunities this week where we've done a bit better. One early morning this week, a neighbor's car had one tire slide on the ice and hang precariously over the edge of a 6' deep irrigation canal at the bottom of our street. It was good to be able to respond by using our jeep to pull his car out. This morning, James joined 30 other neighborhood men eating "osh" and lining the street in black robes welcoming guests for a wedding at a neighbor's house. Josh, Melani & Rebecca blessed our educational center staff by singing a Christmas carol at our staff New Year's party.

Today and tomorrow, we hope to deliver over a dozen plates of cookies and give our wishes of blessings for the New Year to neighbors and friends. We're continually challenged and blessed by the relational focus of life here. May many in our community soon come into a personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior!

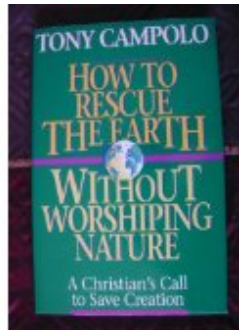
May your New Year be blessed with even deeper relationships with God and with friends!

Creation Care News

---Submitted by Anne Nielsen

The Creation Care Group added 13 more trees and shrubs to the HMC Creation Care/Meditation Path on November 12th. We were glad for the participation of most from the group and for two new recruits from Jr. MYF: Wyatt Bollinger and Jake Hall. It was a COLD morning, but we were helped by hot cider and warm doughnuts supplied by Sheryl Shenk, Linda Miller and Darlene Keller. Good rains since then should help ensure their survival. There has been some deer damage along the Path. Tree tubes, wraps and cages have been added that we hope will solve the problem. If you see deer out there chewing on our young trees, please let us know! We anticipate we are nearing the end of major planting schemes for the Path.

A book has been added to the HMC Library. We encourage you to check out Tony Campolo's book *How to Rescue the Earth without Worshiping Nature: A Christian's Call to Save Creation*. It is not new, Campolo calls this book the "most important I've ever written" and adds, "being concerned about the environment is a biblically mandated command and acting to rescue creation...is a Christian obligation." It is short, well-written and enjoyable.



Creation Care

---By *Tim Brenneman*

Many of the readers of Tidings and other members at HMC have questioned why the Creation Care Committee places so much interest and effort into environmental concerns. Shouldn't we be about the mission of saving souls or at least providing the "cup of cold water" to those who are in need? The mission, vision and core values of our church include multiple expressions and stewardship. Many articles and books have been written (I am too lazy to provide an annotated bibliography) supporting the Christian commitment for environmental concerns. We are all familiar with the creation account and the mandate that God gave Adam in Genesis to subdue, have dominion, to till the garden, and to name and classify all the animals. Christians also accept the covenant God made with all the creatures of the earth and endorsed with the rainbow. One can find many other Biblical passages in which God expresses concern for the created world. I would like to suggest the incarnation itself presents yet another affirmation of God's special connection to all of creation.

As we have recently celebrated the birth of Jesus, the coming King, I am reminded that our creator chose to become one of us and dwell among us. This God whom we worship, this God who set the stars in place, who provided the beauty of a

sunset, and who created whatever beautiful thing you like stepped out of his heavenly realm to become one of us--to become part of the created world. The creator joins the creation. It's as if the potter, working the clay became clay and was one with the urn or vase. Jesus ate the bread and fish and drank the wine of the vine, essentially dependent upon the earth for his sustenance.

Maybe your response is that Jesus became human and humans are the crown jewel of God's creation and the rest of creation exists merely to keep humans alive. Maybe you think that, because we as humans are the highest form of life here on this planet, we are entitled to all that this earth has to offer us. I believe that God represents a being that is so totally other, so omnipotent, that the gap between us and God far exceeds the gap between us and the other animals. Therefore, the incarnation represents a decision to become not only a part of humankind, but also a part of all of creation. God's being one with creation gives greater value to plants, animals, rocks, rivers, and streams. In fact all of nature can now experience the redemption.

It would be a mistake to deny that God loves all of creation. As one studies all the interconnections between all facets of life and the natural world, one can only conclude that our God is indeed a God of love. Because of the intricate detail in this creation and the symbiotic relationship which exists between so many seemingly unconnected aspects that give life, we now have evidence that God considers his creation very precious. Furthermore God chose to enter this creation and become one with it in order to reconcile it to himself. (Colossians 1: 19 & 20)

So as we enter the New Year let us do so in the confidence that Jesus who walked this earth walks with us. Remember that Jesus cares for the sparrow that falls from the sky. Hopefully, we can all find ways to care for this earth, our home, with the same concern that God has. I would also encourage us to study the intricate ways in which all aspects of life are interconnected in the physical world.



From Gary and Ruth Denlinger

Don't talk to me about Yeshua? I don't need him. We have Moses. Why should Jewish people need anyone to get to God?

Jewish and Arab believers cooperate to share their faith with those attending the Holiday of Holidays festival in Haifa in December. Rachel loves to share the faith with Arabic-speaking "seekers" at events like these.



Meet a young Israeli Jewish woman, Rachel, who today receives her greatest joy from sharing God's invitation to faith to Arabic-speaking "seekers" of the truth. Rachel fired the above question back at the woman who was humbly trying to explain to her how the woman's life was changed through Yeshua (the Hebrew name for Jesus). During high school Rachel dreamed of taking a trip to South Africa for a year of fun. When she finally made the trip at the age of 23, her life was totally secular. She claimed she believed in God, but her lifestyle was in stark contrast to what was His desire for her. Her parents, who were religious, had tried to force her to keep strenuously all the Jewish traditions from the time they put her in

a religious kindergarten. She says that a religious spirit was deeply rooted in her, but she rebelled against it. She wanted to enjoy life with no thought about her responsibility to her creator.

However, while in South Africa, she met many believers. Her stubbornness in rejecting any mention of Jesus reached a climax one day. She remembers seeing once a New Testament in a friend's apartment with whom she was living. She began searching for it. Her intent was to find "that book" and burn it as an act of protest! She wanted to be left alone from what were the Spirit's nudgings. Now she says, "Thank God I didn't find it, because it was locked in one of the closets." However, her journey in faith began at that point. She became frightened at how much hatred burned in her heart against "that man," Yeshua. She could not find any rational explanation for it. This "bugged" her to no end. She asked herself what this force was, that was pushing her away from investigating Yeshua. What was its origin and why was it so compelling?

Her job in South Africa in marketing brought her repeatedly in contact with believers. One day she met a man at work. She became angry, because this Jewish man had the audacity to tell her of his faith during a coffee break. Finally, she said to herself, "God, if you are real, if Yeshua is your son, then bring to me a Jewish woman who believes in him." With that she rested, for she was quite sure that no Jewish person would betray the Jewish faith by believing in one in whose name so many Jewish people have been persecuted. Jews have even been warned that belief in Yeshua inspires the killing of Jews. Of course, Jews can't believe in Yeshua.

One month passed and you can imagine what happened. Rachel met a Jewish woman who beamed with joy, as she told her an amazing story. This woman had been a committed atheist and rejected with a passion anything connected with faith in a Supreme Being. The Bible was just an interesting book of legends that no intelligent person is going to believe. But, in desperation, she had cried out to God for help with a physical problem. She testified that not only did she hear Yeshua's voice audibly answer her, but she was supernaturally healed at that moment. This woman's powerful testimony opened Rachel's eyes and changed her life. Rachel began reading the Bible and found herself even turning to the New Testament in the back. After 3 months, Rachel went with that lady to a congregational meeting. After 2 weeks, Rachel found herself saying loudly, "Yeshua is the Messiah." She then decided it was time to come back to Israel. There in a nearby town she began to attend a Messianic Jewish congregation. How overjoyed she was to find in Israel a vibrant, dynamic movement of Messianic Jews springing up all over this land. Meeting her one day when she inquired about Israel College of the Bible, I heard her story and was overjoyed at God's power.

The Beginning of the Rebirth of Spiritual Israel

I remember the first visit of an exploratory group of Messianic Jews from US to our home town of Haifa here in Israel. Israel was a wasteland spiritually. The few dozen or so of native Jewish believers found around the land were either hiding their faith for fear of objection and rejection of family and workmates, or allowing it to be "snuffed out" by the cares and worries of a life spent trying to eke out a living in the midst of a nation that was constantly under attack from war and terrorism. It was also uncharted territory in terms of spirituality. By some "bad joke," I ended up being the group's guide. I felt as much up to the task as a Pennsylvanian farm boy trying to guide explorers through the depths of some African jungle. Most, though, ended up immigrating here.

God vividly revealed himself to me that day through an earthquake. Yes, on that very day I experienced my first earthquake. The earth literally shook on the entry of this group of Messianic Jews to our city. A rare earthquake shook Haifa – 5.3 on the Richter scale. I knew Ruth and I were about to see the spiritual shaking of this land. The immigration of Messianic Jews from the West was the beginning of the rebirth of spiritual Israel. We also know from God's Word how it is going to culminate. God gave us faith to know that the next thing on God's spiritual calendar may be: "all Israel shall be saved" of Romans 11:23. Since then, thousands of Messianic Jews have been called back to the land of their ancestors and the Messianic Body of believers has exploded in numbers and strength. There is now a bible college to train leaders of the rapidly growing movement.

During this coming year, your prayers will make a difference as you ask for: 1) wisdom for Ruth as she serves as financial manager of a campus ministry work, and at the only Messianic Home for the Aged in Israel, and 2) for the Spirit's work at Israel College of the Bible, so that our students will deepen their love for God and become thoroughly equipped for congregational leadership and service. How we appreciate **you!**

Garry and Ruth



Congratulations to:

Evelyn Layman who turned 100 years old on January 8th! Evelyn is a long time HMC member and lives at the Harrisonburg Health & Rehab Room 46B, 1225 Reservoir Street, Harrisonburg, VA. 22801. She enjoys cards and visits!



- Franklin and Retha Baer are happy to announce the birth of their second grandson, Bennett Robbie, son of Jennifer and Kris Webb. He was born on Dec. 31st
- Nancy & Stanley Cline are rejoicing in the birth of their first great-granddaughter born on Dec. 29. Brighton Noel was born to Parly & Dave Sonifrank, who live in Red Lake, Ontario.
- Randy and Janet Shank announced the birth of their twin granddaughters to parents, Becca and Perry Shank. They were very small and required special care.
- Ron and Annamary Pierantoni had a splendid surprise 50th wedding anniversary organized by their daughter, who was under strict orders to ignore the date.

Sympathies extended to:

- Lois Miller and Joleen & Gary Myers and family at the death of Lloyd Miller, husband of Lois and father of Joleen, on October 29
- Pete Kiser and family at the death of his wife, Ruth, on October 31.
- Bob (Jake) and Char Jacob and family at the death of Bob's father, Milton (Dave) Jacob, on November 8.
- Rhonda and Herman Thompson at the death of Rhonda's brother, Charles Witmer Shank, of Standardsville, VA on November 12.
- Kurt and June Boshart at the death of June's mother, Kassie Holsinger on November 16

Sympathies --continued

- Sylvia and Les Helmuth and family at the death of Sylvia's mother, Mary Clymer on December 8.
- Mahlon and Gloria Rissler & family at the death of Mahlon's brother, Melvin Rissler, sister-in-law, Pattie, and niece, Rachel, who died in a house fire in Stevens, PA on December 11.
- Allen and Diane Berkshire & family at the death of Allen's mother, Zona Marie Berkshire, on December 23.

Thank you:

- The Ruth Kiser family would like to thank everyone for the prayers and cards sent to her during her 2½ year battle with cancer. Your encouragement, support, and the many acts of kindness during her illness and recent passing were a true comfort to all of us.
---Pete, Cindy and Randy
- I want to express my deepest appreciation to my HMC church family for the love and support we felt during my illness. Thanks for the prayers, cards, notes, flowers, visits, and calls. And special thanks go to the members of Agape, Open Circle, SALT, and Stepping Stones who helped to provide meals during those difficult days. I praise God that I continue to feel better each week.
---Shirley Brunk
- Thank you to our church family for the prayers, cards, phone calls and food sent on our behalf following my recent surgery. You are all very special persons.
---June Marie Weaver
- Many thanks to everyone for their prayers, food, cards and phone calls as I had surgery to remove a tumor pressing on my spinal cord at my neck. The whole tumor was removed very easily without cutting or fusion of the vertebrae. Thanks be to God the tumor was benign.
---Geneva Suter
- Many thanks to all at HMC for your prayers on my behalf this past Sunday. I felt sustained by the prayers of God's people throughout a wide community – and you have been a very real part of that. Surgery went well and I am on the road to recovery.
---Kathy Hochstedler

CLASS NEWS

Agape Class



Steve Yoder is teaching the Sunday school class this winter using the quarterly. We like his style of asking us to share our stories as they relate to the lesson.

Pastor Craig and Wendy Maven and Lawrence and Shirley Yoder were invited to our monthly prayer and praise in November. Pastor Craig showed pictures and spoke about his Hong Kong and China trip.

Christmas activities included ringing bells for Salvation Army and putting together health kits for MCC. We celebrated an old fashioned Christmas at Crossroads. We stepped into nostalgia as we observed mid 1800's costumed villagers getting ready for Christmas. The candlelit pathways and full moon added to the specialness of the evening. Afterwards we went to Sam and Jan Showalter's house for food and fun.

Individual news include Sam and Jan's wonderful trip to Israel and Jordan in November. Joe and Nancy Mast were also part of the group. The early morning boat ride on the Sea of Galilee and the walk through the Garden of Gethsemane were special. Reading God's word comes alive in my new ways now.

Lowell and Sue Guengerich visited son Jeff and family in Montana. Sue is retiring from her job at Everence December 30. Samuel and Judi Espinoza's son Josh and his wife visited them for the holiday.



Koinonia Class

We are enjoying Jim and Brenda Kidd with us this winter quarter. Jim is teaching using the Uniform Sunday School Quarterly. The lessons are from the Old Testament and Jim tells us that he usually checks before he agrees to teach whether or not the lessons are Old Testament. He generally chooses not to teach the Old Testament lessons. However, let me tell you, we are having an exciting time with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Jim is bringing life to some old passages and I think he is enjoying it too. Thanks, Jim.

Our Christmas Dinner was at Perry and Emily Hostetler's home in Weyers Cave on December 2nd. It was a great beginning to the Christmas season. The tables were beautifully decorated—we found our places at the table by reading our names which were stitched on the cloth napkins that Emily made using a variety of Christmas fabrics—so very pretty. The food was catered by Emily's niece and the desserts were done by Emily—no one went away hungry. We had various short Christmas readings and poems given throughout the evening that Phil Kreider had planned and assigned to others for reading. We collected food for Patchwork Pantry as part of the evening activities as we did last year. It is always welcomed and needed. We had a very good time together and thank Perry and Emily for their gracious hospitality.

Our January event is 'game night' at Allon and Doris Lefever's home on January 21st. Wendell and Carol Eberly will be fellow hosts and organizers.

Winston and Charlotte Rhodes toured Israel and Jordan in November. After Christmas they plan to spend time at their home in Florida.

Franklin and Retha Baer are happy to announce the birth of their second grandson, Bennett Robbie, son of Jennifer and Kris Webb. He was born on Dec. 31st and is named for Franklin's mother, Hazel Bennett. He is lovingly welcomed by his two-year-old brother, Kenner. Retha already has her reservations to travel to Edgewood, NM to visit when Franklin makes his next trip to Africa.

Carol Eberly and her daughter, Jennifer Freed, flew to Hesston, Kansas to attend the wedding of their niece/cousin, Julie Weaver, on New Years Eve.

Lighthouse Class



This winter term our class, with Mike Lehman leading, is watching the TRUTH SERIES videos on how Christian values have been changing in the United States. It is very informative and allows each person to see practical ways to "stem the tide" of encroaching non-Christian values in our society. The first video discussed the cosmic battle of world views, on whether man is created in the image of God or is a random creation as the evolutionary theory teaches. The second video taught about deceptive philosophy and use of assumptive language, such as Carl Sagan (1981 Humanist of the Year) taught. In 1828 Noah

Webster's Dictionary's definition of philosophy was "The objects of philosophy are to ascertain facts or truth and the causes of things or their phenomena; to enlarge our views of God and His works (ultimate reality-Truth)" Today's (3rd edition) Noah Webster's dictionary has this definition, "a search for the underlying causes and principals of reality." It leaves God out of this definition and says there is no absolute truth. Chuck Colson said, "The church's singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system or worldview that governs every area of existence." Several members of Lighthouse said they are the only ones in their school classes with this worldview.

Class members enjoyed Christmas with their families and are thankful. Curt and Liz Martin are thankful they had three full days to spend with Curt's parents and sister's families in Hagerstown, MD. Dick and Diane Smith are thankful their nephew was not paralyzed in his hiking accident. Cindy Greene is thankful for more family time and that everyone seemed more relaxed and enjoyed themselves. Laurie Hartman is thankful for family. She and her son rediscovered the meaning of Advent together with daily readings. Another person wrote they are thankful for the fellowship of church. Lee and Jody Voth are thankful for having their entire family of 28 here in Harrisonburg for several days. During their sharing time together it was good to hear about stable marriages and great-grandchildren being trained in Christian teachings and values. One grandchild's family shared in narrative and song the entire genealogy of Jesus from both Joseph and Mary's side.



Open Circle Class

Les Helmuth is leading our SS discussion based on the Adult Bible Study. For our Christmas project, members brought various items to fill four Aids kits and donated \$400.00 to send to MCC for Generations at Risk. We also took an offering to assist Patchwork Pantry in their plea for more food for those in need. One Saturday in December, we did our annual ringing of the bell for the Salvation Army at Red Front. For our Christmas party, we enjoyed a delicious luncheon at Traditions and especially delighted in the tasty oysters and shrimp. Rowland Shank regaled us with a glimpse into the

life of O. Henry and gave a special reading of "The Gift of the Magi", a timeless story about love and sacrifice.

Doris & Wayne North had a very pleasant 3 days at Highland Retreat over Christmas with their entire family group (26) present. Nancy & Stanley Cline are rejoicing in the birth of their first great-granddaughter born on Dec. 29. Brighton Noel was born to Parly & Dave Sonifrank, who live in Red Lake, Ontario. Geneva Suter is hoping that 2012 will be a healthier year for her as she required both rotator cuff surgery, due to a fall, and surgery on her neck to remove a benign tumor, but is now doing well. Jay finished reading the Bible in 2011. Ken & June Marie Weaver traveled to Hesston, Kansas, to attend the wedding of their granddaughter on New Years Eve. She is their fourth grandchild to get married and plans to live in Delaware. June Marie will begin her 2 months of radiation therapy treatment in January. We lost two members of our class to cancer in 2011: Ruth Kiser and Lloyd Miller. We miss these dear people and mourn with Pete and Lois in their loss.

January is the month that Open Circle class begins shrinking in size due to the annual migration to the sunny south. Some members (Ordan & Reba Harman, Joe & Mary Louise Brunk, and Randy & Elly Moyers) are already in Florida, and several others plan to soon go (Frank & Lou Emswiler, Mickey & Harold Eby, and Nancy & Stanley Cline).



SALT Class

In November, Dan Hoopert continued teaching on Paul's letters, and shared some of his experiences in Ukraine. Gordon Weirich is teaching from the Quarterly in December and January. Ron and Lila King will tell us about their mission trip to the Maritimes one Sunday.

The class has had a very busy couple of months. We provided child care for Grace Fellowship on Nov. 13 and 20, and tended a kettle at Red Front for the Salvation Army Nov. 19. We continue to supply a weekly meal for Lester. The women meet on Mondays for lunch. They try to patronize locally owned restaurants, and those who are free to go enjoy this time together. Our monthly evening gatherings for "Red Hats" and "Hard Hats" continue, though postponed for the celebration of Christmas. On Dec. 9

we enjoyed a wonderful Christmas banquet at Park Place dining area at VMRC. It was a lovely space for this, we had a festive country music band, and the food was excellent. A grand time was had by all (except maybe those with brain strain who had to supply missing words from the 3rd and 4th verses of many Christmas carols!). We prepared and sent three AIDS kits for MCC.

Grandchildren continue to be added to the growing list of the new generation. The latest is the birth of twin girls to Becca and Perry Shank. They were very small and required special care, but at the end of December a grateful grandma Janet reports that the twins are home and healthy. Randy and Janet will meet them in January.

Individual class members also worked at a stretch in November and December. Anne Nielsen organized tree and shrub planting on the Creation Care/Meditation Path around the church for the fourth, and possibly the final year on Nov. 12. Rene Kegerreis had a big part in the Arts and Crafts sale at VMRC November 18-19. It's amazing the things she made to sell as a fundraiser for a special mission. Her dedication continues to astonish and humble those of us with fewer reasons for inaction. Catarina Trissel again gave precious time to organize preparation of Communion for all of us on Christmas Day.

Ron and Annamary Pierantoni had a splendid surprise 50th wedding anniversary organized by their daughter, who was under strict orders to ignore the date. Aren't we glad our children don't ALWAYS obey? The class was invited to send cards and notes, and the Pierantonis enjoyed all of it, although Ron is still pretending disapproval. Dave Eschleman reports a good outcome for the latest Sharathon for the radio station, and extends thanks those who helped.

All of us are grateful for a safe place and understanding hearts as we share both good news and bad each Sunday morning. Some whose children have long been out of work have found work at last. Medical crises have been overcome and are a source of great joy. Some continue to deal with serious health issues. And there are losses: Allen Berkshire's mother died in early December. Many in the class are caring for

parents, siblings, or children, as well as praying for students, close friends and work associates, many with serious health issues. We continue to pray for strength, guidance and peace of mind for each of them.



Sinapi Class

Mark Keller is leading a study for Winter Quarter on the book entitled, "Being Well When We're Ill" by Marva Dawn. Dr. Marva Dawn is a theologian, writer and speaker who suffers from a whole range of physical impairments and maladies where treating one ailment exacerbates the symptoms of another. All the while, she maintains a deep love and fellowship with God and a "Marva-lous" spirit of peace that can only be attributed to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

On December 18th, Sinapi and Logos Sunday school classes hosted Friendship Circle Sunday school class and HMC residents at VMRC for a fellowship meal in Strite Auditorium. It was an enjoyable time of fellowship with members of HMC, some of whom no longer have the opportunity to attend church services. We enjoyed good food and singing familiar Christmas carols together. It was a large crowd with approximately 40 from Sinapi and Logos and 40 from VMRC and Friendship Circle.

Also in December the class was invited to Rick & Lenora Bell's home to go Christmas caroling and share cookies in their neighborhood.

Congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, January 29 at 6:00 p.m. Annual Reports need to be completed and in mailboxes on Sunday, January 22.

