

The Sharing Org

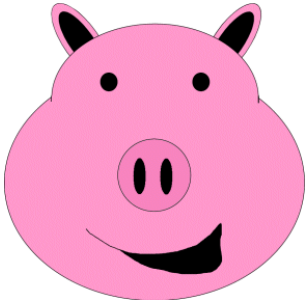
Ministry to the Nursing Care Community

January 2009

Dear Prayer Partner,

Happy New Year!!! I hope you are as expectant of the New Year as I am. Each year I plan, and schedule, and hope, and pray, and expect that at least a few of my efforts will amount to success. However, it will not be until the end of 2009 when I can reflect and see what was of God and what was of my own devices. Last month I wrote about the exceptional blessings of God in our work for 2008 and this year I hope for more of the same.

Although the numbers are not all in, the budget for 2008 was greatly blessed as God provided in spades for it. I spent many months wondering if we were going to have to close up shop but then God provided a way through. I don't know why I always fret – you would think that I would have learned by now that God is faithful. As the 2009 budget has been approved by our board it is again an aggressive budget, one that will likely leave me a bit apprehensive, but I fully expect that God will once again provide. Please keep an eye on our website for details.



For 2009 please pray with us about our annual Shoeboxes event. This year we will again be focusing our attention toward Operation Christmas Child and filling the shoeboxes for that. As since we do not expect to once again receive the grant that we did last year, we will be initiating the Adopt-a-Pig program as a way to fund the project. We will be inviting people to **Adopt-a-Pig** and fill it with their pocket change (and even their wallet bills) throughout the year. The residents are excited about participating in this effort again this year. Please check our website to find out how you too can **Adopt-a-Pig** for 2009.

Also, please be in prayer this year about an orphanage in Zimbabwe that we are praying for and contributing to. It is important to the residents (and myself) to always be missional in our ministry - so we have adopted an orphanage in Zimbabwe. This orphanage allows the residents to have a purpose outside their four walls and blesses the children who are in a dire situation.

Please continue to pray for the residents as most of them often struggle to remain encouraged. Discouragement is a huge struggle as they deal with confinement on so many levels: *physically, emotionally, and spiritually*. Please pray that the residents are encouraged by faith in God through Christ Jesus our Lord. Although many of the residents struggle I am impressed with many of them as time-and-time again they take such comfort from God and His Word.

And lastly, please pray for my family as we adjust to the new baby who will be joining us in February. We are excited to welcome this new addition to our family, but we know that it will be a steep curve of adjustment as everyone gets acclimated to the new environment that we will find ourselves in.

Serving our community and our world with you,
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.*

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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I was asked this past week to pray for a woman who has a court date coming up. The purpose of the court appearance is to judge whether she will be allowed to leave the Adult Foster Care system or not. I always cringe a little inside when I get these sorts of prayer requests because ultimately I get these requests from people of whom it is obvious that they need the benefits of the AFC system.

As a minister, I always struggle because I proclaim that “*all things are possible in Christ our Lord*” while at the same time believing that the doctors are correct in proclaiming that some people are mentally ill and in need of guardianship. I struggle because my faith is in the “*resurrection from the dead*” and mental illness should be no problem for God to heal, yet I am not seeing the mentally ill people that I serve healed of their mental illness. I struggle because the AFC home for them is a confining punishment, but I view it as a blessing to those who need it - *and my vantage point is rarely theirs*.

As I was leaving the facility the other day this woman asked me to continue to pray for her release. I told her that I would pray God's WILL for her to which she replied that it *must* be God's will that she be released.

I thought about how often we consider something to be God's will for our life simply because it is what **we** want – and I struggle with that. I struggle not with the fact that the residents that I serve think this way but because I am prone to think this way myself. I often have strong feelings of what should happen and how, and as I consider God's will in all of it, I like to imagine that it is God's will that my plans turn out the way that I expect them to. It is easy for me to imagine that if my plans do not work out the way that I planned that it is the devil thwarting my plans rather than my plans simply not being God's will for my life.

Once, when Mother Teresa was allowed to choose a parcel of land to build a new Leprosy village, she and one of her novices were inspecting a plot of land. As she did, the local villagers congregated and upon learning what Mother Teresa was doing started throwing rocks at her. Mother Teresa ducked for cover and made it safely to her car where she laughed a little and said to her novice “Oh dear, I don't think God wants us to build the village here.” A couple of weeks later Mother Teresa was given an exceptional plot of land by the government to build the village.

I really like this story because it reminds me that instead of rebuking the devil when rocks come flying, it may indeed be God who is sending the rocks so that I will move unto what He has in store for me. When someone asks me to pray for them I struggle because they are asking me to pray for a certain outcome rather than simply God's will – *whatever the outcome*.

Sometimes I struggle with communicating the reality that God is not our personal prayer genie but rather our God who has a plan for this world and the lives of all of us in it. I guess I will continue to struggle with this until I have consistently worked it out in my own life

~ John