

the Kerygma



NEWSLETTER OF REDEEMER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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“I asked the Lord that I might grow in faith and love and every grace.

Might more of his salvation know and seek more earnestly his face.

’Twas He who taught my heart thus to pray. And he I trust has answered prayer.

But it has been in such a way, as almost drove me to despair.

I hope that in some favored hour, at once he’d answer my request.

And by his love’s constraining power, subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of this he made me feel the hidden evils of my heart.

And let the angry powers of Hell assault my soul in every part.

Yea more with his own hand he seemed intent to aggravate my woe.

Crossed all the fair designs I schemed; blasted my gourds and laid me low.

Lord why is this? I trembling cried. Wilt thou pursue they worm to death?

“Tis in this way” the Lord replied, “I answer prayer for grace and faith.”

These inward trails I employ from self and pride to set thee free.

And break they schemes of earthly joy. That thou mayest seek thy all in me.”

—prayer by John Newton

WHAT DOES TROUBLE MEAN?

BY JUSTIN G. CLEMENT

The welt beneath her eye immediately began to form. It turned into a shiner that she could “brag about.” I remember my three year old daughter, Anna Catherine, racing to greet me when I arrived home from a long day. She didn’t see the edge of our dining room table and slammed right into it with her big blue eyes, one of which became black and blue.

It is rare for us grownups to get black eyes from running into furniture. Instead of getting black eyes, we have hearts which turn black and blue. We don’t encounter living room tables poised to strike us; instead we feel as though sledgehammers are pounding troubles into us. Oh, we all know trouble. It may be a parent, a spouse, or a child who contracts unexpected cancer. Or children who lose their parents in a tragic accident like those children who lost their parents in the TWA crash several years ago. A besetting temptation that lingers like a sinus infection in the winter: it is just always there. A relationship that is always awkward and draining. A family history tainted with abuse, neglect and anger. It has so contorted your personality that you feel trapped, doomed to repeat your parent’s failures. It may be the collective power of disappointment, depression, and discouragement that swept you when you failed to get into the club, to achieve the grade, or to reach your goal. We all know trouble.

James, in his brief letter, teaches us not to be alarmed when trouble comes. In verse three he reminds us that meeting trials of “various kinds” is a matter of when, not if. You need not go seeking trials; they will find you. Just like Anna Catherine encountered that dining room table, it seems that we run smack into the most difficult of circumstances.

The question then becomes, “How am I going to respond?” Amazingly, James suggests...no, he commands...that our response should be to “count it all joy.” Say what? How in the world are we supposed to do that? Let me see if I can shed some light on what James is teaching us.

Trouble does not mean God is mean.

Today people make all kinds of assertions about the trials we face. Some say trials are God’s way of punishing us for the sin in our lives. Others say that trials would disappear from our lives if only we would have enough faith that God is more powerful than our trials. Other people believe that trials are simply a figment of our imagination, like the boogeyman. Still others believe that God is just as perplexed as we are

about trials. Like us, his hands are tied, unable to do anything about trials except to hope that we rise above them.

I don’t know about you, but none of these options encourages me to do what James tells me in the passage: “Consider it all joy...” All of these options make me either afraid of God, mad at God or confused about God; they don’t make me want to rejoice. No, the only thing that can lead me to joy in the midst of adversity is when I realize that God is there in the midst of the adversity with me. Far from being distant in my trial, James reminds us that God is *with us* in the midst of adversity because he is *control of adversity*.

James is not telling us to rejoice in our misfortune, but to rejoice in the fact that God is in control of them, using them for his good purposes in our lives. Trials don’t mean that God is against us; rather, He is at work in the midst of them for us who are his beloved children.

Therefore we don’t have to say with Rabbit, the tightly wound friend of Winnie the Pooh, “Why does it always have to be me? Why? Oh Why? Oh Why?” Rather than see trials as winding up on the short end of the stick, James encourages me to see trials as *windows of God’s presence*. Wherever there is trial I can be assured, there God is also. Just as Jesus told the disciples, “And lo I am with you, even until the end of the age.”

Trouble does not mean God is playing games.

Well, if God is not being mean, then what in the world is He doing in our trials? James answers this question when he teaches us that God is using our trials to *serve a purpose and reach a goal*. When we know both of these things we can rejoice in our own valley of sorrow.

• Purpose which is served:

To understand God’s purpose in our trials we need look no further than the words James uses in verse 3. There he writes, “The testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” James says that these trials are God’s tests, tests to solidify steadfastness in us.

In the ancient Greek world a word would be marked on the underside of a piece of pottery. That word was *dokimos*, which meant “approved.” For a piece of pottery to be marked

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MOVING... BY JENNIE SMITH

We recently moved into our first house and I have been at once excited with the newness and overwhelmed with the effort. I don't like giving up the comfort of the known and establishing a new routine but this move was special because it marked an important milestone for our family. We have room to grow and are excited to begin this new stage of our lives hoping to realize so many dreams as homeowners. Being new to the neighborhood, I am struck with the curiosity of being a neighbor. I notice the not-so-subtle stares and craning necks of our neighbors. I'm sure they wonder what we're all about; we feel the same about them. I hope they see what we would like to be: a family living and growing together with purpose.

Reflecting on my personal experience has given me a better perspective on the recent changes in the life of Redeemer. I have to admit that I was comfortable at the Bright Shawl building; I liked knowing what to expect and I liked the routine. But after only two years we have so many families coming to worship that we need more space for classrooms, fellowship, and church life. Now our church family has moved to a new home, facing all the excitement and challenges of change. Our routines have changed and it will take some time before all of us adjust, but now we have the much needed room to grow and realize dreams as a church family.

Redeemer's move marks an important milestone in church life. On February 6, we celebrated our two-year anniversary as a

particular church. The time of fellowship at the potluck luncheon was full of reflection, discussion and laughter. "Look how long the line is, can you believe how many of us there are?" Others noticed how the seats during worship are filling and that the auditorium is taking on a cozy atmosphere. Our church family is seeing a vision realized.

As the church settles into its new home, neighbors will wonder who we are. Not only those near the McAllister Auditorium, but also those who live and work around each of us, the church, will be curious. I wonder what they see. I believe it's a vibrant family of believers learning and growing together with purpose, responding (as Pastor Gibbs said) to "the electric impulse of God's love".

REDEEMER NEWS

NEW MEMBERS



Ben and Ann Bingham



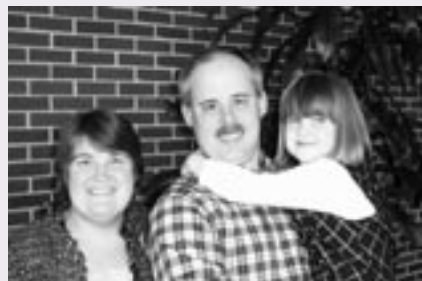
Erin Scheideman



Thor and Alissa Thornhill



Mike Grijalva



*Jim and Tracey Smith
Mikaela**



*Quintin & Melissa Dodson
Jacob, Emma*, Luke* & Eleanor**



Amy Ketcham



Heidi Starr

**Non-communicating members*

MISSIONS MINUTE

❖ The Fishers – Guadalajara, Mexico

Life is “busy as usual” for Paul and Dawn Fisher in Guadalajara, Mexico. They happily report that the Soli Deo Gloria Music Academy is doing well and attracting new students, having recently held its first student recital in December, “a milestone and a testimony to the families in attendance as students performed for the glory of God.”

The Fishers also report that the churches are doing well. Cristo Redentor nominated several candidates for elders in January, and the church is growing as small groups flourish and new member classes start again soon. The church in Santa Ana is also growing, and they are gearing up to open a new church plant in another community, Residencial Moctezuma. We rejoice that Redeemer was able to provide an end-of-the-year gift to the Fishers for a recording studio, enhancing the effectiveness of their music and teaching ministries in Guadalajara.

Pray that music would open doors for the Fishers to meet people and share Christ. They ask for prayers for two of Paul’s students at the Academy, Chema and Mark, who are struggling with their family as their father left them and their mother a few years ago. They also ask for prayer for Paul’s sister, Carol, who had a liver transplant a few months ago and is now suffering as her new kidney is failing. Please pray for encouragement for Carol, her husband, and her three children during this very difficult trial. The Fishers send their warmest regards to the church family at Redeemer and thank you for your prayer support.

❖ The Days – San Narciso, Belize

Three of the four Belizean children Bill and Sherry adopted after planting the local church have come to know the Lord as Savior! Frankie, Juanaria, and Sonny all expressed their understanding of their need for a Savior and prayed to receive Christ. Please pray that the Lord may call their older sister, Virginia, to this same saving faith. Belize has experienced recent political and labor union unrest, which has made utility and water services and grade school schedules sporadic. The Days were fortunate not to lose significant power or services, but other parts of Belize are struggling still. Please pray for peaceful resolution of these political issues and pray for the continued expansion of the Kingdom in Belize. Redeemer will make a return visit to San Narciso this summer. **Mark your calendars for July 30 – August 06, 2005 and call Jake Gray at (210) 820-3790 ASAP with questions or to let him know of your interest in going to Belize.**

❖ The Bowmans – US/Mexico Border Ministries

Gene and LuAnn Bowman moved in August 2003 to El Paso, where Gene serves as the Border Evangelism and Mercy Ministries (BEAMM) Coordinator. Gene works with the PCA and National Presbyterian Church of Mexico, overseeing border church planting and mercy ministries activities. LuAnn works with the ladies of the team and serves as the Administrative Assistant for Christ the King Presbyterian Church in El Paso, where she and Gene attend.

Praise God that He has wondrously provided for part of their support needs! New pledges have allowed their account to remain in the black; pray for an additional \$400 per month still needed for the Bowmans to be fully funded.

Praise God for the provision of \$140,000 for the purchase of a building in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, for the Gracia y Paz Church and the San Pablo Seminary! Pray that all of the necessary legal details may be handled quickly, that the additional \$40,000 needed for renovations may be raised, and that work teams may come so that the building may be ready by September 2005. The Bowman’s prayer letters may be accessed online at www.beamm.org.

❖ Peter Dishman – RUF Mexico City

Redeemer recently began supporting Peter Dishman. He arrived last month in Mexico City where he will be establishing an RUF ministry on the campus of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). UNAM is the largest university in Mexico with 140,000 undergraduate and 15,000 graduate students on 22 campuses in Mexico City. Please pray for Peter as he gets settled in and begins making contacts on the campus. Keep current on Peter’s ministry at www.rufmexico.org.

WHAT DOES TROUBLE MEAN (CONTINUED)

dokimos meant that the piece had gone through the furnace without cracking. It stood the test in the refiner’s fire.

James is teaching us that we are in the furnace of God’s testing whenever we encounter trials in our lives. He wants to make us strong and hearty, to strengthen His character in us.

• Goal to be reached:

Testing leads to the character of patient endurance, but it is not God’s final goal for our suffering. James says steadfastness also has its own work. That work is perfection and completeness—two words that simply

mean maturity. God wants us to be mature. God wants us to be for real. He wants us to be genuine.

But what does that look like? During seminary one of my professors, David Calhoun, professor of church history at Covenant Seminary, was stricken with his second bout with cancer. As the battle raged, he commented on his own painful struggle: “If I did not have cancer, my life would be a failure forever. Whatever comes, the Christian doesn’t despise this life. There are green valleys and quiet waters. But even in the valley of the shadow of death, the Lord is with us. He is our joy and comfort.” Such words reflect the work of steadfastness producing something approaching maturity.

Maturity is the ability to say, “Come what may, be it green grasses and quiet waters or the valley of the shadow of death, my confidence is in my Shepherd. He is my joy and my life.”

Therefore, as we encounter the adversities of sickness, death, job losses, marriage stresses and disappointments, wayward children and anxious spirits, let us remember that God has not left us. Far from it, each of should expect to get a few “black eyes” as we walk the path of Jesus. Such is his design for his children. So cheer up! He is not being mean, nor is He playing games. It is maturity that He must, and will, have in us.

PRESBYTERIAN REDEEMER

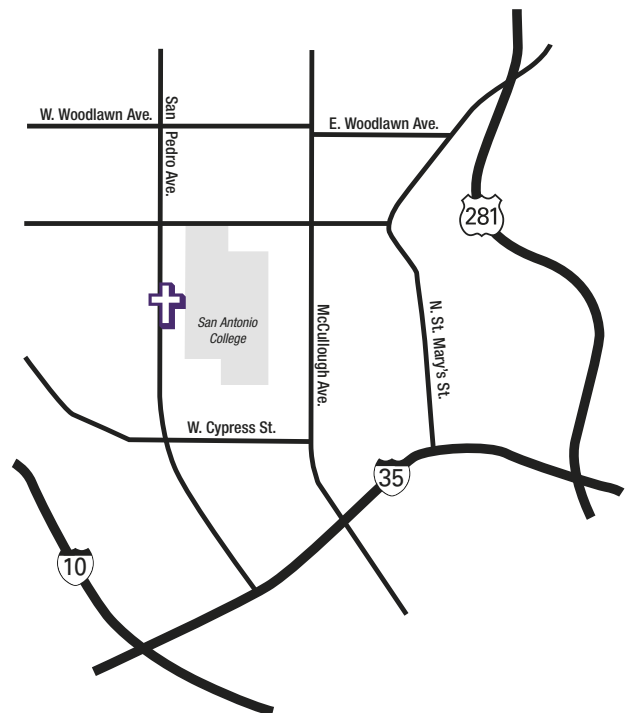
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Join us
at our new
worship location,
the McAllister
Fine Art Center
on Sundays
at 9:30 a.m.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 17 Men's Fellowship Evening at the Flying Saucer**
- March 2 Good Friday Service at McAllister Fine Arts Center**
- March 27 Easter Service at McAllister Fine Arts Center**
- April 5 Newcomers Dessert at the Gibbs'**

MAP



+ Sunday Morning Worship Services are now held at the McAllister Fine Arts Center