



Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

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It's the Thing to Do

By Dixie Marino

Growing up in a Southern culture, certain points of etiquette were faithfully held and passed down from one generation to the next. For instance, after attending a social gathering a thank you note was penned that very evening to be posted the next day. Rising when an adult entered the room was a given. We addressed our elders as Ma'am and Sir and politely respected the privacy of others. We knew to honor these rules because it was the thing to do and because there were consequences if a breach occurred.

Next to "because God made it that way" was "because it's the thing to do." It was the mantra of our mothers and grandmothers. It was the right and good thing and the thing expected of us as their successors. The thing to do was embedded into our consciences.

As the years go by and more expectations enter into my development this wonderful saying surfaces, and like a compass swings to magnetic north, my conscience reminds me—do it because it's the thing to do.

It seems a small thing if the application is limited to manners and etiquette. But when the conscience is involved the spiritual enters into it all and the question of motive must be raised. If our motives aren't entirely pure does the resultant good really count? The apostle Paul says yes. In Philippians 1, starting in verse 15, he says some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, some out of selfish ambition and to stir up trouble, and then in verse 18 he says: "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or

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It's the Thing to Do

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true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice" (NIV).

And I rejoice also that another aspect of it's the thing to do comes into view. It is that God's word never returns to him void. He sees to it his purpose is achieved and his will is accomplished (Isaiah 55:11). So when our consciences begin to prod, let's do that right and good thing. God is on the other side of it and his motives are forever perfectly pure.

Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:24, 1 Corinthians 1:31). It's the thing to do.



Dixie and Charles celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in June. Their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, along with other family members and church friends celebrated with them as they reaffirmed their vows. You may e-mail Dixie at cmarino001@ec.rr.com.



CONNECTIONS

Pastor General: *Joseph Tkach*
 Advisory Panel: *Senior Pulley, Marilys Green, Pat Shaw, Susan Dick, Norva Kelly, Trish Clauson.*

Editor/Managing Editor: *Tammy Tkach*
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Connections

Mission Statement

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

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

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

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• CALIFORNIA •
TAM 2 U

Emmanuel, God With Us

Anyone who has been to my home knows I love flowers. They are everywhere—in the backyard, in the front yard and in pots wherever I can find space. I love everything about them from planting them, watching them grow, and enjoying their fragrances and colors, to how they attract butterflies and hummingbirds. I wait all year for spring bulbs and I'm sad when they finish blooming. When a piece of a plant breaks off, instead of throwing it out I stick it in dirt and hope it grows. I talk to my roses.

I've always thought my love of flowers was genetic as my parents came from farming backgrounds. My dad was an avid gardener who also loved flowers. My mom's yard is full of them and she loves them as much as me, or rather, as much as I do. I read a booklet by Baxter Kruger that changed my perspective on my passion for flowers, as well as my other hobbies and predilections. The booklet (available in e-book form on his website, www.perichoresis.org) is titled *The Secret*, not to be confused with the new age book of the same name.

Kruger tells the story of his encounter on a plane with a biologist. This man was enthusiastic about plants, so much so Kruger received an impromptu botany lesson. That prompted him to ask the biologist where he got his passion for plants. The man said he'd not really thought about it, so Kruger showed

him a diagram depicting Father, Son and Holy Spirit and explained that his passion came from God's passion. He didn't say what the biologist thought, but I know what my reaction was: Aha!

That's why I love flowers so much! That's why artists paint, musicians play, singers sing, architects build, athletes play and compete, writers write and pilots fly. Our passion and creativity come from the passion and creativity of God, through the Son, in and through the Spirit. I was right, my love of flowers is genetic, but it's DNA passed on to me through the shared life of Father, Son and Spirit.

So when the biologist who loves plants goes on a research trip or I plant yet another bulb or a poet writes a poem, we are expressing the image of God. Why is this important? It means, as many of us have suspected, our lives are not separate from God. As Paul said in Acts 17:28, "In him we live and move and have our being" (*NIV*). In Christ, all of life is shared life with the Trinity.

As I write, occasionally looking out the window at my flowers and fruit trees (and running out to chase the birds away), I am living "in the circle of the Triune life of God" (*The Secret*). All people, as we live out our passions or dream of living them, participate with God as he lives in us. He is Emmanuel. Our lives are in him. He is with us in everything we do. I think I'll go plant something in celebration of God with us!



Tammy

We have to pray with our eyes on God,
not on the difficulties.



—Oswald Chambers

More Memories in Amish Country

By Hannah Knaack

Most of the fun was outside at Grandma's and Grandpa's house in the heart of Ohio Amish country. There were kittens to play with and chickens with eggs to collect. I wasn't brave enough to do any collecting as I've never trusted anyone with beady eyes. But Grandma had no such fears and showed my sisters and me how to go about getting a warm egg from a disgruntled hen. She collected eggs in several shades of color, much to our surprise.



Their cows, unaccustomed to active, squealing girls, approached the stock tank timidly. We'd sneak close to watch and each point out a favorite cow. Then we argued over who had selected which favorite cow first. It's amazing the cows didn't stampede what with all that fuss. We had no pets at home so being around the animals at Grandpa's farm was great fun.

We took turns petting the velvety soft nose of their only horse Mable. Unfortunately, our brief rides in Grandpa's and Grandma's buggy proved to be a major letdown. Mabel was kept to one speed, clip-clop, clip-clop. Certainly not as much fun as we'd anticipated, but what could we expect from a horse named Mabel? I'd seen other buggies go by at a faster clip, so I strongly suspect Grandma's diligent frugality had somehow factored into Mabel's idea of what was fun and what was expected.

While playing outside after supper, we'd keep an eye out for Grandpa. He would make his way to the porch swing of an evening to "sit a spell." When he'd brought the swing to

just the right creak (I would say speed, but there was no true speed involved), he'd remind us the fireflies were coming out—time to get the collecting jar!

Grandma allowed just one jar (bet you can guess why), and my dad tapped holes in the lid with an ancient hammer. The best part was with Mother's supervision, we were allowed to keep the jar in our bedroom to light up our sweet summer dreams. We'd collected fireflies at home, but somehow they seemed bigger and brighter in Grandma's neck of the woods.

Grandmother was a hard worker and having our family for a visit did little to distract her from daily chores. She spent hours in her vegetable garden, always wearing her black bonnet to shade her face from the strong summer sun. I thought surely she ought to be taking some clothes off to work in the hot sun, but not so. Mother was allowed to help with gardening, but we girls occupied ourselves outside the garden fence.

In Amish country it wasn't unusual for neighbors to drop by and especially while we were there. English relatives were not common in the 1960s. Most visits followed a similar pattern—my sisters and I spent the entire time visually inspecting every article of clothing each person wore while they seemed to do the same to us. Conversations were fascinating, as most Old Order Amish have German phrases sprinkled throughout their speech.

A few days into our visit, one of Grandma's neighbors came over leading a sturdy Shetland pony. My big sister, who had more nerve than the rest of us combined, asked if she could ride him. She climbed onto the pony, *sans* saddle. We were all

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More Memories

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thinking about taking a turn when suddenly the stout pony's stall friends called him home for lunch! He paused only long enough to toss my sister off, stomp on her, then race home to get in the lunch line.

Everyone was horrified, but soon enough discovered her only injury was the salad-plate-size bruise on her inner thigh. For weeks she'd let us take peeks at the neat rainbow of colors that appeared on her leg. Naturally, the rest of us were a bit envious of her lovely trophy and the attention she received.

We didn't overstay our welcome at Grandma's, as my mother was privy to just how much excitement and disruption of home life my grandparents could tolerate. Before we knew it, the station wagon was loaded up and off we went, holding within our hearts the new memories we'd made that summer. What has remained with me all these years are Grandma's consistent frugality, her delicious homemade apple

butter and her desire to lead a Plain life.

So it would only seem fitting that she slipped from this world to a better one just four months shy of her 100th birthday. I suspect word leaked out about a big party and, well, that might seem wasteful and certainly not very Plain. Should you enter her new world before I do, she won't be hard for you to spot. Just look for the tiny woman in the white *kapp* standing guard over the well pump.



Hannah says: "Our only daughter returned home from living in Chicago and while she hunts down a job and apartment, we get to enjoy her company. We're trying new recipes, new decorating ideas and shopping (thrift stores, of course). Now she's talking about outdoor summer concerts. Let's see—where did I store my ear plugs?" You may e-mail Hannah at justmomhlc@juno.com.

Sheila Says It's Now or Never!

If you recall, some time ago I invited you to contribute to a book I'm writing. Some did and I appreciate your contributions so much. Others said you would write but so far I haven't received your stories. My book is about your experiences as a woman in the former WCG and how the transition affected you. I'm hoping to wrap up this book project before the end of the year, so it's now or never.

Please send your contribution to me in the next several months. For further information or to send your story, e-mail Sheila Graham at grahams@ntin.net.

Hope Through Darkness

By Audrey Auernheimer

It was a dark and stormy night.” With these few words, the plot begins for what I consider a really good read. Curled up in my favorite recliner, unraveling the maze of intrigue presented by a great novelist is my idea of how to spend a relaxing afternoon. Never could I imagine the stormy night of my novels would become my life’s reality.

During a short seven year time period, I found myself engulfed in a real life storm called grief. In 2002, I lost my 28-year-old son Marty to suicide. He was warm, caring and fun. His death deeply affected our family, particularly his younger sister Candace who was very close to him.

On a cold February night in 2008, I received a call from my oldest son. My beautiful daughter Candace had also taken her life. Of the four children I brought into the world, I have two remaining. In July, my husband lost his mom. Shortly thereafter, my beloved sister passed. Not long ago, our 19-year-old son was arrested and faces serious criminal charges.

Why me, Lord? Why my children? Yet I know the answer. Through education with National Alliance on Mental Illness, I know my children suffered the illness of chronic depression, a genetic disorder passed down from my side of the family. I take comfort knowing God’s grace extends toward both my healthy and ill children.

Despite the love and encouragement of friends, I find myself struggling helplessly through a sea of grief and confusion. Sustaining the blows of loss in such rapid succession

make me feel as if I were thrown hard and fast into the Atlantic with barely enough strength to rise to the surface and fill my lungs with air before being pulled back down again.

I, like Jesus’ disciples in Luke 8:24, have been afraid for my life during this storm and wonder how Christ could sleep while I barely cling to a boat swamped with water? In verse 25 of this chapter, after calming the stormy waters, Christ simply asks the terrified disciples, “Where is your faith?”

When surrounded by chaos, with no quick ending in sight, will I still choose to believe? Christ has a plan for my life (Jeremiah 29:11). I accept I am humanly incapable of deciphering that plan. Perhaps he is teaching me to stop asking why? to my life’s journey and begin asking for what purpose?

Healing from such grief comes slowly. I am thankful for the new understanding this experience has given me of heaven. Before the loss of my loved ones, *heaven* was only a vague word repeated in some old hymns. Now, I look forward with great anticipation to the day I will be rejoined with family members for the ultimate Family Reunion.

A Beacon of hope shines through the darkness of the storm. His mercy and love never cease.



Audrey Auernheimer is a housewife and a retired hairdresser. She and her husband Tony formerly pastored the Salina, Kansas, church of WCG. They now

have a ministry to the victims of mental illness through National Alliance on Mental Illness. Audrey is a member of the Kansas state board of NAMI; national web site www.nami.org or 1-800-950-NAMI. You may e-mail her at TAuernheimer@ktron.com.



He Giggled

By Anne Gillam

He giggled! My grandson giggled! I heard it from the next room. The sound brought great joy to my heart, and that's putting it mildly. It's been a long time coming and it's the sound of one more step forward in the battle for my grandson. You see, he is 6 and he has autism. At the age of 2 he began shutting himself off from the world. There was nothing we could do to stop it. It was almost impossible to get through this wall to him, and this wall made it even harder for him to communicate with us.



It's been four years of heartbreak and stress, but I wouldn't change it for the world. Over the years we have learned the importance of keeping him on a strict diet, away from gluten, casein, hydrogenated oils and red food colorings. It took months to rid him of the poison these were to his body. At first everything got worse as he went through the withdrawal process, but slowly we noticed a change in his health and behavior. We began seeing little steps forward and each step was paved with tears and prayer.

It is a great deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it. Lighthouses do not ring bells and fire cannon to call attention to their shining—they just shine.



—Dwight L. Moody

Every parent and grandparent knows the heart break and joy raising their children brings to their lives. Raising a child with a handicap is no different and it can build within you a special strength. It is like the strength a tree gains from having to fight the wind. Without the wind pushing against the tree it will become brittle and break easily, but with the wind's constant push the tree grows stronger every day. So we too grow stronger as we fight our battles instead of trying to run away from them.

My grandson's laugh made me think of our heavenly Father, of how much he loves his children and how what we do must give him heartbreak and stress as well. We sometimes build walls that break our communication with him.

What joy he must have each time we make one step toward tearing down those dividing walls. He must joy in our growth and development as Christians. I know he would not trade the pain and the tears for the world either. He proved this by his great love for us as he came down to earth to become one of us, and to take on the challenge to bring us back to him so we can join him where he is.

My daughter and I, along with my grandson, began a new learning and growing journey with Qigong Therapy for children with autism. It is a Chinese massage therapy used for centuries on children to promote a normal healthy sleep-wake cycle. It helps break through the sleep, sensory and digestive problems of children with autism.

Since beginning this therapy we've noticed a great change in my grandson. It's like beginning again where we left off with him at age 2 when the wall began to divide us. My grandson has gone from no speech to several words, and he has begun to sing and

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He Giggled

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to laugh. He will now play games with other children instead of playing in his own shut-off world. This is why my grandson's laugh brought me such joy. I knew the wall was coming down.

There is still so much to learn. It's been hard, but it has also been a wonderful journey. It hasn't been one I had to go alone. God was there with me every step of the journey. I know he smiled when my grandson laughed.

Merciful, heavenly Father, you are our strength for every trial. Please help us to stay close by your side through all our journeys, trial or joy. Knowing you walk with us hand in hand and side by side gives me the strength for every day. Thank you for your faithfulness! Amen.



Anne lives in Bonanza, Oregon, and pastors the Anchor for the Soul Fellowship in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Her hobbies are quilting and gardening. Anne is enjoying working her way through the Ephesians series by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. You may e-mail her at WEBEBASS@aol.com.



When you forgive, you in no way change the past—but you sure do change the future.

—Bernard Meltzer



Why I Believe the Bible Is the Word of God

By Carmen Fleming

When my children were young we adopted two parakeets, Sweetie and Baby. Our desire was to love them and provide for all their needs, but whenever we put our hands in their cage to care for them, they furiously flapped their wings and cringed in fear. From their vantage point we seemed overpowering and terrifying.

How different it would be, I thought, if I became one of them and entered their world. Then perhaps they would understand. This is what God did, of course, when he sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. While the Bible is a way God speaks to us, Jesus is the Way to know God. One could say the Bible is God's written word leading us to the Living Word, Jesus Christ, so that by knowing and believing in him we have eternal life.

There are many amazing facts about the Bible. One is that it is a collection of 66 books written by as many as 40 different authors over the span of 1,500 years, yet all 66 books are consistent in what they say about God. Another is that it has been proven to be historically accurate by other reliable historical accounts and by archeology. It has also been preserved for us against extremely difficult odds. Another remarkable fact is the Bible has forecasted historical events in detail many years in advance. It transcends time and culture for its wisdom and understanding of human beings, presenting God's people as

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Word of God

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they really are, less than perfect.

The quality of its moral and ethical teaching is above reproach and it is a source of objective and absolute truth. The Bible teaches that truth is not just an idea but rather a living being. God is truth. As God cannot be reasoned out because he is beyond the ability of our finite minds to apprehend, God has determined to reveal who he is to us. Our inability to apprehend all God is compares to our parakeets' inability to understand us.

The Bible says God is a relational being who wants to love us as a father loves his children or a mother cares for her young. In the Bible we read the accounts of men and women as God revealed himself to them. In their encounters they often gave God names that expressed his goodness.

All this is pretty astonishing, but the most astounding fact about the Bible is that all its stories can only be fully understood at the coming of Jesus. Through Jesus God enters our world thereby allowing us to know an exact representation of himself. Jesus said if you have seen me you have seen the Father.

Another most remarkable thing about the Bible is that it is a means God uses to lead us to a personal encounter with a very real albeit invisible Creator God who is always looking

for us and calling us into a loving relationship.

The Bible has given me eyes and ears to recognize God's constant activity in my life and in the lives of those around me. Meditating and studying the Bible is the most rewarding experience of my life because it provides a way for me to know someone whose ways are much higher than my ways and whose thoughts are beyond my ability to know unless revealed.

In the Bible God says I will be your God and you will be my people. How comforting it is to know God is determined to be ours and resolute about us becoming his very own children. I believe the Bible is the word of God because through its pages I have had an encounter with a very real being who loves me and shows me how much he is for me and with me.



Carmen has taken a part time job in a vision center and is training to become an optician technician. She says, "I am enjoying my new job. Every day I learn something new and I get to make friends with people from all over the world and all walks of life. It's a new and exciting kind of ministry." You may e-mail her at carmen.fleming@wcg.org.

The Gospel does not consist of what we can do for ourselves, but of what God stands ready to do for us.

—Arkansas Methodist



If the mind of God as discovered to us in his word and works is so vast and deep, what must his mind be in all its undisclosed resources in the infinity and eternity of his existence?

—John Bate

Zorro and Me

Time to Party

By Barbara Dahlgren

Say what you will about our kids, they know how to party.

Nine years ago our oldest daughter Shelly was married to Dale Davis on the island of Maui in a little chapel overlooking the beach. A luau reception followed at a cabana and we partied on a moonlit beach while we watched Hawaiian dancers entertain us. We feasted on delicacies, drank champagne and did the hula under the stars to live music until the wee hours of the morning.

Ten years ago our daughter Sherisa married Randy Emata in a traditional-eclectic wedding (if such a thing is possible) at a large church in San Jose, California. Her dad walked her down the aisle to the live accompaniment of a four string quartet. Amidst the traditional fare her best friend Eileen did an interpretive dance, I sang a song I wrote titled "A Mother's Prayer" and the families came forward to unite in prayer.

Randy and Sherisa thought it would be fun to forego the usual wedding march and as a surprise to her grandfather (my dad) walk out to his favorite song. Randy is a professional musician so he arranged for some friends and family in the congregation to bring instruments. One by one they rose at the end of the ceremony and started playing a Dixieland version of "When the Saints Go Marching In." Down the center aisle the band marched and the rest of us danced out the door following Randy's and Sherisa's lead. My dad smiled and said, "I love that song," as he boogied out



the door.

Both girls insisted their brother Matthew, 10 years younger, stand on their side of the wedding party along with their bridesmaids. Matthew loved it. For years he would say, "Always a bride's maid, never a bride." Both weddings were performed by their dad. You know him as Zorro.

Now let's fast forward to this year when we received an invitation to Randy's and Sherisa's vow renewal party in retro, wild and crazy Old Downtown Las Vegas. It was a '50s-'60s theme. They wanted no presents but requested everyone come in costumes representative of the era. The festivities would take place in a private atrium at the Golden Nugget.

Sherisa asked her dad to dress as Zorro. As *Zorro* was a popular TV show from that era, we thought it was appropriate. But the real reason she wanted him dressed that way was because all the Zorro stories are a part of her life and have special meaning to her. She told all those invited as much and even sent one of the stories to everyone about how Zorro got his name.

To tell the truth I wasn't excited about parading around Vegas in costume, but it was party time! Besides, we just needed to get from the car to the private room. Zorro looked pretty good—all decked out with his mask, cape and sword. I went as a senora, Mrs. Zorro to be exact. My black wig looked more like Elvira, Mistress of the Dark (you know, the chick who used to introduce the horror flicks on TV) than Catherine Zeta-Jones, but at least I had a Spanish fan to cover my face when needed.

As we boarded the elevator in the parking

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Time to Party

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garage, people asked, "Going to a costume party?" Zorro smiled and replied, "No, we dress like this every Saturday night." I must admit Zorro caused quite a stir walking through the halls at the Golden Nugget. People stared and whispered, "There's Zorro." Some even wanted their photos taken with him.

The private atrium wasn't quite as private as we hoped. It was a lovely room but only roped off from the public, like they do for VIPs. And why not? We certainly had our share of VIPs. Sherisa and Randy were Marilyn Monroe and Elvis. We had Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, JFK, Jacqueline Kennedy, Danny Zucho, James Dean, pony-tailed gals, nerdy guys, some show girls, flower children and even Dorothy and Toto from the *Wizard of Oz*. I know Dorothy was from a different era but no one in costume was turned away. We started to feel like celebrities as we gained quite a crowd of on-lookers. One bellowed, "Hey, Zorro," and gave us two thumbs up.

So with Vegas gazing on we ate a sumptuous dinner interspersed with Mr. and Mrs. Z sharing advice for a long marriage, others sharing stories and Zorro doing the vow renewal. Elvis and Marilyn exchanged huge, gaudy but tasteful rings and took a few promenades around the room while we all sang "ta-da-de-da" to the tune of "Here Comes the Bride." On one such romp around the room a guy at the red rope said to Sher-

isa, "What's the occasion Marilyn?" She replied, "It's our tenth wedding anniversary." The guy said, "If you need anything, please let me know. I'm the owner." To which Sherisa smiled and thought, Yeah, right!

But, when she sat down at the table the waitress said, "Oh, I didn't know you were friends of the owner." The staff was already very accommodating, but now it was even better. They would ask, "Can I get you anything else, King?" or "Can I freshen that drink for you, Marilyn?"

The party continued at an upstairs lounge where we again had a special red-rope area reserved for VIPs. We danced into the wee hours of the morning. Many Golden Nugget patrons had their photos taken with Marilyn Monroe, Elvis and Zorro. It was quite a night. I think God was smiling. I know I was.

Sometimes we put God in a box and say, "Oh, he wouldn't approve." I think God laughs with us and parties with us. God is so good and wants us to enjoy life. I delight thinking about his first miracle, when he turned water into wine at the wedding party. Some feel if God walks into a room they need to tone it down a bit. I think, Hey, God's here! Time to party!

When my kids think of God I want them to see him there with them at the party, having a good time.



Barbara says she and Zorro are thinking about doing a church fundraiser by going back to Vegas in costume and charging a fee for people to have their picture taken with Zorro. It's also something to keep in mind to bring in extra money when they retire. She's hoping this saying is true: What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas! You may e-mail her at bydahlgren@pacbell.net. © February 2009.

Inasmuch as any one pushes you
nearer to God, he or she is your friend.

—Anonymous

A Letter to My Future Daughter-in-Law

By Cathy Emerson

In keeping with the admonitions of the scriptures, I welcome my new daughter-in-law-to-be into our family (Titus 2:4). I want to share my letter to her with you.

Dear M. . .

I want to welcome you into the family. Since you and B have been together, he seems much more relaxed, at ease and more comfortable with people. You seem to enjoy one another's company.

As B may have told you, I believe in prayer (much to B's chagrin at times I'm sure) (Philippians 4:6). When he left home to begin his many adventures, I knew he needed someone other than his mother to love him, care for him and delight in him. He can be a delight. I put him in God's hands because I could not go all the places he was going.

I admit, I prayed for you, though I did not yet know your name. (I think M is a beautiful name by the way). I prayed for your mother too, though I have yet to meet her. I prayed

that she would mold her daughter to become an accomplished, talented, lovely young lady who could love my son dearly. My prayers have been answered.

Thank you for loving my son. B is a fragile, sensitive soul, as are most of us in so many ways. Thank you for sharing his dreams, goals and thoughts. Thank you for being a precious part of his life. He needed someone to love.

I am so glad you have decided to wed. Most little girls dream of growing up to marry the man of their dreams and you seem to have found yours. You will be a most beautiful bride.

If there is anything I can do, please let me know.

I look forward to years of joy in a relationship that is comfortable and joyous.

Your mother-in-law-to-be,

Cathy



Besides preparing for the wedding, Cathy is enjoying her new grandson, Isaac. The weeds are taking over her garden but she doesn't mind, at least for now. They will be waiting. You may e-mail Cathy at ceewee@juno.com.

God has placed the genius of women in their hearts; because the works of this genius are always works of love.

—Alfonse de Lamartine

The strength and happiness of a man consists in finding out the way in which God is going, and going in that way too.

—Henry Ward Beecher



Prevention Is Better Than Cure

By Héctor Barrero

We don't have to wait till things break down to give them maintenance. The idea, if something is not broken, don't fix it, is not totally true. Things need maintenance before they break down.

Today medical practice emphasizes prevention. We have often heard that prevention is better than cure. Dentistry is a case in point. We teach our children how to brush their teeth and how to use dental floss. Fluoride and annual cleanings prevent cavities. In the past people visited dentists only when their teeth hurt. Sometimes it was too late and the easiest thing to do was to extract the bad teeth. Today rather than extractions a restoration process is performed. The same is happening in other branches of medicine. It is advised that one should visit the doctor from time to time even if one is not sick. Some cancers do not hurt in the early stages. If they are detected in time they can be cured.

We should take care of our health when we are healthy with adequate rest and a balanced diet. A doctor told me more people are sick from overeating than from not eating enough. People eat too much white flour and sugar and do not exercise as they should.

The same goes for our spiritual health. We should have a regular intake of the word of God, a time for daily prayer, a time dedicated to God. We should consistently care for our marriage and children. We should not wait for problems to emerge before we do something. Carelessness in our spiritual disciplines can have devastating consequences. The lack of a personal and intimate relationship with God can make people spiritually weak and possibly make them easy prisoners of sin. At the same time sin will destroy relationships and create enemies, bring envy, jealousy and contention. It adversely affects friendships and makes our loved ones withdraw.

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Nurturennet

Nurturennet is a computer forum for women in ministry. Its purpose is to help you stay connected through digest-mode communication (each day's messages compiled into one e-mail). You may use it for requests for information, prayer requests, to share



ideas and resources, to receive updates on *Connections* news or just to stay connected! To join or change your e-mail address, please send Tammy a message at tammy.tkach@wcg.org.

Prevention

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By not disciplining our children spiritually they are in jeopardy of leaving the ways of God. Then it may be too late to teach them those ways. We should do it when they are young and will listen.

When we are spiritually healthy is the time to maintain our spiritual health. Because if we are careless and sin, consequences occur, and restoration to normality will take more effort, dedication, tears and supplications. Sometimes we cannot restore completely the conditions before sin. This is why this popular saying is so wise: "Prevention is better than cure."



Hector and his wife Paulina live in Bogota, Columbia. He graduated from Ambassador College in 1984 and was ordained in 1988. Hector is Superintendent of Missions for Latin America and enjoys teaching and playing soccer. You may e-mail him at hbarreros-ter@gmail.com.

Connecting & Bonding

By Jannice May

Ministers' Wives Role vs. Purpose

Connecting & Bonding (C&B), a ministry devoted to nurturing ministers' wives, is entering its 12th year. *C&B* conferences have taken place in England, South Africa and the Philippines as well as Kentucky, Delaware and in Los Angeles, California. We consider the Los Angeles conference our mother conference since the first one was there and our conferences have continued in L.A. for all this time.

Little did I know when a new minister's wife asked me for help 12 years ago God would give me a passion to start a ministry for all ministers' wives. At first I resisted the

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Confidential Peer Listener Line

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Darlene Schmedes
626-792-2329, Pacific
glysch@gmail.com

Ginny Rice
225-756-0519, Central
ginny.rice@wcg.org



Helen Jackson
626-284-8256, Pacific
helen.jackson@wcg.org

Connecting & Bonding

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word *passion* because I didn't think it applied to me. Then someone explained a passion is a heartbeat, and I had to admit I definitely had a heart for ministers' wives and their unique challenges. In this column we will explore some of those areas.

Author and speaker Jan Johnson spoke at several of our conferences about the different hats we ministers' wives wear and our role and purpose. I've heard her give this same presentation several times, but when she spoke last year in Lexington, Kentucky, a light went on for me.

Jan said being a minister's wife is our role, not our purpose. Sometimes we get the two confused. Therefore, when our role changes, it can be quite difficult. I can't tell you how many times a minister's wife has told me after her husband retires or dies, "I don't know where I fit anymore." They have served in a specific role and now that role is gone.

Jan explained sometimes we can use our role to fulfill our purpose, but we need to know the difference between the two. When the role of being a minister's wife is over, life is not over, because we still have a purpose.

Abby Williams shared how much Jan Johnson's presentation meant to her. Two and a half years ago Jeff and Abby set their alarm to go off at 6 a.m. Sunday morning, so

they could get ready for church. When the alarm went off, Jeff did not move. Abby said, "I knew he was dead." Jeff was just 45 years old and had died in his sleep. Abby shared how she struggled with knowing where she fit after his death. Saturday she was a full-time minister's wife and Sunday morning, that role was over. I am happy to say Abby understands even though the role of a minister's wife is not there for her anymore, she is OK. She knows she was put here by God for a purpose.

I find this so liberating. When our roles change, we still have our purpose. Many of the women found this liberating as well. They can be the ministers' wives, but they can also have something of their own. Perhaps it's worship leading, teaching classes in prison, serving at a homeless shelter, running a business or starting their heartbeat ministry.

I say it's a great time to be a minister's wife. It's wonderful to be chosen for that role. It is also important to know if this role ends one day, our purpose will not. Our purpose will never change; it will just grow.



Jannice May has been a minister's wife for 40 years. Her husband Curtis is the director of Reconciliation Ministry. Jannice shares her passion through Connecting & Bonding, a ministry devoted to ministers' wives of all denominations. She has a new role to add to her many hats this year. She will be a grandmother when her first grandchild is born in September. This new C&B column for Connections will allow us to explore topics unique to ministers' wives. Be sure to check out the C&B website at connectingandbonding.org for coming conference information. Contact Jannice at conbond@acninc.net.

Has this world been so kind to you that you should leave with regret? There are better things ahead than any we leave behind.

—C. S. Lewis

My New Cell Phone

By Ruth Miller

I don't like my new cell phone. It's different and I was barely skilled at using my old one. These new gadgets have so many bells and whistles. I'm just looking for something that will let me call out and receive calls. I don't want voicemail because then I would have to figure out how to retrieve my messages. But I notice voicemail seems to be automatic with this new so-called improved model.

At home I just push a button on our answering machine and it plays messages. And then this nice voice tells me what to do. But with the tiny buttons on my cell phone it's not that easy. I even managed to disable the thing completely. I couldn't call out and couldn't get calls either. I am thankful a young girl in the office—young people seem to know how to use these things—fixed it for me.

Sometimes we have the same trouble in our spiritual lives. Jesus often challenges us to think outside the box, to try new things, to behave in unfamiliar ways. We humans seem to have strong nesting instincts. We like familiar things—our own beds, our own favorite chairs, burgers done our way.

Sometimes we get in a huge RUT! My personal acronym for RUT is Real Uneventful Time. It has been said if nothing changes, nothing changes. Or put another way, insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. In a word, it's hard to change. God doesn't change, and we want to be like God, so why should we have to change?

The analogy used in Jeremiah 18 about God as our potter helps us understand a little

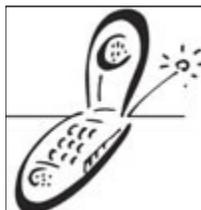
better. We are the clay, soft and pliable, ready and willing with the help of the Holy Spirit to be made into something new. Because God is working in our lives, helping to mold and shape us into his chosen vessels, we undergo change. It's easy to sing, "Mold me and shape me," but it's not easy to allow it to happen.

The scriptural admonition we know so well, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," found in 2 Peter 3:18, should be fundamental to our understanding of how God works in our lives. And we should understand any kind of growth means change. From the time a baby is born, the growth that occurred in the womb continues throughout childhood and into early adulthood. Eventually the growth ends and the opposite process begins.

That, too, is difficult. We experience the process of aging. Sometimes we still feel quite young in our minds, but our bodies are changing in ways we don't like.

The wonderful thing about the whole process is after our human lifetimes of inhabiting our earth suits, and struggling through the ups and downs and changes in life, we can look forward to our glorified spiritual bodies. These won't be subject to the negative changes we experience now. No more deterioration, no suffering, no pain.

I imagine my new cell phone really is nice. And if I could muster up the courage to actually learn how to use it, I'd probably appreciate the improvements. To improve things, something has to give! There's a politically correct term for my problem. I am technologically challenged. Now there, I feel better having that out in the open. And, yes, I am spiritually challenged also. I believe all



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Give Me a Break!

By Sue Berger

It's been a bad morning. One of those mornings where everything goes wrong. It started first crack out of the bag when I discovered my husband finished off the granola. He alternates between three different cereals, but I only eat the granola. Now I had no cereal for my breakfast. Grrrr! Did I mention I'm not a morning person?



Cell Phone

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of us have this condition in common. It's a challenge to follow the call of Christ and to go through the changes necessary to serve as one of his disciples.

But it's a wonderful calling and a great life. It's the abundant life Jesus calls us to. Being afraid of change only limits our possibilities. Hmm, I should probably get out the instruction book for my cell phone or get a personal trainer (you know, someone less than 30 years old.). It's great we already have an instruction book (the Bible) and we have the best trainer of all—Jesus!



This summer Ruth and Bob are celebrating 20 years of pastoral ministry in the Birmingham area. Ruth enjoys teaching a weekly women's Bible study and is involved in planning a women's retreat this fall in Cullman, Alabama. You may e-mail her at ruth.miller@wgc.org.

I head out on my morning errands. I spy a decent parking spot and circle around to come in from the right direction. I politely pause for an idiot in a little bitty car, only to have that same idiot whip into my parking spot. Incredulous, I watch a bright pink sweater clad gal jump out of her car and run into the store, completely oblivious to me sitting right there with my blinker on. Now come on. A person can't possibly be that blind, so it's just plain rude. Ugh!

Finally inside the store I briskly walk the five acres of aisles to gather the four items I need. I can tell I'm not in a good mood. My face hurts and my brow is so furrowed it's cramping. I tell myself to relax, drop my shoulders and take a deep breath. My purse strap falls off my shoulder, hits my forearm and I drop a pack of batteries and a box of granola. At least it wasn't something breakable. I'm trying to look on the bright side.

I pick a checkout line. It doesn't matter which one. They'll all be slow. I try the deep breath again, without dropping my shoulder this time. Bored, I read the ridiculous headlines on the magazine rack. Then I catch a flash of pink behind me. Surely not. I steal a look. Yep, it's the parking spot thief.

Unchristian thoughts go through my mind. How can I slow this line down even more? Ask for a price check? Change my mind on what I'm purchasing? Try to use my library card instead of a credit card? Dump out my purse and count out all the loose change rattling around in the bottom? I'd look like an idiot, but somehow it'd be worth it. I scold myself for the thoughts and tell myself to let it go. Besides, she's totally clueless she's a thief.

Back home I clean the receipts out of my wallet. One well-worn scrap of paper gets

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Give Me a Break!

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put back into my wallet. Why do I even bother? I look at the hand-written IOU, tempted once again to throw it away. I really did trust my coworker to pay me back. We even laughed when he gave me the piece of paper as our so-called contract. But I have to assume it's long forgotten on his part. It's not a big deal, is it? Just a small breach of trust, isn't it? I really should throw it away, but it hurts. I tuck it back in my wallet.

My computer screen flashes an Amber Alert. Another child abduction. I glance at the headline news. Same old stuff—corporate corruption, government spending, an indictment of yet another official, severe weather wiped out a town overnight. God, my head hurts.

God. Where have you been today? And why am I just now thinking of you? Sometimes I hate myself. What should be my first line of defense is muttered under my breath at the end of my rope. God, how on earth do you put up with all this stuff? The last-of-the-granola-eaters, the parking-space-stealers, the I-forgot-I-owe-you-anythings, much less the everything-else-going-on-in-the-worlders. I've been on the short end of the stick all morning. It's just not fair. I pull my weight. I work hard. I pay my taxes and my tithes. I try to be polite. I'm a good person. Why the injustice?

Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.



—C. S. Lewis

Frustrated, I click on my online daily devotional. Luke 6:35-37. “I tell you, love your enemies.” Oh great. Give me a break, God! Don't you ever let up? “Help and give without expecting a return. You'll never—I promise—regret it. Live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously, even when we're at our worst. Our Father is kind; you be kind. Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment” (*The Message*).

I wonder. Have I ever eaten the last of God's granola? Stolen his parking spot? Owe him a debt? Duh! He's given me everything. Everything I don't deserve, and not given me what I do deserve. Where's the justice in that? It's not fair—thank God! God, I'm so sorry. Forgive me? Again? Thank you so much for your mercy, for your grace, for your love. I'm no different from those around me. Thank you for loving them too. What a relief.

If you'll excuse me, I have a scrap of paper to throw away. Then I think I'll enjoy a bowl of granola out on the patio.



Sue and her husband Lee have been busy landscaping their new-to-them Texas home this spring. With summer setting in, they're about to go into survival mode then resume improvements in the fall. Sue now keeps a couple extra boxes of granola in her pantry. You may e-mail her at sueberger2000@gmail.com. © 2009 Sue Berger.

Being a Light...has a lighter side!

Home computers are being called upon to perform many new functions, including the consumption of homework formerly eaten by the dog.

—Doug Larson

A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore.

—Yogi Berra

The word *aerobics* came about when the gym instructors got together and said: If we're going to charge \$10 an hour, we can't call it "jumping up and down."

—Rita Rudner

A man went to some old friends' home for dinner. His buddy preceded every request to his wife by endearing terms, calling her Honey, My Love, Darling, Sweetheart, Pumpkin, etc. He was impressed since the couple had been married almost 70 years.

While the wife was off in the kitchen he said to his buddy: "I think it's wonderful that after all the years you've been married, you still call your wife those pet names."

His buddy hung his head. "To tell you the truth," he said, "I forgot her name about ten years ago."

—Unknown

My Prayer

Lord help me relax about insignificant details beginning tomorrow at 7:41:23 a.m. PST. Help me consider people's feelings, even if most of them ARE hypersensitive. Help me take responsibility for my own actions, even though they're usually NOT my fault.

Lord, help me try not to RUN everything. But, if you need some help, please feel free to ASK me! Help me to be more laid back, and help me do it EXACTLY right. Help me take things more seriously, especially laughter, parties and dancing. Give me patience, and I mean right NOW!

Lord help me not be a perfectionist. (Did I spell that correctly?) Help me finish everything I start.

Help me keep my mind on one thing — look, a bird — one thing at a time. Help me do only what I can, and trust you for the rest. And would you mind putting that in writing?

Keep me open to others' ideas, WRONG though they may be.

Lord help me be less independent, but let me do it my way. Help me slow down and not rush through what I do.

Amen