

Celebrations

real people real stories real faith



A Publication of
Hanfield United Methodist Church

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real people real stories real faith

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Issue 4

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Welcome to Celebrations!

From the Editor

Is God still in the miracle business?

We read about miracles in the Bible. The crossing of the Red Sea. People healed of blindness. The earth even moved backwards on one occasion!

But I think we miss the point today when we look for miracles. A miracle is defined as “an extraordinary event in the physical world ascribed to a supernatural cause.” A miracle is not necessarily so big that lots of people can see it. Sometimes you have to look a little harder.

Most miracles today are small and personal. Families reconciled after years of estrangement. A child with special needs making his mom proud during a Christmas play. The peace God gives to a man dying of cancer.

God is and always has been in the miracle business!

You’ll read about some of these kinds of miracles in this issue of *Celebrations*.

This Christmas season, let’s not forget to *celebrate* the greatest miracle of all—that God himself became a part of His creation through the birth of Jesus Christ.

The *Celebrations* Team and I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas!

Tim Lehrian
Communications Director
Celebrations Magazine General Editor

From the Pastor

Christmas.

Advent.

Yuletide.

Whatever we call it, this is one of our favorite months of the year. It’s a great time to enjoy family, friends, and loved ones. Most importantly, it is that season of the year when we can reflect on God’s greatest gift to us.

“Behold a virgin shall be with child, and she shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name *Emmanuel*, which being interpreted is *God with us*” (Matthew 1:23).

You will enjoy these stories; many are written around the topic of Christmas, but all have the common theme of miracles. God is indeed “with us” today!

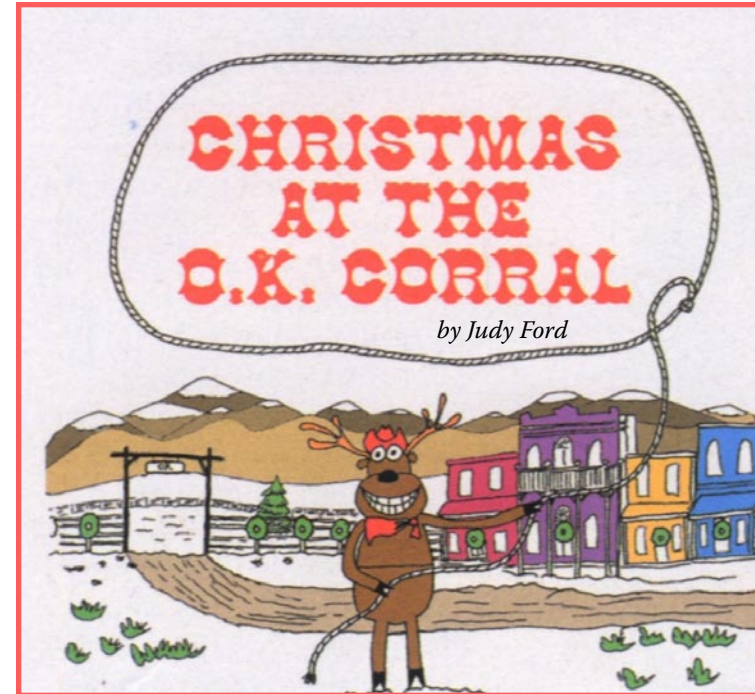
Merry Christmas!

Tim Helm
Senior Pastor
Hanfield UMC

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 Hanfield United Methodist Church
101 N 400E, Marion, IN 46952
765.664.8726 | info@hanfield.org
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Service Times Beginning 1/8/2012:
Worship: Sunday @ 8:30 & 11:00am
ABF Classes: Sunday @ 9:45am



I’ve always shared that teaching was not my idea, but an inner conviction – a knowing or understanding – a calling if you will, granted to me, supported by those who love me - to reach out and make a difference. This story is a tribute to someone who touched my life in a special way. This is why I teach.

“We don’t test for quirky,” I said with a smile in my voice in response to a mother’s question about her son. “But I will keep an eye on him as school progresses.” Eric, with his lopsided grin, brown eyes peering through his glasses, brown hair like his mom, was happy most all the time. Qualities that he exhibited at times did not fit a category that could be easily defined. Eric, smart as whip, active beyond belief, yet unable to fit into the classroom setting easily. As the school year progressed I began to see that his mother’s concerns required attention.

November brought the advent of the Christmas program. Eric’s mom came to me again with her concerns. She talked about past programs in which he had participated. “I dread every Christmas program,” she said. “Since kindergarten Eric has always been

a clown during the program. The other children seem to know what to do, but not Eric. It hurts to see him behave that way in front of all the people. I just can’t take it anymore and I don’t know what to do.” His mother’s plea touched my heart. What could I do?

This year’s program was going to be different. Third grade students were going to put on a play and everyone was allowed to try for parts. Lo and behold, Eric won the part of the mayor. I couldn’t believe it. And his mom? Well, she worried all the more. I understood his mother’s anguish but encouraged her to allow him to take the part.

I talked with the speech and language specialist. She helped me identify Eric’s possible needs and suggested writing a story for him. Eric worked on his lines and I worked on his story.

Two days before the play I gave his mom the story. “Have him read it lots of times,” I told her. “And don’t worry. He’ll do just fine.”

On the night of the play I could see the tension in his mother’s eyes. The curtain opened, the play began, and Eric stepped on the stage. No young man could have made his mother more proud than he did that night. No sign of the clown was there. He knew his part and played it well.

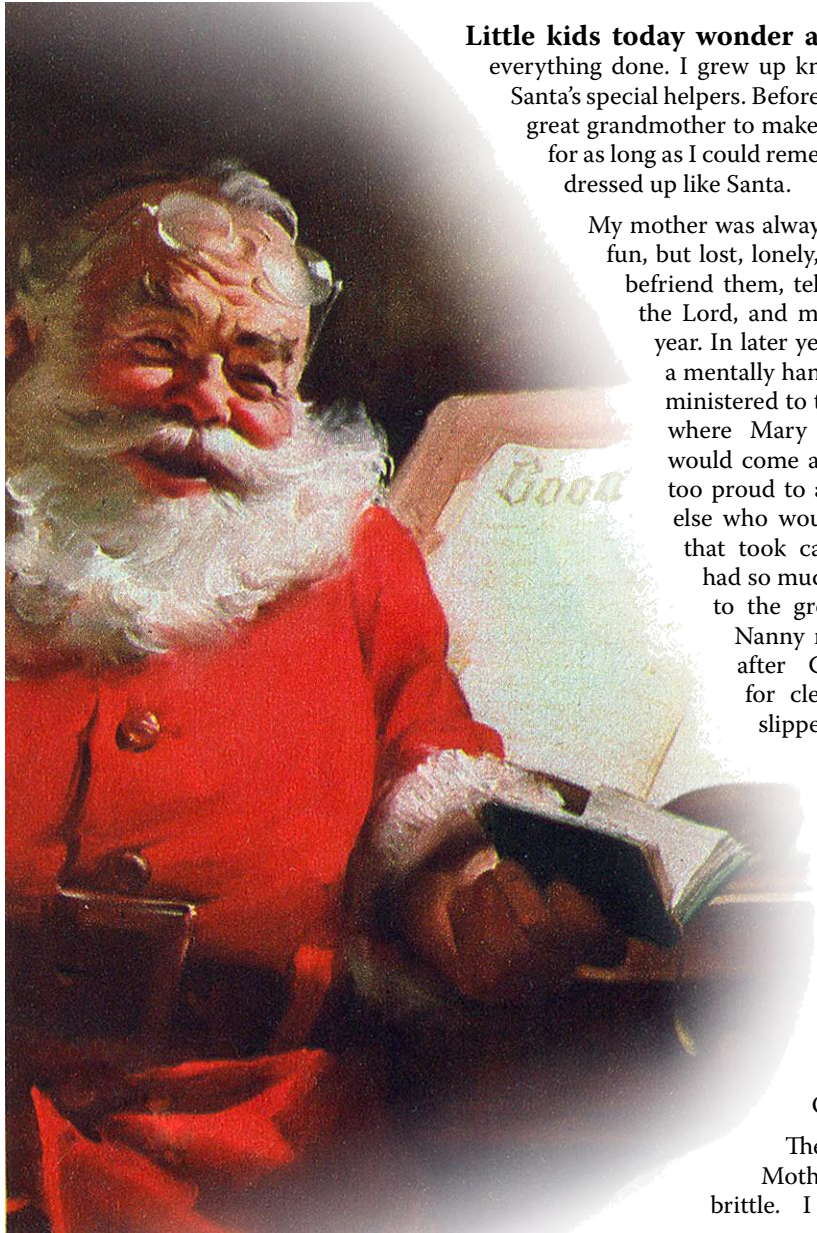
Afterward, with students gathered in the cafeteria, I felt eyes upon me. Turning, I looked into brown eyes, just like Eric’s, shining with tears unshed. Her smile was brilliant and my heart sang with joy for her. *Christmas at the OK Corral* turned out okay.

That was her last Christmas. The next Christmas season she passed away. Her gift of unconditional love for her son will never diminish and I will forever remember that beautiful smile.

As parents, we give our love to our children – unconditionally. This love, exemplified, is also given to us, through Jesus’ crucifixion – unconditionally.

Father Christmas

by Candice Haase



Little kids today wonder about Santa and how he gets everything done. I grew up knowing that my dad was one of Santa's special helpers. Before I was born my mother asked my great grandmother to make my father a Santa suit. You see, for as long as I could remember, on Christmas Eve, my dad dressed up like Santa.

My mother was always collecting people. Not just for fun, but lost, lonely, and hurting people. She would befriend them, tell them about Jesus, her love of the Lord, and minister to them throughout the year. In later years she took on the wardship of a mentally handicapped lady named Mary and ministered to the entire group home of people where Mary lived. When Christmas time would come around, her regular people were too proud to accept help from her or anyone else who would try to help. The association that took care of the handicapped people had so much red tape she could not donate to the group home directly so she had Nanny make dad a Santa suit. Starting after Christmas mom would hunt for clearance bargains. Hats, gloves, slippers, gift packages of perfume and beauty products. She would spend hours coupon shopping for things that her people could use and needed. We could not have afforded to give otherwise. In December she would spend hours wrapping for her people. As I got older, helping her wrap taught me patience and care as I helped wrap upwards of 100 plus gifts for what became OUR people.

Then the baking would begin. Mother baked pies and made peanut brittle. I always made huge batches



of gingerbread, spending hours in front of the TV on a card table decorating gingerbread men, women, dogs, goats, chickens, Santas, angels, stars, and many other fun shapes. I would make shortbread cookies and snickerdoodles. Most of my cookie recipes were tripled or quadrupled to accommodate all the goody trays we would make for our people.

On Christmas Eve—with all the goody trays made and all the presents wrapped—I would lay on my parents' bed watching dad color his eyebrows white with makeup, stuff a pillow into the waistband of his Santa pants, and don the fluffy white beard. The truck would be loaded and off we would go. My job was to make sure that Santa's bag was ready for the next stop, filled with the correct presents and goodies, and a candy cane for each person. Most of the time we got to see the surprise and joy on the faces of those who answered the door. Other times mom and I would wait for dad to come out and tell us about everyone's smiles and joy as he passed out their presents.

When I was smaller I was allowed to dress up as an elf and help pass

out gifts at the group homes. The gift I received from them was ten times more than we ever gave them.

The last two stops on the trip will always be near and dear to my heart. Gene was a poor bachelor with a 5th grade education. He lived with his multiple cats in a home without electricity down a dirt road. He made his living selling produce at the local farmer's market and out of his home. He was always so nice to mom, sharing his coffee with her on market days and sending home produce he did not sell for us kids. He knew what the truck looked like so we parked way at the end of the driveway out of sight and dad walked all the way up to the door. I am not sure if he ever knew who we were, but if he had known he would have surely refused the gifts. Over the years he went from being sad and mean to being kind and when the time came, my dad offered him Christ right there on the street at the end of one farmer's market. He accepted and is now with the Lord.

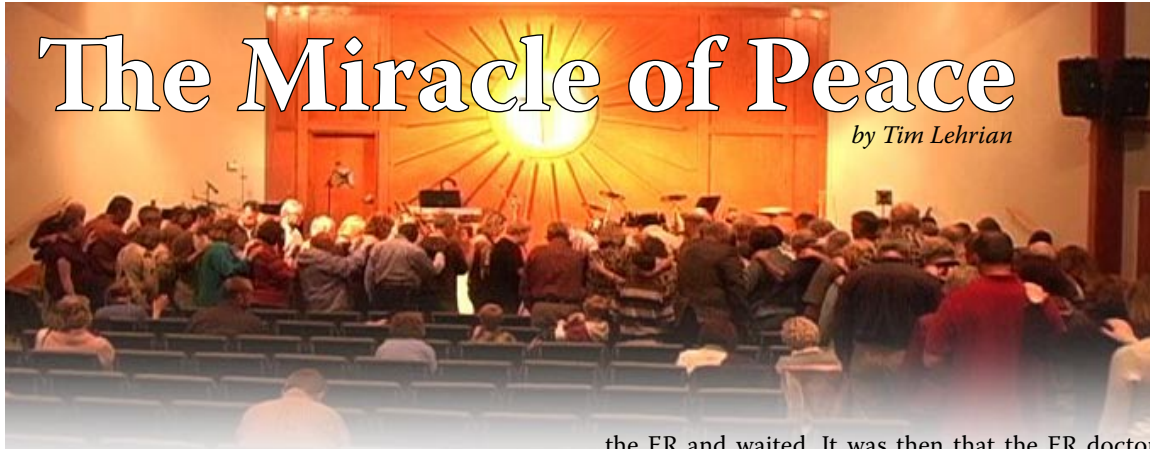
Olive lost her husband and children in the bombings of London in World War II. She came to the U.S. after marrying an American soldier but never had any more children. Her husband had passed years before and she was all alone. She was a dear Christian lady who was always ready to pray for hours for anyone who needed help. Santa took special care of her and she loved her visits from Father Christmas. I always made a special gingerbread girl just for Olive. She always sent special cakes called petit fours home with Santa for the elves. I could almost feel the love in every little cake that we ate that night in front of the fire. Over time, she figured out who we were but never let on that she knew. She let down her pride and started coming to our family Thanksgiving meals and Christmas dinners. She prayed for me and was my personal prayer warrior while I was struggling in college. She is with the Lord now, but she touched my life and stood in the gap for me more often than I knew.

Our family did these things not because we wanted to be recognized as Santa and givers, but to share the joy of Christmas with those who would have no joy without it. We told our people about Jesus and now many of them are in heaven. My Christmas memories could not have been nearly as rich, full, or blessed without the time spent working as Santa's special helper.



The Miracle of Peace

by Tim Lehrian



“Do you believe in miracles?”

That phrase will be forever linked to a hockey game between the United States and Soviet Union in 1980, but the question goes much deeper than a game.

What is a miracle? An amazing sports play? An unexplainable healing? An amazing peace God gives someone in the midst of tragedy?

Do YOU believe in miracles?

It was July 3, 2010; a Saturday; 2:30am.

Dave Ratliff had been feeling fine. The day before, he noticed symptoms of possible kidney stones, so he had a scan scheduled for the next Monday to find out. But during the night, Dave felt a soreness that would not go away. Eventually, the pain became so great he told his wife Roberta he needed to go to the emergency room. Perhaps the kidney stones were on the move?

So in the early morning of Saturday, July 3, 2010, Dave and Roberta found themselves in the ER at Marion General Hospital. The ER staff seemed to agree with Dave's self-diagnosis: kidney stones seemed likely. So up Dave went for a scan, hoping to find out where these stones were and take care of them.

With the scan complete, Dave and Roberta went back down to

the ER and waited. It was then that the ER doctor came in and said words no one wants to hear: “I don't have good news. You have tumors in both kidneys.” Roberta's face immediately became as white as a ghost, but Dave seemed to have a strange peace about him.

The urologist had never seen someone get tumors in both kidneys at the same time. He also added, “Aside from the cancer, you are probably the healthiest person I know.”

Over the next 3 months, Dave had surgeries to partially remove his left kidney, and completely remove his right kidney, leaving him with basically half a kidney. The surgeries seemed to be a success.

Six months later, Dave went in for more scans on the remaining half of his left kidney. The news was again not good. More tumors had formed on the partial kidney. And not only that; tumors had formed on the colon and liver as well and he had a large hernia. After another surgery for those tumors, a subsequent scan showed more tumors on Dave's liver.

The cancer has since spread to Dave's lungs, and the prognosis is not good. Dave is dying of cancer. He has decided not to live the rest of his life at a hospital in Chicago taking treatments that may or may not buy him some time. Next to God, his family is the



most important thing to him, and he has decided to spend however much time he has left with them, not cooped up in a hospital room.

So what do you do with that? You are being told you're healthy, but cancer is killing you. You feel fine your entire life, and then one day you're told cancer will shorten that life. How can that be God's plan? Where is God in all this?

This is where Dave's story becomes a miracle.

Ever since first accepting Christ into his life, Dave has had a very strong faith. When he and Roberta first started attending Hanfield in 1997, at the invitation of John Schamber, they immediately started attending the Visionaries Sunday School class.

Since then, they have become a fixture at Hanfield, although you may not always notice it. Dave is tall, but not imposing. He does not like to have all the attention, so even as a greeter, he voluntarily stations himself at the side door (“I like helping the older folks in and out of their cars”). He is happy to stay behind the scenes praying for people.

He has a heart for people, and even through his battle with cancer, he is more concerned with how others are doing rather than himself. Gary Miller describes Dave as a contemporary Peter or Paul from the Bible.

One of his nurses once asked him, “Why are you different?” She continued to explain that most of the patients they have complain all the time (and maybe even deservedly so), but Dave is always nice, cooperative, and kept asking the nurses how THEY were doing! The conversation shifted as they talked about when Dave found out he had cancer.

The nurse said, “I'll bet that really scared you, didn't it?”

Dave said, “No, it didn't. I know Who is in control,

and have complete trust in God that He will take care of me.”

The nurse continued, “So, do you think He's going to heal you?”

“I didn't say that,” Dave replied. “I said He is going to take care of me. I have no fears and no doubts [about that].” They continued to talk for about an hour. Dave never saw that nurse again, but no doubt that conversation had an impact on her.

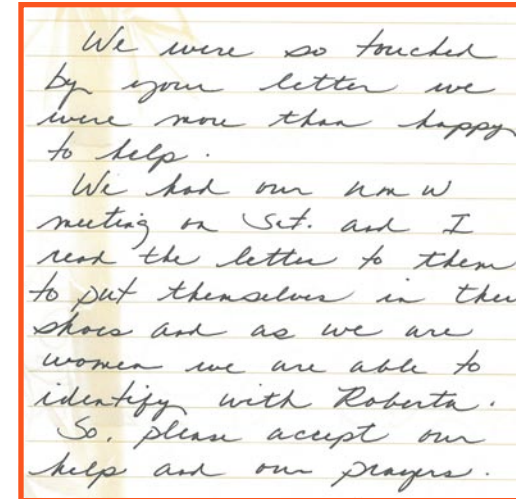
That's the kind of influence Dave has had on all who know him, before the cancer invaded his body and since. His faith is unwavering, his hope is sure, and his sense of humor is infectious. Even his daughter Adrienne said his doctor had been hanging around him too much, because his sense of humor was rubbing off!

Upon hearing the initial news that he had cancer, Dave recalls, “I didn't have any doubts at all that God wasn't in it, and that He wasn't going to take care of me.” That kind of faith is a miracle in and of itself.

Whether that faith leads to physical healing or not, we don't yet know. But Dave has seen God's healing before in his own life.

About 10 years ago, Dave had gone almost completely deaf in his left ear. He first started noticing it at work. Being right-handed, he would pick up the phone and hold it to his left ear so he could write notes with his right hand. After a while, he had to start holding the phone to his right ear, or turn around to his right side to hear people talking to him. He went to an ear, nose, and throat doctor where an audiologist ran a hearing test. He found out he had lots of scar tissue and had lost 95% of the hearing in that ear. He was told he would have to wear a hearing aid to ever be able to hear out of that ear again.

The next Sunday, he shared this with the Visionaries class at Hanfield and they all laid hands on him and prayed for his healing.



About a week later, Dave was at work. Work must not have been too exciting, because he yawned really wide, and in the process, he heard and felt something “pop.” He didn’t think much of it at the time, until the next time he picked up the phone. By force of habit, he picked up the phone and placed it to his left ear. He carried on his conversation and hung up the phone. He then realized he had heard the entire conversation – with his left ear!

The doctor said it wasn’t possible; that Dave must be compensating with his right ear. Dave said, “No, I was talking on the phone and heard with my left ear.” So the doctor made him a deal: Dave would come in for another hearing test, and if he could hear out of his left ear, he wouldn’t be charged for the visit. Otherwise, Dave would pay for the doctor’s visit. Dave agreed and went in. The scar tissue the doctor had seen before was all still there, but somehow Dave regained almost all of the hearing back in that ear. That visit was on the house! The doctor couldn’t understand how that could happen, but of course Dave knew. God had healed him! To this day, he can hear completely fine out of that ear.

Dave doesn’t know if God will heal him of the cancer the same way He did with his left ear. He has prayed that God would “do a Hezekiah” for him. (Hezekiah was a king of Israel who was healed by God. His story is told in 2 Kings.) Whether Dave is healed or not, he is not going to stop honoring God with whatever time he has left. Dave says God has given him a peace that he simply cannot explain.

God has also been with Dave in a very tangible way. He recalls a time just after he had his first surgery when he was having trouble sleeping at night. He was laying on his right side, and felt what seemed like a hand touching his left side, where part of his left kidney had been taken out days earlier. At first, he thought it was Roberta, but she was laying the opposite direction and the hand felt bigger than hers. Dave reached for the hand, but there was none there! He then thought perhaps one of his kids came by and had their hand on him. He got up, and no one was in the house. Dave then knew it was God laying His hand on Dave, saying, “I’m right here with you.”

Now, before you start to think that somehow Dave isn’t human, know this: When he was first diagnosed,

he told his good friend Gary Miller, “I don’t want this,” and proceeded to explain that he knows now a little bit how Jesus felt in the garden before his crucifixion. He knows what Jesus meant by his prayer, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39). But when friends or family ask him if he ever questions why this happened to him, he always comes back to the same answer: that God knew he had the faith to get through it where others may not.



On November 6, 2011, Pastor Tim anointed Dave and Roberta with oil as the entire congregation laid hands on them and prayed for them.

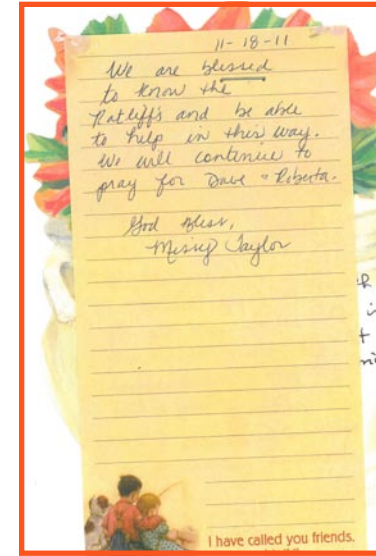
Dave mentions his favorite book of the Bible is Job. Yeah, *that* Job. The one that Satan said would curse God if everything that was important and dear to him were taken away. God allowed Satan to take everything away from Job, except his life. Yet Job continued to remain faithful. Upon hearing the news of the death of his children, Job said, “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (Job 1:21). After being afflicted with horrible sores all over his body, he said, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (Job 2:10).

Dave knows that God has a plan for all of this. He knows that no matter what happens, God is still good and Dave is going to praise Him until the very end. That is Dave’s main wish: to see God honored through this whole situation.

But you see, Dave’s strength does not come from Dave. It comes from God. The peace he has about everything is supernatural. Gary Miller remembers having lunch with Dave recently, and he said to Dave, “You can tell me anything, Dave. So how are you *really* doing?” Dave’s answer was dumbfounding. He didn’t confess that he was really struggling with everything. He didn’t say he was mad at God for doing this to him. He said, “I really do have a peace about things. If I live, then I’m here with my family. If I die, then I’m at home in heaven. So I win either way.”

So, I ask again, what makes a miracle? Is it a medical healing that doctors cannot explain? Is it some sort of suspension of physical laws that leaves us amazed? Is it a magic trick? Or is it simply a peace that God gives someone in his spirit that cannot be explained?

We all look for miracles in the big and bombastic. But the truth is, most miracles happen in the small and personal. They’re almost imperceptible, unless you’re looking for them.



So miracles do still happen. One is happening right in front of us at Hanfield right now. And that miracle’s name is Dave Ratliff. Will God heal his cancer? We don’t know. We pray for that, and that might yet happen. But whether it happens or not, that does not make his story any less of a miracle.

Jim Valvano, former basketball coach at North Carolina State, was diagnosed with bone cancer in 1992. In March 1992, he won the Arthur Ashe Courage and Humanitarian Award at the ESPY Awards. He would succumb to the cancer six weeks later. During his acceptance speech he said, “Cancer can take away all of my physical

abilities. It cannot touch my mind, it cannot touch my heart, and it cannot touch my soul.”

Dave may be starting to fail physically, but his mind, heart, and soul are as healthy as they have ever been. And he is at peace with all of it.

And that is the biggest miracle of all.

The Church At Its Best!

One result of Dave & Roberta’s story has been an amazing outpouring of love from people near and far. One of Dave’s major concerns is that Roberta would not be able to afford to stay in their home once he is gone. Their ABF (the Visionaries class) started a fundraising campaign, sending letters, emails and Facebook posts to everyone they knew asking for help.

Gary Miller spearheaded the campaign, and thought perhaps they could raise most of the \$41,000 needed in 6 months. But **6 weeks** later, they have raised the entire amount and more! Praise God! On Sunday December 18, the Visionaries ABF is having a mortgage burning party during their ABF time to celebrate what God has done.

Over 150 people donated to this cause and many have written back how thankful and blessed they were to have an opportunity to help Dave & Roberta. Some of those very notes are displayed in the story above. ***This is what the church is all about!***

The Ratliffs still have medical bills, so if you want to donate, please write a check payable to *Hanfield Visionary Class* and write the word “outreach” in the memo. Checks can be sent to: **Hanfield UMC, 101 N 400E, Marion, IN 46952.**

WHY DO **BAD** THINGS HAPPEN TO **GOOD** PEOPLE ?

by Gary Miller & Tim Lehrian



When tragedy strikes, this is perhaps the most-asked question among Christians and non-Christians alike. So what does the Bible say about this?

To fully understand the answer to this question, we must first understand that we live in a fallen world. The world we now live in is not the perfect world God intended. God created a world where there was no sin, no death, no disease, and no tragedy. But God also created man with a free will – the ability to choose between right and wrong. When Adam and Eve chose to eat the forbidden fruit, the consequences were much more far-reaching than being kicked out of paradise. They introduced sin, disease, and death into God’s perfect world.

So, when bad things happen, we kind of have ourselves to blame. It does not mean God doesn’t care and is not there. It simply means that we are part of a fallen world and we should expect it. God never suggests that believers will be spared the troubles of this world. Jesus said, “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45).

Jesus, however, also gave us a promise. He says in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” On the other hand, the prophet Isaiah said, “There is no peace for the wicked.” So what is the difference between believers and unbelievers? Peace. Believers have a peace that is unavailable to unbelievers. This peace allows believers to get through the troubles of this world victoriously.

How do we experience this peace? The Holy Spirit creates this peace in our lives when we trust and obey Jesus, believe Jesus loves us, and believe Jesus will bring us through whatever life throws at us.

So, when these things do happen, Jesus tells us to “take heart” (John 16:33). This is meant to encourage us to understand that fear can be replaced with trust. Trust in Jesus, because he has beaten sin, evil, death and disease. Jesus suffered more than we ever will, so He fully understands our anguish.

Furthermore, did you know that Jesus prayed for you? This prayer is recorded in John 17:15-18. Jesus prays that we would be protected from the evil one (Satan). He did not pray that we be protected from disease, crimes, and accidents. Perhaps He places more emphasis on spiritual health than physical health?

We must also realize that God can make good come from bad. It is hard to say this without sounding cliché, but it is true. Romans 8:28 says “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” This verse does not say all things are good, or that we will always see the good right away. It also does not say this is for everyone, but only for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. So, if you are a Christian, God is working to make good come through even the most painful circumstances.

As Christians, we have a dual existence – we are in Christ and we are also in this world. We must never allow this world to convince us that this is all there is and that the world is most important! Make the most of every day and enjoy everyone around you. If you are a Christian, know that this is not your home – you are a citizen of heaven.

If you are not a Christian, find someone you know who is a Christian and talk with them. Take the step to invite Jesus into your heart. It is the best decision you will ever make! Doing so will not spare you the troubles of this world, but it will give you the opportunity to have peace in the midst of those troubles – the same kind of peace Dave Ratliff is experiencing now.

All I Want for Christmas is... **MY FAMILY BACK**

by Gail Haglund



I have a big confession: I struggle with Christmas. I realize that may be heresy to some, but it’s just not that special to me. It’s just a financial burden more than anything else. Because of some past issues, I just don’t “get into” Christmas as much as many others do. Thinking about it just makes me tired. (Wow, I feel better just getting that off my chest!)

When I heard about the latest *Assignment: Hanfield*, I thought, well, I could write about Christmases past.

I remember my first Christmas as a newlywed living in southern California, and deciding that we absolutely had to go to the beach on Christmas Day. It was a cold (for southern Cal), rainy day. We shivered, took pictures, and ran back to the warmth of the car. So much for rubbing it in to all of our friends back in the Midwest that we were in sunny California! Hmmm...not much spiritual in that.

When we lived on the west coast, I remember the excitement of the kids getting their Christmas boxes from my mom. This usually took the form of the largest boxes ever shipped, full of goodies and toys and clothes. How they looked forward to that arrival! That’s sweet, but there’s not much spiritual in that, either.

Frankly, many of the Christmases run together... trees, Christmas cookies and goodies, decorations. I know we had lots of fun with family and friends, but nothing exactly stands out in my memories. Because we lived 2500 miles away from most of my family for 18 years, we celebrated usually with friends from our church or small home group.

But as I thought more about it, what makes Christmas special to me is the fact that we are all TOGETHER. That sounds a little corny, I realize, especially from a Grinch like me. But there was a time when I thought that having my kids with me at Christmas was an impossible dream. And when I look around the table when we are all gathered at my house for the traditional

Christmas breakfast on Christmas morning, I hope I never forget the work that God has done in reuniting me and my children.

The details don't need to be dwelled upon, but the reality is that my two oldest children and I have not always gotten along. Their teenage years were, to put it bluntly, pure hell. There were years when I hardly ever saw them, when one of them lived far away from me and I rarely heard from her. There were years when the words "I hate you" and "you've ruined my life" echoed over and over again in my mind. I wondered where I had gone wrong, how I had failed so miserably, how a future once so bright with promise had become a dismal, tainted, painful reality. I felt I had failed as a wife and as a mother. When I read back over journals I wrote during the years we were estranged, tears fill my eyes and I can barely see the words. Years went by with no hope of reconciliation. My prayer was always the same: please bring my girls back to me.

And He did.

God brought my girls back.

It took time, healing, forgiveness, mercy and grace, the births of grandchildren, and lots of just simply holding on. But He did it. He fulfilled my heart's desire. Today, my girls and I are in close relationships.

I never want to forget what God has done, how He healed something for which I had no hope. How He took a mother's feeble prayers and blessed them and brought restoration. I had so little faith and things looked so dark that He even had to GIVE me the hope that He would work in the situation; I had none of my own.

I write this now to offer that hope, that faith--that God will work in hopeless situations. Do you have a broken relationship? Has your heart been torn apart? Is there no hope left in your soul?

Look up.

Pray.

Take your tiny speck of hope and offer it up to the One who is the author of hope, the One who can be trusted with your fears, your dreams, and those you hold dear. Now, He's not a cosmic Santa Claus; He is not into "quick fixes." It may not happen soon, it likely will not be easy, but He will hear your prayers and He does know and care about your situation. You can trust Him.

At Christmas, when I look around the table and see all of my kids and grandkids gathered, I breathe a prayer of thanksgiving. My prayer for those of you who are grieving broken relationships is that someday you will be able to do the same.



Embracing the



Sandwich Model

by Jerry Harshman

Today, many people are looking for a church where they can be fed.

Hanfield's senior pastor, Tim Helm, hopes implementing the "Sandwich Ministry Model" January 8th will help provide more of that needed nourishment.

"God poked me," Pastor Tim grinned. "I felt like the Lord was telling me Sunday morning should be about worship, connect and serve. Right now people can't do all three," he said.

"There has been a tension between connecting and fellowship," he continued. "It seems like whenever we have tried to energize the children's ministry it has taken away from our Adult Bible Fellowships (ABFs) and vice versa. In the 90s we didn't have this problem," he concluded.

The current Sunday morning schedule combines many ABFs and Worship Services at the same time. Also, a nursery and toddler room are provided for those

children up to three years of age during both worship services.

Pastor Tim sees the need to strengthen the ABF ministry at Hanfield. "ABFs are the backbone of the church," he smiled. "John Maxwell believes relationships are the oil that greases the machinery of ministry." Right now Hanfield has about 175 attending ABFs.

Lance Brookshire has built an impressive worship team which includes 34 musicians, 14 vocalists and 4 sound technicians who rotate on various Sundays. This change will mostly impact the Praise Team's practice times on Sunday mornings and will mean that team members will have to be at the church for at least another 90 minutes each time they serve.

At the present time there just is not a consistent number of adult volunteers to help with the nursery, toddler room, and children's ministry opportunities. The current Sunday schedule doesn't make it easier

because in order for adults to work in these areas they have to either miss worship or an ABF experience. This can lead to burn-out and frustration for those dedicated to helping our children. Beth Fisher told about a couple who really wanted to become involved in Children's Ministry, but just didn't want to leave their ABF. Pastor Tim and his staff believe Hanfieldites need to have the opportunity to experience all three each Sunday morning.

Pastor Tim wants everyone to have the opportunity to engage on Sunday mornings but realizes many Hanfieldites already serve outside the walls of the church in a variety of ministries in the community. "I want everyone to know that those ministry opportunities are important and certainly count," Pastor Tim added.

Everyone needs to realize that changing the schedule on Sunday mornings is not an easy thing to do and much planning has been happening behind the scenes

ABF and LIFE Class Lineup Beginning January 8, 2012

Adult Bible Fellowships (ABFs):

Prayer Warriors led by Nyle Fox

HIS Team led by Chris Cunningham

Armor Bearers led by Jeff Bragg

Vineyards led by Mike & Melissa Jessup

College Age/Young Adults led by Sara Brookshire

3-in-1 led by Bob Hix

Caregivers led by Greg Ford

Visionaries led by Gary Miller

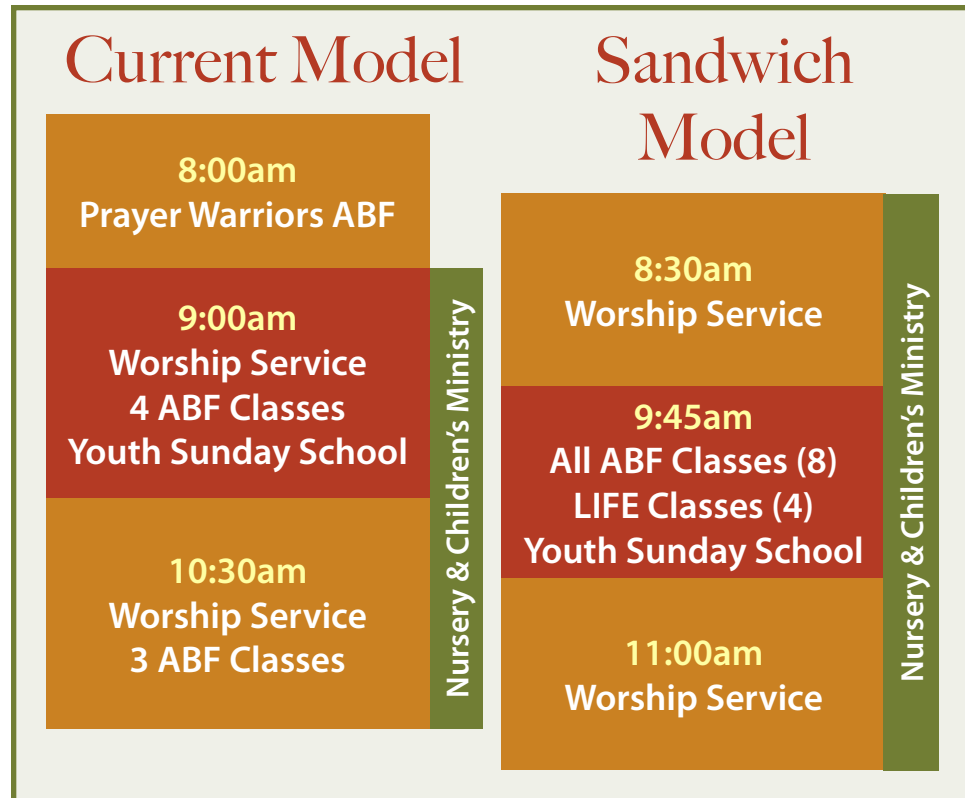
LIFE Classes:

Financial Peace University led by Mike Mullen

Current Events led by Tim Tittle

Spiritual Gifts led by Jerry Harshman

Membership Class led by Tim Helm



to make this a successful reality. The Sandwich Model will separate out all the ABFs and other classes from the Worship Services. The nursery, toddler room and children's ministry will be offered in some format for the entire morning.

Everyone will need lots of coffee, and patience will certainly be a virtue. There will be some set-up and tear-down and moving of chairs which will have to occur, but if we all work together this could prove to be a very positive change for our entire congregation!

It is still being decided where the ABF and LIFE Classes will meet. The nursery, toddler, and children's ministry would continue to be available and meet in their present locations.

Pastor Tim believes it's hard for some, especially newcomers, to engage in existing groups. "It's best to start new ones," he said. "Many groups started out as membership classes. Usually I meet with them for several weeks and then spin off as a new class," he added. "A few young couples have come to church, were too timid to join existing groups, and eventually left the church." We need to avoid that and help everyone find a place where they can fit in!

Sunday morning there will be a greater need for the coffee ministry, ushers, greeters, but most of all, more volunteers will be needed in Children's Ministry. As Shirley Saddler, Children's Ministry Director, and her team plan for the transition to the Sandwich Model they will need many more volunteers each Sunday.

Hanfield's Safety Policy requires all adults to complete safety training which includes a criminal background check in order to work in Children's Ministry. So far

over 200 Hanfieldites have completed the training but not all are prepared to serve in all areas of Children's Ministry. That's a real challenge for Shirley, Beth, and Shannon Shilts who have to cover or draft volunteers at the last minute. Also, the policy requires that at least two adults 18 years of age or older be in rooms with children who are infants up to age 5. Children age 5 or older must have at least one adult with them at all times and no child can be left alone with just one adult.

Kyle Bixler, Youth Director, hopes many of his kids in the junior and senior high Sunday School classes will be willing to volunteer their time to assist and serve as mentors with the Children's Ministry during the 8:30 and 11:00 worship hours.

There will continue to be other opportunities for involvement other than Sunday mornings. Many groups for youth and children meet each week. Many adult Bible studies meet weekly, and other groups meet once a month.

There are also many seasonal opportunities to serve on mission teams, at Vacation Bible School and various summer camps.

There are also many opportunities to witness by your words and actions. Mow someone's yard; take a meal to someone who is sick; volunteer in the community; or bring snacks to an ABF.

Let's be "All in" and have the courage Peter had when he stepped out of the boat to walk on the water with Jesus (Matthew 14:28-31). Even as he began to sink, Jesus reached out to him and wouldn't let him fall. That same Lord is with us today!

A Private Hallelujah

by Cris Bragg

Every Christmas season when I was a child my family listened to a record by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir that included two songs from Handel's *Messiah*: *For Unto Us a Child is Born* and *The Hallelujah Chorus*. When my extended family would celebrate Christmas at Grandma and Grandpa's we would all attempt to sing *The Hallelujah Chorus*. My mom would play the piano, Aunt Ann was thankfully a soprano and could carry the melody and my dad jubilantly sang loudly whatever part he felt needed the most "umph." I learned that this music was special.

When I was a freshman in college the Taylor University Oratorio Choir and other college choirs were invited to sing Handel's *Messiah* with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra conducted by rising star John Nelson. This included a big and lavish and long rehearsal and performance schedule right before finals. Since the entire musical is about Jesus I remember wondering how many of the participants believed in what they were singing and playing.

My sophomore year in college I spent January studying in London. I experienced Handel's *Messiah* performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra in the magnificent Royal Albert Hall. I pretended the queen was there to rise on the opening notes of *The Hallelujah Chorus*. I was moved to worship in such a historic and beautiful venue with accomplished musicians.

Back at Taylor for spring semester, the Chorale began preparing to perform excerpts from the *Messiah* for choir tour during spring break. We worked on phrasing, diction, dynamics, breathing, technique. During Holy Week, we performed in different churches every night, culminating with a mini concert on Easter morning in a cathedral style church with gorgeous stained glass windows. I remember being inspired by the music as it moved with the meaning of the text in such a beautiful and holy setting.

But it wasn't until years later, that Handel's *Messiah* most ministered to me and I began a private Christmas tradition. As a young mom I did a personal Bible study on the prophecy of Jesus. As I looked up Old and New Testament references I began

humming the lines from Handel's *Messiah* as I recognized the Scripture as lyrics. I bought the CD and sang along.

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed. And all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Isaiah 40:5

The words of Isaiah written 400 years before Jesus was born came true! The glory of the Lord WAS revealed in Jesus. The glory of the Lord IS revealed in Jesus today. And one day ALL flesh will be unable to ignore or deny the glory. The Lord has spoken it!

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder and His Name shall be called: Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace!

Isaiah 9:6

Again, the words of Isaiah written 400 years before Jesus was born came true! Jesus was given to earth as a child yet He has all authority to judge and rule. I do call Him Wonderful! He is Counsellor! Mighty God! Everlasting Father! The Prince of Peace! The words of Scripture set to music resonated in my soul.

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:6

I am a sheep. I confess I go my own way, pursuing my own interests and gratifying my selfishness. This is why Jesus came: to bear the sins of us all. Yes, Lord. Forgive me.

Hallelujah! King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, and He shall reign for ever and ever, Hallelujah!

Revelation 19:6, 11:15, 19:16

In the privacy of my home I let go and worshipped, whole body and voice. My mind, spirit, and emotion merged with the glorious truth of the gospel set to a grand musical score performed by dozens of musicians piped through my stereo speakers. It was a new level of worship for me, deeper and more heart felt. I treasure the memory.

So every Advent season, I try to recreate my own private worship tradition. I pick a day when no one is home, I turn the stereo up loud, I sing at the top of my voice (and it isn't always pretty), and I worship Emmanuel with full mind, body, and spirit. Then I am ready for Christmas.

***The words of Isaiah
written 400 years before
Jesus was born came true!
The glory of the Lord
WAS revealed in Jesus.
The glory of the Lord IS
revealed in Jesus today.***

*Messiah
an Oratorio*



Spotlight On... Armor Bearers ABF

by Kelly Bixler

Kelly Bixler recently sat down with Jeff Bragg, the leader of the Armor Bearers ABF.

The Armor Bearers class was started in 1989 as a new Sunday School class. We were mostly aged 20-30 with young families. We chose the name *Armor Bearers* as we felt we were called to be Pastor Tim's "Armor Bearers" as his wife Karen was a member of our class, and Pastor Tim by extension. It seems that, at the time, our class consisted mostly of recent members or new attenders to Hanfield.



We have had a similar format over the years. A time of meeting/greeting to begin, followed by opening prayer. We then use an "opening question" to give everyone a chance to talk and then a Bible study. Recently, we have been using the curriculum offered by Hanfield so we can study the same passage/theme that Pastor Tim is using in his sermons. This seems to have added depth and additional insight to passages as we study and discuss them in class and then listen to Pastor Tim.

Our class has been in transition over the last year as we have had many of our members move away. We are an older group now with our ages ranging from the 30s to 50s. Some of our group members still have kids in middle school but also in high school, college and adult children as well. We very much would like to have new people join us.

We have supported the Crisis Pregnancy Center, which is now the Pregnancy Help Center, for over 20 years with a monthly gift. We take an offering in class to meet that commitment and other class activities/

missions/needs. We have been involved in other "mission" work such as the Myer's House Project and over the years we have volunteered for Habitat for Humanity/St. Martin's food kitchen.

The Armor Bearer's ABF is where my point of connection is at Hanfield. When I or my family has had a need or crisis, this is the group that has surrounded and supported me most directly. The weekly interaction with this group challenges me to study, pray and "sharpen" me to be a better person, Christian, and man. To be honest though, I come to class because I have fun there and enjoy the people. It's hard for me to think that others wouldn't want to come and enjoy themselves also.

We have a couple of upcoming events or parties that we are planning in the near future. We will be doing a Walkway of Lights night followed by a Christmas movie (like "It's a Wonderful Life") in December. We will also host a Super Bowl Party in February. We would love for you to join us!

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