

STREAMER

Willow Creek Presbyterian Church of Argyle

7300 Belvidere Road

Caledonia, Illinois 61011

815-885-3455

August 2014



Worship in the Park 2014

Thanks to all, especially the CE and M&W Committees, Body Parts (John Harden's band), the Grill Master (John Felton), and all who came out to worship our God, who makes all things beautiful!!



Babies In Need (The Baby Angel Closet)

Last year, we began a relationship with Love INC (Love In the Name of Christ) through their Gap Ministry outreach. Gap Ministries meet needs that are not currently or sufficiently being met by agencies, government, ministries or churches, they cover the “gaps”. Each Gap Ministry is focused on a particular need, including services and products. Our Gap Ministry is our Babies in Need, or Baby Angel Closet, open the first Tuesday from 9-12, and the third Thursday from 12-3. This ministry, overseen through the Mission, Membership and Stewardship Committee, needs your help in the form of donated goods and volunteer hours (sorting, organizing, shopping, and “minding the store” when the closet is open.

The Love INC offices verify and refer clients whose needs we can help to fill up to three times a year, per family. Last year, Love INC expanded by adding a Boone County satellite office. In its first full year in Boone County, we saw the powerful impact that a Love INC gap ministry phone bank can have in a community. Together we are proving that Love, in the name of Christ, can truly heal our communities!

- In the first quarter of 2014, Love INC served 237 separate families; 192 in Winnebago, and 45 in Boone.
- 452 requests for help were received.
- Each caller has an average of two needs.
- Each need requires at least four phone calls to verify and find resources.
- Every referral card generated by a volunteer is reviewed an average of three times.
- 34 Partner churches referred families, 28 in Winnebago and 6 in Boone.
- 15 individuals received transportation assistance through our GO! Fund. The fund provides temporary assistance to get to verified work or medical appointments.
- 120 personal needs packages were provided to the families at Midvale; 71 packages were provided to the clients of Love INC at various churches in our community network, 37 in Winnebago and 34 in Boone.
- 219 clients were served through Gap Ministries in various Partner Churches like ours.

Our Baby Angel Closet has served five families so far this year, three since we set up our official closet hours (1st Tuesdays, 9-Noon and 3rd Thursdays, Noon-3). Once a family has demonstrated Baby need, verified by Love INC, they are referred to us with an appointment at a particular time during our Closet Hours. We receive the appointment card about 10 days prior to the appointment. Sometimes we have all of the needed items, sometimes we are able to purchase items needed but not in stock, and sometimes we can only fill some of the needs. And that is okay. As a part of Love INC, we can trust that God is helping to fill the gaps through many other Partner Churches as well. But let's do our best!!

We are grateful that God has blessed us here at WCPC, through funds from our Annual Cookie Walk to help Families in Need and a special mission fund for Babies in Need provided in memory of Michele Boeke. And, we are certain God is blessing our ministry through calling members of our faith family to give of themselves, through volunteer time and donated goods. Here is a list of items we are trying to keep on hand in the closet for babies in need:

Baby Food, Baby Wash, Baby Wipes, Baby and Toddler Bedding, Bibs, Blankets, Bottles (4 and 8 ounce) and Nipples, Car Seats, Clothing (infant to size 2/3T), Diapers (Newborn to size 6), Diaper Rash Cream, Formula, Furniture, Onesies, Pacifiers, Pull Ups (day & night, all sizes), other items, as requested, and you and your time to help with the closet!





Dear Friends,

Thank you for your support of the mission and ministry of Presbyterian Women. Caring people like you help ensure that necessary funds are in place to support all Presbyterian women as we carry out the PW Purpose together—a purpose that includes Bible study, advocacy for justice and peace, mission work around the world, and the work of the PC(USA).

Through Horizons, quarterly newsletters, the PW website and Facebook and Twitter pages, we will keep you informed about how your gift continues to make a difference....

We thank you again for your generosity, and I personally send blessings and prayers to you as we continue this journey together.

Gratefully, Mary Cook Jorgenson, Moderator, 2012-2015

[Note: Donations for Presbyterian Women Birthday Offering Totaled \\$453](#)

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the children and staff of Kemmerer Village, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for your recent gift of \$128.00 on 6/20/2014. Your friendship and support serve as encouragement to our staff as we begin another year providing for the many young people entrusted to our care.



Along with the sunny skies and beautiful flowers, the arrival of spring brings with it still another chance to make a real difference in the lives of the children placed in our care. Your gift brings us closer to our goal of providing Christian Services for as many young people and families as possible.

We are always happy to schedule lunch and a tour of our campus. Feel free to contact us. We are grateful for your continued support.

Sincerely, Michael Havera, Executive Director

CARPENTER'S PLACE

Every good carpenter has a tool box filled with the tools of his trade. What Carpenter's Place does is provide "the tools necessary for rebuilding the lives of homeless adults".

We helped in this effort by donating \$250.00 from our "Mission Fund Restricted" account and an additional \$211.00 from our Mission Envelope contributions.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this worthy cause!



Thank You!

Dear Willow Creek Presbyterian Friends,

Thank you for inviting me to visit and share the work of Carpenter's Place. It was a joy to share the body of Christ with friends. Thank you for your support and abundant love! Carol



Dear Rev. Hardie and Church Family,

The national celebration of the 4th of July brings to mind in a special way the homeless Veterans we serve at Carpenter's Place. Men and women who selflessly served our country through the U.S. military are now in need of our help.

Your generous \$461.00 donation will help us continue services to homeless Veterans working to rebuild their lives. We respond to their need in two ways: 1) a daytime shelter and case management program provide a safe haven from the streets, meals, bathroom/shower facilities, clothing, positive activities, and most importantly, access to a holistic assessment, development of a personalized life-recovery plan, and supportive case management to assist with linkages to services and provide support; and 2) a transitional housing program specifically for homeless Veterans.

We thank you for being our partner in serving those who served our country and sacrificed to keep us free. God bless you, and God bless America!

Gratefully, Cathy Barsema, Co-Founder and Director of Guest Services

Mariners Excursion

Sponsored by Richard & Pat Nortch.

Tuesday, August 12

Meet 11:00 am at church to carpool to The Dancing Horses Theater in Delavan, WI to see the Arabian horses and the exotic bird show. After the show, travel to the Butterfly Club in Beloit for dinner.

Tickets must be ordered in advance, contact Richard & Pat Nortch.



It is a **great time** to join the Bell Choir!!

Session 1 Rehearsals: Thursdays, Aug. 21, 28, Sept. 4, 11, 18 @ 7:00 pm

Ring for Worship on Sunday, September 21.

Session 2 Rehearsals: Thursdays, Sept. 25, Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23

Ring for Worship on Sunday, October 26.



Picnic Committee Meeting, Wednesday, July 30th, 6:30 pm at the church.

The Picnic committee is hard at work on the 2nd Annual Community-Wide Picnic.

Mark your calendars for Sunday, August 24th to have a *great time*!! We have prizes and surprises planned. We hope everyone will come, bring a friend and enjoy; food, fun, entertainment, games and fellowship.





Celebrating a Birthday? Or Anniversary?

Share your joy with the congregation. Bring Chancel Flowers. Sign-up is located in Fellowship Hall (bulletin board near the doors to the Education Wing).

Back-to-School Youth Kick-Off Sunday, August 17th 4:30-7:00 @ Maren Reid's Home Incoming 6th Graders-Seniors

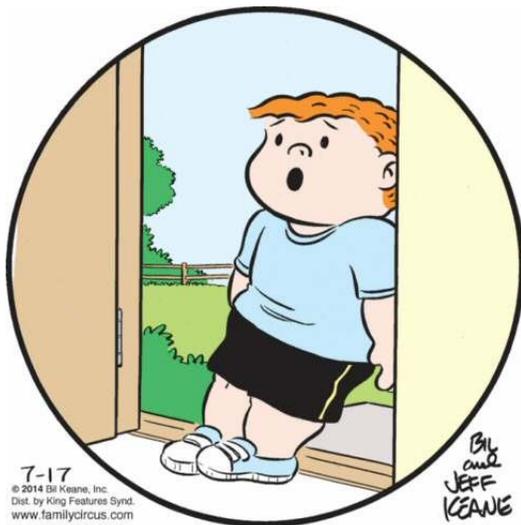
The Youth Group will kick-off on Sunday, August 17th with outdoor games, dinner, and a bonfire at Maren Reid's house (12885 Argyle Road). Incoming 6th Graders up through Seniors are welcome. Feel free to bring a friend and any outdoor game equipment you enjoy. If it is hot, we may get wet. Contact Maren (815-978-5307) with questions.



8-20
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By
Bill
KEANE

"Summer vacation's almost over, Sam. We need to do as much of nothing as we can."



7-17
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By
Bill
KEANE

"Mommy, Billy said I haven't 'chieved my full potential. Is that a good thing or a bad thing?"

The English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was entertaining a visitor one day when the conversation turned to children. "I believe," said the visitor, "that children should be given a free rein to think and act, and thus learn at an early age to make their own decisions. This is the only way they can grow into their full potential."

"I would like you to see my flower garden," Coleridge interrupted his visitor, and he led the man outside.

The visitor took one look and exclaimed, "Why, this is nothing but a yard full of weeds!"

"It used to be filled with roses," said Coleridge, "but this year I thought I would let the garden grow as it willed without my tending to it. This is the result."

Community-Wide Back-To-School Non-Denominational Worship Service

Sunday, August 17, 2014
5:00 pm – 6 pm
Community Building Complex
111 West First Street
Belvidere, IL
Pray for our Students, Teachers,
Schools & Administrators

Keynote Speaker: Philip Delre-Belvidere, Illinois:

"Come hear the true story of the man that represented the largest cocaine seizure in the history of the state. Phil met Jesus Christ while in prison. You'll want your kids to hear this!"

-Fred Brereton, Former Belvidere Mayor

P-H-M (Paul Hieser Music) is a contemporary Christian group whose songs proclaim the love and power of Christ. They reflect on how Christ is found in our relationships and our world. Members of the band are: Paul Hieser, Lance Kamin, Terresa Franklin and Gary Tarnowske. They play at various venues throughout the region and local churches. They recently played at Kiwanis Brat Days and next will be at the Restoration Café at the Rescue Mission. The band received Contemporary Christian Band of the year at the Indie Music Channel Awards and has received honors at the RAMI (Rockford Area Music Industry) awards. Come hear how they bring Christ into our midst through music and song on Sunday, August 10, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. Bring your friends and neighbors!

(A special Children's time is part of the program and CD's (\$10...no credit cards) and autographs will be available after worship in Fellowship Hall.



Guest Pastor Al Lisk returns to WCPC on Sunday, August 17. Pastor Al offers Pastoral Support at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Rockford IL. Following careers in business and higher education, he served as pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Oregon IL. Al, who completed lay pastor studies at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, has graduate degrees in Management as well as Organizational Behavior and Development. He's been married to Jean for 49 years and they have two grown children and four grandchildren.



Picture it...a summer morning in July. I am on summer vacation from teaching and am feeling rather lazy. In the back of my mind, I know I have to sing three times in August and should start getting into shape (yes, singers are athletes and get in and out of shape). Can't I just have a few more days of rest before I have to start practicing again? A little voice tells me NO, so I start singing.

And then, as almost always happens (unless I'm very tired or ill), I start to feel really energized. The more I sing the happier and more alive I feel. I sing for 30 minutes, a good workout, and my voice starts to sound beautiful and smooth. It is 11:00 a.m.. I go on to have a positive and productive day.

This is the power of singing. In case you didn't know, singing is one of the most popular hobbies in the country: community choirs, community theatre, you name it, and, yes, for sure **CHURCH CHOIRS.**

Singing gets the oxygen going, gets your muscles working, gets you into a social setting, creates beauty for you to be part of and gives you a feeling of satisfaction for a job well done. And it's just plain FUN.

I'll leave you with a thought that an old lady (well, I was 30 at the time and she was 75) told me once when I was doing theatre on the outer banks of North Carolina (singing has also helped me see the world.) We were driving home from rehearsal one night and she said, "Isn't it wonderful that God made voices in all these different ranges so that we sing his praises in harmony?" I had never thought of it in quite that way. Yes, it is wonderful, indeed.

Church choir begins on September 7. Please come join us.



THE OVERFLOWING CUP

Total Life Center

JOSIAH'S PLACE Coffeehouse

1175 Madison Road - P. O. Box 1075

Beloit, WI 53512-1075

Phone: (608) 365-0365 - E-mail: ofctlc@overflowingcup.org

A Christian Coffee House Ministry

www.overflowingcup.org

NEWS RELEASE

RE: ROCK ON THE ROCK 2014 Coming Soon....

Dates: Saturday and Sunday August 16th and 17th 2014

Location: Riverside Park at Jones Pavilion, Beloit

There will be music, food and fellowship on both days (August 16th and 17th from Noon until 10:00 p.m.

On Saturday August 16, 2014 from 12:00pm-3:00pm, Love INC is hosting its 5th **Back-to-School Bash** to bless the community in conjunction with **Rock the Rock!**

During this event there will be bands performing, children's area with jump houses. This will be a fun way to pass out school supplies to those children in need in the Beloit community. Everything will be totally free. The best part of this event is it will not just be for those needing school supplies but the community can come out and enjoy all that the event has to offer. All students needing school supplies must sign up at Love INC by July 31 in order to receive it on the day of the event.

(We are Seeking Donors and Sponsors for this event. We will be serving food for approximately 2,500 people this year and will appreciate donations of meat, chips, drinks etc. Call 608-365-0365 for more information.)

Respectfully Submitted by: Pastor Dave Fogderud www.overflowingcup.org

Community Gospel Concerts

Old Baltic Mill – Belvidere Park

Sunday Evenings – 7:00 P.M.

July 27: Guest Artists - King's Men Four

August 3: Guest Artists - Cody Clauson Trio

Bring a Blanket or chair or use ours

In case of rain, concert will take place at the church – 220 East Harrison St., Belvidere

Sponsored by the Evangelical Covenant Church of Belvidere



Olde English Faire!

October 4 & 5, 2014

Gates open at 9:00am & close at 4:00 pm

The Faire concludes at 5:30 pm

Tickets:

	1-day	2-day
Adults 13+	\$9.00	\$14.00
Youth 7-12	\$5.00	\$7.00
Children	Free	Free

During the first weekend in October, Stronghold transforms itself from a modern retreat and meeting facility to the site of the Olde English Faire. Wandering players perform both onstage and off as crafters and merchants display their wares. Minstrels fill the pathways and stages with melodies while children gather in the Gremlin's Garden for stories and other children's activities. These and many more delights await you at the Olde English Faire!

For more information, see the website: www.strongholdcenter.org

Attention Quilters

2014 Stronghold Quilt Auction and Silent Auction

Saturday, October, 4 (Quilt Preview 10:00 – noon)

Stronghold Camp and Retreat Center, 1922 IL 2 North, Oregon, IL.



Needed: Donated quilts for the Quilt Auction and items for the Silent Auction. To donate a quilt or silent auction item as an individual, church, or group, please contact Thelma Busker, Quilt Auction Coordinator, at 815-871-1655 or tkbusker@comcast.net or stop in the church office for additional information.

Also Greatly Needed: Bidders for quilts. If you know anyone who appreciates the hard work that goes into making a nice quilt, invite them to attend the auction to bid on a quilt and more importantly to support Stronghold. Quilts make a great birthday or Christmas gifts for someone to love. **Proceeds will benefit castle and camp improvement.**

August 2014 All Church Calendar

Fri 8/1	---	Youth Mission to Kentucky thru Sat 10/2
Sat 8/2	---	Youth Mission to Kentucky thru Sat 10/2
Sun 8/3	10:00 am	Sunday Worship w/Communion-MOM WAVE (Working Against Violent Environments)
	11:00 am	Fellowship
	11:15 am	Christian Education Meeting
Mon 8/4	---	Pastor Vacation Begins
Sun 8/10	10:00 am	Sunday Worship (P-H-M Paul Hieser Music)
	11:00 am	Fellowship
Mon 8/11	9:30 am	Membership, Stewardship & Mission Meeting
	---	Pastor Study Leave Begins
Tue 8/12	11:00 am	Start Mariners: Sponsored by Richard & Pat Nortch. Meet 11:00 am at church to carpool to The Dancing Horses Theater in Delavan, WI to see the Arabian horses and exotic bird show. After the show, travel to the Butterfly Club in Beloit for dinner. Tickets must be ordered in advance, contact Richard & Pat Nortch.
Wed 8/13	6:30 pm	2 nd Annual Community Wide Picnic Meeting
Sun 8/17	10:00 am	Sunday Worship (Pastor Al Lisk returns)
	11:00 am	Fellowship
	4:30 pm	Youth Group Gathering at Maren Reid's farmhouse
Mon 8/18	7:00-9:00 pm	Session Meeting
	---	Pastor Returns
Tue 8/19	9:00 am	Buildings & Grounds Meeting
	11:00 am	Preschool Board Meeting
Thur 8/21	Noon – 3 pm	Love Inc (Baby Angel Closet)
	7:00 pm	Bell Rehearsal
Sat 8/23	8:30 am	Music & Worship Meeting
Sun 8/24	10:00 am	Sunday Worship
	11:00 am	2 nd Annual Community-Wide Picnic
Tue 8/26	9:30 am	Martha Ruth Circle at Rock Cut, Lion's Club Pavilion
Thur 8/28	7:00 pm	Bell Rehearsal
Sat 8/30	5:00 pm	Wedding Rehearsal-Schuster/Neff
Sun 8/31	10:00 am	Sunday Worship
	11:00 am	Fellowship
	2:30 pm	Wedding-Schuster/Neff
TBD	TBD	Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting will be rescheduled

Future Dates Worth Noting

October 1–Kickoff meeting for Cookie Walk @10:30 am
 October 6–Nadia Bolz-Weber, Belv. Com. Ctr @6:30 pm
 November 2–Daylight Savings Time Ends
 December 6–Cookie Walk

**Treasurer's Report:
 WCPC Operating Statistics**

June, 2014

Income	12,686.00
Expenses	11,891.00
Previous Month - Excess/(Deficit)	(6,964.00)

WILLOW CREEK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
STATEMENT OF INCOME and EXPENSE
 Actual vs Budget
 FOR THE SIX MONTHS ENDED JUNE 30, 2014

	Budget	Actual	Variance
REVENUES:			
Contributions - General	63,550	66,281	2,731
Contributions - Special	500	542	42
Other Income	4,459	3,997	(462)
Endowment	-	-	-
School & Event	375	115	(260)
Total Revenue	68,884	70,935	2,051
EXPENSES:			
MINISTRY OF:			
Personnel	52,695	50,595	2,100
Christian Ed & Youth	2,225	968	1,257
Music & Worship	1,150	944	206
Member & Stewardship	850	506	344
Building & Grounds	22,790	25,589	(2,799)
Session	3,108	1,293	1,815
Deacons	100	175	(75)
Missions - Budgeted	250	100	150
- Unbudgeted	250	-	250
Total Expense	83,418	80,170	3,248
Change in cash from operations	(14,534)	(9,235)	5,299
OTHER:			
Dedicated Accounts, Pre-School & Liabilities	-	(13,898)	13,898
Net Cash Transfers To/(From) Investments	-	-	-
Change in cash since January 1, 2014	(14,534)	4,663	19,197

Kentucky Youth Mission Trip 2014

Thanks to all who supported us financially!



Now, please support us by praying with us.

WCPC Youth Mission Bible Study and Devotional

Sunday Night, 7/27: What would our world look like if it were everything God intends? Peace, understanding, comfort, satisfaction, true abundance for everyone—everywhere? Maybe something like that. We might never see it in our lifetimes. But in the meantime, there is *this* place and *this* moment. The kingdom is keen to break in.

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." ~Matthew 13:33

Bread rises because you put something in the dough that makes tiny gas bubbles to stretch the dough a little before they pop. These days, we use yeast or baking powder. Our ancestors used leaven—a lump of dough saved from yesterday's batch of bread. Before you shape the dough into loaves and put it in the oven, you pinch off a bit to leave until tomorrow, letting the natural yeasts and bacteria in it get a good head start.

Jesus says God's kingdom is like a small lump of yesterday's dough. Doesn't sound much like a kingdom, does it? But like the mustard seed from yesterday, the leaven-lump is more powerful than you think. In Jesus' parable, one lump can make about 50 pounds of flour rise. That's a lot of biscuits!

The tiny seed or the smallish lump becomes home for all us birds or bread enough to feed us all. That's God's kingdom in action.

Dear God, may my hand plant the seed or mix the dough that becomes your kingdom. Amen.

Monday Morning, 7/28: What would our world look like if it were everything God intends? Peace, understanding, comfort, satisfaction, true abundance for everyone—everywhere? Maybe something like that. We might never see it in our lifetimes. But in the meantime, there is *this* place and *this* moment. The kingdom is keen to break in.

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." ~Matthew 13:31–32

Ever notice how teams with animal mascots pick strong, fast, fierce animals? Lions, tigers, eagles, vipers; not earthworms, crickets, sloths, or tadpoles. Okay, there are the TCU Horned Frogs, but you get my point. National symbols work the same way. Ben Franklin argued that the turkey is a much nobler bird than the bald eagle, but nobody agreed.

Jesus says the kingdom is like . . . a huge oak tree? A maple? Nope—a mustard plant, small and common, not big and majestic. Mustard greens start from small seeds, and they grow like crazy; and if you don't pull them and eat them (as most people did and still do), they grow into a sort of bush. God's kingdom—this place where God's love is stronger than any other power, human or cosmic—doesn't look powerful, doesn't have tanks or armies. God's kingdom is small and ordinary; it's full of peace-lovers and people who feed the poor. But it has spread worldwide, and lots of us birds call it home.

Dear God, please help me live where your mustard seeds grow, and help me to grow along with them. Amen.

Benediction: Maybe it's not just a romantic notion. The kingdom comes in things that are very small, but that can become something great; something worth giving everything you have to be part of it. The kingdom is something fine, worth more than we can imagine. And it is worth all the more when we share what we know about it, though we will never understand it completely. Go now to give it all away.

Monday Night, 7/28:

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." ~Matthew 10:34–39

Bringing a sword and not peace is not quite what I want Jesus to say. Jesus is supposed to tell us to put our fighting words away. Jesus is supposed to be easygoing. Jesus is supposed to make everyone happy, right? Hunger and poverty make me mad. But filling hungry bellies and helping families find their means of support are efforts that upset our social balance, so these injustices will not end easily. What makes you angry? War? Drop-out rates? Racism? Debt? Gangs?

Jesus wants us to be kingdom people, getting angry and turning the world upside down. Jesus got angry. He even died because he wasn't willing to compromise. He turned things too upside-down for those in his part of the world, so maybe we aren't supposed to be keeping everybody happy. Maybe, instead, we are called to proclaim God's upside-down kingdom by standing uncompromisingly for the weak, broken, and hated.

God, I am surrounded by injustice. Give me the courage and wisdom necessary to stand for your upside-down kingdom in the face of injustice. You are my strength, my vision, and my life. Amen.

Tuesday Morning, 7/29: "I feel so alive!" We all have experiences that can make us shout that phrase. But we can also feel those occasions don't come along often enough and we long to know that feeling again, especially in difficult times. Feeling alive is attached always to the One who gives us life. Open yourself in these next moments to be touched by life as it is meant to be.

"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!" ~Matthew 10:24-25

A friend from seminary went to Arica, Chile, hoping to find Jesus at work there. Immersed in the culture, building relationships and learning as much from my missionary hosts as she could, she did find Jesus already in motion, but she became overwhelmed. There was a lot of work to do, and she was only there for a little while. What would happen when she left? Could she make a lasting impact on the community, the church, the children she found there in so much need?

When Jesus sends out his disciples, he relieves them of the stress of having to be...well, Jesus. We work hard following Jesus into good work, but we stress ourselves out thinking we have to have it all figured out. The way things turn out is not entirely up to us. In Chile, Jesus was already bringing life. So the good news is Jesus will be there even after the mission group leaves.

Holy God, I am grateful that you call me. I am grateful that, no matter where I am, I can be a part of your ongoing work. Help me remember that it's not all up to me. Amen.

Benediction: So, go. Breathe. Breathe deeply and feel the spirit of life within. Know that the Giver of life is with you, making you alive by the Spirit that is still at work in all of creation. Then walk. Walk confidently into your day, aware that the life-giving Christ is alongside you with every step.

Tuesday Night, 7/29: Imagine a game of tug-o-war. Without *both* teams the rope would simply fall to the ground and there would be no game or fun. Now imagine on one side of the rope is "listening" and on the other side is "doing." There is a tension between the two, but they are both needed.

We can't truly listen without it changing us in some way – our ideas, our knowledge, and our way of living. We can't truly do anything without first listening – to our thoughts, to God's call, or to the voices of others. We need both listening and doing. Look up tonight's Bible reading. Listen for what you are to hear and to do.

Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to advice. ~Proverbs 12:15

If someone were to ask if I wanted to be wise or unwise I would instantly know the answer. I want to be wise. Yet when I hear good advice, too often I don't take it. I think one of the main ingredients to listening to others is not being prideful. We take so much pride in ourselves that we assume we know best. If we could stop thinking we were the best, we might be able to listen to the advice of others.

We might hear how they have been where we are and survived. We might hear how they know a better way out of a frustrating situation. We might even hear some ways to experience God that we never knew before. Let go of your pride so that the people who surround you might be able to speak words you will listen to.

Lord, help me to lay down my pride today. Too often I believe I know the answers. Guide me to listen to you and others so that I might make wise choices. Amen.

Wednesday Morning, 7/30: (I know it's early. You want to sleep, and I've asked you to serve.)

Imagine a game of tug-o-war. Without *both* teams the rope would simply fall to the ground and there would be no game or fun. Now imagine on one side of the rope is "listening" and on the other side is "doing." There is a tension between the two, but they are both needed. We can't truly listen without it changing us in some way – our ideas, our knowledge, and our way of living. We can't truly do anything without first listening – to our thoughts, to God's call, or to the voices of others. We need both listening and doing. Look up tonight's Bible reading. Listen for what you are to hear and to do.

Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land, saying, "When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain; and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale? We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with false balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat."

~Amos 8:4-6

A young boy rode the school bus. The older kids on the bus would sell him cheap Pokemon trading cards for more than they were worth. Wanting to be "cool" like them, he would give them all his lunch money for the cards. He wouldn't eat because of their tricks, and because he didn't think ahead. Years later he saw the same tricks being pulled on the younger kids. He sat by and did nothing; he just let it happen. Too often people just stand by and let others be taken advantage of. We should do a better job listening for the cries of the trampled and do something about it.

Lord, help me to listen for those in need, to hear their cries, and to do something for them. Amen.

Benediction: So go out this day seeking God. Every day is a day of tug-o-war, listening and doing pulling at you. Sometimes listening is more important; In other moments we are called to action. In both, God is present. Look for God's guidance to know when to listen and when to act.

Wednesday Night, 7/30: Our eyes can fool us. We are each captive to our own way of seeing things, struggling to see the world from any perspective but our own. Sometimes we look away, afraid of what we might see or afraid of what it might mean to see things differently than we usually do. Wisdom shines a light on what we look at, and God is the source of that illumination. Be prepared now to see things more clearly.

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." ~Matthew 11:25–26

Sometimes in the upside-down kingdom of God, it is not the wise and intelligent who have the answers, but those who are young in their faith—so young that they may know hardly anything! Everyone has a part; not once you become an expert, but right now, before you know all the stories and before you have all the experiences.

All of us, experts and beginners and everyone in between, have a part in the larger community of faith. We do this together. Together, we ask questions and figure out answers. Together, we follow the ancient traditions and create new ones full of meaning for today. Together, we tell the story of God's love. It takes all of us!!

God, thank you for my place in your family. Show me how to make contributions as I make space for others. Amen.

Thursday Morning, 7/31: Our eyes can fool us. We are each captive to our own way of seeing things, struggling to see the world from any perspective but our own. Sometimes we look away, afraid of what we might see or afraid of what it might mean to see things differently than we usually do. Wisdom shines a light on what we look at, and God is the source of that illumination. Be prepared now to see things more clearly.

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” ~Matthew 11:28–30

I get tired. I get so worn out I can't remember why I'm doing what I'm doing. I can't see the finish line. Instead of telling me to put it all down and walk away, Jesus walks up beside me and shares my load.

Following God is a lifetime commitment. It is a HUGE goal made up of every choice, word, and deed done throughout every day. It's not a commitment we can put down and walk away from when we are tired or don't know which way to go. Instead, we get Jesus walking next to us, yoking us together, offering support and encouragement, giving us a guide and a steady rhythm to follow.

God, help. Help me to see Jesus beside me, guiding me, walking with me. Help me to see you so that I know where to go and what to do. Amen.

Benediction: May you have new eyes to see this very day a world that is not exactly all that you thought, new wisdom to understand the things that God shows you, and a new humility that makes you a more effective witness to God's love, grace, and mysterious works.

Thursday Night, 7/31: There are two steps in the process: first, you must listen, paying attention to what is being shared. Then, you must hear; that means you try to take in all the meaning of what you've been listening to, making an effort to understand. Living in relationship with another requires that you are willing to become vulnerable to the life and experience of another, and care enough to experience it yourself—at least to some small degree. Listen. God is speaking. Do you hear?

At some point we have all sat around for story time. Maybe it was at preschool, maybe at a local library, or even at home with a loved one. Story time was the time when our imaginations were stirred. Maybe we ventured into a world of fantasy or visited a different period in history or hung out with a group of friends solving mysteries. Whatever the case was, we took time to allow new stories to stir our souls.

Sometimes, like the crowd who gathered around Jesus, we need to take time to listen to stories that may stir our faith. The story may be prodding us to see the world differently, encouraging us to persevere through struggle, or calling us to challenge injustice. But we will never know if we never hear the stories. Take a moment to listen to the stories being told around you. Think about the stories you have heard on this trip.

God, as I move from task to task, and place to place, allow me to hear the stories being told all around me. Amen.

Friday Morning, 8/1: There are two steps in the process: first, you must listen, paying attention to what is being shared. Then, you must hear; that means you try to take in all the meaning of what you've been listening to, making an effort to understand. Living in relationship with another requires that you are willing to become vulnerable to the life and experience of another, and care enough to experience it yourself—at least to some small degree. Listen. God is speaking. Do you hear?

"As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away." ~Matthew 13:20–21

In today's culture of speed and agility, if people and organizations are not able to change and adapt, they will soon fall behind. At the same time, if those same people and organizations move too quickly, they run the risk of losing focus, damaging relationships, and frustrating those around them. Often, these changes happen when tasks become burdensome while other, different tasks are more exciting. The danger of this rapid change is that there are indeed some things that must be done, no matter how exciting they are or are not; they are tasks essential to being a healthy individual or organization.

The journey of faith is similar in that sometimes we only engage our faith during the high times. But when faith becomes difficult, challenges us in new ways, or begins to feel heavy, we disengage. In order that our faith stays healthy and vibrant, we must take the time to persevere in our discovery so that we may experience that initial joy over and over and over again.

God, be with me in the days of rapid change, on brief meaningful experiences, and on mission trips, but also ground me so that my faith may take root and help me grow and develop in Christ who strengthens me. Amen.

Benediction: As you go throughout your day, will you listen? God is speaking and you will be wise to pay attention. Hear what God is saying. Feel the power of God's voice and go then wherever you may be directed. There is life abundant within for your journey.

Friday Night, August 1: It's an important part of your identity, going to the root of who you are. It speaks to where you come from and, to a large degree, where you are going. So whose child are you? Since God is our source, we are children of God, made to be loved and to thrive. In these next few moments, consider who has birthed you into the world and who is nurturing you along the way.

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ~Romans 8:12–13

In any family like yours or mine, there are traits and patterns that make us who we are. Maybe your family loves to play card games on vacation; maybe you always eat Chinese food on Christmas Eve or maybe you have to wait till you're 16 to go on a date. Sometimes we like the ways of our family; other times we don't. Paul tells us that, in the family of God, some of our common traits are found as we pay attention to leadings of the Spirit of God, not what is most natural to us. It's easy to do what we want; it takes more courage to follow a different way. Are we willing to forgive that friend again? Are we willing to sit with the person on the bus who smells a little funny? Are we willing to spend our Saturday at the food bank instead of at the mall? We abide in God's family when we listen to those whispers of the Spirit.

Lord, help us listen to your whispers. Even when we are not feeling it, help us be still and know you are our God. Keep the lessons of this week in our hearts, we pray. Amen

Saturday Morning, August 2: (It's early, but don't forget to wish Skyler a happy birthday!)

It's an important part of your identity, going to the root of who you are. It speaks to where you come from and, to a large degree, where you are going. So whose child are you? Since God is our source, we are children of God, made to be loved and to thrive. In these next few moments, consider who has birthed you into the world and who is nurturing you along the way.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ~Romans 8:22–23

There is a popular spiritual song you may have heard called, "I Wouldn't Take Nothing For My Journey Now." The lyrics include these words: "I started out traveling for the Lord many years ago, I've had a lot of heartaches, had a lot of troubles and woes. Oh, when I would stumble, then I would humble down. I'd say, Thank the Lord, I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now."

These words describe the faith journey of a child of God, much like Paul writes about in today's Scripture. As we are seeking to follow Jesus, we aren't always going to get it right. We are going to make mistakes and even fall on our faces sometimes. But the good news is that it's okay. Wherever you find yourself today, you are okay. So much of our journey with God is about the process; not as much the destination. It can be more difficult not always having the answers, but it is God's plan for our becoming. We learn day by day as we go.

Dear Jesus, when I look back on this week, when I look back on my life, I know I've done some things right and some things totally wrong. But I thank you for my journey and how you've helped me learn more about who you really are along the way. Guide us now and always safely home. Amen.

Benediction: God made you beautiful, gave you the wisdom and power you need to live out your calling to love and to lead. Thank you for a wonderful week of growing and learning, and sharing the love of Christ. Go now towards home, taking all you have learned and turning it into a lifetime of grace, leadership, and service in your own families, communities, and churches!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SKYLER! AND THANK YOU JEFF, JACOB, NOAH, JACK, CONNOR, MATT, KATHERINE, ELIZABETH, SKYLER, HAILEY AND RACHAEL!!!



(If we left, as planned, by 7am, we should be in the church parking lot by 2pm.)