

Celebrations

real people real stories real faith



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June 2011

Issue 2

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Welcome to Celebrations!

From the Editor

When I had the initial vision for *Celebrations*, I felt God telling me something very specific: We had gotten good at telling people what's *happening* at Hanfield, but not so good at telling people what *happened*.

That is, people knew when VBS was, that there was a prayer vigil happening, that Pastor Tim challenged us to give up something for Lent, or that a team was going to Zambia on a mission trip. What people *didn't* know was what God did in the lives of people during those events.

I felt God telling me that we needed to *celebrate* His work in the lives of the people at Hanfield. Thus, *Celebrations* was born.

I'm excited about this issue of *Celebrations* because most of the stories contained in it were submitted by you, our readers.

As you read these stories from your fellow friends and Hanfield family, I hope you are encouraged by what God is doing in people's lives, and inspired to remember what God has done for you.

Enjoy reading, and *celebrate* what God is doing!

Tim Lehrian
Communications Director
Celebrations Magazine General Editor

From the Pastor

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. - Hebrews 3:13

A key component to our spiritual growth is watching and learning "life tips" from our fellow disciples. The discipleship process is by its very definition a corporate exercise. As I recently heard in church, "We are all in this together."

Simply put, hearing stories of our friends and fellow believers helps us become more like Christ. The stories on the following pages will do just that for you. Some stories include pain, trial and suffering. Some entries are deep and moving. Some are simply about everyday life. All stories point us to Jesus.

These are not stories of Hollywood celebrities or athletes on ESPN. These are from our friends and fellow Hanfieldites. They are *real people*, telling *real stories*, about *real faith!*

May you be inspired in your daily faith journey as you read and learn!

Tim Helm
Senior Pastor
Hanfield UMC

Congratulations Class of 2011!



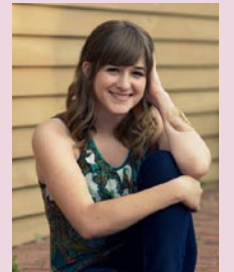
Olivia Jessup
Eastbrook HS

Olivia was involved in Band, International Club, and Drama Club at Eastbrook. She will attend Taylor University to major in Professional Writing. Her favorite memories of youth group include the many retreats and trips they've taken over the years.

"God has taught me so much about trusting Him, staying faithful when things get tough. He's really just drawn me into a deeper relationship with Him, a relationship where prayer and listening are prevalent."

Sarah was involved in Art Club, Sewing Club, Worship Club, Volleyball, Soccer and Softball at King's, and plays the piano in the Praise Band at Hanfield. She will attend Asbury University majoring in Spanish (and possibly Missions). Her favorite memories of youth group are relaxing and enjoying each other, and retreats at Epworth Forest.

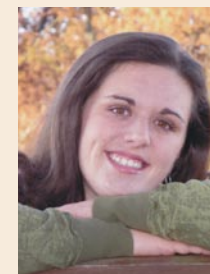
"God is helping me to learn to trust Him. Although I am in a huge transition and unsure of what is to come, in the past He has been faithful and I know I won't regret trusting Him with my future."



Sarah Pearson
The King's Academy


Linly was involved in Band, Show & Concert Choir, 4-H, National Honor Society and FFA, but lists Ballet as her favorite. She will attend Huntington University to major in Elementary Education. Her favorite memories of youth group are the winter retreats and the Washington DC trip the group took in 2009.

"God has really taught me a lot about just trusting Him. I can't do it on my own; I have to have His leading. I just have to trust Him. It is one of the hardest lessons I have ever learned."



Linly Lloyd
Southern Wells HS

Celebrations is a publication of:

 Hanfield United Methodist Church
101 N 400E, Marion, IN 46952
765.664.8726 | info@hanfield.org
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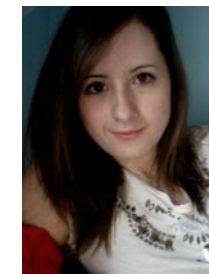
Service Times Sunday @ 9:00 & 10:30am



Corey Hollinger
Marion HS



Hannah Kochanek
Eastbrook HS



Alisa Rickel
Eastern HS



Trevor Simpson
Mississinewa HS

THE FINAL FALL OF COMMUNISM AND CHILDHOOD

by Erik Fisher

Late in the summer of 1991, as new countries emerged and broke off from the U.S.S.R. during the collapse of the Soviet Union, a tumor was forming in the brain of my younger brother Evan. I was 11 at the time and unaware of either event. The freedom that the new post-Soviet states were yearning for was achieved through multiple coups until they finally were victorious. A world superpower was breaking apart, and soon my world would break into smaller pieces as well.

My aim that summer was to play hard. I had just completed my first year of junior high school, the most challenging social experience I have encountered to date. All I wanted to do was play football, play hide-and-seek, and ride bikes. I wanted to stay out until it was dark, and then stay out some more. That was my aim.

Although Evan and I were gaining newfound freedom and independence that comes with age, that summer was the last time I remember being allowed to act carefree and childish. To adolescents, this coming of age is the equivalent of suddenly waking up with super powers and not knowing how to use them for noble causes, and so these powers are used for selfish endeavors instead. The old boundaries of how far from home you can go, or how late you can stay up are gone. We only used the new territory and curfew for the larger and later games of tag on our bikes.

All through the summer, Evan would complain of headaches, or sometimes have an upset stomach with vomiting. He was taken to the doctor a few times, but nothing was found. Every time a symptom would show itself, there was uneasiness inside me. Each time Evan suffered with a new pain, I was overtaken with an emotional and intellectual paralysis. My entire head, from the neck up would tingle, the same way my hands or feet tingled when they fell asleep from being still too long.

When school started up again in the fall, Evan was in his prime. His nickname was Doogie, because his brushed-back hair made him look like the actor Neil Patrick Harris when he played Doogie Howser, M.D. Evan was also very smart, and he was the one who got good grades in the family, so this added to the creation of the nickname. He was literally the kid in his sixth grade class that all the other kids wanted to be. I would be lying if I said I was not at least a little jealous of his style and popularity.

I was also jealous of something else. Even though I was the oldest of three brothers, each two years apart, the middle child, Evan, got his own room. I never understood this. I shared a room with my youngest brother, Ben, even though I was the eldest brother! It may have had something to do with Evan being an overachiever who was especially protective of his neat room and all the belongings in it. He knew when even one little thing was out of place.

It was one night right after we lay down for bed that our dad came in to our room and explained that they had taken Evan to be seen by a friend from church who was a chiropractor. He told them to take Evan to the hospital immediately after seeing the buildup of pressure behind his eyes. They did a scan and found a tumor on his brain that needed to be operated on immediately. This was one of the few times I cried myself to sleep.



An overturned statue of Josef Stalin symbolizes the fall of the Soviet Union

There is a picture of Evan that has been seared in my mind. I stared at it so often, wishing for that version of my brother to return. The picture was taken of Evan the morning before his surgery. He is standing in front of an arcade game, turned and staring at the camera with a huge smile on his face. He's wearing brightly-colored surfer shorts, his arm bandaged, with an IV stand next to him. He's aware of why he's checked into the hospital, but he's still joking around and having fun. This picture to me represents the brother I never saw again.

They did the surgery. They removed the tumor. It was successful—except that Evan remained in a coma from just before the most silent Thanksgiving of my life until sometime after my birthday in late April. I remember March 23rd passing that year, which was Evan's birthday, and wondering what was going on inside his head.

The head of our “united republic,” my Father, was a man with many issues. I believe he was probably most happy in life while working on the church softball league with Evan as his assistant, or when they would watch sports together. I wasn't into sports, other than occasionally playing them with friends. Evan was my dad's favorite child. Evan's tumor and the changes it caused were probably harder on my dad than any of the rest of our family.

I can't help but wonder now how the role of Evan's tumor, coma, and the slow recovery affected my dad long term. He was already guarded, but this seemed to bring a crack into our family, causing all of us to break apart from each other like the pieces of the Soviet Union did. For better or for worse, it was our family, and things would never be the same again.

Looking back now, I only wish I had known to pay attention to the time I was spending with my dad. Even with the heads of the house starting to argue more, and the voices of disapproval becoming louder and louder, I wish that at least my youngest brother Ben and I had bonded more closely to deal with the shaking up of our entire world.

I've still never fully unpacked this issue for myself. I felt like God owed my brother something more.

Evan eventually woke out of the coma, but he was never the same again. To this day, Evan is a model for me in faith. He still holds to the thought that even though

he can't run, and he is legally blind, yet can see, he knows there is a purpose for his life. It helps me to see my younger cousins and my daughter play with him and know they don't see him any differently than anyone else.

I'm still in awe of Evan's perspective on the whole circumstance. He holds on to a grateful attitude, knowing he came very close to death with his Traumatic Brain Injury. In the same way I was forced to mature early to cope with his cancer and our family's dysfunction, Evan sees these events in his life as a way that God has taught him to mature too. He has spoken to young adult groups at his church, telling them that even though he gave his heart to Jesus at eight years of age in children's church, in a way, he's been born again twice.

Evan accepts the event as something that caused him to grow closer to God, the one thing he could cling to during the fear he had before the operation and who he prayed to during his long road to mental and physical recovery after awaking from his coma. “I know He was with me, even though I didn't know what to think. I was scared.”

Evan learning to mature over again and regain lost time has been a parallel journey of faith for him that is his own road to discipleship. His confident faith is what allows him to continue walking better without his wheelchair, and serving others with greater disabilities in his own independent assisted-living environment. Evan thinks that God can take anything and make it into a good thing. He's living proof.



Erik Fisher is a native of Rochester, NY and lived there until attending IWU, where he graduated in 2001 with a BS in Communications. He currently works with social media networking and management at IWU. You can find his thoughts at erikfisher.com, and podcasts at serenity.com and wellnessbreakradio.com.

Erik and his wife Beth have one daughter, Emily, and a baby boy on the way this Fall.

A Labor of Love



If you don't have kids, you've probably not had a chance to venture to the second floor at Hanfield. Wrapped around the entire hallway is a mural with 105 squares depicting stories from the entire Bible. You may have also noticed the mural on the wall by the nursery. These are the work of our own Sherrill Howard. Recently, we had a chance to interview Sherrill about her passion.

CELEBRATIONS: Give us a little background about yourself.

SHERRILL: I was born and raised in Grant County and graduated from Eastbrook High School. I have 2 grown children (Mary and Brian), 1 grandson and a granddaughter on the way. My husband Rodney and I have attended Hanfield for 14 years.

CELEBRATIONS: When did you discover your artistic talent?

SHERRILL: My mother is a self-taught artist and I started drawing and coloring as a child. I loved to watch her and help whenever I could with her projects. She's always been my role model. She was very active in children's ministry and created a lot of artwork for church ministry. I never really tried to paint much until I was married and had my first child. It just took off from there.



CELEBRATIONS: Do you do other artwork besides paint?

SHERRILL: I just tried all kinds of artwork, with all types of mediums – oil, acrylic, water color and pastels. I used to do a lot of oil painting, but acrylics are the easiest to use and clean up, and you can use them on just about any surface. The acrylics are what I've used for all the painting on the walls here at Hanfield.

CELEBRATIONS: Tell us about the artwork upstairs. Was it something you saw somewhere?

SHERRILL: When our present building was being completed, I helped paint the walls along with many other volunteers. It was fun and very satisfying. Then Cris Bragg asked me if I thought I could do the mural that goes all around the halls upstairs. I had no idea, but I thought I'd try.

Pam Boatwright was the Children's Ministry Director at that time and she had a coloring book that went through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. I used those pictures and references as guidelines. Then I figured out size and all the rest according to how many pictures to use. Of course as always, I painted on days off work and weekends, and since each square took about 3 hours or more it took me a long time to get it done.



Sherrill's most recent project was the wall outside the nursery

The rooms that were painted for preschool were thought up and drawn out by others. I agreed to paint the farm room and then helped finish the jungle room.

The latest hallway by the nursery was great fun. I've never really painted animals before. My mom came to look one day and said, "Did you know you could do animals?" I have to admit I wasn't sure just how it would turn out. When Shannon Shilts asked me about doing something, I thought about it for a while. Finally, I thought it would be sweet to use mothers/dads with their babies. Then I started looking for books to use for reference. I used photographs and also children's books for ideas and "models."

CELEBRATIONS: How do you get your inspiration?

SHERRILL: Nature inspires me. I love the outdoors and I love to garden. I suppose I'm truly one of those "artsy" people – that is, I love music, color, design, details, etc. I can "see" pictures in my mind before I ever produce them.

I also used to do a lot of craft work, needlepoint, cross stitch, painting on fabrics, etc. Art is my passion; it's the only thing that I can do and completely lose myself in – that is,



A big panther at Washington Elementary School's gym

lose all track of time and what's happening around me. It's a wonderful feeling. I think that is how it is, or should be, for all of us when we use the gifts and talents that God has blessed us with, and I truly believe that we ALL have them.

Also, I have to say that I am humbled time and again by what the Lord has been able to use me to create. I love it, and I am so grateful for all the opportunities He has given me to share these gifts.

CELEBRATIONS: Are there other public places where you have used your talent?

SHERRILL: Over the years, I've done a lot of different kinds of artwork – paintings, graphic designs, banners, signs, murals, stage sets, and items for festivals and fairs.

I've also created lots of different things for Vacation Bible School and children's ministry.

One big highlight for me was working with all the volunteers at Washington Elementary School when Hanfield did the "extreme makeover" there. Creating and painting the 2 huge mascots for the gym was something I had not done before, especially doing things that big (7 feet tall) and that high on the wall.

I had no idea how or if that would turn out, and I was more than anxious about it. But as always, when you make yourself available for God to use, especially in the areas of the gifts and talents He has given you, He can do a mighty work. It was so phenomenal to be a part of that project!

We all go through difficult times. Sickness, stress, pain, financial challenges, relational difficulties, loss, sadness, loneliness, grief, heartache – the list goes on. We struggle through these difficulties, crying out to the Lord for help, and out of His great lovingkindness and mercy He hears us and sends us the help we need, rescuing us from our distress.

Most of our challenges are short-lived. But there are times when the Lord allows us to go through an extended season of difficulty or suffering. We cry out to the Lord like always, but this time there are no answers, no comforting presence, no immediate rescue or joyful deliverance. God seems hidden and painfully silent. Time slows down. Doubts creep in. The Holy Spirit seems far and the Enemy seems near.

It is very dark.

What is going on? Has God forgotten about us? Why won't He answer our prayer? How can good possibly come out of this intense pain? Is there purpose in this darkness?

Recently the Lord spoke to me about this dilemma of darkness. Fond of using parables, He used a story to bring the message home to me. It was my story – one about a lost diamond – that I had recorded in my journal a year ago.

June 15, 2010

I lost my diamond the other day. I was sitting on the couch and I happened to glance down at my hand and I saw something that made my heart stop: My engagement ring was empty. It has to be every married woman's worst nightmare – to lose her most cherished earthly possession, a constant and beautiful (and insanely expensive!) symbol of her love and commitment to her husband. My diamond held additional meaning for me, since it was given to me by my grandmother when I was a teenager. So not only was it a symbol of 17 years of marriage to my beloved husband, it was also a treasured family heirloom.

And now it was lost.

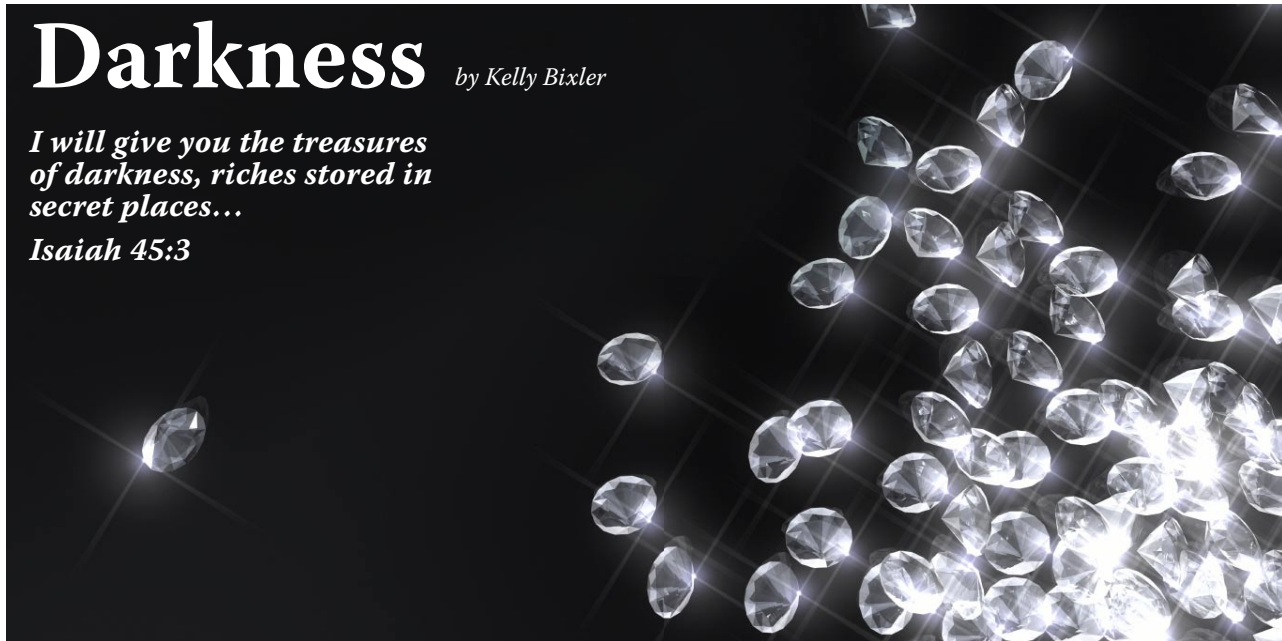
I got down on my hands and knees and searched for my diamond, retracing every step I had taken in the house that day. I carefully vacuumed the carpet and meticulously sifted through the contents of the

Treasures of Darkness

by Kelly Bixler

*I will give you the treasures
of darkness, riches stored in
secret places...*

Isaiah 45:3



vacuum canister. No diamond. As I continued to search, I started to feel a sense of hopelessness. I'll never find my diamond, I groaned inwardly. It's so small and my house is so big!

I eventually had to stop searching so I could go to work. When I returned, I did not have the heart to continue searching for my diamond. I felt hopeless about it and was starting to think I would never see it again. Later that night I was on the internet, checking my email, and getting very sleepy, since it was quite late. On a whim, I decided to google finding a lost diamond. So I typed in "How do I find a lost diamond in my house?" and read through some of the first few returns. There was one suggestion that kept coming up again and again: Turn off all the lights in the house and get down on your hands and knees with a flashlight and shine the flashlight across the floor. If it shines on the diamond, it will

sparkle brightly and you will easily be able to spot it.

This made sense to me, and with renewed hope, I found a flashlight, turned off all the lights and went to work. I decided to start in the basement and work my way upstairs. I had worked on laundry earlier that day, so it made sense to me to start in the laundry room.

I got down on my hands and knees and shined the flashlight across the laundry room floor. The light vividly exposed all the dirt, dust and cat hair, and I was thoroughly disgusted. But I was on a mission, so I continued crawling around the floor. I directed the flashlight underneath the dryer – more dirt, dust, cat hair and lint. Then I shined the flashlight underneath the washer. Again, lots of nasty stuff. But wait, what was that? Was that a sparkle? I

peered closer and I indeed saw something sparkle. I reached underneath the edge of the washer and pulled out the sparkly object. In the palm of my hand lay a dusty but beautiful little diamond.

I was absolutely amazed. At first I couldn't believe that this was my diamond, but as I turned it over and over in my hand, the reality finally set in: I had found my diamond! I cried tears of joy and then immediately called my husband and my parents who had been praying that I would find it, and shared the good news.

As I re-read this amazing story in my journal, I felt the Lord speak clearly to me, "Kelly, it was the darkness that enabled the diamond to be found." As I let the truth of that statement soak in, I realized that indeed, I never would have found the diamond in the daylight. It was the darkness that revealed it.

Darkness, in the life of a child of God, does have purpose. Sometimes the most valuable lessons and insights the Lord wants to teach us can only be learned in the dark. Our faith – of greater worth than gold and diamonds – is being refined and strengthened during these trying times as we are conformed into the image of Jesus. Though painful, God doesn't want us to be afraid of the dark. There are diamonds to be found in it.

I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places...

Kelly Bixler is a proofreader, wife and mother of 2. She holds a BA degree in Applied Communication from Asbury College.



Her husband Kyle is the Youth Director at Hanfield. They have two children, Josh and Lauren, and have been here at Hanfield since October 2004.

Kelly is a member of the communication team that helps put *Celebrations* together for you, and has her own proofreading business called The Write Proofreader (www.thewriteproofreader.com). Kelly has written a book entitled *Transformed by the Psalms*, sharing practical and inspiring reflections on all 150 Psalms.

Costa Rica was truly a life changing experience. I have been on six other mission trips before, but this was my first one outside of the country. It was amazing to be in a foreign culture and connect with the people despite the language barrier. Serving and smiling seem to be a universal blessing! We did a lot of both of those things that week. Our team from The King's Academy worked at two churches in San Jose, doing various tasks from painting to gardening to scrubbing. In the evenings we led a VBS ministry where we interacted with as many as 150 children! We accomplished more than what was expected and made a good impression with the churches. These churches hadn't had interactions with missionaries or organizations before. The pastors and their families were very blessed with our willingness to serve!

Being surrounded by Spanish was a valuable experience for me as I am pursuing a Spanish major in college. It was great to be able to gauge my skills and see how well I was able to listen and communicate. I was able to sing songs in Spanish, hear Spanish sermons, and talk with several adults and children in Spanish. I was blessed with the opportunity to meet a few people my age who were learning English and converse with them. I would speak in Spanish, and they would speak in English. They were quite broken but these conversations are among my fondest memories! We'd both smile at each other's mistakes and smile even bigger when we spoke well! San Jose, Costa Rica is a beautiful place. I am hoping that my trip to Costa Rica this past April wasn't my last. Thank you to everyone who contributed financially or prayerfully to my trip!

Sarah Pearson



Serving in COSTA RICA

This past April I had the opportunity to travel to Costa Rica with Sr. High students from the King's Academy, including Erin and Sarah Pearson. While in Costa Rica, we did work projects with two different churches in San Jose. One of the projects was such a beautiful picture of the body of Christ showing the love of Christ in small ways and how it can have a profound impact:

When we arrived at the second church on Wednesday we noticed a rundown house across the street from the church where we would be working. When we were receiving our work assignments the pastor told us that the lady in that house used to come to church, but due to some family issues and embarrassment, she stopped coming many years ago and refused to come back because of the shame. The pastor wanted to reach out to her and asked us if we would paint her house. So we asked her if we could and, surprised by the offer, she agreed. So over the next two days the group scraped, filled cracks and painted her house and small stone wall in front of the house. After the group was done, one of the local missionaries brought her outside and showed her the house. When she stood out front looking at it she began to weep. She looked at the missionary and told her that for years she thought she had the ugliest house on the street. She was so ashamed of her house. In one afternoon she said it was transformed into the prettiest house on the street. She told her that she didn't need to be ashamed of her house anymore. The missionary smiled, hugged her and said, "That will preach."

We have not heard if she has started going back to church, but it was amazing to see the teens showing love and grace to a person they had never met. We pray that all of the labor and ministry that was done will bear fruit.

Thank you to Hanfield for giving me the opportunity to serve the people in San Jose, Costa Rica with the King's Academy students! It was a blessing and a trip I will not forget!

Kyle Bixler



Softball Builds Friendships

by Jerry Harshman

To casual observers, softball may seem like a frivolous way to mark the dog days of summer, but to a few of our men at Hanfield it's a way for them to reclaim their youth, to become more involved with their church and to make life-long friends. For the coach, Brent Harshman, it has been all of those things and much, much more.

Nine years ago Brent recalls his first experience on Hanfield's team. "I think that I decided to sign up when I did because I was at Ball State and was kind of bored during the summer time." Hope springs eternal for this avid Chicago Cubs fan whose baseball fever quickly became channeled into softball.

"When I first started playing for Hanfield, the guys all treated me well," Harshman reflected. "I was really rusty as a player and didn't see much action at all out there besides playing a little bit as catcher. I got quite a few at-bats during the first season, but didn't get to play in the field much for the first two years.

"The guys all treated me like one of their own right off the bat, even though I was still pretty shy," he added. "I think the friendships that I made are what kept me coming back." Some of those friendships carried over to his life off the field at Ball State. One of those friends, Drew Tittle, asked Brent to share a house at BSU with some of his buddies. They lived together in

a house off campus and Harshman's roommates—Drew and Michael Yocum are members of this year's team.

"I remember what it felt like being the new guy, and maybe not being the most gifted athlete in the bunch," Brent said. "I feel like that has helped me to try to be more of a 'welcome wagon' for the new guys. I let them know that we appreciate them for taking the time to show up to the practices and games even if they aren't the world's greatest athletes. I try to get them to buy into the concept that they are helping their teammates by being there and being cheerleaders," he grinned.

Harshman gradually moved from that shy, lowly newcomer he describes to coaching the team and recently accepting the challenge of heading Hanfield's Sports Ministry Team. "I spent the first few years just as a lowly player on the team, but when Mike Forshey briefly left Hanfield for a preaching assignment, Josh Baker took over the coaching reigns.

"Since Josh and I had been close and because he had to miss a few games when his kids had baseball games, he left me in charge of making the lineups and doing the coaching during the games." This season Josh will lead the Hillside Wesleyan team, but he and Brent have remained great friends off the field.

Forshey returned to coach the team for a few more years, but frequently asked Brent for input from time to time on strategy. A couple of years ago Mike decided to no longer coach and just enjoys pitching and playing on the team along with his son, Brandon.

It was a "no brainer" for Brent. He answered the call and stepped forward. 2011 is Harshman's second full season as coach.

"I have made a lot of good friendships through softball. Most of the friends that I still hang out with all the time are ones I met at softball," he added. Most any night at the games you'll see wives, parents, and children there cheering on their



2011 Hanfield Softball Roster: BACK ROW (l-r): Jerry Harshman (official scorekeeper), Kyle Martin, Michael Yocum, Matt DeLong, Brent Harshman, Luke Haglund, Zack Myers, Tim Pauley. FRONT ROW (l-r): Stephen Yocum, Drew Tittle, Brandon Forshey, Mike Forshey, Nick Roth. NOT PICTURED: Tyler Ashley, Mark Earnest, Neil Haglund, James Keppeler, Ryan Leffingwell, Nick Ratliff, Marc Sharfman



Team members perform the ritual "heel-click" in the outfield grass as they take the field.

heroes. But, even more strikingly you'll see men reaching out to others in a friendly Christ-like fashion.

Many of the couples get together at other times and at each others' homes and several couples went through the Financial Peace University program together at the church. Churches have many entry points, but Hanfield Softball has been a welcome one for many of our young adults.

Follow the team online!

Chapel Park Softball League:
www.wiwutv51.com/collegeweb/chapelpark.html

Team Page on Gamechangers:
www.gamechangers.io
 Click on "Find a team to follow" and type "Hanfield"

2011 Hanfield Softball Schedule

May 19	Swayzee Nazarene Church	6:00pm
May 25	Upland Community Church	6:00pm
June 1	St. James Lutheran Church	6:00pm
June 7	Brookhaven Wesleyan Church	6:00pm
June 13	New Life Community Church	6:00pm
June 23	College Wesleyan Church	6:00pm
June 29	Eastview Wesleyan Church	6:00pm
July 9	Lakeview Wesleyan Church	10:30am
July 12	Hillside Wesleyan Church	6:00pm
July 18	Swayzee Nazarene Church	6:00pm
July 25-August 6	Double Elimination Tournament	

All games are double-headers and are played at Union Chapel Baptist Church, 6049 E 300S.

LISTENING FOR LENT

**ASSIGNMENT:
HANFIELD**

by Rick Fox

As Pastor Tim challenged us to release something for Lent, my mind began to ponder all of the things I truly enjoy. Many things raced around the track in my mind.

I immediately thought of giving up watching NASCAR. That would be easy! Well, maybe not. It is just a once-a-week deal that really doesn't require me to truly release anything, because I am an avid multitasker and am always doing something in conjunction with the televised race. So giving up NASCAR would not really be a sacrifice.

So I prayed, listened, and meditated, and the Holy Spirit laid just what I needed to sacrifice on my heart.

Since I work for AEP in Fort Wayne, I routinely listen to talk radio during the daily 38-mile trek. Of course, if I were going to commit, I would have to give up afternoon talk radio too. Conservative talk show host Pat Miller from WOWO would do just fine without me for 40 days.

So, Monday morning I backed out of the garage and turned the radio off. I enjoyed the quiet time and thought about many things that I normally would not be pondering if I had the radio on. The first few days went by with me taking some more time praying and listening. It had been a while since I heard His voice as I am usually bombarded with phone calls, emails and texts; generally rescuing someone from a catastrophe.

By Wednesday, I was not even tempted to touch the knob for the radio. As I drove down our long driveway with rain sporadically splashing on the windshield, I noticed how quiet it was. I began to pray and praise Him for who He is and thank Him for His awesome mercy and grace.

As I was traveling my usual morning route, I was only

three miles from home when I heard a still, small voice. I could feel the voice more than hear it, actually. Softly, yet very clearly I heard, "Don't take the usual path to work today."

"Hmmm," I thought. "Is this Him or is it just me hoping to hear His still, small voice?" I drove for about another mile with a soft gentle rain when I again heard His voice: "Don't take the usual path to work today."

Twice I heard Him, and I quickly decided not to be like Peter and deny Him three times. After all, this was just a simple trip to work.

We live in the last house in Grant County on County Road 100 North, so my typical route takes me to SR 3 straight up to the Airport Expressway, and then it's just a short jaunt to the office. Taking the interstate would take me through Warren, north on SR 5 and then to I-69.

I somewhat begrudgingly avoided the urge to turn toward SR 3, snaked through the sleeping town of Warren and continued on my way to Fort Wayne. With a slight mist falling and the wipers on intermittent, I rolled past the Markle exit. Wondering what God may have had in store for my detour and specifically listening for clear details of His direction, I began to hear a very faint, low rumble. Maybe I was just listening to noises that I normally don't hear because of the talk radio chatter. No, it seemed to be getting increasingly louder with each passing mile.

"OK Lord, I think I am getting a flat tire. Is one of these trusty Michelins losing air?"

A number of thoughts were running through my mind, but I was only a few miles south of a rest park. So I began to pray... fervently.

As the rumbling got louder, I got closer to the rest park. As I pulled off the interstate and slowly limped to a stop in the well-lit safe haven, I was thankful that I made it! I'm a little OCD, so I was prepared with a can of Fix-A-Flat. I popped the trunk and smugly retrieved the can of miraculous chemicals that would allow me to quickly get back on my way. With the short hose attached to the valve stem of the almost completely flat tire, a press on the can's nozzle was a quick disappointment. All it had was a quick PSSSSSTTTT. That was it??? All my preparation

was for naught? The can had been in the trunk for how long? Too long, since it had lost its pressure to inflate the tire. Great, just great.

"OK Lord, what are you telling me? Are you telling me I'm not prepared no matter how much I try?"

So I thought about my options. I could call AAA and have the tire changed, but it would take them at least an hour or so to dispatch a service truck to rescue me. Not acceptable in my mind—I was not going to be late (something else I'm OCD about).

I had recently checked the air in the little doughnut spare tire, so I knew I had an out. I would just change it myself and be at work still ahead of all the others. I quickly removed the spare and jack, when I realized I hadn't changed a tire with a conventional jack for years; there was no hydraulic floor jack here.

"OK Lord, are you trying to humble me? Well, it's not going to work."

The lug nuts were loose in a flash and the jack easily lifted the car so I could swap the deflated tire for one that was full of precious air. It was a speedy tire change, although not one that would give me a spot on Jimmy Johnson's NASCAR pit crew, but one that would challenge any unfortunate soul changing a tire in misty rain!

The car was now back down on four tires complete with air and the lug nuts tight. The rain was picking up into a downpour just as I tossed the jack and the deflated tire into the trunk. As I slammed the trunk and swiftly made it to the dry interior, I gave thanks for the preparation and the ability to change a tire. As I watched the larger raindrops smash against the windshield, I heard that still, small voice again.

"Go and look at the spare tire."

"What???" I quickly replied. "You want me to go out in this pouring rain to check a tire that I am one hundred per cent sure is tight and ready for the final few miles to Fort Wayne?"

I heard that quiet voice again: "Go and look at that spare tire one more time."

I again--somewhat reluctantly--hopped out to look at the spare. Just as I rounded the right rear of the

car, I easily saw what He was telling me. Right there, lying in a small puddle beside the spare tire, were my brand new glasses. I snatched them up and scurried back to the driver's seat just as it began to rain even more intensely.

I humbly sat in the quiet of the car and pondered the morning's event. It was obvious God spoke to me because He knew what was in store for me. Had I taken the usual route, I would have made my pit stop on the unsafe gravel berm of SR 3, in the dark of night with pouring rain. I can only imagine the dangerous outcome of that scenario.

I recalled Tim's challenge to make a sacrifice as the first step toward hearing God's voice. Had I only given up NASCAR for a few weeks, I may not have had the humbling opportunity to change a flat in a pouring rain. I am not complaining one bit though: Experiencing this flat was an awesome blessing.

As I finished my altered route to work that morning with hands dirty and clothes soaked, I counted my blessings and thanked Him for the disaster that could've been, but wasn't. After just a few days of giving up the words of Pat Miller or other talk show hosts and tuning into God's channel, I saw the benefit of listening obediently. Paying attention to Him rather than the distractions of the world sure presented a great testimony for me to share with my team that rainy morning. Who knows, just maybe someone else will choose to listen a little closer for His still, small voice some rainy day.



Rick Fox and his wife Robyn have been involved at Hanfield for many years.

Rick has been involved in our prayer ministry and has helped support Pastor Tim as a friend and accountability partner for years.

Rick works for AEP in Fort Wayne, trying to keep the grid online, and loves the outdoors.

God's Faithfulness

by Faith Madison

This is the story that has brought me to where I am today and why I decided to be baptized in the summer of 2009. I have come a long way from where I was many years ago, and have learned so much about what Jesus Christ's and God's love can do.

I grew up in Massachusetts and moved to Indiana just over 17 years ago. Growing up, I thought that I had a happy home life. After many years of counseling, I have realized that it was far from that. There was no affection shown at all between my parents and my sister and I. I never heard the words "I love you" from either of my parents until I was 39 years old and had been talking to my Dad on the phone. He said "I love you" right before we hung up. However, I didn't realize what he had said until after I had hung up.

We did attend church every week. When I was a child, I went to Sunday school and when I was older, attended the church services and was involved in youth group. As I recall, I went to church services only because that's what we did.

In elementary school, I was constantly teased, picked on and beaten up by the boys. When I got to my house I'd be crying. My mother would ask me why I was crying and I'd tell her what had happened. Then she'd tell me not to cry because the kids would then know they got the better of me. She would also ask what I did to instigate it.

As I got older, there were two families that moved into the neighborhood. Both families had children that were much younger than me. I was about 11 or 12 and the only way to earn extra money at that time was to babysit. I started doing this for both families. When I was about 12 years old, the husband of one of the families started molesting me. This went on for about a year. I never told my parents and therefore suffered with this for many years. Whenever I'd babysit at the one house on Saturdays, I would pray that the man would not come home for lunch. If he did, I knew what would happen.

When I got into junior high and high school, my mother found other ways to put me down. She would

always compare me to a couple friends of mine that always made the honor roll. She'd say, "Why can't you be like Sue or Laura?" Whenever I did do well, it was still not good enough.

When I was a sophomore in high school I started dating Bill. My dad thought the world of him, but my mother never showed anything one way or the other toward him. She did allow him to be at the house to visit, but I never felt comfortable when she was around. Bill went into the Navy right out of high school and then I went to college after I graduated. But our relationship continued and got stronger. The relationship lasted eight and a half years and we were engaged to be married. Unfortunately, I broke it off because when we would spend time together we'd argue a lot. He never knew about my being molested as a child or the rest of the baggage I carried.

My college years were not the best. During my freshman year, I was drugged by someone with whom I went to the campus tavern. I remember walking out of the tavern and then waking up in this person's

room. I started partying, drinking, smoking pot and became very promiscuous. I'm not proud of that.

My parents split up during my junior year. I denied that this was something that affected me. At the end of first semester, I was on academic probation. I dropped out of school one month before the end of second semester because I was flunking out.

I've always had a temper and never gave it any thought; I thought it was just the way I was. The year I broke up with Bill, I ended up dating another guy (Victor) whom I followed to Florida and then eventually to Indiana. Looking back, he was abusive verbally and emotionally—putting me down in such a way that I didn't realize what was happening.

At about this same time I finally admitted to myself that I had a problem with anger. I opened the phone book and found a counselor. She was with Christian Outreach. I made the first appointment, then a few days later, called back and canceled. I was not ready to have Christianity "rammed down my throat." Then, a few days after canceling, I called back and

made the appointment again. I found her to be a wonderful counselor, combining science with biblical teaching.

Less than a year after my relationship with Victor ended for the final time, I started dating Rick. During the six years we were together, he took me for a lot of money. It almost destroyed my relationships with two very close friends.

It has been just over 17 years since I moved to Indiana and there have been many heartaches. Of course, I still miss my friends in New England but things happen for a reason. Moving to Indiana got me to admit I had an anger problem, for which I sought counseling. In going to counseling, I have been forced to realize I had a lot of other emotional issues.

A very good thing that has happened in my life is Hanfield. Even though someone invited me to come, it's been Pastor Tim's teachings that have kept me coming. I have learned so much about God and Jesus Christ. I know it was God that brought me to

Faith Madison being baptized at the Vektor Pond, August 2, 2009

Ambushed by God

by Gail Haglund

Have you ever been ambushed by God? By that, I mean, have you ever had God intervene in your life in such a way that it totally took you by surprise and took your breath away?

Here's a little bit of my history.... In July of 1996, I moved back to my home state of Indiana. I had lived in Tacoma, Washington for five years. For the last 18 years of my life, I had been primarily a stay-at-home mom. Needless to say, the whole computer thing passed me by as I raised four kids. Upon moving back to Indiana, I faced being a single parent and jumping back into the job market. New Horizons Ministries took a chance on me (even though I barely knew where the "on" switch was on a computer), and I worked there for 13½ years.

In May 2010, I was laid off due to the ministry's extreme financial difficulties. To say that the next six months stretched my faith is a huge understatement. As I searched for work and lived on unemployment, I saw God work in many ways in my life. God's provision is incredible.

As Christmastime came nearer, I began to fret about how I would be able to purchase Christmas gifts for my family. We have never spent huge amounts on presents for each other, but even a \$5 gift for each kid and grandkid was out of reach.

I tithe, and I have tested God many times in that area, and He has come through every single time. But this was different—could I ask God for money for Christmas gifts when I was struggling to pay my mortgage?

Now, I have never been a "name-it-claim-it" sort of person; you have to understand that about me. But I felt strongly that I was supposed to ask God for a certain amount of money to buy Christmas gifts. I didn't feel comfortable about it, and I didn't have a lot of faith that it would happen, because it felt frivolous, wrong somehow. However, I did it because

I believed that God wanted me to do it, to ask. So about three weeks before Christmas, I prayed and asked God to give me a certain amount of money. Over the next week or so, I thought about it now and then, but shoved it to the back of my mind and tried not to fret over it.

About two weeks before Christmas, I received a card in the mail from a college friend and her husband. Included in the card was a check for \$100!! I have not spoken to this friend in at least twenty years, and even though we chat on Facebook occasionally, we are not close. She wrote that she and her husband



felt strongly that God had told them to send me \$100. Needless to say, this blew me away; I sat at my kitchen table and wept. It was such a humbling experience.

Little did I know that this was only the first of God's surprises He had in store for me.

On December 20th, the children's ministry volunteers gathered at the church for our annual Christ-

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Why Do We Do VBS?

by Beth Fisher

Vacation Bible School is part of our DNA at Hanfield. Our people expect it and are proud of the many VBS weeks put on by the church throughout the years. But why does Hanfield love VBS so much? Why do we put the great amount of time, resources, and volunteers into one week of ministry to kids each year?

I think it is because VBS is one event that encompasses all aspects of our Hanfield mission statement, which reads: "To make, mature and mobilize disciples of Jesus Christ in order to magnify God's name." Our Children's Ministry mission statement is like it: "In partnership with parents and other gifted adults, we will help children to know about God and his plan for their lives, to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ in order to go into their world equipped to show others the way to God."

KNOW- Make Disciples

VBS is an outreach to un-churched or under-churched kids in our community. Many of the kids who attend Hanfield VBS are Hanfieldites or kids who attend other churches so it is difficult for us to know exactly how many of the kids who come fall into these categories. However, many unchurched parents will bring their children to a VBS when they would otherwise be unwilling to bring them to Sunday morning worship. Several of our Hanfieldites

can only get certain kids in their family to church during VBS week. Also, some parents use area VBSs as a form of child care during the summer. Out of necessity, these parents are more willing to let their kids "go to church" than they might be on a regular basis.

GROW- Mature Disciples

VBS is a time for our Hanfield kids, and other church kids, to come together for fun fellowship and discipleship. The Children's Ministry staff works hard to pick a VBS curriculum that will challenge the kids who already go to church or believe in Jesus to build up their faith. The different fun activities that we do reinforce the Bible lesson, Bible verse, and Biblical Truth for that day. Furthermore, the kids do these different activities in community, or fellowship, with other kids in their grade level. Meanwhile, the kids see youth and adults continually modeling life with Jesus and how that life can be fun.

GO- Mobilize Disciples

VBS gives our Hanfieldite youth and adults an opportunity to serve and give to children in our church and community. For the past few years, more than 70 volunteers have worked during the VBS week. Plus, we have many Hanfieldites who aren't available

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Kids at a VBS in India express their thanks for the gifts that made their VBS possible

Helping Others

Last year, the kids at VBS raised **over \$750** in support of missionary Peter Pereira to help kids in India be able to have their own VBS. **That money sent over 150 kids to VBS**, where they not only heard about Jesus, but they also received a healthy meal, something many kids in India go without each day.

Peter says, "Many come for food, but God gives them the Bread of Life." Thank you to our kids for helping others a whole world away!

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Ambushed by God

mas celebration, which always involves great food, a lot of laughter, and a rowdy game of "Spoons."

Just before we began our game, Tim Chambers came into the room and motioned me over to the hallway. He said, "I have something for you." I responded, "Is it going to make me cry?" and he said, "Probably."

He handed me an envelope. In that envelope was a check from one of Hanfield's ABF groups. The check was for the exact same amount I had asked God for!!!

I leaned against the wall and sobbed, overcome by such unexpected generosity, from people I barely know. I had been "ambushed" again by the incredible goodness of God. Tim just grinned. And I suspect that up in heaven, Jesus also had an ear-to-ear grin on His face.

It still humbles me and brings tears to my eyes to think of how God gave me such wonderful Christmas surprises, so that I could bless my family.

I am reminded that God cares about every aspect of my life. I was completely humbled and amazed by the love shown by Hanfieldites. I once again was shown that GOD KNOWS. He KNOWS every circumstance in my life, and He KNEW I was going to lose my job, He KNEW I was going to struggle at Christmas, and He already had a plan for a holy Christmas ambush.

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Why VBS?

to work during VBS hours or who don't feel comfortable working with kids, who help with preparing materials, decorating and building sets, administration, and donating money and supplies. Then, VBS gives the children who attend VBS, and their families, an opportunity to give to a missions project. Each year, the kids (and many parents) go crazy over raising money to reach out to others who need Jesus—it helps that we always make it a contest between boys and girls!

SHOW- Magnify God's Name

Ultimately, our goal of VBS each year is to magnify God's name and to give Him glory. My favorite thing about VBS is that it is an entire week of filling our church with kids who are encouraged and released to praise Jesus. It reminds me of the story of Jesus visiting the temple after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:12-16). After Jesus drove out the money changers and sellers, He began healing and ministering to people. While Jesus did these "wonderful things" children were "shouting in the temple area" praises to Him. The chief priests wanted Jesus to quiet them, but Jesus refused to quiet them and quoted Psalm 8:2, which reads: "From the lips of children and infants You have ordained praise." There is power in the praise that comes from the lips of children.

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God's Faithfulness

Indiana. If I had not come here, I may not have admitted I had a problem or have found someone with the kind of training my counselor has. I'm still not reading the Bible regularly, but I do get a lot out of attending church and listening to Christian radio.

Back when I was having severe financial issues, I had to humble myself and ask if I could use the food pantry at Hanfield. That was when I met Diane Tedder for the first time. Since that time I have noticed how kind the people at Hanfield are. Unbeknownst to me, with the help of two friends of mine and Diane,

the people of Hanfield purchased a car for me a little over two years ago. I haven't been able to do a lot of service at the church, but I do try to bring items for the food pantry as often as I can.

Over the past thirteen years of counseling, I have come a very long way in my emotional battles. I had severe anger issues which could have turned out very badly if I had not sought help when I did. I also was very depressed, but did not realize it. It has been a very long and hard battle to overcome the baggage I carried. I still work at it every day. God is wonderful. I know I would not be here if God had not helped me find the blessed person to give me the help I desperately needed.

Last year two additional and wonderful things happened. First, I became debt-free, with the exception of the first and second mortgages on my house. The second was that my counselor released me from seeing her.

Thank you for all that you do and what you have done for me. I have come so far and try to remember to thank God every day.

Meet Beth Fisher

Beth grew up as a preacher's kid, accepted Jesus at a young age, and has loved being part of a church as long as she can remember. She has seen how God desires relationships with even little children.



Beth attended IWU and graduated in 2002 with a degree in Christian Education. While she was in college, her dad died, and her mom and sister Beverly moved to Marion. They all then started attending Hanfield.

Her mom is Shirley Saddler, our Children's Ministry Director. In October 2007, Beth was hired as our Kid's Hope USA Director and Children's Ministry Assistant. That means her mom is also her boss. They work well together, although sometimes Shirley will say, "OK, I'm talking to you as your boss, not your mother!" (or the other way around).

Beth is now our Children's Extension Ministry Assistant, and in charge of such events as the Christmas Pageant, Easter Egg Hunt, VBS, and Elementary Summer Camp. As Kid's Hope Director, she recruits mentors and prayer partners in a local elementary school.

Beth and her husband Erik have one daughter, Emily, and a baby boy on the way this Fall.

Hanfield Outdoor Baptisms

One of our time-honored traditions at Hanfield is the annual outdoor baptism service, held each summer for almost 30 years!

During that time, hundreds of people have been baptized. Young kids, grandparents, and even whole families have been baptized at the same time during these services.

Our next outdoor baptism will take place on **Sunday, August 14, 2011** at 1:00pm. If you would like to be baptized, please call the church office at 664.8726 or email info@hanfield.org.



VBS 2011
July 25-29, 8:30-11:30am
Hanfield UMC

Volunteer or register your kids
online at www.hanfield.org/vbs



Spotlight On...

3-In-1 ABF

a definite British flavor it's probably Hugh or Alma Harris sharing one of their passions. "Hugh is an answer to prayer," Bob said. "I've never seen someone grow as much as Hugh has."

Hugh remembers him and Alma meeting Bob and Becky about 12 years ago. "We enjoyed their company and I began to realize there was something missing in my life," he said. It was that friendship which brought them into the class. "I have enjoyed the ability to learn with them."

Before that, Alma had gone to church by herself, but found that to be increasingly difficult. "Hugh said why don't we find a church," Alma recalled. But, it was a stranger in a snow storm that sealed the deal and brought them to Hanfield. "Kent Kessler stopped to help us during a snow storm and told us where the church was," she said. "I love the class. I love the people and have made some very special friends here."

Besides praying, coffee, food and fellowship are integral parts of the 3-in-1 experience. "He-Brews" is my favorite book of the Bible," Velma Ratliff smiled. "I started coming with Dave (Ratliff) and Roberta (Ratliff), but Bob's sister, Margaret, said why don't you come to our class," she said. Velma remembers seeing a large white tent at our current church location labeled "the harvest" and thought she was going to a plant sale. She continues to be thankful for the way Hugh and Alma as well as the rest of the class supported her when she had to have her leg amputated.

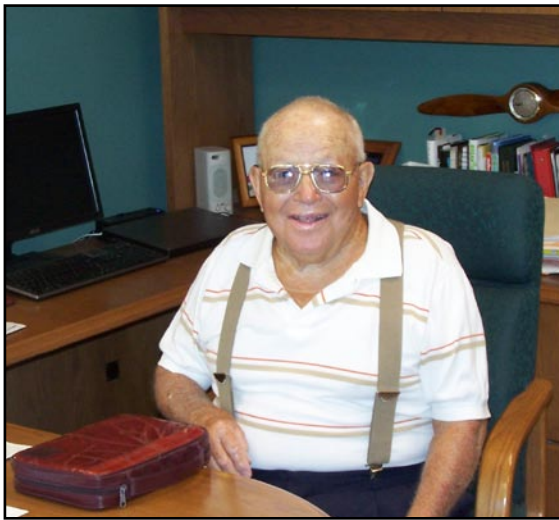
For some, the 3-in-1 ABF is the last stop before eternity. "Bob calls it our coronation," Becky added jokingly. But, for others

Every Sunday morning Pastor Tim's office is transformed into a "Cheers" type environment where everyone's name is known and each member's needs are met. It's a hub of activity where you'll find Mike DeShon setting up the chairs; Vicki DeShon schlepping coffee from the kitchen; Becky Hix copying handouts for the lesson while Bob Hix or other classmates are busy passing out napkins and homemade goodies.

Bob reflects on how the class has changed over the years. "We used to be called the Hustlers," he smiled. "But, it just didn't seem appropriate any longer." As you enter the classroom don't be misled by the walkers or canes. Many of its members may not move quite as quickly as they once did, but their passion for loving the Lord and serving others continue to grow.

Each class starts off with prayer requests. "Prayer works," Bob said. "Look at me. I'm a product of prayer." Bob may be Hanfield's true bionic man. Why, with all the repairs, replacements and enhancements, he's certainly good for at least another 50,000 miles.

If you happen to overhear a spirited history or railroad conversation emanating from the room with



Bob Hix leads the 3-in-1 ABF in their coronation to the ABF Eternal!

age is no barrier at all.

Mike's the youngster in the group. "A guy from Lakeview told us about Hanfield," Mike recalled. "Vicki began singing in the choir and Becky invited me to join their class. I really enjoyed it. Even though all the folks were older they cook better and allowed me to be myself," Mike said.

Later, Mike asked Vicki to join him in class and her response was, "Really?!" She had attended church for 11 years by herself before she and Mike were married and started coming to Hanfield. Vicki thought they should probably attend an ABF with people more their age, but when she saw how comfortable Mike was she decided to give it a try. "(In this class) we have found very faithful friends who love us and support us no matter what," she said.

"Most people's concept is there's not much more to learn, but we've found that we never quit learning. We are still growing in the Word," she smiled. Vicki has been given the job of designated scripture reader in the class—which she does very well!!

Becky admits she came into the class kicking and screaming too. The older class no longer had a teacher and Bob had been asked to fill that void. Becky didn't want to be in there with all those older people, but along with Bob and Jeanette Douglas they are all that remain from that original class.

For Ruth Ann Custer, it was no longer being able to drive which brought her to Hanfield and eventually to the 3-in-1 class. "I came because my daughter, Vonda (Hanson) and Tim (Hanson) brought me with them," she said. "I wanted to be in the Word and wanted to be in a class with people my age. Here, I can say things and not wonder what people will say. Everyone is really friendly," she added.

Dick Smith is the class's newest member. His daughter, Melissa (Whitehead) took him around to visit the various ABF classes, but Dick found a home with the 3-in-1. "I just ran into wonderful people here," he said. "The chair is comfortable and I can hear what is being said," he smiled. Dick found that too much background noise made it more difficult to hear in some of the other classroom settings. "I like the wisdom of the older people," he grinned. "This is the way people are supposed to get along!" he said. "Plus, I didn't know there were so many good cooks in here!"

Call it an ABF, a Sunday school class or a small group. But, it's the practice of loving the Lord, loving one another and serving others that keeps its members coming back as long as they can. After all, no one wants to miss the fellowship, great food and a chance for coronation in the ABF Eternal!

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