



Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

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Summer 2008

God So Loved the World

By Dixie Marino

I once had the experience of helping with Vacation Bible School. As we came together to worship before going to our separate classrooms, more than 170 children ages 4 to 11 raised their voices in worship and praise. I helped in the age 5 classroom and we had 14 children nearly every day. There were two other teachers and two teenage girls. We were all needed to help these active and enthusiastic children.

At first I had some trepidation. It had been a long while since I had interacted with children of this age group. But soon I realized these little ones only needed to be reassured and hugged, and helped and guided. It wasn't long before I knew their precious little faces and names.

Each day as the week went on, I sensed something opening up for me—something of width, length, depth and height that would bring spiritual enrichment. It grew day by day and finally expressed itself in one of the songs the children loved to sing. "God so loved that world that He gave His only Son. God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son!" I got the message. In only five short days I had come to love those 14 boys and girls and knew them by name. And *God so loved the world*, he knows each of us by name.

It's really not hard for us to love little children and want to help them, but do we see our Father having that same heart for us, more intensely than we will ever be able to understand? Do we really, really know he cares deeply and eternally for every one of us?

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A few of the children needed more attention than others and needed to be refocused more frequently. Some were louder than others and some were timid and withdrew. Even with these differences, on one subject they all seemed to have a good understanding, and that was Jesus. Jesus is my Savior; Jesus is my friend; Jesus lives inside me; Jesus lives in heaven; Jesus is God's Son; Jesus died, but is alive now. They each had their own wonderful answer about who Jesus is.

I volunteered for Vacation Bible School because they needed help, but I came away the one helped. What a blessing to see a more beautiful and clearer vision of God's love for us. And it came from the mouths of babes to the glory of God!



Dixie and Chuck celebrated their 49th anniversary in June. She volunteers for a few hours each week at the church office and enjoys shopping and having lunch with her girls. E-mail her at CMARINO001@ec.rr.com.

CONNECTIONS

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Connections

Mission Statement

Primary: The Connections for Clergy Support Department provides intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual support and encouragement in the personal lives of WCG ministry families.

Three primary means of serving are the *Connections* journal, the Connections for a Successful Ministry and Life web pages, and the Nurturennet forum. We highlight women in ministry but are inclusive of the needs of the entire family.

Secondary: To promote respect, understanding and support for women, their personal ministries and ministries that serve them.

• CALIFORNIA •
TAM 2 U

A Little Spice

I like spicy food and hot chilies. When I was in Trinidad for a conference, I surprised the women in the kitchen by taking some hot sauce for my lunch. I think they expected me to find it too hot, but after I tasted a little bit, I ladled on more. I like to feel the burn.

The peppers in the Trinidadian sauce were Scotch Bonnets, similar to habaneros, which I've enjoyed eating for a long time. Habaneros are the third hottest on the Periodic Table of Scoville Units. I've already tried the second hottest pepper, the red Savina, and I'm looking forward to eating a Bhut Jolokia from India. It's been confirmed by *Guinness World Records* as the hottest pepper in the world. Other names for it are Naga Jolokia or ghost pepper and Bih Jolokia or poison chili.

Just as hot peppers can really spice up a meal, so articles from international authors are spicing up this issue of *Connections*. We have articles from South America, Canada and Africa. Not that the articles from the United States are bland! It's just nice to have some international flavor.

So far this year, I've been privileged to attend women's conferences in Zimbabwe (see the article on page 13), Malaysia and Australia. I consider it a tremendous blessing to visit sisters in Christ in different parts of the world and my life is richer for it.

Our denomination is a worldwide organization and it is fitting and even necessary for this publication to reflect this reality. Yes, this is another call for articles. But it's also a

call to your hearts.

Many of you don't get the opportunity to travel internationally, and with rising fuel costs, it may become more difficult in the future. We may not be able to have as many conferences as in the past. It's more important than ever to communicate. If so many people can take the time to blog, surely we can make time to share our lives with each other.

Our hearts are tied in the unity of the Holy Spirit, but we are still human and communication is an important part of keeping ties strong. Won't you take a little time soon to write for *Connections*? It can be about anything, but I think we all appreciate learning about each other's lives and how we cope with trials. As it says in Hebrews 12:1, we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, both from the past and the present. We are each other's witnesses as we journey through life and we need encouragement along the way.

If you do an Internet search for the Periodic Table of Scoville Units, you'll see 53 peppers are on the chart, ranging from 0 heat units to more than a million. Each one has its own flavor to contribute to a meal.

Each of you has something unique to contribute but we can't taste it unless you share. We'll be waiting, forks in hand.



Tammy

Good company in a journey
makes the way seem shorter.

—Izaak Walton



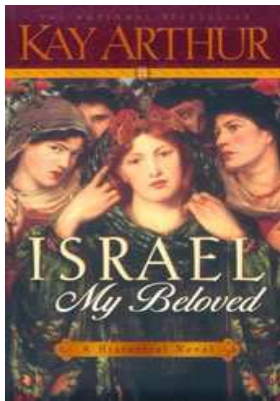
Book Review

Israel, My Beloved

Author: Kay Arthur

Reviewed by Karen Quinn, Katy, Texas

Israel, My Beloved is the story of the nation of Israel, specifically the Jews. The main character, Sarah, is the personification of Israel. She is the child who is discovered in an abandoned field and becomes the adored wife of God. Then she rebels and abandons her husband and turns to harlotry. Her life is one of struggle and persecution down through the centuries, until she is finally reunited with her Husband.



This book was written by Kay Arthur, founder of Precept Ministries

International, author of more than 100 books and Bible studies. She is teacher and host of *Precepts for Life*, a radio and television program that reaches a worldwide viewing audience of more than 94 million people. She teaches them to discover truth for themselves

Looking for a good women's Bible study? Have you participated in one you'd like to share? Send your reviews and recommendations and we'll include them in a Bible Study exchange column.

through inductive Bible study.

The book is a combination of biblical accounts and true events as recorded by historians. Some of the characters are noted people of recorded history; some are fictional. The book carefully traces the history of the Jews beginning in 586 B.C. as Sarah is taken captive to Babylon, where she meets and speaks with the prophet Daniel. He gives her a copy of his prophetic scroll that she carries with her through the ages as the kingdoms come and go.

Following the decree of Cyrus, Sarah returns with her people to rebuild Jerusalem. She is in Bethlehem when Roman soldiers break down the door and slay the infant son of a dear friend. She is among the captives in A.D. 70 as they are removed from Jerusalem and dispersed among nations. Sarah experiences the persecution during the Crusades and flees with her people in Kiev from the Cossacks.

She lives among her people in Germany and is taken captive to Auschwitz. She returns to Jerusalem as a freedom fighter in the new Jewish state of Israel. She witnesses the rise of the false prophet and lives through the events of the end times, witnessing the return of Messiah to earth. Finally, she is reunited with her Husband, who calls her Israel, My Beloved.

I highly recommend this creatively written Christian bestseller. I learned a great deal about the history of the Jews and the persecution they have endured through the ages. It is history told in a way that involves readers in the story and does not allow us to remain distant or uninvolved.



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Little Red Hen and the Berry Patch

By Hannah Knaack

“More strawberry shortcake, anyone?” my mother-in-law asked, receiving only oversized groans in reply. Everyone was full—except me. I appreciated my mother-in-law’s efforts with dessert, but I prefer it homemade. To me, there’s no substitute for real strawberry shortcake. I’m talking freshly picked, bursting ripe berries, tender, buttery



homemade shortcake, and always real whipped cream. So her kind gesture of half-ripened, out-of-state berries, shortcake short on taste and warm Cool Whip left me a little unsatisfied.

After a big round of hugs the next morning, we set off for home. A plan began to brew in my mind and after sharing it with hubby, I was eager to set it in motion. Flipping through the books I’d packed to entertain our youngest, then 3, I found what I wanted. Garnering the children’s attention, I began reading from *The Little Red Hen*. Our daughter had always loved this story, so she and her younger brother listened attentively. Wise to the story line, our 8-year-old kept repeating, “Mom’s gonna make us do work when we get home,” until I hushed him.

What I had planned certainly wouldn’t seem like work but more like loads of fun and good family time. Instead of me picking all the berries this year for jam, freezer and shortcake, why not get everyone involved? After all, the more the merrier and many hands make light work. I gathered our buckets and set out my recipe for shortcake. A

pint of heavy cream was all I had to pick up. I was eager for tomorrow to come and decided to challenge my hubby to see which of us could pick more berries.

The next morning, after the woman in charge of the berry patch assigned each of us a row, I reminded the kids to peek under the leaves so they wouldn’t miss ripe berries and be careful not to step on any. It was a gorgeous warm, berry-picking kind of morning and apparently others thought so as well, as the field was full.

My first hint that maybe the little red hen had bitten off more than she could chew was when my youngest, after pestering his sister, knocked over my full basket. Then when he had picked just two rather pathetic berries, he announced he had to go to the potty. Washing his hands under the outdoor water spigot, we hustled back to our buckets. I knew my husband was way ahead of me in berries, so he was getting the next potty run.

I dove into berry picking, only to have to stop a minute later and corral our oldest who was holding social hour two rows over. When he turned toward me, blotches of red covered his face and shirt. “Pick,” I scolded, “you can chat later.”

Half a dozen more berries later, my daughter approached. “Is this one good, Mommy,” she asked for the umpteenth time. “Sweetie,” I said, a little put out, “remember that once you pick it, you can’t return it, so just pull the ones that look the ripest, OK?” She looked at me a bit longer and I knew my harsh tone had registered. Well, maybe now she would go ask her father—anything to slow the beast down. From where I was kneeling I could see his hands flying furiously. Watching for a second, I saw that every third berry went into his mouth. So, there was hope.

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Little Red Hen

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Distracted and feeling bad about hurting my daughter's feelings, I caught only snippets of my older son's newest conversation. What he was saying finally registered. Horrified, I heard him relate in detail—way too much detail—to all within earshot how his brother had been sick two days earlier and had “tossed his cookies.” I called his name in that tone known only to mothers and his chatter decreased to a loud whisper. He had to get in those few last details of the story.

Kneeling again, I winced in pain. Checking beneath me, I saw what remained of the huge dried prickler weed I had knelt on and began to pull pieces from my knee. Berry picking was looking slightly less fun at this point. Glancing over at my daughter, I saw her bent forward in utter concentration. But where was her little brother?

“Honey,” I called to her, “where's your brother?” She glanced up, looked off briefly toward the nearby trees and back at me, guilt written across her features. “Well,” she said, “he had to go potty again, but he didn't like that stinky potty. He said Uncle Tom told him boys don't need potties. So,” she points to her left, “he went to find a tree.”

Oh, I huffed, he is in such trouble and his father gets this one. Giving my daughter a message to deliver to her dad, I slumped down again into the berry path. A trickle or two of sweat rolled down my back. Why was it so hot at 10 a.m.? This was definitely not on last night's weather forecast.

I leaned over a row and peeked into my daughter's basket. What on earth? It was empty. On the ground nearby was the beginnings of a berry tea party, with berries perched carefully on large leaves and some mysterious something-or-other piled in the center. No berries in the basket meant I

couldn't very well snatch any of hers in hopes of catching up to my husband.

I began to pick again and within minutes my eldest appeared at my elbow, rubbing his stomach. In his hand was a one quart container, almost full. Encouraged, I asked how many of those he had filled. He looked side to side, anywhere but at me. “Well,” he said meekly, “I kinda ate some—so, well, this is all I have.” Great—one quart and one huge tummy ache. I was having a hard time drumming up sympathy this morning. I sent him to mind his brother and got back to picking because after all, someone had to do the work around here.

I dropped the last berry into my first flat and glanced over at my husband, curious as to how he was coming along. Where was he? There—over by the water spigot, one head-to-toe dripping wet boy in each hand. The look on his face was somewhere between a grimace and fierce scowl. I knew our adventure to the berry patch had come to an abrupt end. Calling my daughter away from her tea party produced another sulky expression. It was an unhappy bunch that climbed into the van, smearing red stains everywhere.

One hand on the wheel and the other wiping berry juice from his chin, my husband looked over at me, apparently testing the waters before his spoke. “Well, dear,” he began, “what does the little red hen have to say for herself?” I thought a bit. Then a bit more—he'd picked more berries than me so I felt the wait was justified. “The little red hen thinks you should,” I paused to swallow the bitter taste in my mouth, “stop at the store and pick up some Cool Whip.”

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About nine years ago *Conexiones* came into being to serve the women in leadership in Latin America as a way to communicate and encourage one another. *Connections* was its inspiration. Over the years it has also borne evangelistic fruit. In this and future issues, we will include articles written by our Latin American sisters for *Conexiones*.

Three Lives Touched

By Luz Mary Jiménez

When I received my first issue of *Conexiones* I did not dream it would accomplish so much in the lives of three women. The first was me. When I read it, the testimonies and advice ministered to my life.

A few days afterward, I received a call from a friend having serious marriage problems. He told me with much anguish and despair that he urgently needed someone to counsel them. He asked me to visit and speak to him and to his wife who had decided to leave him. I took my Bible and the issue of *Conexiones* that had an article titled, "A Wise Woman Builds Her House."

While on the bus I began reading the magazine again. Unbeknownst to me, a woman seated next to me began reading over my shoulder. She asked me how she could receive this magazine. She said she had been reading some interesting and lovely things in it. I asked for her address and prom-

ised to send her a copy and also spoke to her about Jesus.

When I arrived at my friends' home we prayed, talked and read the Scriptures, and I saw how Jesus was glorified in that home. There were hugs and kisses, prayer and above all forgiveness. I gave my friend's wife the issue of *Conexiones* and encouraged her to read it carefully and to use what could help her in her home life.

Six months later I received a call. What a surprise! My friend's wife asked for my church's address because she wanted to attend our services. As for the woman who sat next to me on the bus and with whom I spoke about the Word of God, I am sure as Isaiah 55:11 says, God's Word does not return to him empty.



Luz Mary is from Bogotá, Colombia. She says: "I have been a member of the Worldwide Church of God in Colombia for seven years. I serve in the outreach ministry. I am married and have two daughters, also members of the WCG. For 10 years I have been working as an events coordinator for a firm. I love making hand crafts." E-mail her at carmen.fleming@wgc.org.

Little Red Hen

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Hannah will be picking strawberries this summer (by herself!) and is planning a huge

Strawberry Trifle for her son's graduation party. "I wish his grandmother could be here to join us, but we no longer have her with us. Mother to seven children, she was far wiser than I gave her credit for and taught me it's what you learn after you think you know it all that really counts." E-mail her at justmomhlc@juno.com.

I Have Kidney Failure

By Shelba Stanley

I have kidney failure, but unless you are close to someone who has kidney failure you don't know much about it. This includes some doctors who are normally involved with kidney diseases.

When I was being tested for my symptoms by several doctors over a span of a year, not one questioned my kidney functions. I'd been run through many tests for all kinds of heart, lung, liver and blood conditions. I'm thankful my general practitioner didn't give up. He sent me to the kidney clinic.

When the tests came back and the doctor told me I had kidney failure I did not believe him. The way he told me felt like a slap in the face. He said, "We are not ready to start you on dialysis just yet." It took a long time to prove to me I really had kidney failure. That was more than three years ago.

I fought every way I could to avoid dialysis but in December 2007 I met my Waterloo. I was sick the whole month and could not stay off the sofa. Until then, I'd avoided all the sicknesses I knew others had experienced and denied I was sick. I blamed the way I felt on everything but my kidneys. My legs and ankles were swollen and itchy, and I was tired all the time, but that was only because I'm getting older. When my mind failed me it was a senior moment. I was having a lot of senior moments. It couldn't be anything else. Not me. I'd always lived a charmed life. I could not be in kidney failure. That's not a temporary condition; it's terminal and for the rest of my life.

Treatments are not simple or easy on the

patient. They are time consuming and infections are common. *Hemodialysis* is the type of dialysis that cleans the blood by taking it outside the body. It's usually done every other day. *Peritoneal Dialysis* (PD) can be done inside the body. Here is how it works: a thin membrane called the peritoneal membrane lines the abdomen. This membrane also covers the organs that fit within the abdominal cavity. PD uses this membrane to filter blood during dialysis.

I have a catheter in my abdomen and dialysis solution goes through it into the peritoneal cavity where it stays, doing its job of pulling all the stuff my kidneys can't clean out of my blood or body. I carry about five extra pounds in my abdomen all the time. So goodbye to a small waist line.

This is the method I prefer. I have some control over my life. I started out doing it four times a day for an hour each time. The good thing was I read that hour away. I read Baxter Kruger's *The Great Dance* and now want to read everything I can get my hands on that tells me more about the wonders of the Triune God. My life will never be the same, thank God!

In March, I trained and began using the machine. I hook up to the night cyclor each night as I go to bed. It does its thing for 10 hours and I unhook in the morning and am free till the next night. The machine works, but I have not been able to sleep. Worse, I can't seem to concentrate on reading or anything else, it is so noisy. Even ear plugs don't block it out. I keep telling myself, this too will pass. But now I can travel and have done so two times since on the night cyclor.

The second night after training, we got a call from UAB Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, with news of a kidney for me. We got there about 2 a.m. I was tested for the next

I Have Kidney Failure

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ten hours, only to be told that because of a problem with medicine I took years ago, and which I would have to take after a transplant, I would have to wait. When they decide on the safest medication, I can try again.

As always, our great loving God knew what was going to happen. My Mom died only a few days later. Had I gotten that kidney, I wouldn't have been able to go to her funeral in Louisiana and I would have truly mourned that. If I had not been on the night cyclor I couldn't have traveled as easily.

Another blessing is the ability to attend the WCG conference in Lexington, Kentucky, this summer. This would not have been possible in the past. We couldn't go that far because I'm on two transplant lists and have to remain near each hospital. I marvel at how God worked all this out. He must have something special waiting for us in Kentucky.

So far this life has been quite a ride, with lots of twists and turns. Looking back I can

see how our Creator God has been in the driver's seat the whole way. I'm 71 years old and know he has been directing me through my whole life. Now I understand I've been his since before I was born. What is great is we are all his whether we know it or not. He loves us always. He is in charge of our every moment and gives us what we need and what is good for us. Praise the Triune God! What a great plan he has for all his children.



Shelba Stanley serves the Faith Community Church, Spring Valley, in Tuscumbia, Alabama. She says: "As much as I hated the idea of giving into dialysis I have to admit it is helping me spend much needed time with my God. Blessings come in all kinds of strange packages!" E-mail her at sestan@comcast.net.

Confidential Peer Listener Line

Shall we talk? We're here for you!

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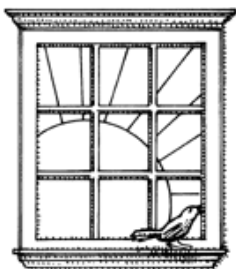


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A Door Closes, a Window Opens

By Tina Willis

More than 20 years ago now I remember thinking how secure my life was. My own little world seemed complete with a growing family and involvement in the young church in Kenya. But looking back, I can see God's hand in closing that door. When a door is slammed in your face, the normal reaction is to feel insulted or stunned and to ask the question, Why?



A door was being closed for me with our move from Africa to Canada. I was going home, but it wasn't the same with both my parents gone. Not long after came the Church's doctrinal changes and suddenly, our ministerial job was no longer secure.

An epiphany occurred during a women's retreat. We were focused on the theme of crossing a threshold. The room had one closed door but all around the room windows

I had found a kind of serenity, a new maturity...I didn't feel better or stronger than anyone else but it seemed no longer important whether everyone loved me or not—more important now was for me to love them.

Feeling that way turns your whole life around; living becomes the act of giving.

—Beverly Sills

looked outward on the rugged, coastal scenery. It hit me that although one door was being closed, God would provide a window. I had to rely and wait on God to open a window, not go crashing through on my own impulse.

I had been caring for my family and for others in the church. Now with my children leaving the nest and without the same demanding church involvement, I had a chance to set up a personal ministry to serve and care. Soon I was carrying my lunch box, rather nervously and apprehensively, to the community college to start my nursing course. Would my brain take up the challenge? Would I be the oldest in the class? Would my family survive without me?

Walking up those steps to the classroom was a real challenge. I sat down next to a 19-year-old and started talking. About half the class consisted of mature students and some were even older than me. The class clown, at 56, joked that it would be hard to tell the difference between him and the seniors in the nursing home. A kindred spirit was obvious as many were united in their desire to help others. Brains had to work overtime as jam-packed courses and homework on anatomy, physiology, wellness and disease absorbed all my free time.

Soon I found myself working for the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON), a community health organization here in Halifax. Doing a 10-day practicum with VON felt like home and reminded me so much of church visiting. Now I have completed six years of nursing in the community with experience in a wide range of health issues. Usually my work day consists of eight to ten visits in the home setting. This can range from the lowliest room to marbled mansions. It is touching to be in-

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A Window Opens

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volved personally with so many people. I see the devotion of mates who look after their spouses with Alzheimer's. I saw a woman with declining health, who lost her husband and then her son, keep going on faith alone. Another man who had his leg amputated burst into tears while I bathed his remaining foot. He was so moved as it reminded him of the time when Jesus washed the disciples' feet.

With each visit I try to let God's light of caring shine through with a smile, a kind word, a laugh and time for listening. We are all on a journey and we can help each other along the way.

Looking back it is easier to see God's hand holding and helping as he provides a way. With Jesus, what looked like a great disaster turned out to be a great victory. The door was blown off its hinges and every window burst open so we could have access to our loving Father. We will all face challenges. Doors will be shut. But God faithfully provides windows. Getting out of our comfortable ruts, our horizons are expanded as we hold onto his hand, trusting and knowing he will help us through.



Tina says: "We just had a visit from our daughter, Tasha, husband Travis and our grandson Jack. Jack made it into the world October 25. It's great fun being a grandmother. He's such a lovely, adorable baby but I may be prejudiced!" E-mail her at christina_a_willis@yahoo.ca.

Zorro and Me

Grandma and Grandpa Zorro's Little Miracle

By Barbara Dahlgren

Last October Zorro and I became grandparents. I was privileged to witness the birth of our new granddaughter, Sophia. It's the first time I've ever seen a baby actually being born and I can tell you, it's not a pretty sight.

When the head crowns, it's not all round and smooth like you see in the movies. It's bumpy and a little distorted, and looks more alien than human. This is understandable as the baby is straining to push out of a tiny opening that logically it shouldn't be able to get through. (As my mother used to say, "It's like pulling a doorknob through a keyhole.")

My daughter opted not to take drugs so she could experience the euphoria and beauty of childbirth. As baby Sophia made her grand appearance, Shelly let out a scream to rival those you hear in horror movies. A mother in a nearby room told a nurse, "Oh, I hear the baby cry." The nurse replied, "No, dear. That's the mother."

Baby Sophia looked a little bluish purple and was none too happy as they put her on Shelly's tummy. Daddy Dale was there to cut the cord and presto change-o, before my very eyes, she turned all pink and plump—8 pounds, 9 ounces, plump to be exact. By the time she was weighed, swaddled and placed at her mommy's breast, she had transformed from your average alien-looking baby into an angelic, newborn babe. This was quite a metamorphosis.

I must admit I've always been fascinated

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Little Miracle

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by the whole pregnancy-childbirth process. Thoughts of our firstborn's birth resurfaced. In those days you couldn't know the gender ahead of time. When Shelly came forth my husband was in a better position than I to assess everything so I excitedly asked him, "What is it?" In his awe of the miracle of birth he just kept saying, "It's a baby! It's a baby!" I thought, "Thank God. I would have hated to go to all this trouble for a monkey."

Having gone through childbirth three times myself, I can think of no other experience that has reinforced the existence of God to me as much as feeling life inside my body and bringing a baby into the world. I marvel how anyone can think such a miracle is the product of evolution.

There are many arguments in today's society for not having children. Movies make babies look all cute and cuddly, but the first few months can be grueling. Endless diaper changes, feedings and sleepless nights take a lot of emotional and physical energy, which can intensify if a baby has health problems or the colic. Children change marriage dynamics. Priorities rearrange as spouses defer to the inconvenience of a helpless infant. Free time becomes a thing of the past.

C.S. Lewis said we are just adjectives striving to point others to the Noun. "And for people to believe that Noun," he added, "we must improve our adjectives."



As children grow, parents realize what a huge commitment and responsibility they are. Children do not make for an orderly lifestyle. They're messy. They make mistakes. Parents make mistakes. It costs a lot of money to raise a child. It also takes a lot of hard work, energy and time. Parents try various methods to communicate, educate, teach and impart spiritual and moral values. They worry about them and hurt for them. Parents struggle watching children make choices they wouldn't make—not always wrong choices, but different because they are not little robot versions of us. Parents wrestle with how tightly to hold on, how soon to let go.

These are valid arguments for not bringing a child into an overpopulated, evil world. In biblical times children were considered a blessing. Today they are considered an inconvenience—because they are. So

I can understand why people choose not to have or to adopt children.

Yet, for me, I think God used my children to teach me some of the most valuable lessons of life. If I have any of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit it's probably due to Shelly, Sherisa and Matthew. My little alien babies turned pretty and pink. In spite of the sleepless nights, I thought every sigh, smile, laugh and move they made was adorable.

They opened my eyes to the creation around me by forcing me to look at sunsets, butterflies, trees, bugs and flowers. I learned to cope with worry, doubt, frustration and the realization that my way wasn't always the best for them. I shared their joy and shared their pain. I found out there was something more important in the universe than me. I

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Little Miracle

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learned to “let go and let God!”

The miracle of children amazes me, even more so when I think of God referring to us as his children. Do I really comprehend what a bountiful blessing it is to be called a child of God? It means God is willing to care for me in spite of how messy and inconvenient I am. He loves me with a deeper love than I could ever imagine bestowing on my own children. That’s a lot of love!

Little baby Sophia is a lucky little girl. She’s going to get a lot of lovin’ from Grandma and Grandpa Zorro. And why not? After all, she is a miracle.



Barbara and Zorro are enjoying their new granddaughter Sophia. A couple of her favorite grandchild quotes: “Grandchildren are God’s way of compensating us for growing older,” or if you want to be truly honest, “Grandchildren are God’s reward for not killing your children.” You can e-mail Barbara at bydahlgren@pacbell.net. She loves hearing from you.

Real spiritual growth only happens when our effort to act upon God’s word meets the provision of the Holy Spirit in us.

—John Fischer,
“Catch of the Day”
May 5, 2008

A Special 10th Anniversary

By Chrissy Mankhomwa

We set off in the early hours April 2 from Blantyre, Malawi, to join our sisters from Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa for the annual Women’s Retreat at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. This year’s retreat was a special one in a number of ways. Firstly, it was the 10th anniversary for the sub-region. The three countries Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi have been host to the retreat alternately during this period. Secondly, the choice of Victoria Falls as the site for the 10th anniversary was indeed fitting. We considered it a rare opportunity to see one of the wonders of the natural world, the Victoria Falls on the Zambezi River.

Above it all, I considered it a privilege to meet again Tammy Tkach, wife of the president of the Worldwide Church of God, Joseph Tkach. I met her in Zimbabwe at the first retreat a decade ago. Accompanying Mrs. Tkach were Wendy Moore, wife of the regional director for Canada, whom I also met at a conference in South Africa, and Dorothy Nordstrom and Elaine Duchesne, also from Canada. The presence of these leaders of the church promised to be encouraging to us and to give our conference an added international flavor.

The delegation from Malawi passed through Zambia where we joined our Zambian sisters on the trip to Victoria Falls National Park. Our journey was long and tiresome. We had a breakdown both on our way to the site and on the return trip. It was fortu-

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nate we were accompanied by an auto mechanic who was able to fix the problem each time.

Kalengule Kaoma, mission developer for Africa, opened the retreat. Mr. Kaoma raised a searching question: "Where do we find our identity?" He explained that a Christian's identity is found neither in possessions nor in external features but deep in our hearts. There we must allow Christ our Lord to dwell and shape our lives.

We were also inspired by Tammy's messages. I fondly remember her introduction: "Who is this woman talking to you?" She then reminded us about God's precious promises to us and his grace. Wendy encouraged us to cherish the hope we have in Christ, which should continually engender joy in our life as we meet daily challenges. We also benefited from the uplifting and educational messages on Christian living from Dorothy and Elaine, and from the many discussions and the fellowship we had. It was truly a wonderful retreat.

Uncertainty hung over our program because of the build-up of tension in Zimbabwe before the general elections the weekend preceding our arrival. But an atmosphere of peace and quiet prevailed throughout our stay. Thanks to the many prayers of all. Indeed, these are still much needed for our brothers and sisters we left behind.

Photos of the retreat may be seen at the Worldwide Church of God women's ministry website. Clicking on the link under "Retreats and Conferences."

www.wcg.org/womensministry

Sunday afternoon we visited Victoria Falls. What a fascinating site! I said, "How great Thou art, Lord!" The sight of it is a powerful message of God's awesomeness. We concluded our retreat with a lavish dinner at Rainbow Hotel. It was sad to be parting, but the time we spent together was worthwhile. Monday morning we left Victoria Falls National Park after a truly profitable and memorable retreat that will be reminisced for years to come. I thank God and our Lord Jesus Christ for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity where the divine guiding hand was vividly evident.



"I am Chrissy Mankhomwa. I was born December 31, 1961. I come from a broken family and have never known my father who I was told was Joseph Banda.

"I was raised by my mother during my early years but because of financial hardships, I depended much on relatives for my education. My mother was murdered when I was about 14, so my opportunity for good education was hampered. I had two years of secondary education and went no further. My mother was a Roman Catholic so I was raised in that church.

"I met my husband William in my early 20s. We have two children, Isaiah, 25, and Mara, 22. My husband had just begun attending the WCG when we married. We live in a town called Zomba, the first capital of Malawi, about one and half hours drive away from Blantyre where Malawi had its

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first WCG congregation. It is just about 60km away, but the road connecting the two towns is in bad shape.

“My husband works in the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) as an educator and researcher. For all the years we have lived in Zomba, we have attended the Blantyre church. We used to attend monthly during the mid-1980s, then weekly when we received a resident minister, Kenneth Buck (1986-1992) and then R.W. Whitaker (1992-1996). Traveling is becoming too expensive now, so we have reduced our attendance in the Blantyre church.

“I was baptized by Mr. Whitaker on the Last Great Day, September 30, 1992. I became a minister’s wife September 21, 1996, when my husband was ordained by James Henderson, then regional director for Africa. Life in the church has been a mixture of challenges and exciting times. My husband was ordained during the period of changes in the Worldwide Church of God and now pastors the Blantyre church.” You may e-mail her at wjmankhomwa@yahoo.com.



Elinah Mandimika



Victoria Falls

Nurturenet

Nurturenet is a computer forum for women in ministry.

Its purpose is to help you stay connected through digest-mode communication (each day’s messages compiled into one e-mail). You may use it for requests for information, prayer requests, to share ideas and resources,

to receive updates on *Connections* news or just to stay connected!

To join or change your e-mail address, please send Tammy a message at tammy.tkach@wcg.org.



Country Girl Goes City or, Did I Really Say, “Whatever Lord”?

By Hinka Gilbert

As far back as I can recall, my family has been happiest living in the country. I was born and raised in the small farming communities of southwestern Ontario, Canada. I feel truly at home among trees and gardens, cows and horses, chickens and geese, wide open fields and fresh country air.

Our first pastorate brought us to Waterloo and Mason City, Iowa. I thought we’d been given our dream place—country that suited us to a *T*. Imagine, living on a 100-acre farm—a true picture of rural life. I recall fruit trees, berries of many kinds, a long clothesline for drying clothes, a quarter mile driveway and fields for our sons to run in. Locals waved to each other as they passed on the roads, and it wasn’t uncommon to stop and chat. We had picnics in the summer for no special reason.

So how is it this country girl ended up in the big city of Philadelphia? I recall the day my husband Dave said we had two choices: New York City or Philadelphia. Lord, what kind of choice is this? May this cup please pass me by? Dave, a Pennsylvania native, and not at all unfamiliar with a big city, thought Philly might be the best choice as it was closer to his folks in Pittsburgh. There was absolutely no country in either place, and my heart and soul weren’t ready to settle for either choice.

As much as the country was to my liking, the phrase, “Whatever Lord” has become my

life’s motto. I can’t say I came willingly or wasn’t fearful, but I’ve come to grow where God wants me (Ephesians 1:11). *Philadelphia* means brotherly love and who wouldn’t want to be connected with such a sentiment? After all, one of the churches spoken of favorably in Revelation is Philadelphia.

I vividly remember explaining to our young sons that moving to a new place would be an adventure, with many fun, new things to see and do. There would also be things they might not like and unknown scary things like the adventures in their favorite stories. Of course, it would all turn out OK in the end. What’s a mom to do but be realistic and positive?

I should have listened to my own advice. They couldn’t possibly know how shaken I was inside. But God did and he surely knew I would be miserable in that environment. I’m being completely vulnerable and honest here, but now, years down the road, I see it quite differently.

God did have me in mind as he does all of us all the time (Jeremiah 29:11). Before we made our premove trip, my husband had a dream about living in the country in a house that looked like “a cabin tucked away among a lot of trees.” I filed away that moment of wishful sharing and thought how nice—maybe when we retire.

During my devotions over the next few days, God turned my thoughts toward being flexible, trusting him and not being so set in my way of thinking. I thought about letting go and letting him lead (Psalm 37:3-4). I tried to give my husband a break from listening to his wife cry and carry on, praying this nightmare would just go away.

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Country Girl

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After studying maps and considering our sons, we decided once we got to Philly we'd take the first country exit before the city and see if we couldn't find a suitable home and school area. We came to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, which is not only rural, but absolutely more beautiful than we could have imagined.

We spent about three days looking for a home and on the third day we drove up to a cedar-sided A-frame house, tucked among a lot of trees. It even looked a bit like a cabin. As we signed papers to rent our new home, my husband's dream came to mind, and my heart rejoiced at God's provision for this country girl. He provided a sense of peace too.

So, this country girl packed her bags with a song in her heart. We began our move to the big city. Jesus provided in our time of need. I wasn't meant to be miserable after all. God had a plan to begin merging country adventures with city adventures right away.



Hinka and her husband David continue to serve the Philadelphia and Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, congregations. She is in her 10th year working full-time as the assistant manager-head cashier of Fisher's Ace Hardware. After work this time of year, you'll find her tending her many perennial flowers, including about 25 varieties of hostas. She also leads Heart-to-Heart women's ministry and is preparing for Vacation Bible School this summer. Hinka has been teaching her younger son Nathan (age 16) to drive. He hopes to have his license soon. E-mail her at David.Gilbert@wcg.org.



The Milk of Human Kindness

By Steve Schantz

A book could be written about the outrageous prices charged for incidentals at airports. Location: Burbank, California, Bob Hope International. Item: a cup of Tully's Coffee purchased at a stand near the terminal's departure-arrival gates. (Tully's is another steaming cup of exported adrenalin rush headquartered in the northwest.) Scene: A customer pays nearly \$5 for her large cup of coffee, turns away from the counter momentarily, then steps back and asks for soy milk creamer to go with the dark brew warming her hands. She doesn't ask for half a cup of it or for it to be steamed and brewed into her Java.

She doesn't ask to have mocha, vanilla, butterscotch or any other ingredient added. She just asks for enough creamer to lighten her serving.

"Soy creamer is 65 cents per serving" the cashier blurts out. "You're kidding," she replies in disbelief. "I'll never stop here again!" she proclaims to everyone and to no one as she walks away toward her seating by the gates.

As I paid for my own tall coffee mocha I thought, How much should the soy milk of human kindness cost? Really? How far can and should this request intrude into our profit and loss statement in the marketplace of life? Maybe soy prices surged and Tully's just made a price adjustment. I realize we live in a competitive world market with continual

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Milk of Human Kindness

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price adjustments. But if soy milk is going for 65 cents an ounce at a coffee stand, how will families with tiny tots afford this needed supplement at volume price points? Would she have lost her job offering this ounce of soy without charge? I'm not suggesting we steal from our employers to care for the customers. That won't work either. We need something better, but what?



I have Tully's website. It's on the cardboard jacket of my cup, but I'm not soliciting a boycott. They would probably have been embarrassed by their

cashier's answer as well. What I'm suggesting takes us back before Tully's was a franchise, somewhere back in the day when it was somebody's dream. Back when it was Mom's and Pop's family business to be handed down to the next generation. So many large companies were birthed through the personal labor pains of caring owners who contributed their own blood, sweat and tears. They lived by the principle of giving customers a little more than they paid for rather than quite a bit less.

This is where generosity's rubber meets the road, where hospitality goes deeper than a smile at the counter. The value and principle in life I'm isolating here goes beyond impressing the customer and far beyond just doing good business.

It finds its deepest and most profound expression in giving to someone because we know and trust the Giver of all good things. It comes from trusting the one who provides for us to help us provide for the needs of others.

It is lived out when we open our eyes and respond to the question Cain posed out of his personal darkness, "Am I my brother's keeper?" with a resounding, "Yes! For Heaven's sake, Yes!" It happens every time we decide to sacrifice personally on someone else's behalf. (Or in this case, someone else's half and half.)



Steve Schantz is senior pastor of New Beginnings Christian Fellowship in Orlando and Melbourne, Florida. He and his wife Carol have served congregations in east Kentucky, West Virginia and Florida. E-mail him at sschantz@cfl.rr.com.

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you (Luke 6:38, NIV).

Enjoyment is not a goal, it is a feeling that accompanies important ongoing activity.

—Paul Goodman

Being a Light...*has a lighter side!*

The shipwrecked sailor had spent several years on a deserted island. Then one morning he was thrilled to see a ship offshore and a smaller vessel pulling out toward him.

When the boat grounded on the beach, the officer in charge handed the marooned sailor a bundle of newspapers and told him, “With the captain’s compliments. He said to read through these and let us know if you still want to be rescued.”

Taking the bull by the horns is often a sound course of action as long as you and the bull agree on when to let go.

Unfortunately, getting a new passport required a new photo. As I handed my ten-year-old passport and the new picture to the clerk, I sighed. “I like the original better,” I told her. “Trust me,” she said. “Ten years from now, you’ll like this one.”

If you took the same excuses people use for not going to church and apply them to other important areas of life you’d realize how inconsistent we can be in our logic. For example:

Reasons Not to Wash

1. I was forced to as a child.
2. People who make soap are only after your money.
3. I wash on special occasions like Christmas and Easter.
4. People who wash are hypocrites—they think they are cleaner than everyone else.
5. There are so many different kinds of soap, I can’t decide which one is best.
6. I used to wash, but it got boring so I stopped.
7. None of my friends wash.
8. The bathroom is never warm enough in the winter or cool enough in the summer.
9. I’ll start washing when I get older and dirtier.
10. I can’t spare the time.

“I play golf in the low 80s,” the little old man was telling one of the young boys at the club.

“Wow,” said the young man, “that’s pretty impressive.”

“Not really,” said the little old man. “Any hotter and I’d probably have a stroke.”