

The Sharing Org

Ministry to the Nursing Care Community

NOVEMBER 2008

Dear Prayer,

Happy Thanksgiving to you! Despite the country's economic problems we have much to be thankful for. For instance, we can be thankful for our families, we can be thankful for God's love for us as demonstrated through the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord, and we can be extremely thankful that the presidential election will be over with very soon! Phew, I did not think it would ever stop.

The month of October was filled with filling 100 shoeboxes in participation with Samaritan's Purse and the Operation Christmas Child program. It was a blessing for me to assist the residents to pack and give these gifts to poor children around the world. Doing this allowed the residents to be missionaries with the promise of sharing the love of Jesus with poor children and their families. For many of the residents this was the very first time that they had been able to do something like this and they are excited to have been a part of the program. **Please remember to pray** for the program and the children who will receive our shoeboxes. A special thanks goes out to Community Baptist Church of Richmond for not only sending a team out to help with the packing of the boxes at one facility but for accepting and transporting our 100 shoeboxes to the distribution point. Thanks is also due to the United Methodist Women from Armada who helped with packing parties at two facilities. I plan to prepare a report (in the next month or so) detailing this year's shoebox program and some preliminary plans for next year's shoebox program as well. Keep an eye out for it.

November transitions us into the Advent season which begins on the 24th of November for us. We will be in the process of adding a new collection of Christmas songs into the mix as well as newly printed and bound song books. The books that we have are 5 years old and in need of some serious help. **Please pray** that we will be able to get these books edited, funded, printed, and distributed in time for that first Advent service.

A couple of weeks ago I was reminded of the hurts that exist in the lives of many of the residents that I serve. I was talking with a woman and she expressed nothing less than detest and hate for her son. She told me that her son took advantage of her and that God would not expect her to like the boy let alone love him. While I empathized with the feelings that she had in this matter I spent some time reading to her what the scriptures said about hate.

- 1 John 3:15 – *Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*
- 1 John 4:20 – *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.*

I asked her to seek God in prayer about this matter so as to change her heart and that she might see reconciliation in her relationship with her son. She honestly expressed her unwillingness to do so but I am praying that God would work a miracle in her life and her son's. **Please pray with me about this** and let's just see what God will do.

Blessings to you and yours this November. I pray that you will be blessed as God uses your life for His purposes.

Together in His grace,
John

www.thesharing.org

PO Box 73 · Armada, MI 48005 · (586) 949-6885

It is the MISSION of the Sharing Org to share the love of God and to build relationships with residents of care facilities by providing them with weekly interdenominational Christian worship services.

I would like to partner with the Sharing Org and serve the residents of care facilities by giving them the love of God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I would like to partner with the Sharing Org by making a **monthly contribution** of: \$50.00 \$25.00 \$15.00 **\$8.00** for 2008 \$_____ Other

I would like to support the Sharing Org by making a **one time donation** of: \$500.00 \$250.00 \$100.00 \$75.00 \$_____ Other

#0607030.5
Prayer Partner
12345 Anywhere St.
Your Town, MI 48---

Thank you for partnering with us as together we share the Love of God with the residents of care facilities.

You've pledged \$0 per month to support the Sharing Org.

Your gifts for 2008 have totaled \$30

Please make checks payable to: **The Sharing Org**
Please mail to: PO Box 73
Armada, MI 48005

Ministry Moments

In January of 2006 I began writing a correspondence series titled *Ministry Moments* for the monthly supporters of the Sharing Org. In Ministry Moments I highlighted key moments that happened in the ministry and my own reactions to those moments. I've since received so many positive comments concerning that series that I have decided to begin adding it to each newsletter. These Ministry Moments that I share are my most personal thoughts about what I've experienced in the previous month. My words are not always flowery or politically correct but they come straight from the heart – the heart that is ever being challenged and changed by our God who seems to surprise me every time I turn around.

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- Open with prayer – “*check*”
- Lead five songs – “*check*”
- Present a short message – “*check*”
- Close with the Lord’s Prayer – “*check*”
- Share polite niceties during a short time of fellowship – “*check*”
- Shake hands as I depart – “*and check*”

All congregations get into a pattern (aka “a rut”) and they operate in such a manner as a normal course of action – and the above pattern is mine. One of my character flaws (and yes I have a couple) is that when I attend a church (any church) after just a few weeks I recognize patterns like these and I immediately begin wondering how I can “*help*” the church change the pattern so that spiritual growth can take place. The problems this can create are many and recently I have learned what my propensity for a change feels like from the other side – *the side of the “rut.”*

I have a group of people in one of my services that is unlike the other groups. There I am often asked to perform a spiritual practice that I am unaccustomed to, the men and women are prone to ask questions or to share stories and statements as examples to the truth of the message, and these residents are not simply contented with me just opening with prayer and starting the music: One person will ask to share a Christian poem that they have written, another person will ask to perform on the guitar a spiritual song that they have scored, and when I ask them to pray with me – the Lord’s Prayer – they ask that we assemble in a circle and hold hands.

At these requests the administrator in me cringes because it varies from the norm (don’t they know that I have a schedule to keep?), the theologian in me cringes because it varies from *my* tradition (don’t they know that I was raised Baptist?), the control-freak in me cringes when someone suggests something that is out of the rut (don’t they know that we have a routine to follow?), and all the while the Spirit in me rejoices that residents are not allowing *me* to get in the way of them worshipping our Lord.

The other day I had a woman tell me that she is a life long member of a particular denomination but yet she chooses to come to our service each week even though I am not her *brand* of Christianity. At first I had to question if I have watered down the gospel that much but as I thought about it I realized that I have not watered it down, I have simply extended the love and mercy of Christ, without pretext, to everyone that I come into contact with in the homes.

The religion in me screams that I am in error but it seems to me that showing the love and grace of Jesus cannot be wrong. Struggle as I do sometimes I know that I will continue to reach past my inner administrator, theologian, control freak, and religionist in order to make people – all people – know that Jesus loves them.

~ John