



June 2007

# The Word of God NEWSLETTER

an  
ecumenical  
charismatic  
missionary  
Christian  
Community

...it wasn't weird or confusing at all. It was how I was supposed to be living!

## Seeking the Glory of God

By Theresa Rickloff

*Editor: Theresa Rickloff is a student at EMU and the granddaughter of our own Mary Rickloff. She almost didn't make it, but managed to come on the MissionChrist Spring Retreat at the last minute. Here is what she experienced.*

we going to play the "getting to know you" games, where I get to tell complete strangers where I go to school and what my favorite brand of toothpaste is? And by the glory of God, they weren't there!

The first activity that we had was to assemble ourselves in a room, pray, and spend the next few hours praising the Lord and thanking him for the wonderful lives He has given us. We got to know each other by praying over one another and asking the Holy Spirit to enter into each other's lives. And you know what? I heard no one complain about being bored.

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I've been a bit of a prayer meeting and youth group tourist my whole life, and while I'm not a certified "youth group scientist," I feel like I've seen everything. Being this way has allowed me to see how God works in different circles, but at the same time, has shown me how bleak many different youth programs can be. I've worked with different youth programs that spend their time finding ways to entertain kids, as opposed to showing them the glory of God flat out. While this isn't an unholy practice necessarily, it becomes painful to watch kids leave a program unchanged, simply because they became bored with the routine and realized they can find "entertainment" in other ways.

### A different kind of youth group

But then I started going to Mission Christ on Friday nights, and was subsequently convinced into going on their spring retreat. I was confused. Where was the light show? When were



Worship is at the heart of MissionChrist, and so it was the heart of the Spring Retreat, too. A lot of the songs are written by members of MissionChrist, one of the signs of the Holy Spirit stirring up a vibrant worship life.

Seems to me ...

## Take Heart!

*In the days to come Jacob will take root,  
Israel will blossom and sprout,  
And they will fill the whole world with fruit*

*Isaiah 27:6*

I love the prophet Isaiah. You can be plowing along through chapter after chapter of judgment on Israel and all her neighbors and then a ray of sunshine will break through the clouds—'will take root', 'will blossom', 'will fill the whole world with fruit'! As I read along it is easy to become overwhelmed with Israel's sin, and ours. It is easy to get borne down by the promised judgment. But it is as if God cannot stop Himself from letting that burst of hope and promise out. He does judgment, but His name is Salvation!

Reading this passage again recently I was really encouraged. God is life and wherever people are connected with Him, life comes forth. There might need to be pruning and healing, but eventually, there will be fruit. It is not God's nature to decay or even to remain static. When we are connected to the Life, we take root, blossom and bear fruit. Seven hundred years later, Jesus repeated the promise:

*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit. John 15:5*



As I put together this issue of the Newsletter I was also encouraged. We are not yet seeing fruit that 'will fill the whole world', but there are some sprouts and blossoms. Young people excited about following the Lion of Judah into war. An Intern to help lead MissionChrist. Young families finding life through connection with the Vine as experienced in the community. And more.

Look around. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to the sprouts God is raising up in your life and all around you. It is always appropriate to hope because our God saves.

Theresa Rickloff

## MissionChrist Spring Retreat

### Freedom in the Spirit

The kids at Mission Christ, as well as being some of my best friends, are some of the most hyper-active kids I've ever met, and proudly so and with no intention of changing. However, when God is at the center of a retreat, rules and legislation aren't as important. This rumor going around about the Lord giving people a sense of freedom is entirely true. It also turns out that teenagers can fully experience the Holy Spirit and have their lives changed, and our God is powerful enough, on His own, to supply that power. Amen!

I didn't believe it until I saw it. I never thought I could spend a weekend enjoying the glory of God, the resurrection of our Lord, the joy of the Holy Spirit, and the community of His believers. But I did, and I realized it wasn't weird or confusing at all. It was how I was supposed to be living.

### Seek after the glory of God—what a great idea!

I'm not sure the kids at Mission Christ realize what they have. I've had to put up with being treated like a spiritual infant for years, and with no help or training to be otherwise. For years, these kids have been taught to seek after the glory of God, and I'm starting to think that's it a pretty great idea.



*MissionChrist combines youth from college to high school freshmen and even a few middle schoolers. This community really helps young folks grow both through giving and receiving. There was lots of time for hanging out and simply ministering God's love to one another during the Spring Retreat.*

## The Lion of Judah is calling us to war

Movie clips from stories like *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and others at the MissionChrist Spring Retreat helped communicate the power, drama, urgency and excitement of the True Story, the story of God's creation, redemption, and final salvation accomplished through Jesus Christ. Joan Wolfe and Billy Kangas joined Phil Tiews in giving talks which tried to bring the Gospel off the pages of the Bible and into real life with impact.

The Lord worked through the talks and the extensive worship to stir up the young folks to go all out for Him. One highlight came when we ran a video from National Geographic of a male lion running



*Jesus wants you.*

*That was the message of the MissionChrist Spring Retreat. All creation, all history, is God's big story and he has caught us up in it. He is calling every one of the youth not as an observer, but as a player in His bold rescue plan for the human race!*

down and executing the head of a pack of hyenas who had been harassing his pride, killing cubs and moving in on their territory. As we viewed it we sang a song by Jason Upton with this chorus:

*Hear the sound of the Lion of Judah  
See the fire and the fear in the  
enemy's camp  
From the sound of the Lion of Judah  
roaring again.*

*There's a new generation arising,  
A nameless, faceless, placeless tribe,  
All the fear is the Fear of the Lord,  
All they hear is the Lion of Judah.*

We roared pretty good ourselves after that! Needless to say, everyone was ready to go to war with the Lion of Judah. ■

## New Intern begins work with MissionChrist

It seemed like just the right time for Billy Kangas and for MissionChrist—you know how God works these things out! Billy had just finished his degree from Regent University online and was asking the Lord 'what next?' MissionChrist was in need of some help to move to the next level of development and fruitfulness. So, as of mid-May, Billy is working for The Word of God for the next two years as a full-time intern to develop MissionChrist.

'Mission', as the youth call it, has always been about both bringing kids into a relationship with Jesus Christ and engaging them in His mission to the world. Billy will be working with Phil Tiews and the



youth themselves to get intentional and fruitful about these goals. We want to see the youth move from believers to disciples to missionaries in whatever setting the Lord calls them.

Billy brings a lot of experience to his job. Not only has he been serving in the context of MissionChrist for several years, but he has worked with the youth groups at Cross and Resurrection and St. Luke Lutheran Churches. Among other gifts, he has a great gift for leading worship and has written many of the songs used at MissionChrist.

Let's pray for real empowerment for Billy and all the youth in Mission as they grow and reach out to their own generation and beyond. ■

## Christ the Source of Body Life

By Peter Williamson

Editor: Peter Williamson is working with other scholars to produce on a set of Bible commentaries and is currently writing the volume on Ephesians. As we work at living and strengthening our community life, particularly through community care groups, we thought this excerpt from Peter's draft on Ephesians 4:15-16 would provide helpful insights.

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<sup>15</sup> Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love.

**Ephesians 4:15-16**

Verses 15b-16 sums up 4:11-16, which in the Greek forms one long sentence. The result of "living the truth in love" is that we will **grow in every way into him, who is the head, Christ**. Maturity, "living the truth in love," means growing in union with Christ himself. Again, we see there are degrees of unity and maturity.

Christian faith entails an "already" and a "not yet." Although the Church is already "in Christ," united to Jesus, there is plenty of room to be more fully united with our Lord, "to grow in every way into him." Christ, as **the head** of "the body, the Church" (Col 1:18), is not only over the Church, he is the source **from whom the whole body**, the Church, derives its growth and flourishing.

The term head can mean either authority or source, as in "the head waters of the Nile." This body, the Church, is **joined and held together by every supporting ligament**—other translations say "joint." These ligaments are the individual members of the Church. They provide structural support for the body, but the Greek word translated "supporting" (also in Col 2:19) suggests that nourishment is part of it. "In this way, the writer pictures the ligaments functioning to provide the connections between the various parts and thereby mediating life and energizing power throughout the body" (see footnote).

Notice the intensely communal vision of the Church's nature—the parts are touching one another, fastened together, in a way that supports and energizes the body's activity. This activity depends, however, on the **proper functioning of each part**. As in 1 Cor 12:15-21, no part is indispensable. The ministers with gifts of teaching and overall leadership must do their part of equipping "the holy ones for the work of ministry." So must every other member of the body fulfill their role. This cooperation of Christ and all the members of the body **brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love**. The final word of the sentence both in Greek and in English is placed there for emphasis. The Church can only be strengthened if her members conduct their relationships and fulfill their ministries **in love**.

To summarize, Paul is saying that the goal of the diverse gifts

Messiah gives the Church is for ministry that leads to Christ-like maturity in the body as a whole and in its members. This maturity is characterized by a unity in doctrine and in relationship with Christ himself. It entails stability regarding the truth. It involves sincere conduct and love, and it requires that each member of the body of Christ fulfill his or her role of service. If we want to see our local communities and the Church as a whole flourish, these verses tell us how.



Peter Williamson is using his scholarly expertise and pastoral experience to help produce a set of Bible commentaries for use by Catholic clergy and pastoral workers. These will fill something of a vacuum in what is currently available. He is serving as one of the editors for the whole series and an author of several volumes, starting with the book of Ephesians. Let's join in praying for the fruitfulness of this effort!

Footnote:  
Andrew T. Lincoln. *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990. p 263

## ***What I learned in The Word of God***

***By Mark Giszczak***

You may have wondered what happened to me. Or maybe you caught some word from someone that I was away at school or something, but can't really describe the whole thing. Now that I'm at a turning point in my life, I want to tell you not only about how the Lord has blessed me, but about how he taught me using you, my brothers and sisters in The Word of God Community.

I am about to graduate with a masters degree in Scripture from the Augustine Institute of Denver, CO. It's a small start-up Catholic school, a masters-only program with about 40 students and about 10 faculty. It was founded in 2005 by, among others, Dr. Jonathan Reyes who was a leader in UCO in Ann Arbor. The program is designed to train Catholics in evangelization and Scripture.

In my studies, I have reflected on the many things I learned in The Word of God which have come into play in my life here. This past year, I have been living in a household of Augustine Institute students. No, not just a bunch of guys who share space, but a household which meets for daily prayer, weekly meals and consistent fellowship. Sound familiar? Dr. Reyes designed this House of Formation based on the households he was part of in UCO. And yes, we do occasionally celebrate the Lord's Day meal. The Word of God taught me how to live in a household, how to lay down my life for my brothers, how to engage in prayer when I don't feel like it. I even had the opportunity to live in a Word of God household with other young men in Ypsilanti in the summer of 2004. Talk about great preparation!

Beyond the Augustine Institute, I have been involved with a local parish's Life Teen youth ministry program. They needed a worship music guy, so I volunteered myself. I spend every Sunday evening with the teens and lead a teen band for the ministry's retreats. We have even posted our retreat videos on YouTube! The Word of God taught me how to be

a good worship leader, how to help people pray and praise and how to be sensitive to the movement of the Spirit in the midst of worship.

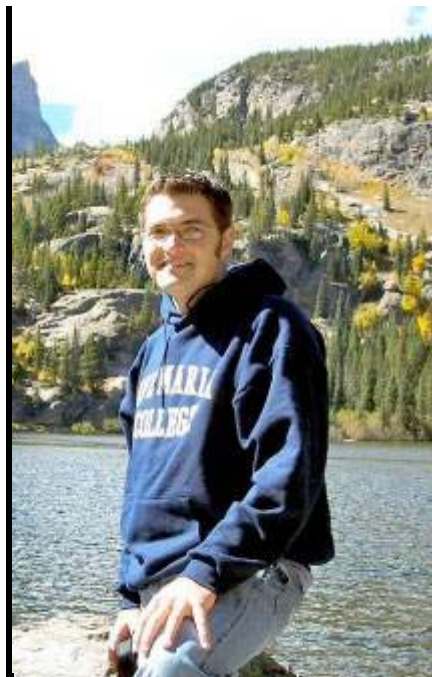
One of the greatest challenges for me over the past two years is my lack of charismatic fellowship. There isn't much charismatic activity here in the Archdiocese of Denver (unless you speak Spanish!), so it's been harder to maintain a deep spiritual life. But The Word of God taught me the importance of a daily prayer time, regardless of my circumstances or feelings. And I have made daily prayer my number one priority during my time in Denver, which has been a great blessing to me in my studies.

Another test I have confronted is the bane of all theologians and Christian scholars: intellectualism. I don't mean that it is wrong for Christians to become intellectuals, but that it is easy to over-think your faith when you study it deeply, to fall into trusting in your mind instead of in God, to think rather than believe. In my studies, I have constantly reflected on my experiences in The Word of God and they have consistently reminded me that our God is a God of power, not of talk. He actually heals people. He really speaks to people. He physically raised his Son from the dead. These truths have kept a guard over my heart when hacking through the elephant grass of biblical studies.

The last and most important thing which The Word of God taught me is trust in God. And that's a hard one. All through our lives we must trust him, but especially when we're young. It's not always easy. But when I have had very difficult times I have remembered that simply trusting the Lord with my future and relying on his plan instead of mine is the way to go. Essential to this trust is the ability to hear the Lord. Without the many talks, prayer meetings and practice that I had growing up in The Word of God, I would not be able to hear the Lord's voice nearly as well as I do.

I'd like to mention two fruits that

have come from my time in Denver and my life with The Word of God. First, I helped launch a dialogue between students at the Augustine Institute and students at Denver Seminary, an evangelical school. We have met twice and have discussed biblical and theological issues in a spirit of Christian brotherhood. My enthusiasm for the unity of the Church and my ecumenical experience in The Word of God has enabled me to participate with an open heart and a spirit of welcome. Second, the Lord has blessed me with a scholarship to Catholic University of America in Washington, DC to pursue a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies, Old Testament. I plan to begin the program this fall. So thank you. Thank you for your fidelity to the Lord. Thank you for creating a Christian environment for me to grow up in. Thank you for teaching me how to pray, how to hear God's voice, how to trust in him. I will never forget what I have learned in The Word of God community. ■



*Mark Giszczak grew up in The Word of God and has embraced our vision and call. Now he takes that from his studies in Colorado to doctoral studies in Washington DC.*

# 'Family Friendly' Meetings

*Editor: You have probably noticed a recent upsurge in young kids and grandkids at prayer meetings. What a joy! We are looking for ways to make community life more 'family friendly' to encourage the participation of they youngsters and their parents. In one step, Don & Ann Kopinski held a special family observance during the 40 Days. Here's how it went.*



The only downer was that the pizza dinner was a bit pricey, \$500 per family. But much to the relief of the moms and dads, the kids came through to save the day, forking out the alternative fee of sharing scriptures and translating the coded message: GOD ALONE. To those of you who would have come if only you knew about it: Sorry, this event was planned about as loosely as it was run. Next time we'll try to get the word out to lots more folks.

A couple dozen young kids gathered with a sprinkling of their parents for dinner and prayer at the Community Office on Wednesday, March 28th.

The company of babies showed up in FULL FORCE to join the joyful shout. Among the throng we had Geyers and Phelps and Rays and Kazanjians and Kopinskis and Sister Mary with Renee and Anna, and TWO squads of Campbells!

Stay tuned for other family oriented events such as:

**Community Picnic—Sunday, July 8, 4:30 at the Kopinski's  
8758 Webster Hills, Dexter**

**Day at the Beech—Some Sunday afternoon later in the summer. Details to be announced.**

## New Council Members

It's that time of year again. Terms for Community Council members expire at the end of June. This year we need to thank the following folks for faithfully serving on the Council for the last three years.

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Mike Bartholomay | Jane Burch      |
| Mary Carpenter   | Barb Oas        |
| Pat O'Connell    | Eleanor Shields |

In addition, Pat has served as Senior Leader of the Council for the last two years.

We choose new Council members by the highly biblical method of a lottery, as you may recall! After prayer the Council draws names from a bowl with community members' names and then confirms with them that they are willing to serve. The following folks are all set to start their three year terms in July:

- |            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| Pat Davis  | Don Kopinski |
| Gene Leger | Betty Maxey  |

When it meets in the fall, the Council will look at its composition and decide whether to add up to two appointed members to achieve a better representation of the community. For example, in the past we have added younger members or married women as needed to ensure that all voices are fully heard.

Thank you Lord for those who are willing to serve us!

## Upcoming Dates

Here are some dates for upcoming special events that you will want to mark on your calendar for prayer and to reserve the time:

- 6/24 Annual Community Meeting**
- 7/8 Community Picnic @ Kopinski's**
- 7/8-14 Pine Hills Boys Camp**
- 8/5-11 Pine Hills Girls Camp**
- 9/28-29 Dorm District Reunion**
- 9/30 Joint Prayer Meeting with Word of Life**
- 11/16-18 Community Retreat & 40th Anniversary**
- Feb 2008 Unbound Conference with Neal Lozano**



## National Day of Prayer

# Taking Prayer to the Public Square



*Both current and former members of The Word of God made up a significant number of the folks observing the National Day of Prayer outside the Ann Arbor City Hall at noon on May 3rd. A similar event was taking place simultaneously at the Ypsilanti Public Library.*

All around the county the first Thursday in May is observed as the National Day of Prayer by Presidential decree. In addition to several local church observations, there were two public events. At noon on May 3rd a band of folks from many local congregations gathered outside Ann Arbor City Hall for intercession for the city, county, state, nation and even the world. Rev. Mike Frison from Knox Presbyterian led, but it didn't take much! Folks were eager to join in.

In Ypsilanti, Lois Richardson, who is a member of the Ypsilanti City Council and a former missionary organized prayer in front of the Public Library. She had made a very public call to prayer given the serious state of things in Ypsilanti right now, which was even covered by the Ann Arbor News. Again, she was joined by folks from many churches in crying out for the city.

The Spirit is stirring God's people to prayer and intercession in many forums. Revivals are always preceded by a movement of prayer as God prepares the way. May we seek Him more and more until His Kingdom breaks in upon us!

## IMPACT 24 Hour Prayer Room

# It turns out God is up and alert at 4 am, too!

It turns out that 4 am is a great time to pray! Phil & Barb Tiews, Paul Woodward and Katie Sims have been filling the 4—6 am shift at the 24-hour IMPACT prayer room for the last month or more. Initially it was a bit of a challenge to get up, but the slot actually works well because there is time to catch a brief nap before work!

Most importantly, the Holy Spirit has really been blessing the prayer. We combine a lot of worship with intercession, prophecy and even visions. All of us are pretty surprised how quickly the time passes and it is time for Jean Horak and Kathy Robinson to take over the next shift. It is wonderful to have that sense of sharing an unbroken chain of prayer for transformation of our County which begins every Tuesday morning at 12:01 am and goes on until midnight with folks from a dozen different churches leading shifts joined by folks from many more congregations.

Stop by the IMPACT prayer room any time on a Tuesday for 5 minutes or 5 hours! It is held at Summit International Assembly on South Main where Ann Arbor-Saline Road splits off.

Please come join us at the 4-6 am shift some day, too. We view this as The Word of God's watch and hope that many community members will come at least occasionally to share in seeking God for transformation for Washtenaw County.



# Women's Breakfast

Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup>

9-10:30 am

Community Meeting Room

Christine Jones—Sharing about her  
year of training &  
mission.



*'Nourishment for  
the whole Woman,  
Body, Soul & Spirit!'*

## Join us in June & July

- 6/3 Prayer Meeting, 4:30–6:00 pm  
Covenant Presbyterian Church  
5171 Jackson Road
- 6/9 Women's Breakfast 9-10:30 am  
Community Meeting room  
230 Collingwood, Ste. 150
- 6/24 Prayer Meeting, 4:30–6:00 pm  
Covenant Presbyterian Church  
5171 Jackson Road
- 7/8 Picnic & Prayer Meeting,  
4:30–7:00 pm  
Kopinski's (see info page 6)

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