

# THE CONNECTION

A Newsletter of Cumberland Valley Church, Dillsburg PA

JULY 2009

## Living Together ~Fred Miller



In 2007, the Elders designed and administered a Discipleship Survey in the church. We took about 10 minutes during three consecutive Sunday worship services to do this. One of our questions was, “What role have the following CVC structures played in your overall spiritual growth?”

We asked people to rate ministry structures like preaching, worship singing, home fellowship groups, retreats, informal fellowship, adult classes, etc., with a number from 1 to 7, where “1” was “Little,” “4” was “Moderate” and “7” was “Significant.”

Do you remember what got the highest “spiritual growth” marks? (If you weren’t here then, can you guess?) The winner was . . . Home Fellowship Groups. They got an average 5.6 rating. (Preaching got a 5.2! ☺)

To my mind, this is a healthy trait of Cumberland Valley Church. And I believe God agrees. We are created to be relational - because he is a relational God. You don’t need to be relational to hear preaching or sing songs. Not that this makes these bad, it just means they are not complete. Spiritual maturity must include spiritual relationships.

Of course, just going to a small group doesn’t automatically mean it’s going to help you follow Jesus and grow into spiritual maturity. Some groups can become social clubs and merely talk about their families, their trips and their ailments. Some groups can become Bible studies that emphasize knowledge over application and practice. Some groups never

venture into spiritual honesty and growth, instead hiding behind safe prayers, safe topics and safe conversations.

Obviously, something is working in the groups at CVC because so many gave it a positive grade in helping them grow spiritually. It’s our mission to fulfill our biblical mandate concerning such texts as:

*Hebrews 3:12-13, “See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”*

*1 Thessalonians 5:13-15, “Live in peace with each other And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.”*

As the fall season approaches, I encourage you to begin thinking about getting involved in a Home Fellowship Group at CVC. Build friendships. Love others. Be challenged personally. Learn to need others for your spiritual health. Pray for one another.

If this kind of environment sounds scary to you, be assured that nobody will force you to do anything you don’t want to do! Also recognize that our Home Fellowship Groups are about “fellowship” that is spiritual, not primarily social. In other words, we share *Jesus* together, not primarily hobbies, age, marital status or interests.

It’s *Jesus* who binds us together - and that means we can never go into a spiritually focused group and expect to come away unchanged! Change is a standard expectation to those who follow Jesus. Change that is rooted in grace and love and understanding and our ultimate good.

Several new groups are forming this fall and current groups are always open to new people. Your soul will not regret it!

**Men's ROOM**  
**A collaborative effort of the Men's and Prayer ministries**  
**"Men ought always to pray"**  
**"A God of the Serendipitous"**

By Walt Cieslukowski



"Not all those who wander are lost." J.R.R. Tolkein

Did you know that the previous name for Sri Lanka was Serendip? Do not feel bad, neither did I, until I started thinking about this article. The word serendipity was voted one of the 10 most difficult English words to translate in June of 2004 by a British translation company. "Serendipity is the effect by which one accidentally discovers something fortunate, especially while looking for something else entirely." Some examples of serendipitous discoveries are, "Silly Putty," "Teflon," "Cellophane," "The Slinky," "Corn Flakes" and of course "Christopher Columbus looking for a new way to India in 1492 winds up landing in America."

These discoveries did not happen by random chance though, "most authors who have studied scientific serendipity both in historical as well as in epistemological point of view (the study of how we know things) agree that a prepared and open mind is required on the part of the scientist or inventor to detect the importance of the information revealed accidentally". William Shakespeare said it more famously as, "All things are ready if our minds be so." So, in order to discover something serendipitously you have to be ready for anything. This reminds me of Paul exhorting the Church at Philippi that all things can be accomplished through Christ who is our strength. How many times has it seemed that you have accidentally discovered God's purpose? How many times has God been present when you were not actively seeking him? God uses the serendipitous moments in our lives with such purpose that it is as if he invented the word.

Now back to the Tolkein quote. It comes from a poem he wrote for the novel "The Lord of the Rings". The poem talks about "Strider" before it is revealed that he is "Aragorn," the descendent of the ancient line of the Kings of Gondor. He is next in line to be the king of Gondor. He is vastly more important than he looks or even wants to be at this point in the novel, so it is not surprising he has an aversion to becoming king. Though Strider feared that his strength would fail just like his forefather's did, his destiny could not be denied. Here is the last part of the poem,

*"From the ashes a fire shall be woken,  
A light from the shadows shall spring;  
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,  
The crownless again shall be king."*

Aragorn's self discovery and growth throughout the novel is somewhat serendipitous because as he was helping Frodo destroy the ring and save middle earth, he found within himself the qualities and character that would make him king.

Although it is just a novel, think of our God as a God of the serendipitous. God carved out a plan and a purpose for Abraham without his knowing. All that was required of Abraham was to believe the promise that God made with him. Saul was anointed prince over the people of Israel while looking for donkeys that escaped from his father's house. Paul was searching for followers of the way to persecute when he had an encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus.

If you are seeking God, you cannot be lost. If you feel as though you are wandering, you may be on the verge of a serendipitous encounter with the living God. This is not a bad place to be, you just have to be ready, placing your faith in the God who gives you the strength to accomplish all things.



# Climbing the Ladder

~Dar Miller

I completed an art job in the first week of June that scared me before I even got started. I was asked to go and look at an historic Catholic church in E-town, give an estimate and decide if I was up to doing it. I have worked up on scaffolding a few times before, so that wasn't the whole problem. The problem was that the proposed job was to repaint and restore a *ceiling*. Michelangelo did it, but he's amazing.

My family knows that I was worried about this job. While I debated taking it, the opportunity was too good to pass up. My questions were, how do I hold my arm up for 8 hours a day and how do I support my neck? I knew that there would be pain; I was sure of it and I don't like pain.

The first day up the metal ladder, my heart pounded. Even though the scaffolding was large and secure, the ladder was attached to the outside perimeter with no safety cage around it. I was scared. One misstep and I'd be on the marble floor down below. My backpack bulged with painting supplies. Slowly I made my way up, until my head was even with the floor of the scaffolding. I realized at this point that I would have to let go with one arm, push open the top gate, and swing one of my legs from the ladder to the upper floor. I hesitated. I just wasn't sure about this. Why was the bolt on the top of the ladder loose? Would I be strong enough to support myself and the supplies when only one arm and one leg remained on the ladder? I decided that I had no choice.

I leaned forward, swung free, batted open the gate, and scrambled onto the scaffolding. Once there, I felt secure, supported, exhilarated in a way. I looked down over the rail and enjoyed the view. Here was an old church filled with glorious stained glass. I got to view it from a perch on high that showcased its' magnificence.

How like my faith journey is my climb up the ladder and my transfer to the solid floor. I have learned to trust God step by slow step. I have come to a crossroads many times and have made decisions to move forward and not look back. There have been moments of excruciating uncertainty while hanging over the precipice between doubt and faith. I have reached the firm support of God's love and grace, only to experience the pain of the daily grind of life.

With obedience and risking to trust, the journey got easier, even joyful at times! My climb up the ladder became a focused normal part of the day. The swing to the floor at the top became a burst of energy and confidence in a learned motion. The painful hours of work proved to me that I was getting the job done; I was fulfilling my contract.

My neck is still a little sore. My legs don't have their usual spring back yet, but my runs are getting a bit easier each day. The job is completed and there is satisfaction in knowing that the congregation at that church will have more beautiful images to lead them into worship. I am reminded of a line from a youth conference that I was a part of some thirty odd years ago. The focus was on Faith. It said, "Walk to the edge, and leap!"

Leap my friends! The certainty is that you will land in God's love and grace.



# Missions Corner

~Submitted By The Missions Committee

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## Update on the Goshorns serving in Thailand:

The Goshorns arrived safely in Pennsylvania on Monday afternoon, June 15, for 6 months of Home Ministry. We praise the Lord for His hand of protection over them as they traveled. Pray for them as they get settled in their home in Chambersburg and for a smooth transition to the American culture. Pray for all of the relationships they leave behind for this time, that God will continue to work in the hearts and minds of their Thai friends, drawing them to Himself.

## What's New with the Weigner's?

Life in Costa Rica continues to be good (though June is very rainy!) as school continues. Jason is taking more grammar classes as well a class that has him spend a significant amount of time out in the community talking to people and developing relationships rather than only practicing in the classroom. He has already made several friends and is really thriving with this new structure. Jenna is taking two upper level Spanish classes with one on Culture from a Christian anthropologist she really is enjoying and the other on Translation.

Besides their studies they have both been able to volunteer in the community. Jason spends one or two afternoons a week working at a local butterfly & botanical garden. Jenna is working through a local ministry teaching English once a week to children who want to learn.

In addition, few weeks ago Jason had the opportunity to spend the weekend at a camp with a bunch of men from the school. They had a great time tackling a ropes course, rock climbing and hiking, as well as having time for relaxation, reflection and getting to know the other guys. From this weekend here is a quote from him that is worth reflecting on:

*"One of the recurring themes during my time here is realizing just how diverse the missionary community is, not to mention the Christian community as a whole and the retreat was no exception. I've met very few people here who fit the usual missionary stereotypes. I mean, whoever heard of a missionary with tattoos and pink hair? In all the diversity I have been learning patience and trying not to resort to judgment of those with differing points of view. After all, none of us have it all figured out but we are all here to see God's love shared with those in need. The retreat was also a time of remembering just how broken we are as men and how we all are struggling with similar fears and temptations. It is reassuring to know that despite all our flaws and failures, God loves us anyway, is continually working on us and through us little by little."*

## Prayer Requests

- Concentration and motivation to learn Spanish
- Smooth process in applying for visas to Bolivia
- For Bolivia during this time of political instability
- Provision of remaining support needed

## CVC Church Retreat: Reflecting on Childhood Memories

~Jeff Miller

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Growing up as a pastor's kid, one of the things that was modeled to me from an early age was the importance of getting the church together. And when I say church, I mean everyone – women, men, children, grandparents, teens, young adults – everyone. Whether it was potlucks, picnics or gathering on Sunday mornings, I experienced the richness of gatherings that crossed generations. Gatherings where we could laugh, play, worship and get to know each other better. One of the strongest memories of these gatherings was our annual Church Retreat. It was at these weekends I felt the most proud to be part of a community of faith because true love, friendship and fun (yes fun!) was modeled all around me. Who knew the elder I saw pray from time to time was so good at Ultimate Frisbee? Who knew the woman who greeted me in church would be so hysterical at the talent show? Who knew getting together with people from church would be so much fun? Well, one thing was for sure, I knew after our Church Retreat.

And so, it is with these fond memories in mind that I look forward to *our* first CVC Church Retreat on August 27-28. We are going to have it locally at the King's Kids' Camp and I encourage all of you to attend in some way. You can either decide to camp out Friday night or drive back home and then come back again on Saturday. It will be a great time filled with games, food, laughter, camaraderie, and spiritual nourishment. Take the time now to make sure you put this on your calendar and make it a priority to come – no matter who you are. It's a great time to experience community in a different way as we are able to make new friends and build on the ones we already have. I'm really looking forward to making it a CVC tradition. Of course that means that you, the church, have to come! Take my word for it, it will be a weekend well spent.

Look for more details coming your way as that weekend will be here before you know it!

# Rest Awhile Longer ~Alan Knisely

Last month I wrote about Isaiah 30:15, "This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.'" I did not include the last phrase of the verse: "but you would have none of it." God offers us salvation when we repent and rest in Him. Are you, "having none of it" or benefiting from your salvation? God also offers us strength when we are quiet and trust in Him. Again, are you, "having none of it" or living in His strength?

A couple of verses later (18), the Lord continues with, "The LORD longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him!"

To me this is a very comforting and encouraging verse. God is not sitting around waiting for us to repent. God is not twiddling His fingers in anticipation of our turning around and coming back to Him. God desires so deeply to give us salvation and strength, He is constantly seeking us and ways to draw us to Him. We don't make the first move and then God responds. He is continually moving in our direction and we respond to Him.

This verse is also very amazing to me. God, the creator of the universe and you and me, the Lord and King of everything, does not just sit on His throne waiting for us to come into His presence. This GOD, gets up, out of his throne and comes to us! Before we make a move towards Him, He is already running in our direction. Jesus, in Matthew 28:20, says, "I am with you always." He doesn't add any conditions. He promises to simply be with us always. Period! Therefore, His salvation and strength is always there for our benefit. The question remains, are you, am I, "having none of it" or not?

It is very interesting to me that He adds the phrase, "For the LORD is a God of justice." It doesn't seem to fit based on our definition and understanding of justice. So, is our definition and understanding in error. I think so. We try to separate God's mercy from God's wrath. God's love from God's justice. Sometimes we try to bring them together in a way by saying, "they are two sides of the same coin." Based on this verse, I think they are even more similar than that. I don't believe God has to decide whether to deal with us with His love or mercy or wrath or justice or whatever. I believe His mercy, wrath, justice, etc. are all His ways of loving us based on what will draw us to Him. In this verse, His "justice" is compassionately giving us what we deserve. "Now wait a minute," I can hear you saying, "we don't deserve His salvation and His strength and His blessing." My response is that we absolutely do. Why? Remember what I wrote last month? We rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus Christ and our accepting what He has done for us and resting in what He has done for us, God's justice says we deserve His salvation, strength and blessing.

I feel the need to ask you again, are you "having none of it" or are you allowing yourself to be compassionately loved by your GOD? Am I?



# Stewardship Corner

TALENT ~ TIME ~ HEALTH ~ RELATIONSHIP ~ MONEY



~Carmy Hess

This month Lisa Pflugh shares with us how she has been managing her **health** via some changes to her sleep patterns.

Bedtime . . . It was no fun to hear it as a child, didn't really happen anytime before midnight when I was a teenager and now that I'm an adult, I put it off because there are so MANY things that need to get done in a day!

I teach people about wellness everyday and not once had I ever thought about the importance of sleep to a person's wellness.

I recently was lucky enough to hear Dr. James B. Maas speak on the subject of sleep. I was astounded! I learned that sleep is NOT a luxury, it's a necessity and I learned that I had a sleep debt. If you have any of the following, you also have a sleep debt.

- **Do you need an alarm clock to wake up on time?**
- **Is it a struggle to get out of bed in the morning?**
- **Do you feel tired, irritable or stressed out during the week?**
- **Do you have trouble concentrating or remembering?**
- **Do you often fall asleep watching TV or after heavy meals?**
- **Do you often feel drowsy while driving?**
- **Do you sleep extra hours on weekend mornings?**
- **Do you need a nap to get through the day?**

So, now that you're like the rest of us and realize that you have a sleep debt, what do you do? The "Golden Rules of Sleep" according to Dr. Maas are as follows:

- 1. Get an adequate amount of sleep every night. (Most people should be sleeping about 8 hours per night. At minimum, most people absolutely need to have 60-90 minutes more sleep than they are currently getting.)**
- 2. Establish a regular sleep schedule.**
- 3. Get continuous sleep.**
- 4. Make up for lost sleep as soon as possible.**

After hearing Dr. Maas speak, and becoming acutely aware that I need more sleep, I have made some changes in my life. I now go to bed at least an hour earlier each night. I no longer exercise early in the morning and I have eliminated all caffeine from my diet. I am looking forward to the day that I no longer need an alarm clock to awaken me and when I can wake up and not be thinking about when I'm going to be able to get a nap that day!

Changing these simple habits will not only make me feel better and remember better, it will improve my relationships with my family and ultimately allow me to reflect Christ's love better to those around me.

Won't you join me in making some simple changes that will change your life? And if you'd like to read more about sleep, I recommend "Power Sleep," by Dr. James B. Maas.

*I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. – Psalm 4:8*

# MY ATTORNEY

Submitted By Connie Tennis

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After living what I felt was a "decent" life, my time on earth came to the end. The first thing I remember is sitting on a bench in the waiting room of what I thought to be a court house. The doors opened and I was instructed to come in and have a seat by the defense table.

As I looked around I saw the "prosecutor." He was a villainous looking gent who snarled as he stared at me. He definitely was the most evil person I have ever seen.

I sat down and looked to my left and there sat My Attorney, a kind and gentle looking man whose appearance seemed so familiar to me. I felt I knew Him.

The corner door flew open and there appeared the Judge in full flowing robes. He commanded an awesome presence as He moved across the room. I couldn't take my eyes off of Him. As He took His seat behind the bench, He said, "Let us begin."

The prosecutor rose and said, "My name is Satan and I am here to show you why this man belongs in hell."

He proceeded to tell of lies that I told, things that I stole and in the past when I cheated others. Satan told of other horrible perversions that were once in my life and the more he spoke, the further down in my seat I sank. I was so embarrassed that I couldn't look at anyone, even my own Attorney, as the devil told of sins that even I had completely forgotten about.

As upset as I was at satan for telling all these things about me, I was equally upset at My Attorney who sat there silently not offering any form of defense at all. I know I had been guilty of those things, but I had done some good in my life – couldn't that at least equal out part of the harm I'd done?

Satan finished with a fury and said, "This man belongs in hell, he is guilty of all that I have charged and there is not a person who can prove otherwise."

When it was His turn, My Attorney first asked if He might approach the bench. The Judge allowed this over the strong objection of satan and beckoned Him to come forward.

As He got up and started walking, I was able to see Him in His full splendor and majesty. I

realized why He seemed so familiar; this was Jesus representing me, my Lord and my Savior.

He stopped at the bench and softly said to the Judge, "Hi, Dad" and then He turned to address the court. "Satan was correct in saying that this man had sinned, I won't deny any of these allegations. And, yes, the wage of sin is death, and this man deserves to be punished." Jesus took a deep breath and turned to His Father with outstretched arms and proclaimed, "However, I died on the cross so that this person might have eternal life and he has accepted Me as his Savior, so he is Mine." My Lord continued with, "His name is written in the book of life and no one can snatch him from Me. Satan still does not understand yet. This man is not to be given justice, but rather mercy."

As Jesus sat down, He quietly paused, looked at His Father and said, "There is nothing else that needs to be done. I've done it all."

The Judge lifted His mighty hand and slammed the gavel down.

The following words bellowed from His lips, "This man is free. The penalty for him has already been paid in full. Case dismissed."

As my Lord led me away, I could hear satan ranting and having, "I won't give up, I will win the next one."

I asked Jesus as He gave me my instructions where to go next, "Have you ever lost a case?"

Christ lovingly smiled and said, "Everyone that has come to Me and asked Me to represent them has received the same verdict as you, "PAID IN FULL."



