

BRIDGING THE GAP

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Volume XI No. 8

August 2007

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From the Pastor's Desk Enjoy the Journey

I usually end my letters with "Enjoy the Journey," but this time I want to begin this article with it. Everyone wants to be happy. If you ask people what their number one ambition in life is, most people will say "I just want to be happy." Always having to appear happy creates stress. But not everything works according to the way we planned it. It is easy to be happy when everything is going our way, but what about the rest of life? How can we stay positive in a negative world? How can we remain optimistic when everything is falling apart? This is where joy comes in. Galatians 5:22 says "The fruit of the Spirit is joy," and Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always."

Happiness depends on happenings. It comes from the root word *hap* which means luck or circumstance. Joy is different; it goes deeper. Joy is an attitude, a choice. Joy is an inside job and is not dependent on circumstance. It is your choice to rejoice. Joy is what makes life enjoyable. We have Hope! It has been said that a person can live four days without food, three days without water, eight minutes without air, but not one minute without hope. The hope we have in Christ is the first reason we can rejoice even in difficult situations. We can also rejoice because God has a purpose in every situation. Joy is learning to enjoy life in spite of problems. Joy is not the absence of suffering, but is the presence of God. Paul says when we rejoice in suffering, God is always with us. Perspective makes all the difference in the world. How you respond to problems at work, at home and health problems depends on your perspective. Perseverance, character and hope are produced in us only when we choose the right attitude. And that is joy. When we learn to rejoice in the problem not for the problem, God uses it for good in our lives. Do you know where Paul was when he wrote the book of Philippians? He was in jail. He was there because he had learned to be content in all situations. We can be joyful in tough times because we always hope. Romans 5:11 "We rejoice because of what God has done through our Lord Jesus Christ." Think of Isaiah 43:2 "When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you, your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you." Think about it, if you know God, nothing can overwhelm you.

No matter what you go through in life you will never go through it alone. Now and then you hear another Christian who says, "I've lost my joy." Did you know that joy comes as we get our focus off ourselves and concentrate on helping others? Joy is like a muscle; the more you exercise it, the stronger it becomes. My greatest joy came when I committed my life to Jesus Christ; my second greatest joy has been to introduce others to Him. So as the summer goes by so fast, take time each day and choose joy. Let's be determined to help someone along the way. We have a great calling as The Fairview Heights Church of God, and that is to help bring joy into people's lives. We can do that by telling our story of what Jesus has done for us. Never stop telling the good news everywhere such as on your vacation, your job, at church, and to your friends. Tell them to enjoy the journey and ask them if they know Jesus, the joy giver.

Enjoy the Journey,
Pastor Clayton

Sermon Topics and Service Outlines

August 5

AM Service: Richard Ryan Knowles
PM Service: "Summer Series" Extreme Make Over! Ever Had a Bad Hair Day?
Acts 27:9-12 Pastor Clayton

August 12

AM Service: You Mean I have to Change?
Gen. 32 Pastor Clayton
PM Fresh Service: Pastor Brian

August 19

AM Service: My Live is a Mess, What Now?
Judges 13-16 Pastor Clayton
PM Service: Bible Trivia Pastor Clayton

August 26

AM Service: I'm So Lonely I Could Die! 2
Tim. 4:6-8 Pastor Clayton
"Communion"
PM Fresh Service: Pastor Brian

Coffee House Bible Study

Boy, I sure hope you have been able to attend these studies. They have been great. We meet each Wednesday night at 7:00 PM. We started on July 11 and will end on Aug. 29th. So if you have not made it yet, come on and join the study of *Faith, Our Experience in Action* written by Lillie McCutcheon. She was a great preacher, pastor, teacher in our movement. You will not be disappointed because God will bless you for coming.

Up Coming Dates

This is not a complete schedule of all upcoming events because events can be added or changed. These are important ones so we are giving you these dates well in advance. Please add these events to you calendars now so you can plan to attend them the rest of this summer and into the fall.

Aug 5 – 12 Southern Illinois Camp Meeting at West Frankfort
Evangelist Steve Chiles, Song Evangelist Kevin Willis.

Missionary Day Thursday Aug 9 - Wayne and Kathi Sellers

August 11 Angel Food Pickup 10:00- 11:00

August 18 "Come and Go Picnic"

at the Parsonage 12:00-2:00PM (weather permitting)

August 25 W.C.G. Prayer Retreat (for our area)

August 27 Ladies Bible Study at Stella Simms' (leave church at 10:00)

September 2 Sunday School Picnic & Teacher Appreciation Day

September 5 Faith Weaver Friends
BEGINS for the school year (meals also).

September 21-22 State W.C.G. Retreat at
Camp Warren in Decatur

September 29 W.C.G. Walk-A-Thon

October 5 & 6 OUR "CHURCH" Family Reunion at Camp Warren

November 10 Denise Droege's Recital at
Macomb

"Come & Go Picnic" at the Parsonage.

We just want to say THANKS for all you do and have done for us for the past four and a half years. We would like you also to come by and see the new roof our men put over the patio in back. It is so nice, and we have already been enjoying it. We can't wait for cooler weather to really be able to set out there and relax. "When ever that will be!" (HA! HA!) Anyway, we will have hamburgers and hot dogs and all of the trimmings! We hope you can drop by and have a sandwich and sit awhile. We are planning on Saturday, August 18 from 12:00 - 2:00 PM. Now if the weather turns bad and we have rain, we will have to reschedule because there is no way we could all get in the house! So bring your lawn chair and come over and enjoy! We are really looking forward to having each one of you at our home. Please ask for directions if you have never been over to the parsonage.

Pastor and Darla
Fairview Heights

Small Groups for Sunday Evenings

Beginning September 9th and running each Sunday evening until October 21st we will be having small group studies. Several of our "most sought after teachers" will be leading these groups: Becky Ball (doing a study for ladies); Pastor Clayton (doing a study of the Church of God); Richard Knowles (hasn't made a choice yet); Pam Knowles (will be leading our children classes and has GREAT material for this class!); Pastor Brian (hasn't made a choice yet); and Darla is praying that we have a study just for our men. It sounds great! There are so many good things to look forward to in the coming months. Begin praying now about which class you would like to attend. You will "not" be assigned a class, but you will be able to choose which class you would like to attend. We ask that once you choose a class you stick with it and not change each week. Of course, if you get in a class and just don't think it would be appropriate or is something different than you thought it was going to be, please change! Please don't stay home because you think you might not fit in. Find a small group where you do fit or choose a new group to expand your knowledge. Get to know new church members and even some of the ones you have attended church with for years. This is the time! Pray and ask God's direction to better help you be the Christian God has called you to be!

Joy Sunday School Class

"You Were Shaped for Serving God - Purpose #4". We are continuing our study in *The Purpose Driven Life*. Whenever God gives us an assignment, he always equips us with what we need to accomplish it. This custom combination of capabilities is called your SHAPE;
Spiritual gifts
Heart

Abilities

Personality

Experience

We continue to have wonderful discussions therefore learning much from each other. Last Sunday we took a survey of our service possibilities. First, we evaluated ourselves by answering questions "what we can do?" and "what are we actually doing?" Second, we learned more by evaluating each other. Sometimes others can see our abilities or strong points better than we can ourselves.

We have missed several JOY members this summer as they have enjoyed vacation time. Hurry back!!

We hear from Jason West. He is having a good time in South Korea and is traveling and enjoying the sights. He has finished the Spring 2 session and is getting ready to start the summer intensive session.

We are glad to have Patti home.....enjoyed having Shelia and family with us for two Sundays.....good to have Matt in our class the last few weeks.....good to have Jennifer Osaben in SS last week.....Candy turned 50! She & Jim vacationed in Virginia.... Debbie Porter has a new puppy named "Grace." Some of us got to attend a portion of state camp meeting....Bill Beltz spent 3 weeks in Nicaragua....Amy vacationed in Oklahoma.... .Marshall enjoyed entertaining grandsons recently....Mary vacationed in Wisconsin.... Pam and Richard have been working and vacationing various places....Shawn was in SS and church recently and celebrating college graduation. ...Claytons entertained their grandson for a week recently, and they are also enjoying a new roof over their patio.

If you want to connect with a Sunday School class, we'd love to have you!

Ruth Pope, teacher

W.C.G. Prayer Retreat for Our Area

The Women of the Church of God plan to open our Annual Prayer Retreat to all area Church of God congregations. We are hoping for a big group that day. Please invite your friends and neighbors! The date is Saturday, August 25. It will be held in our Fellowship Hall. We plan to have registration from 10:00 - 10:30; program from 10:30 - 11:30; and our meal at 11:30. The menu for the day will be soup/salad and sandwiches. We will need your help for the meal. So first if you plan on coming (we know you will want too), please let either Diane Taylor or Kim Brooks know. Second, if you can prepare something for the meal that day, let either one of the ladies know that also. This will be a great day to come together with ladies from our area and from other Church of God congregations. Diane Taylor will have our program and she ALWAYS does such a good job, and we ALWAYS leave with a blessing. Please plan now on attending. You won't want to miss this fellowship.

Junior/Senior High Youth

First, we want to thank all of you who helped the WCG/Youth Dinner Theater be such a success. It was a lot of hard work, but we were able to add \$461.00 to our Fundraising Account which helps to pay for state youth convention in April. Jim and I especially thank Mike Niederer for all his help as our director and for the countless hours that Sister Darla spent coordinating and planning. A special thanks to Denise Droege for "hamming it up" as the church piano player and to all our youth who helped either with props, serving or memorizing countless lines. And last but not least, all the WCG ladies who helped with cooking, table decorating and/or clean-up. A STANDING OVATION TO YOU ALL!

We want to thank-you again for the support we are receiving from donut, soda and Schnuck's escrip sales. Those who have signed up with Schnucks Escrip Community card have added \$110.00 in just four months to our fundraising account just by shopping at Schnucks. If you would like to help us and need more info, see Jim or Candy Niemeyer.

Youth are still currently meeting on Sunday evenings, and we have added a Wed. night study during the summer. We are currently studying the beliefs of the Jehovah Witnesses and what the Bible actually says about some of those beliefs. Sometime in the future the youth would also like to look at Mormonism and Islam. We also went to see Evan Almighty which really stressed that we could all change the world with Acts of Random Kindness. (ARK). There are some great biblical truths and teachable moments in that movie that we may explore in the future.

Five of our youth spent time at Older or Younger Teen Camps during July. The were Amanda Floyd , Andria Bowsby, Cameron Weakley, Andrew Pollard and Victoria Pope. I understand everyone had a great time. On their behalf, I want to thank the Board of Trustees for making Youth Camp Assistance available to all the youth as well as the children for the camp programs.

Future plans for the summer include a family pool party at Brian and Debbie Pope's and going to the Centralia Balloon Fest in August where the Christian band Newsong will be in concert Saturday night. We are also looking at attending a couple of National Youth events being held in St. Louis in the upcoming months.

Jim and I also want to thank the Board of Trustees for approving expenses to be able to attend The National Youth Workers Convention in St. Louis Nov 8-12th. We would appreciate your prayers as we prayer

for this conference as there are over 80 hours of small conferences that we can attend in addition to the main worship and conference sessions. We are excited about this opportunity to learn more about youth ministry and to bring what we learn back to this group and congregation.

Thank you for your prayers,

Jim and Candy Niemeyer, teachers

China Adoption for the Peiffers

When you see a family like ours doing a foreign adoption, I'm sure many questions are aroused in your mind. Why are they adopting when they can have children of their own? Why are they going all the way to China? Isn't that awfully expensive? Why don't they just adopt here in the US? These kids need homes too! Well, hopefully I can answer all your questions and lay your doubts aside.

Anyone who's been pregnant or has children knows that pregnancy and infancy are hard work! You gain a lot of weight, your body changes, your hormones are all out of whack, and hardest for me was losing so much sleep. What made it even more difficult, in my case, was that I suffered from post partum depression and both boys were colicky. When I was pregnant with Elijah, I was already struggling with the decision of whether or not this would be our last child. I laid in bed crying and praying over it. I heard the Lord speak so clearly, "Why don't you adopt?" I thought "Why don't we?" If we have the Lord's support, how could we go wrong? The deciding factor was Adam's response. "Sounds like a logical solution!" was all he had to say.

Immediately, I began researching adoption online. I wanted to adopt domestically,

because I, like many others, thought “children here need homes too.” I was very disappointed to find that domestic adoption was a difficult and sticky process. What upset me the most was that I kept reading that there is a 25% chance that the mother will change her mind, and the adoptive family will lose everything they have invested in the adoption. Because paperwork in the adoption process is all time sensitive, there is no way to transfer it to another child. We could not afford to take a risk like that so I began to research other avenues. A friend suggested China as her aunts have adopted about five girls from there. I was surprised to find that foreign adoption is not any more expensive, in most cases, than domestic.

Many factors contributed to us deciding on China. We wanted a girl, and their orphanages are 95% girls due to the fact that the families are legally only allowed to have one child. Most families choose boys because the parents will move in with their sons when they retire. Baby girls are often abandoned in warehouses and alleys. Sad as that may be, it is actually a bonus for adoptive parents because there are no ties to the family at all. The people of China are also very healthy compared to other countries. They take good care of themselves and the odds of us getting a reasonably healthy daughter are very good. China only requires one trip where other countries require two or three trips to their country during the adoption process. We will go to China in about two years once the adoption authorities have received and reviewed our paperwork and selected a child for us. We will stay for 14-16 days and finalize the adoption there (as long as Adam and I both go). When our daughter enters the United States, she will be a US citizen.

After learning and considering all of this, we prayed for confirmation. That very week I received a call from a lady who was obviously foreign. She was very excited

about her new found Christianity. She said “I have something to tell you.” “Of course,” I asked her. “What?” She exclaimed, “Ya su ae ni, Ya su ae ni!” I asked, “What does that mean?” She said, “It means ‘Jesus loves you’ in Chinese.” Tears streamed down my face as I knew I had received my confirmation. She had no idea what her words meant to me. The Lord continually confirms it to us.

Just today I was at the Bread Co talking to a friend about the process. A man at the next table heard me mention ‘authenticated’ and asked if I was doing a China adoption. When I told him yes, he pulled a picture out of his wallet of four beautiful little girls who are his daughters all adopted from China. He gave me some very valuable information. God used this event to touch my heart yet again.

Yes, the process can be very pricey. Most adoptions can range from \$15,000 to as much as \$30,000. China’s prices seem to be right in the middle by costing \$17,000 to \$19,000 depending on the agency you go through. There are many grants you can apply for, and I have an entire book of them. But we can only apply once we’ve filed a completed home study. Our home study is almost complete. We are just working on getting some of the final paperwork for it, and then our Social Worker just needs to complete her review. Until then we have to pay for it on our own. I’ve been amazed how the Lord has provided so far. We are trying some other methods of fund raising such as my birthday party and yard sales. We have a big amount due soon when we send our paperwork (this is called a Dossier) to China for review. This will be the biggest amount we’ve had to pay at one time. Thus far costs are \$3,720 plus \$750 when we complete our home study.

We are going through Children’s Hope International which has a location here in St. Louis which makes the process much easier

and convenient for us. China has a stringent policy that only allows people over the age of 30 to adopt. I am just hitting that mark with my birthday this August. Some of their rules also include: applicants must not be obese, have been on antidepressants, or are homosexual. They also have a tendency to deny African American families. Applicants must also have a minimum income of \$10,000 per year per person including the adopted child, and an accumulative net worth of \$80,000 after the family has subtracted all their debt

We've been into the adoption process about four months now. We need only to get our passports and have our paperwork state certified and authenticated. Then we will need the \$3,720 dossier fee before we can send it to China for review. It will take between eighteen months and two years for them to translate our application into Chinese, review and hopefully approve it, and select a child for us. We will get a picture of our daughter about eight weeks before we travel to China to finalize the adoption and bring her home. We've requested a girl under the age of two. Most children adopted are between the ages of 9-18mths. Our other big expense for our adoption will be our trip over there which will cost about \$2500 each plus a required \$3,000 donation to the orphanage. This will cover our airfare, food, and lodging while we are there. So we will have to raise about \$8,000 at least, for our trip. I am hoping to get some grants to help us with these costs and we are planning for it financially as well.

I have no doubt the Lord will provide. I am amazed at the way He has worked in this adoption so far. We had to take parenting classes which I now think EVERY parent should have to take. They have helped me tremendously in the parenting of our own two boys. It has been a very hard and difficult journey. I've been taken aback by the amount of negativity we've received. We've

only had a handful of supporters. It's been one of the most stressful times in my life. I know it's the Lord's will, and I know He has a plan and a purpose for this adoption, this family, and this precious little girl. God is SO GOOD! If you have any questions, please ask us! We are anxious and excited about the adoption. We long to talk about it, but due to lack of enthusiasm, we tend to avoid bringing it up. We thank you for reading this article and learning about the blessing of adoption. We encourage you to learn more! I'd love to hear from you!

Thanks!
Shannon Peiffer

Kitchen Coordinators

The Board of Deacons has asked Jan and Bud Evans to be this year's Kitchen Coordinators. Jan has started to take inventory and is going to be moving several things around in the kitchen. She asks that you work with her on this during the rearranging and getting new labels put in new areas. So if you go in the kitchen and what you are looking for is not there "it has always been," either start looking or ask Jan to help you out. This is going to take time, but rearranging the kitchen will better serve all of us during those busy Church dinners, etc.

Children of Promise Update

Linda Mason has joined the staff as Associate Director. Paul Maxfield is still the Director, but his wife Brenda will be returning to teaching. (Brenda and Paul were Co-directors) Linda was executive director of Women of the Church of God for over eight years. She is excited about being with the Children of Promise program.

Children of Promise is now in its 15th year, and there are 2,259 sponsors in 708 Churches of God in the United States. Children are still waiting to be sponsored. \$25-\$30 a month can make a big difference in the life and future of a child. If you are interested in sponsoring a child, I can help you get connected or you can contact the Children of Promise office direct.
Ruth Pope

Thank you!!

I want to thank any and all who sent cards, bought cakes, decorated, planned, helped or were present at any of my birthday celebrations including the surprise 50th birthday party given by my wonderful (although sneaky) husband. I really do believe I have had my last birthday celebration now! I was truly blessed this year with a total of five celebrations: one in Nicaragua back in Feb, one held by our marriage class, one by our youth group on a Sunday evening, one Denise gave me before we left for vacation and the surprise party at the church a month after my birthday. You all have made me feel very loved!

Candy Niemeyer

Pecans in the Cemetery

On the outskirts of a small town there was a big, old pecan tree just inside the cemetery fence. One day two boys filled up a bucketful of nuts and sat down by the tree, out of sight, and began dividing the nuts.

"One for you, one for me... one for you, one for me," said one boy. Several nuts were dropped and rolled down toward the fence.

Another boy came riding along the road on his bicycle. As he passed, he thought he heard voices from inside the cemetery. He slowed down to investigate. Sure enough, he

heard, "One for you, one for me... One for you, one for me."

He just knew what it was. He jumped back on his bike and rode off. Just around the bend he met an old man with a cane, hobbling along.

"Come here quick," said the boy, "you won't believe what I heard! Satan and the Lord are down at the cemetery dividing up the souls." The man said, "Beat it kid, can't you see it's hard for me to walk." When the boy insisted though, the man hobbled slowly to the cemetery.

Standing by the fence they heard, "One for you, one for me., One for you, one for me."

The old man whispered, "Boy, you've been tellin' me the truth. Let's see if we can see the Lord."

Shaking with fear, they peered through the fence yet were still unable to see anything. The old man and the boy gripped the wrought iron bars of the fence tighter and tighter as they tried to get a glimpse of the Lord.

At last they heard, "One for you, one for me. That's all. Now let's go get those nuts by the fence and we'll be done."

They say the old man made it back to town a full five minutes ahead of the kid on the bike

SMILE! God Loves You!

Please continue sending me news, reports and fun stories like the one above. I will add them as space permits. Thank you all for your contributions. This is your newsletter.

Debbie Porter