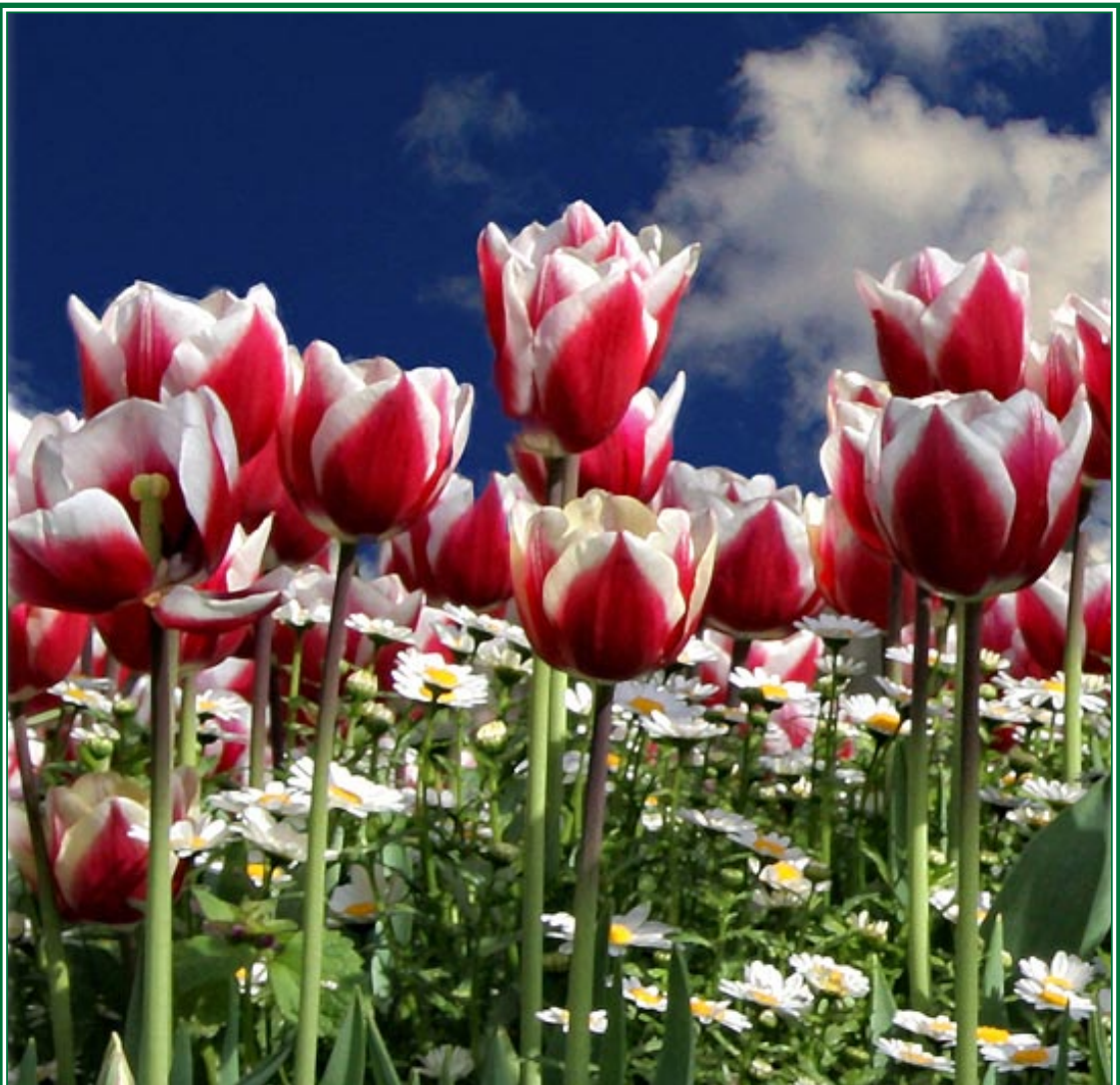


# Celebrations

real people real stories real faith



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real people real stories real faith

March 2011

Issue 1

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Stories from those who delivered Baskets of Joy

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# Welcome to Celebrations!

## From the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of Hanfield's *Celebrations* magazine! This magazine has been many months in the making and we are excited to finally launch the finished product.

*Celebrations* is so named because in it we celebrate what God is doing in the lives of people at Hanfield. We share our stories, big and small. We peek into changed lives. And most importantly, we give God the glory for it all!

Surely *Celebrations* will continue to evolve as we figure out what we're doing. What will remain the same is that in each issue, you will find lots of stories. About mission trips. About God's deliverance through illness and heartache. About aiming to bless others, but finding you're the one being blessed. About finding God in the little things. About how God is bringing groups of people together. About child-like faith. About people just like you. **Real people. Real stories. Real faith.**

Of course, I could not put this together on my own. I want to thank the Celebrations Team for their input, writing, editing, and tireless devotion to this project: Jerry Harshman, Sheri Harshman, John Morgan, and Kelly Bixler.

If you would like to join this team, we would love to have you! Please let me know at 765.664.8726 x106 or [tlehrian@hanfield.org](mailto:tlehrian@hanfield.org).

May you find inspiration on these pages. **Celebrate what God is doing, because He is busy!**

Tim Lehrian  
Communications Director  
*Celebrations* Magazine General Editor

## From the Pastor

Proof-reading this first edition of *Celebrations* made me laugh, cry, pray, and even sing a little. I suspect these articles will do the same for you. *Celebrations* will encourage you, but it is more than just another periodical for you to read in your spare time. It is like reading an inspirational magazine from a Christian organization with this unique twist: actually *knowing* personally the people who are writing the articles.

God is at work at Hanfield! He is changing lives. He is helping His people grow spiritually. We grow in our **faith**, as we hear real **stories**, from real **people**. So...read on!

Tim Helm  
Senior Pastor  
Hanfield UMC

### What do YOU Want to See?

Celebrations is YOUR magazine. What do you want to see in it? Do you have a story you want to share? Do you know of someone else's story that should be shared? Let us know!

Contact Tim Lehrian at 664.8726 x106 or [tlehrian@hanfield.org](mailto:tlehrian@hanfield.org).

### Celebrations is a publication of:

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**Service Times** Sunday @ 9:00 & 10:30am



*Baskets of Joy* was a huge success this year! 25 families were blessed with gifts and food during the holidays. Our congregation went above and beyond what we asked. But those who helped deliver ended up receiving as much as they gave. Here are a few stories:

### Missy Simpson

“Baskets of Joy this year was so much more than just providing food and gifts for someone else during a time of need. It was about people helping each other emotionally and spiritually; about God bringing complete strangers together and each of us walking away with a sense of wonder.

Many years ago God provided for my family during a difficult financial time. Since then, each year I pray that God shows me how I can share the love of Jesus and bless someone else in need. This year, like years past, my family took tags off the trees at Hanfield to buy gifts for Baskets of Joy. When they announced volunteers were needed to deliver the baskets, my husband leaned over and said, “I am going to sign us up.” My first thought was, “How am I ever going to fit this into an already packed schedule?” But God told me, “Someone had time for you; do you remember?” I knew God was tugging at my heart to commit to doing this. I just wasn't sure why.

The night of the delivery I felt God's presence with me as we prayed over the baskets. I knew God was working on my heart at that moment. I had just been diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis a few months prior and was really struggling emotionally with my diagnosis. Unfortunately, my husband also has the same disease so it has not been easy. It

turns out that someone I met that night has a similar health condition and as we talked, we became fast friends. We ended up staying for almost an hour talking about our experiences, struggles and frustrations. Before I left, we exchanged phone numbers and became Facebook friends.

Sometimes we think we will be blessing others when, in fact, God uses every person in every circumstance to teach us about his love.

### Veronica Tittle

“Just before we were to do our delivery, I was told that our family consisted of a single mother and children. On top of raising a family by herself, I also learned that she was very ill. We actually had to postpone our delivery by one day due to her being in the hospital.

When we got to her home, I noticed her thankfulness. However, from my perspective, her thankfulness came second to her strength. The words “thank you” were drowned out by her strong handshake, wide smile, and big hug. It was amazing that a lady who was just released from the hospital and was in the midst of battling cancer could be so full of life. I knew she had to be in pain. It was evident, however, that God was giving her strength.

I don't know why, but whenever I think of helping those in need, I think of people who are frail, depressed, and without much hope. This experience knocked out that misconception. This lady in need was one of the strongest women I had met in a long time. Her outlook seemed hopeful, and her aura was warm. It was refreshing, humbling, and a great look into God's work.

# I Sing A New Way

*In 2007, Hanfield's own Mike Conner was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma of the tonsil and throat. As an attorney and actor in Marion Civic Theater productions, the possibility of not being able to speak or swallow again was devastating. But God has taken a possibly life-threatening circumstance and created a beautiful story from it. Mike recently wrote a book about his experiences called I Sing A New Way. You may have seen a story written in the Marion Chronicle-Tribune recently about the book. The following are excerpts from that book.*

## *From the Foreword:*

**I always knew** that writing a book was difficult. If it was not, then everyone would be writing and making a living at it. Still, like most people, I figured that I had one good book in me, and it was just a matter of getting it out of my head. How hard could that be? I came to find out that beyond the technical aspects of grammar, and the challenge of simply making it interesting, writing a book could also be emotionally challenging. In the midst of suffering, it was easy for me to write because it was therapeutic. In better times, as pain and sickness faded, I found my writing often stalled. I would get a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach when I would think about returning to my keyboard and reliving the suffering all over again. Still, it had to be written. It would be a true shame and an unfulfilled purpose of my life to leave this world with this book still inside me. Moreover, I came to realize that the book was not so much about me or for me, as it was for others. I had to write it for all my brothers and sisters in the world who might benefit from my story somehow. Keeping that in mind made it easier to finally start writing again.

When I discovered at age forty-six that I had cancer, I began to write like there was no tomorrow. Not only was that close to a literal truth, but writing about my experiences in "health updates" to my friends and family was, without a doubt, good for me. Somehow, writing to everyone in the midst of pain and suffering was spiritual medicine. In a way, writing saved my sanity and my life. During the most challenging times, it took more effort to stop writing, and avoid verbosity, than it did to make myself write. However, when my health improved, and my proverbial ship

began to sail clear of the storm, I found it more and more difficult to write. Writing "after the fact" hurt. It caused me to relive the experiences and there were times when I would cry all over again. My wife, Dixi, had often pointed out that I have a strange defense mechanism to protect myself from emotionally painful experiences: amnesia. I would literally have zero memory of certain bad things that had happened in my life as if they had been erased from existence. Writing a book about my experiences with cancer would permanently defeat that defense mechanism. A book about it would ensure that the account of my battle with that horrid disease would live on as

long as I did, and more. You know something? Painful or not, I am glad my amnesia defense has not been allowed to kick in as to cancer. It would be a terrible shame if I had gone through the war of cancer

treatment, only to have lost the many good things that had come of it. Thanks to cancer, I forever became closer to God, and truly began to know His son in a real and personal way. It re-ordered my priorities in a healthy way, making material things drop to all but the bottom, and putting love and friendship and simplicity at the top. Ironically, the disease that terrified me ultimately was used by God as a tool to bring a peace to my heart that surpasses understanding. God forbid that I would ever forget the thing that so positively changed my life. How amazing it is that God could take a disease that could kill me and, instead, use it to make me a better person, and ultimately, help me to live eternally.

In preparing to write this book, one of the first things that I did was request my own medical records from my family physician in order to help me recall dates and the relevant sequence of events. Given that I was an attorney who had been defending doctors in medical malpractice lawsuits for about eighteen years, I

knew from experience that my request would set off alarms. Even doctors who are perfectly innocent of wrongdoing view a patient requesting copies of his own medical records as a bad sign. Often, such a request indicates dissatisfaction with the care, perhaps even to the point of a medical malpractice suit being filed. Knowing all this, I made my request in the form of a letter to my doctor, explaining that I was simply writing a book about my experiences. I had to smile when the records arrived in lightening quick fashion, with a nice note offering anything else that I needed and without the usual bill for copying costs. For just a moment,

I felt like a pet snake that one wouldn't turn his back on. Being an attorney, I was used to the feeling.

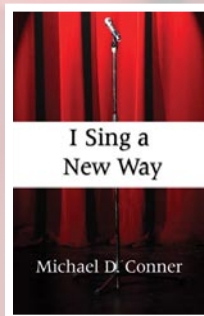
As I began to read my own medical records, I began to have what I can

only describe as a "creepy" feeling, as if I was a ghost attending my own funeral. I suspect that the feeling was caused by experiences I had had in my job. I had lost count of how many times I had begun reading early medical records for a patient already knowing that the patient about whom I was reading had gone on to die. With the perfect sight of retrospection, and despite being a medical layman, years as a med mal attorney had taught me to see warning signs in the records for terrible outcomes that would eventually overtake the patient in question. It was with this background that I began reading my own medical records. I found myself feeling sad, apprehensive, and wanting to somehow reach out to my doctors and to the "me" of the past and scream something like: "Get to a specialist NOW! It's more than just a sore throat!" Of course, it would have been nothing more than calling out to shadows. Reading my records was

*Continued on page 11*



***Ironically, the disease that terrified me ultimately was used by God as a tool to bring a peace to my heart that surpasses understanding.***



**Copies of Mike Conner's book *I Sing A New Way* are available from:**

- Tree of Life Bookstore, 3700 S. Western Ave, Marion
- Gilead Ministries, 428 S Washington St, Marion
- Online at [www.publishamerica.com/product38378.html](http://www.publishamerica.com/product38378.html)

**The book is \$24.95 with all proceeds from the sale of the book going to Gilead Ministries, a non-profit organization that supports cancer patients in Grant County and surrounding areas.**

**Books may also be purchased from Mike Conner himself for \$10 with any donation above \$10 going to support Gilead as well.**

# A New Leadership Team is Commissioned by Jerry Harshman

Several months ago the Administrative Council began discussing the importance of increasing the number of Hanfieldites involved in decision-making at our church. Sunday, January 16<sup>th</sup> you saw the fruit of these discussions as the new leadership team was commissioned by Pastor Tim at the 9:00 and 10:30 services.

## What Is the Administrative Council?

The Ad Council is the official governing body of Hanfield. It meets on the second Tuesday of each month and consists of Pastor Tim and Tim Chambers who represent the staff and appointed

Hopefully this will greatly increase the chances for more Hanfieldites to serve the Lord...

members of our congregation. The Ad Council reviews the church's financial report and staff members' monthly progress reports; sets and reviews Hanfield's policies and procedures; and provides assistance with visioning, planning and prayer support for its paid staff and volunteers.

## How Has the Ad Council Changed?

Prior to 2003 the Ad Council consisted of 28 members. At that time the staff believed there were so

many committees and so many meetings that it became difficult to get issues addressed and resolved in a timely manner. As a result, a shift in thinking occurred which resulted in decreasing the number of members from 28 to 10 and eliminating most of the church's standing committees.

Hanfield adopted a "staff led" philosophy. Unfortunately, several unintended consequences resulted:

- A number of Hanfieldites thought a "staff led" church meant the staff was supposed to do all of the work of the church.
- Other members of the congregation who had served faithfully on numerous standing committees felt disenfranchised and no longer understood how to continue their involvement in the life of the church.
- Many Hanfieldites began to feel like they had little or no opportunity for meaningful input into the various activities and functions of the church.
- Review/Preview Sessions were held, but were gener-



Tim Hanson prepares for the Feb 6 Ad Council Meeting

ally poorly attended and failed to produce meaningful input and seldom produced any real changes or improvements.

With the commissioning ceremony the Ad Council has increased from 10 to 16 members. Eight of the members will lead teams which will help plan, implement and monitor the various ministries of Hanfield. Also, the new Ad Council members are arranged by classes so they serve for a certain number of years. Since these terms are staggered each year there will be an oppor-

tunity for one or more new members to be recruited and appointed to leadership positions on the Ad Council and the ministry teams. Hopefully this will greatly increase the chances for more Hanfieldites to serve the Lord and help make a difference in the life of His church.

## Who Is On the Ad Council?

- Jerry Harshman ..... *Chairperson*
- Cris Bragg ..... *Vice-Chairperson*
- Jamie Penrod ..... *Secretary*
- Chuck Sinclair ..... *Lay Delegate*
- Scott Hoeksema ..... *Finance Team Leader*
- Dave Brown ..... *Trustees Team Leader*
- Mike Pearson ..... *First Impressions Team Leader*
- Tim Hanson ..... *Worship Arts Team Leader*
- Mike Mullen ..... *Adult Ministries Team Leader*
- Bryon Phinney ..... *Youth Ministry Team Leader*
- Gail Haglund ..... *Children's Ministry Team Leader*
- Chris Cunningham ..... *Missions Team Leader*
- Tim Helm ..... *Senior Pastor*
- Tim Chambers ..... *Campus Pastor*
- Jeff Adamson
- Alma Harris
- Randy McMillan





**Six years ago**, I was asked through work to do the first ever *Walk-A-Mile In My Shoes For Homelessness* event. It was a fund raiser for the Grant County Rescue Mission for all the ministries they do to help people in our community. I thought, “Sure, that sounds fun. Do a mile in the middle of February. This could be quite an experience.” Well, it turned out to be a lot more than just a fun walk for me. Isn’t it amazing the way God puts us in situations where we are expecting one outcome, and we get something totally different?

If you have ever taken part in the *Walk-A-Mile*, you know that halfway through the walk you pass by the Mission, where residents are passing out coffee and hot chocolate. That first year, there were only around 175 walkers, and we actually went into the Mission to warm up. When I walked down those steps, I experienced something that would make the walk something near and dear to my heart. Standing there, talking to the walkers and giving out hot chocolate, was one of my former high school classmates! We will call him *Todd* in this story. I asked him what he was doing here. He told me how alcohol and drugs had taken over his life, and he was tired of living under one of the bridges here in Marion. He was disowned by his parents, and had been eating out of dumpsters to get by when it was warmer. He explained that when winter rolled around, he tried to

clean up and live at the Mission until it got warmer. I knew there were homeless around the area, but to *know* one—THAT really turned my world around. I talked with Todd a little while longer, and then got back to the walk.

Over the next several years, I would take part in the walk. And during my various broadcasts over the years, I would run into Todd. At the fair, I would see him with other homeless walking around, picking up your food out of the trash cans, or begging for change. And each year I did the *Walk-A-Mile*, I would hope to see Todd, to see if he had gotten his life straight. But I never did see him.

The walk has grown bigger and better in its six years of existence. This past February 20<sup>th</sup> over 650 walkers met at the Grant County Family YMCA for the walk that raised over \$20,500! That money will stay right here in Grant County to help the Rescue Mission provide food and shelter to men, women and families that need it.

There is happy ending to this story. Around a year and a half ago, as I was walking into the grocery store back in my hometown, I bumped into Todd. I asked him how he was doing. He told me he has been clean for over a year. He has reconciled with his parents. He has a job that makes him travel quite a bit. I told him how happy I was for him. As we were saying

our goodbyes, he looked at me and said, “Now John, you are going to church somewhere aren’t ya?” As I walked away, I got tears in my eyes because I knew that his life was changed by the work that the Rescue Mission does day after day for people we rarely see.

So next year when the *Walk-A-Mile* rolls around in February, I hope you will remember my friend Todd and take part in it.

Matthew 25:40 says: “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

**John Morgan** hosts the morning show on WCJC 99.3 in Marion. He is also the “voice” of the Hanfield announcement videos you see at the beginning of each service. John and his wife Sarah have attended Hanfield for the past 3 years. They have one son, Eli, who just turned 2 last month. They both enjoy singing—Sarah sings in the praise band, and John has sung special music during service several times with his own unique country flair.

## About the Grant County Rescue Mission

The Grant County Rescue Mission works to address some of the underlying problems of homelessness, such as substance abuse, incomplete education and inadequate skills. The Grant County Rescue Mission and Open Heart Women’s Shelter are the only homeless shelters for men, women and children in Grant County.

All money raised by the Mission, including money raised during the Walk-A-Mile In My Shoes event, stays in Grant County to help those in need right here in our community. The Rescue Mission is a Christian-based organization and does not accept any government funding.

Hanfield is a proud supporter of the Grant County Rescue Mission because it helps people right here in our community.

To find out more about the Grant County Rescue Mission:

**Online:** [www.grantcountyrescuemission.com](http://www.grantcountyrescuemission.com)  
**Call:** 765.662.0988  
**Email:** [tomballard@grantcountyrescuemission.com](mailto:tomballard@grantcountyrescuemission.com)





## Spotlight On...

Known by some as the *20Somethings*, this class, led by Sara Brookshire, started in September 2009 with about 6-8 people. Over the past year, the class has exploded to include a roster of nearly 50 with an average weekly attendance of around 30! Sara attributes that to the members of the class simply reaching out and inviting their friends.

The class is made up mostly of college students (roughly a 50-50 IWU & Taylor mix), with a few college graduates mixed in. They have regular game and campfire nights, and even though the class has grown large, there is a strong bond between them.

According to class member Erin Hooten, “Even though we have a lot of people in the class, I do not feel overwhelmed. I am excited about getting to see new people each week. The highlight of my week now has become that I get to go to ABF with people around my age and learn to live by Christ’s example through this messy world.”



## College Age/ Young Adult ABF

The class recently studied the names of God, and one of the names they studied was *Jehovah Sabaoth*, meaning “The Lord of Hosts.” Class member Christal Helm cites this as her favorite name of God. “One day [after studying this name], I had a strong burden for a fellow educator and began to pray to Jehovah Sabaoth for protection and peace. The very same time I felt a burden to pray that name of God over her, she was being told some very hard news, but had a complete peace and could feel the presence of God surrounding her! Our GOD is AMAZING!”

The class also has a strong sense for missions work, as several members have recently been on mission trips to Jerusalem, Turkey, the Bahamas, India, Indonesia, Australia and Costa Rica, among others.

They had prayed about supporting a pastor in a persecuted country, so when Pete Frank with Gospelink came to Hanfield on January 16, they took the opportunity to support a pastor named Thu Ho from Vietnam. Thu, his wife Xien, and 10 children & dependents age 1 to 31 all live in a one-room house with no electricity or indoor plumbing. He has been in ministry since 2002, has helped establish 3 churches, and over 250 people have received Christ through his ministry.

Although some may say that they come for the food (to which Sara says, “whatever it takes!”), it is obvious that this is a group of young people that love the Lord and have a strong desire to learn as much as they can about God and share that with the world around them.

They also love their leader, as Erin puts it: “Sara has done such a great job leading our group. Her insight and knowledge to the things we study is just amazing.”

If you are a *20Something*, you are invited to join their ABF at 9:00 on Sunday mornings in the front section of the Hospitality Room.

# I Sing A New Way

*continued from page 5*

difficult, but important to kick start the flood of recollection.

There is a wide array of stories of suffering and courage among those who have suffered cancer. I would be the first to admit that measured against that spectrum, I had it easier than most. Though I suffered, there are others who suffered far more than I. Though I tried to remain upbeat, there are others who are positively courageous! I have no doubt that there are many other members of this “club” whose account would be far more worthy of retelling than mine. All I know is that this story is in me, and it has to come out just as surely as my cancer did, not because it is bad like cancer, but because God gave me a voice for a reason.

It is my sincere hope that this book will help others at least in some small way, whether in matters of faith or simply dealing with their own struggles. If my humble work aids even one person to know our Heavenly Father better or provides but a moment of comfort to someone amidst suffering, then it will have been more than worth the effort.

### *From Chapter 16:*

I have mentioned a few times about the sorrow I have felt about not being able to sing. While I was never a professional, or really even very good at it, I loved to sing. I had a very nice karaoke machine, a large collection of karaoke CD’s and even a small stage for karaoke singing in my basement. I even had a few solos in some civic theatre musicals. Oh, how I loved that limelight! When I lost my voice, I would leave the radio off in the car because it made me sad to listen and not be able to sing along with my favorites. Most of that has faded now, mostly because my attitude and spirit have changed. Singing comes in many forms, including those that are barely recognized as singing, in the traditional sense. I realize that I can still sing. I simply sing in a new way, and hence the title to this book. Before cancer, I sang with a melody, more or less, and for my own glory. Now, I sing without music, by talking about the glory of God. No matter how good I think I sounded before, I know that I sing better now than I ever did, because I am praising Him.

## About Gilead Ministries

Gilead Ministries is a non-denominational, non-profit ministry located in Marion, Indiana. Founded by Director Bill Sparks in 1999, Gilead is a ministry that provides support for cancer patients and their families through loving acts of service. Our own Teresa Brown serves as the Assistant Director for Gilead. The three “B”s of Gilead’s mission are:

- Build a Relationship
- Bear a Burden
- Bring a Message

Gilead helps to bear the burden for cancer patients and their families by meeting their needs in very practical ways. Mowing the lawn, cleaning the house, grocery shopping, bringing meals, praying and sending cards – these are some of the ways that Gilead reaches out to those struggling with cancer.

Gilead’s message is one of hope and is summed up in the phrase, “There Is Something Bigger Than Cancer.” The message of the Gospel brings hope to those who are facing uncertainty and grief. As Jesus says in John 16:33, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Hanfield has been proud to support Gilead Ministries for many years as they reach out to those right here in our community that need the message of hope that they bring.

To find out more about Gilead Ministries...

- Online:** [www.gileadministries.com](http://www.gileadministries.com)
- Call:** 765.664.3734 or 1.877.445.3231
- Email:** [inform@gileadministries.com](mailto:inform@gileadministries.com)

