



an
ecumenical
charismatic
missionary
Christian
Community

July 2007

The Word of God **NEWSLETTER**

We few. We happy few. We...

Band of Brothers

By John Harburg

On Friday night, June 29th, I asked my son, Aaron Harburg when the Word of God Men's breakfast started, as I was considering the possibility of attending it. When he said "8:00 AM" I was not sure I wanted to sacrifice that unusual Saturday morning opportunity to sleep in. However, the Spirit prompted me to go anyway and I am glad I did.

I came early with Aaron since he said he wanted to do a few things before it started. There was a prayer meeting going on between the 3 men who were already present (Phil Tiews on guitar, Pat O'Connell on cook duty and another attendee). The praise was free and easy. It struck me how natural these men found it to pray and exalt the God of their lives.

I came expecting to hear a talk, pray and eat, in that order. However, this breakfast format surprised me in its simplicity and personal focus. We prayed a quick blessing for the food and ate first, something my body appreciated heartily. Pat juggled cooking pancakes, eggs along with heating the coffee quite handily. His short order cook experience resulted in a delicious breakfast.

Next we turned to a practical talk given by Aaron, to my surprise. He never mentioned having to contribute anything to the affair, so I was delighted to be able to watch my son, now a 20 year old young man, speak somewhat authoritatively and clearly in

a knowledgeable way about "Digital Audio Media." This was mainly for the outdated older men who may not be as familiar with MP3's, subscription services and various devices as the younger generation seems to be. [Thank you Phil for having him do this but I must admit I did not absorb enough to venture into going to Best Buy and getting something to listen to music on.]

The majority of the time was focused on Phil's continuing presentation and structured discussions designed to unfold John Eldridge's Way of the Wild Heart concepts and ideas. After

(Continued on page 2)



It is always a question who will be able to roll out of bed for an 8 am breakfast on a Saturday, but not only did some grizzled veterans show up June 30th, but they were joined by some young warriors, too. There was a reward for their sacrifice!

INSIDE

**Band of Brothers
Breakfast**

Mutual Care

Annual Meeting

Summer Calendar

And More ...

Seems to me ...

Pull!

As I was praying about this month's Newsletter an image of a grebe came to mind. I swear its true! A grebe is a water bird and I remember a friend telling of a time he was hiking in the Rockies and he sat down by a rushing mountain stream. As he was eating his lunch, he watched fascinated as a grebe flew into the river, dove to the bottom and started to claw its way upstream underwater looking for food. Eventually it came up for air, floated down a bit and then dove and marched laboriously upstream again.

[I couldn't find a picture of a grebe underwater so we will have to settle for this picture of guys paddling a raft upstream!]



So what is with the grebe image you ask? I did too! I think this is what the Lord was saying.

We all like floating along on a gentle stream. Summer is, of course, a great time for doing so literally and figuratively. In fact our whole culture is floating along and it is easy for us to drift along with it—downstream! What our Enemy tries to keep hidden from us is that the river gets faster and eventually is headed toward a cataclysm. The longer you drift, the swifter the stream and the harder to reverse course.

We are people who the Lord has awakened to our danger. Instead of bobbing along, we know we need to change course and go against the flow. Can't you see yourself diving down to get a solid grip on the firm foundation at the river bottom, squinting your eyes, hunkering down and clawing step by step upstream, grebe-like? Not that we do this by gutting it out in our own strength. We are empowered by the life of Christ in us.

Maybe that raft picture is no so bad after all. God has placed us in Christ (the raft?) equipped us with all we need (paddles, helmets, etc.?) and said, 'do not be conformed to the world' (head up stream)! Along the way we are calling out to folks to join us and hauling them out of the water.

To be honest, I would much prefer a gentle drift down river. But I think the Lord is making it clearer and clearer that the rapids are growing closer and we are in a fight to change not just our course, but the course of those around us. There will be time for drifting on the river of God later. Now let's take up the paddle of the Spirit and dig in!

summarizing the various stages of masculine development proposed by Eldridge (Beloved Son, Cowboy/Ranger, Warrior, etc.), Phil focused on the Warrior phase and read eloquently from Henry V to give us the context of what it meant to be a "Band of Brothers." The challenge in the passage was to be a warrior willing to die as an honor for God and country. We then paired up and had a short discussion about fighting and seeing God as a warrior.

Next, Phil talked about the obstacles and wounds which rob us of the ability to fully embrace the warrior soul in each of us. We discussed as a group how we might have been held back or failed to develop this warrior spirit. We then looked at how we can become warriors assuming it was never too late to do this. I had to leave for a few minutes to do some personal business so I missed another discussion opportunity based on the material aimed at this. I returned as the men were listening to the Lord speak to each of us about our journey to and through being a warrior.

A fitting end came when we paired up for a few minutes to pray over each other to shore up the weaknesses and give encouragement to the strengths God had given us already. All in all, this was a breakfast chocked full of good food, good fellowship, good teachings, good discussions and good prayer.



The B3 [Band of Brothers Breakfast] takes advantage of the gifts and wisdom God has distributed among His men. Aaron Harburg supplied the 'field instruction', practical info on a topic of interest to guys—this time on digital music, iPods, downloading and all. The main focus was on growing as Warriors and involved presentation, discussion in pairs and the whole group, listening to the Lord and prayer. Making use of a large arsenal!

Strengthening Mutual Care

By Peter Williamson

Recently we celebrated Pentecost, a high holiday for us in The Word of God! Everything that we are as a charismatic, ecumenical, missionary Christian community flows out of our being filled with the Spirit, out of Pentecost:

- We have come to know the Lord personally and to love Him. We have been anointed to worship in the Holy Spirit—we are *Christian*.
- We experience spiritual gifts—prophecy, healing, teaching, administration, we have seen signs and wonders in our lives and those of others—we are *charismatic!*
- God has placed in us a desire and energy to preach the gospel, we are *missionary*.
- He has made us one with one another despite our differences, just as at Pentecost God began to reunite the human race, “*men from every race under heaven.*” A couple chapters later it says in **Acts 4:32** *Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul.... We are ecumenical!*
- Not only that, but as Rom 5:5 says “*God’s love has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that has been given to us*”. The Holy Spirit brings us an experience of God’s love -- love for God, and God’s love for others. The Holy Spirit is our *koinonia*, our fellowship, what we share in common. He unites us to the Father and the Son, unites us to one another, making us one body. The result of Pentecost is that we are a *community!*

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. All who believed were together and

had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. Acts 2:42-47

They prayed together, ate together, and cared for one another’s needs. Some of this happened in big meetings “in the temple area”—Solomon’s portico. But most occurred in smaller settings—“in their homes.” Notice that the love of God from the Holy Spirit received at Pentecost drew them beyond their natural concern for themselves and for their families and into being concerned for the needs of others,

Evolving Approaches

In our Covenant we pledge:

- to “widen our hearts to receive those He adds to our number”
- to “serve and care for our brothers and sisters in The Word of God”
- to “take responsibility for those the Lord has given us; to be a new family, members of the same body”

Over the years our ways of fulfilling these commitments have changed. When we had a more intense community life, we expected almost all of our mutual care to take place in households, men’s and women’s groups, and clusters composed entirely of other members of The Word of God. Our expectations for care have changed in a way similar to our approach to outreach.

At one time all of our mission as a community was done through explicit community outreaches. Our main strategy for evangelizing the world and serving the church was to try to get everyone to join our community or another like it. As we know, in 1990 God decided to re-arrange our community life...

Using both solid insights into what needed to change as well as our mistakes and sins, He pulled down many structures that we had relied on. We have made a variety of changes and believe the Lord’s hand has continued to guide us despite mistakes that we undoubtedly continue to make.

It always helps to stop periodically and ask, how is God working among us? If we think about how God is working through us in *mission*, we see

1. He is using some community sponsored outreaches: e.g. MissionChrist, Pine Hills
2. The community functions as the home base of individual community members who advance His kingdom in various spheres in which we are involved: e.g. churches, work, prison outreach, Renewal Ministries, etc.
3. The community functions as leaven in the broader Christian community for our basic values in the churches: e.g. charismatic life, ecumenism, mission/evangelization.

The ways the Lord is using us in outreach have diversified from mainly explicit community outreaches.

Diversifying Care

In a similar way, the Lord has opened up the ways in which we care for one another, as well. Let me illustrate from my own experience. I receive spiritual

Called to 'serve and care for our brothers and sisters in the Word of God' ...

sustenance through my church, especially Mass and periodic confession AND through prayer meetings of The Word of God. Four days a week a group of brothers, some but not all community members, gather at my house for morning prayer. The Leadership Team involves a degree of sharing and prayer as well as service. I am part of a men's group that meets monthly. I also have ministry connections with Renewal Ministries, the Fellowship of St. Paul at the seminary where I teach. On top of that I have a very active and very Christian extended family, many of whom are in this area!

As you can see, I experience very rich but diversified support and care as a Christian, involving but not limited to our life together in The Word of God. The situation is similar for many of us. Now this approach is good for my personal needs, but it has some serious problems for the life and mission of The Word of God

1. people can, and do, fall through the cracks with no organized way of making sure people are being cared for
2. its not structured to welcome new people or draw them into a steady new set of relationships in Christ
3. it is deficient in elements that expresses community identity, i.e., what we share by being members of The Word of God. Others not in The Word of God do many of the same things.

Our Covenant says we are "to be a new family"... As a family, our activity should not be limited to the family, but it does needs to begin there. There needs to be enough things we do specifically as a family to preserve that special relationship.

Strengthening Mutual Care

In consultation with the Council, the Leadership Team is in the process of taking two modest steps to enable us to better live out our vision expressed in our community Covenant.

1. Encouraging everyone who is able to take part in a *Community Care Group*

A *Community Care Group* is any small group in which the members of The Word of God exercise their responsibility to serve and care for one another. For example it could be one of the Fellowship Groups which began recently like the Flanagan/Lucchetti group. Or it could be one of the variety of existing groups involving people who are not members of community. It is not necessary that all the members of a group be members of The Word of God, so long as all are willing for the group to fulfill the responsibility to serve and care for one another.

One special thing we are asking the Care Groups to do is take a few minutes at each meeting to pray for The Word of God and reflect on the Lord's word to us, using the summaries from the prayer meetings which are sent out regularly. This strengthens our connection as a community, and our connection to the Lord through prayer!

1. Mobilizing community care leaders

A *Community Care Leader* is community member in each Care Group who helps the Leadership Team see that every member of the community receives care and that new people are welcomed into our life. The help each group fulfill its goals and keep in touch with the members so

that they can see that mutual care is taking place. They are the group's point of contact with the Leadership Team to connect the group up to the broader resources of the community as needed. The Care Leaders will meet together with the Leadership Team to discuss how the groups are doing and help develop this vital expression of Christ's life among us.

Building up in love

We have completed our celebration of Pentecost, but let's keep the fire of our love toward all in Christ burning brightly. In particular, let's each consider what steps we can take to "serve and care for our brothers and sisters in the Word of God," how to express our relationship as a spiritual family.

...speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. Eph 4:15-16



A strong proponent of stronger community relationships, Peter Williamson was a chief architect of our plans to strengthen mutual care.

Key Summer Events for Prayer & Participation



July 8, 4:30pm
Community Picnic @
Kopinski's

Prayer, Food, Fellowship at Don & Ann Kopinski's home, 8758 Webster Hills Rd. Bring a side dish and dessert to share — and a guest! Everything else provided, including zip-line.

Directions: Take Mast Rd. north from Dexter, across N. Territorial Rd. to Walsh Rd. Turn left on Walsh to Webster Hills Rd. Turn left on to Webster Hills.



July 8—14
Pine Hills Boys Camp

Pray for the Boys Camp. It is a key time in the growth and development of the campers and the staff as men and disciples of Jesus!



July 22—29
MissionChrist Ypsilanti
Mission

A team from MissionChrist is going to spend a week living and working with the Faith Assembly Church in Ypsilanti. This dedicated congregation is converting an old factory into a church and community center. Our youth will be doing work on the building and reaching out to kids in the neighborhood. Pray with them!



July 28, 8-10am
B3—Band of Brothers
Breakfast
@ Community Office

Men young and old are invited to join us for a hearty breakfast and an interactive time dealing with God's call on us as men. Call the office 994-3243 for info or to say you are coming to help the cooks.

After breakfast, those who want to can join the MissionChrist team to help at the Faith Assembly factor conversion project.



Aug. 5-11
Pine Hills Girls Camp

Pray for the Girls Camp. Almost 100 girls and nearly 30 young women staff spending a week with Jesus—awesome thing happen!

Its not too late to sign up your daughter or a friend's daughter! Contact the Community Office 994-3243 right away.



Aug. 25, 8-10am
B3—Band of Brothers
Breakfast
@ Community Office

This fellowship of men growing into God's call is a great place to bring a son, or son-in-law or friend. We are aiming for honesty, transparency, and encouragement as we become the men the Lord wants us to be and the Kingdom needs us to be! Call the office 994-3243 for info or to say you are coming to help the cooks.

New Leadership Team Members

At the Annual Community Meeting on June 24th, we held the election for Leadership Team members. Jeane Larson and Phil Tiews were elected. We also decided to expand the team by 2 members and Marilyn Geyer and Patrick O'Connell were added. All will serve two year terms until June of 2009.

Jean, Phil, Marilyn and Pat join Peter Williamson, Jack

Flanagan and Aimee Mangan, who just got married so she is now Aimee Bacik! Please remember to pray for Aimee's husband, Peter, who works for Renewal Ministries and is battling cancer.

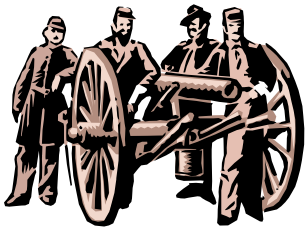
Thanks to all the members of the Leadership Team for their willingness to serve. Please remember them in prayer often! ■

Band of Brothers Breakfast

Saturday, July 28th, 8-10 am

Community Meeting Room

- **Hearty breakfast & fellowship**
- **'Field Instruction' - how to do some useful & interesting thing**
- **Growth in the Way of the Wild Heart**



**Bring your teen sons,
your sons-in-law,
your neighbors,
and yourself !**

Join us in July

- 7/8 Picnic & Prayer Meeting,
4:30-7:00 pm
Kopinski's (see info page 6)**
- 7/22 Prayer Meeting, 4:30-6:00 pm
Covenant Presbyterian Church
5171 Jackson Road**
- 7/28 Band of Brothers Breakfast
8-10 am
The Word of God meeting room
230 Collingwood, Suite 150**
- 8/5 Prayer Meeting, 4:30-6:00 pm
Covenant Presbyterian Church
5171 Jackson Road**

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