



an
ecumenical
charismatic
missionary
Christian
Community

August 2008

The Word of God **NEWSLETTER**

The baton is passed at Pine Hills

One generation shall speak of You to the next

By David Williamson

Eleven years!' I thought to myself. I was packing for Pine Hills Boy's Camp...again. Eleven years that I've been at Pine Hills, either as a camper, as a service team member or some form of Counselor. This year was different though. This was my first year as Camp Director, and the prep work that I put into camp this year far outstripped all the other years combined. Beyond the change in position I am in a very different place personally than when I was packing for my first year at camp; in fact, because of camp, I am a completely different person.

His Staff comforted me

Being Camp Director comes with a whole new set of worries, anxieties and stresses, but it also comes with a deeper appreciation for what the Lord is doing and how He works in the campers and the staff. With all the concerns of leading a camp, I found that many of my greatest anxieties about how camp would run were put to rest by the quality of the staff. In fact, it was the quality of our staff that struck me most. To have a staff of 50 men who are strong, mature, faithful men of God and ministers of His gospel is a tremendous blessing.

Every year nearly a hundred campers come to camp and are touched or changed by the Lord.

I was myself as a camper and this year was no different. But to see these very same campers become amazing counselors and directors and administrators and service team members shows me how deep the Lord has been working His transformation. The experience many campers have isn't just a one time event.

Almost the entire staff was younger than me this year- most of them are in high school or the first few years of college— but rather than having to worry about a



If you are viewing this picture online the red T-shirts make the campers look like they are on fire. Or maybe that is just the glow of the Holy Spirit shining from them! God touched His Sons again this year at Pine Hills Camp, as He has done over the years, but each year using different leaders. David Williamson took over from Daniel Newville as Director, but it is clear that the real Director is Jesus!

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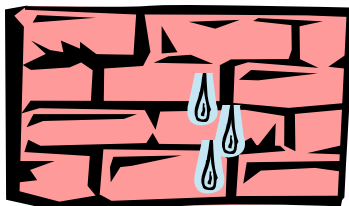
Seems to me ...

The Kingdom of God is at hand ... that means today!

I know I have commented on this before, but the Lord keeps driving the point home to me ... and so I am going to keep bringing it up with you, too!

Earlier this week I was praying at the start of my day. As I try to remember to do, I was praying for a couple of meetings I had later. As I did so, I realized that I had little expectation of God breaking in through those meetings. I have a nice general belief that God's Kingdom will eventually come. But my expectation that I will see His Kingdom advance on any particular day is virtually non-existent! I was ready to ask Him to 'bless' my meetings, but did I think the Kingdom would advance in our day as a result of them — not really.

The Spirit opened the eyes of my heart to see that this is wrong. Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is at hand, really that it is here now, because He was there then and has sent His Spirit to be here now. We should anticipate it squirting in through all the broken places in this world system to transform everything. Many times folks look back on some great work of God and they point to some relatively small event as the starting point.



So who is to say whether the conversation you have with your neighbor might not be the turning point in their life — and change the direction of a whole family. How can we know whether a retreat with a handful of college students who are seeking more of God's Spirit (say 40 years ago in Pittsburg) might grow into a movement which will impact the whole church.

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We can't know the complete story of the outward expanding ripples of Kingdom life that will flow from what we do day by day, but we can know that God's Kingdom, the reign of His Son, is pressing in on the kingdom of this world right now, every day, through us!

Armed with eyes of faith, I went into that day believing for and expecting God to break in. One meeting was between some pastors in the Pastors Alliance for County Transformation and several African American pastors to talk about advancing racial relationships in our County. We have been working for some movement on this for years and at that meeting there was great enthusiasm for setting up a lunch in August for a much broader group of pastors to gather to get to know one another, pray together, and explore how to move forward. A small break in the barrier, a squirt of the Kingdom of God through the crack, the start of a flood?

Where is God's Kingdom at hand in your day today? Holy Spirit, give us eyes to see!

Pine Hills Boys Camp 2008

How great is our calling

young staff, I was impressed by the spiritual maturity and hunger that our counselors and administrators demonstrated. It is at camp that many if not most of these counselors have come to realize that God is real, and the power that He works in us is real and completely changes lives.

How great is the calling of Christ

In my life I have come back to camp again and again, and each time been helped, touched, or challenged in a new way. When I needed hope, He gave me hope; when I needed encouragement, He encouraged me; when I needed love; He loved me, and when I needed to be challenged, He called me to lay down my life.

This year the campers and the staff were challenged to fan into flame the gifts that God has given to us and to live more fully for his glory. As Billy Kangas' song says: "How great is the calling of Christ in your life? Give Him praise in your life!" His calling IS great and Pine Hills has helped me and others hear and respond to Christ's calling in our lives.

I continue to look forward to the ways that the Lord will work through Pine Hills camp; how He will touch the lives of campers, and utterly transform those willing hearts to become faithful and passionate men of God. I saw God work powerfully in the campers this year and I can't wait to see this generation of boys become incredible counselors and Disciples of Christ.

- David Williamson, Camp Director



A one thumb commentary on Camp!

in Christ, give Him praise in your life ...



Learning to overcome obstacles and work as a team are key aspects of Camp. In the process the boys grow in character and learn to love one another.

As in life, many of the challenges the boys face simply cannot be conquered on their own. Learning to value the contribution each camper can make to the team effort, facing their fears together, their success at Camp prepares them for success in their spiritual lives.



Learning to lead is really important at Camp. The ninth graders must organize, motivate, and care for their squads—even if they sprain their ankles and walk with a cane! This squad leader commented on how difficult, but how valuable his experience was.

I like Pine Hills because... — Comments from 9th Graders

- I liked Pine Hills because though I had to persevere, I grew closer to God and I learned to push myself and others to do what is needed.
- I liked Pine Hills Camp because I experience God in a way I never have before.
- Camp was incredible. It opens you up to God while having fun at the same time. Pine Hills is the best!
- I like Pine Hills because I experience Christ more deeply in my life. I also had a fun time. I also learn how to be a leader.
- I loved everything about camp. But most of all I loved getting closer to God through Pine Hills.
- I liked my week of camp because all the staff and counselors were awesome, and this week really helped me grow in my faith.
- Camp was sweet! Prayer is sweet! God is sweet! Oh, baby!
- I love camp because God is present and active.
- Camp gave me power, courage, and leadership skills when I thought I didn't have any.
- I really liked Pine Hills because all the staff and counselors try to help you grow closer to God in the prayer room. Conquest is awesome and so much fun. Bear clubs and grade workouts teach you to persevere. And the food and drinks are delicious.
- I like camp because I have met and made friends with the most awesome people in the world. And have fallen in love with the Lord.
- I really liked camp because it gave me the strength to live my life for God and it taught me to lead and persist even when things get difficult.
- This week at camp was one of the top three weeks of my life. The other two of my top three are the past two camp years.

Nothing beats a warm Sunday afternoon in the country with brothers & sisters

Summer Refreshment at Park Kopinski



Joan O'Connell: God's faithfulness through shaking

by Martha Darling

*"God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.*

Therefore we fear not, though the earth be shaken."

Ps 46:2-3

When asked what Scripture passage is her personal motto, our sister Joan O'Connell chose the one above. All through the changes in her life, when trouble came and the earth shook, Joan has held on to the Lord.

Beginnings

Joan grew up in Dearborn, MI as one of four children. She climbed trees, helped her mother with the laundry, went on church retreats, helped with Sunday School. Did she know the Lord then, or was this just activity to occupy an intelligent, active girl? "I have a strong suspicion that the Lord captured my heart when I was very young, and He swept me up and kept me close to Him throughout my youth," Joan says. "I remember as a very young girl asking my older sister to **please** teach me the Lord's Prayer. She did—one little section at a time before we went to sleep at night."

Grade school and high school were filled with music. Joan learned the clarinet. "I also played the piano before I learned to play the piano." We know Joan as a talented dancer and choreographer, and the founder of the Christian Dance Network, a nationwide organization of Christian dance troupes. But many of us don't know that Joan didn't take a dance class until her freshman year at the University of Michigan.



Joan & Patrick O'Connell met in The Word of God when they were living in households. This December they will be celebrating their 30th wedding anniversary — testimony to a marriage finding refuge in God through lots of 'the earth being shaken'.

Caught while wandering

College didn't derail Joan's faith, but she felt the pressure of studies as well as confusion about her place among God's people. Her pastor advised her to take some time away from church, but Joan says, "It wasn't the best advice. The lack of connection to the Body of Christ permitted me to wander more than was healthy for my tender, God-loving soul." It was during this time of searching that Joan met some young people from an unnamed group, which later became The Word of God.

In the mid-70s Joan met her husband Patrick O'Connell. The birth of their first child, John, was a situation where she experienced God's saving help. Joan developed pre-eclampsia and was rushed to the hospital. While she waited and fought with fear, she suddenly heard the Lord say, "You and your child will come through this. I will be with you. Trust me." And so it happened!

A Present Help in Trouble

Joan has known God as a "very present help" in times of grief, too. Her mother died when Joan was in her 20's; her closest childhood friend died as a young woman; and John, her oldest child, died when he was 20.

When asked what she would like to say to this community, Joan responded, "God bless you all. God loves you. I appreciate you for your faithfulness to the Lord. It's a privilege to have grown up with you. I hope to grow old alongside you."



So what is the O'Connell clan up to? Son Joe is now married to Carrie [VanBemmelen] and teaches at Whitmore Lake High School, Maria has graduated from Hope College and is teaching English as a Second Language in Spain next year, you can read about Joan above, Patrick is the principal at High Point, and Anna is studying Dance Movement Therapy at Columbia College in Chicago.



Band of Brothers Breakfast

Sat., Aug 2, 9-11 am

**The Word of God Meeting Room
230 Collingwood, Ste. 150, Ann Arbor**

- **The Way of the Wild Heart**
- **Demonstration of 'Guy Stuff'**
- **And Breakfast, too!**

**Bring a friend or relative and
Join Us!**

Join us in August

- 8/2 Band of Brothers 9-11 am
Community Meeting Room
230 Collingwood, Ste. 150**
- 8/10 Prayer Meeting, 4:30-6:00 pm
Covenant Presbyterian Church
5171 Jackson Road**
- 8/24 Prayer Meeting, 4:30-6:00 pm
Covenant Presbyterian Church
5171 Jackson Road**
- 9/7 Prayer Meeting, 4:30-6:00 pm
Covenant Presbyterian Church
5171 Jackson Road**

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