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DECEMBER HAPPENINGS

As you might imagine, December was a very busy and enjoyable month for our ministry. We had two special events which had far-reaching impacts in lives within our community.

PAIN-FREE DENTAL DAY: For the fourth year, volunteers from our office



and dentists, hygienists and assistants from our community volunteered their time in an effort to eliminate dental pain for the holidays. Meeting in three separate offices, 200 patients were seen in the eight-hour day. A special thanks is extended to all who participated. We know that the services produced not only a smile on the faces of the patients, but (most importantly) a smile on the face of our God.



CHRISTMAS GIFT BASKETS: This year we were able to help 100 families (nearly double our usual number) with baskets that included holiday food, gifts and sometimes gift cards to help add to their Christmas celebrations. Thank you to all who sponsored families, gave money, toys or food to help in the effort. Our aim was to share the love of Jesus with these families to help them to focus not so much on the presents under the tree but the presence of God in their hearts.



Rev. Bob Shepard, Executive Director

Kathy Ochs, Clearinghouse Coordinator

Juan Miranda, Administrative Assistant

Being the heart and hands of Jesus Christ for our valley

Vol. XII Issue I

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REV. BOB SHEPARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IT'S "DEFRAGGING" TIME AGAIN

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Philippians 3:12

I would be the first to admit that I am far from a computer expert, but I like those of you who own or work with computers recognize the term "defragging". Periodically our hard drives need defragmenting. The reason is that sometimes the data entered on our hard drives isn't always done neatly. The more files we have and the more programs we download, the more the hard drive gets scrambled by random inputs that get sprayed over lots of space. Compounding the issue are crashes, power outages and stalled programs which cause further fragmentation.

The harder your hard drive has to work to retrieve original information, the slower it becomes, and the more blurred the images appear.

If you are anything like me, I procrastinate defragging until my computer almost grinds to a halt. Why? Because defragging takes time. It requires allowing the computer hours of uninterrupted time to clean up the confusion. Yet, once the defragmenting process has been done, usually my hard drive recovers its speed and the images are much clearer. That is why wiser computer owners defrag on a regular basis.

Spiritual defragmenting is required for individuals and for ministries. Taking time in prayer to reflect on the past and seek direction for the future will certainly make us more effective.

As we have concluded our first decade of ministry and forge ahead into the second decade, our required "defragmenting" has been to pause in prayer and praise God for His faithfulness and provision. It also involves asking for His guidance in where we should go in the days ahead as we build on the foundation He has established. What a wonderful journey we have been on and how exciting it is to know that it is not over yet. I ask that you join us in prayer to determine God's leading. Already we have engaged in conversations with pastors and community leaders about future ministry efforts for our valley. I look forward to sharing some of these new directions with you in the days ahead.

Most of all, we know that the sense of unity that has been established and the collaborative spirit must continue in an increasing way for God's will to be accomplished. During these past ten years we have made intentional efforts to accomplish the ministry God has called us to. This has involved resourcing and encouraging pastors, addressing felt needs of the needy in our valley through our clearinghouse ministry,

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praying for our valley and leaving our buildings to get out to the streets to demonstrate a new paradigm of incarnational ministry. All this has required the churches of our valley to unite in unprecedented ways.

More and more I am convinced that God is up to something very special in our valley and we want to be a vital part of it. Thank you for the role you have played in helping us stay faithful to our calling of sharing the whole Gospel to the whole valley. May we each have the spirit of excitement and expectation that 2012 will be the very best year yet in our ministries.

Serve Wenatchee Valley Support Update

Thank you for your faithful support. For the tenth year straight, we were blessed to have an excess of funds after covering our expenses. We believe this to be a wonderful affirmation of God's provision for our ministry and His approval of our efforts.

	December 2011	Year to Date
Income	\$41,269	\$191,852
Expenses	\$15,750	\$173,006

Gretchen's Prayer Corner

Radical Love

A very dear Sister in Christ has been working as a Missionary in a third-world country since 2005. This, in and of itself, is noteworthy, but the best part is that she works with orphans; specifically disabled, precious ones. The Lord has been stirring her nest and making life in general even more uncomfortable than usual for her for about a year now. Prior to going to this particular country, she was pretty sure that she had "heard a piece of Lord's Heart" with regards to Human Trafficking. But, then He "loaned" her a number of precious orphans to love and to care for daily. And, yet, in the midst of daily life, human trafficking and international justice issues were not far from her brain and heart. This past year has been His "shake-up and dis-lodge program" to get her to exactly hear His Perfect, "Joyful Sound." Moving her and four of the orphans with her half-way from here to there, Father is preparing His obedient, and somewhat stretched, vessel to be aware of His slightest leadings. She is more than lovely; He is AGAPE.



Eric Mumford says: "The Trinity is sacrificial, self-giving, self-forsaking in Nature - Radical in Love." Many of us have painstakingly developed a construct of God that is comfortable to and for us -- instead of Who the Trinity actually is. This sabotages the Work of the Master, and only the Truth could possibly set us free. My friend is free indeed. So, she's given away her precious goats to good homes, given away most of the house-hold items that she has accumulated over the past seven years, and plans, God-willing, to make the trek even this month into the big city, where human trafficking is common-place, life is valueless, and this existence of horror affects so many.

Gary Haugen is a lawyer whom the Lord is using to bring this issue of injustice out into the open. A number of books, and an organization dedicated to freeing human slaves (*International Justice Mission*),

are some tangible fruit of this dear-one's life, that he humbly lays before the feet of Jesus. Because it is imperative for us, The Church, to get this right, I must share a number of excerpts from his book, **Just Courage**:

"A lawyer came to Jesus to ask Him an important question. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus answered him with another question: 'What is written in the Law?... How do you read it?' The lawyer answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself' (Luke 10:25-27).

*Simple enough, right? Not if you're a lawyer. As a lawyer myself, I understand the way lawyers can complicate things to avoid obligations. The lawyer in Luke has a follow-up question: 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus then makes it clear, through the parable of the good Samaritan, that anyone in need is our neighbor. When examining stories like this, it's always interesting to ask, 'What is the question that matters to us?' as compared to, 'What's the question that matters to Jesus?' The question that mattered to the lawyer was, 'Who is my neighbor?' The question that mattered to Jesus was, 'Are you loving your neighbor?' Jesus' conversation with this lawyer makes it clear that we can't love God without loving our neighbors. . . But, how do we actually love our neighbor? Jesus made this very simple. 'Do to others what you would have them do to you' (Matthew 7:12). To love our neighbor is simply to consider how we would want to be treated - and then treat all others that way. What does this have to do with understanding God's passion for justice? Simply this: doing justice is being obedient to Jesus' command to love our neighbor in a world of injustice. Doing the work of justice is practicing the one command that sums up all of the Scriptures: To love God with our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Justice is doing for others what we would want done for us. This is why Hebrews 13:3 puts the work of justice in the context of love, exhorting us to 'remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured' (NRSV). For those neighbors around the world who are suffering injustice, we can't say that we love them if we do not draw near and seek justice on their behalf. We must seek to rescue our neighbors with the dedication and urgency with which we would go about trying to rescue our own family or even ourself. In a world of injustice, loving intervention on behalf of the oppressed is simple obedience to Jesus' most fundamental command to love our neighbor. For those who take the teachings of the Bible seriously, there can be no doubt that the call to seek justice is fundamental to our devotional life as Christians. The weight of the biblical material is overwhelming. This massive biblical mandate has been marginalized in most of our churches over the last hundred years, but God is calling his people back to these neglected fundamentals. Our job is to respond to the calling when we hear it - for it is God's grace to us."**

Dear Ones: Shall we all hear the "joyful sound" for ourselves? Shall we submit to the voice of the Lord as He speaks to us, right here in the Wenatchee Valley, on the issues of Justice and His Radical Love? This indeed is God's grace to us. And, it most probably will be Grace for our neighbor as well.

Radically Loved, to radically love,
Gretchen.

*Haugen, Gary. "Just Courage: God's Great Expedition for the Restless Christian." Chapter Six -- Loving God and Our Neighbor. InterVarsity Press (2008) (p. 73-75).