

January 2012

A New You

(During the interim when we are without a senior pastor, Pastor Delianne's article will appear here.)

Happy New Year! January, 2012 marks the beginning of a brand new year and of new beginnings. I'll not frustrate you with yet another plan for self improvement for a leaner body, a less-cluttered mind (or closet), a healthier diet, or new plan to train your dog. Nor will I set your teeth on edge with a list of "pesky resolutions" as Pastor Clay was fond of calling those new practices and things we plan to do, and almost always fall short of doing. But I do want to suggest something more radical: not just new habits, new resolutions, but a *new you*. Recently, we heard a sermon by Pastor George Vander Weit on being formed into the image of Christ—a new you—that takes on the characteristics (image) of Christ. As he illustrated in his message, by giving birth to a new person who looks and acts like Jesus (of course, we need a lot of help), we become "mothers of Christ."

Many of us will respond, "impossible!" We really don't believe in change. If we are selfish, short-tempered or quick to criticize, we often excuse ourselves and say, "I was born that way" or "that's just the way I am." In the church I served in Boston for several years, I remember a woman who regularly criticized the worship service each week and reported by phone or in person to anyone who would listen. On several occasions, she announced to me that it was her gift and responsibility to criticize. I think she missed the point—and the blessing.

Within all of us is an old nature that reveals itself and is our default mode when we think no one is watching or cares. It takes a major overhaul to eradicate our old way of talking, criticizing, judging, and complaining. Most of us, at one time or another, have defaulted to self-serving habits: cheating, criticizing, being mean rather than compassionate, greedy rather than gracious, lacking love, judging others, and excusing ourselves.

Yet we can become new creations. Being transformed is not a matter of just following rules and new habits. It is the gospel promise of grace. We just need to accept the miracle and cooperate with the Holy Spirit who guides us into new life. Paul talks about transformation in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "...if anyone is in Christ, [she] is a new

creation, the old has gone, the new has come." Pastor VanderWeit pointed out to us the Apostle Paul's expression of "motherly" love and patience awaiting this transformation: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you"
Galatians 4:19.

In my life, the old habits cling tenaciously. I would like to be the ruler of the world and of my life. I would like to control my extended family. If I were in control, I would arrange for everyone to show up at family gatherings and for everyone to be happy and prospering. Of course, I'm not in charge of my life, and there may very well be family gatherings where there are setbacks, disappointments and disagreements. I remember one occasion which I almost spoiled it for everyone because I missed my plane! Everyone was waiting for me to arrive (for a family photo) and I wasn't there on time. It was stupid—my mistake (ask me sometime what really happened)! Learning to accept what goes on in my life and to be thankful is what I am learning to do. As I surrender my pride and stubborn will, I sense some new qualities and characteristics taking their place. I want those to be the Jesus' qualities of humility, kindness, forgiveness, love and grace to be formed in me.

In ministry among you, I have the privilege of getting to know and love this congregation. I have witnessed the transforming power of Christ forming in you: I witness John Reurink who is battling cancer with patience and grace. There's Ling who is growing in faith, and taking the long view on reaching a hard-sought goal. I could tell you about new member Tina who lives on a limited income and wants to give back to the church. I could tell you about several couples, who will not give in to the pressures of society, and are working on their marriages—forgiving and giving grace—determined to make them succeed. There is Gloria who faithfully prays. And I know of those who are giving generously and anonymously to help others in this congregation. I could go on.

The miracle of Christ being formed in you is not a fairy tale. It's real and it's happening. It's the Word becoming flesh and dwelling in us. At the annunciation of Jesus' birth, Mary believed the miracle. She accepted it and responded with faith and obedience. Christ is being formed in you and you and you and me. May you respond in faith, trusting the Holy Spirit to shape you into the character of Christ. I know this is possible. In this New Year (and the years to follow) *accept* the miracle of *becoming* a new you. May Christ be formed in you.

Delianne Koops

Search Committee has reconvened and values your input...

Following a short break and the disappointment of our first candidate declining, the Senior Pastor Search Committee has met and resumed its task of choosing a candidate (or candidates) to present to Council. We are pleased that nearly all of the original committee members have been able to return. Andrew Huisjen will be taking the place of Sara Bolt, who has moved to Grand Rapids.

In the fall of 2010, we gathered information from you during focus meetings. Keeping that in mind, we are looking for a candidate who brings strong preaching skills to communicate the Word of God, and a pastoral heart for our congregation. If you have names of pastors you would like us to consider, please submit them to any of the committee members, or send an email to search@riverterrace.org.

Ads have been placed in magazines and on websites, and we will be evaluating candidates as they apply or are recommended to us. We hope to begin interviewing by March and bring a final candidate to the congregation next summer.

We are excited to continue this process, knowing that God has someone in his plan for us. Please pray for wisdom as we discern who that person will be.

Members of the Search Committee are Wayne VanDerKolk, chair, Beth Betten, Eunice Bossenbrook, Dave Geers, Wendy Hofman, Andrew Huisjen, Delianne Koops, Joe Nelson, Cheryl VandeHaar, and Dave VanderHaagen.



Messages for the New Year on the Lord's Prayer "Bringing Heaven Down"

- January 1** **Our Father in Heaven**
 Delianne Koops preaching
 Celebration of Holy Communion
- January 8** **Hallowed Be Your Name**
 Kory Plockmeyer preaching
- January 15** **Your Kingdom Come**
 Chris Allen preaching
- January 22** **Your Will Be Done**
 Rolf Bouma preaching
- January 29** **Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread**
 George VanderWeit preaching
 Celebration of Holy Communion
- February 5** **Forgive Us Our Debts**
 Delianne Koops preaching
- February 12** **Do Not Lead Us into Temptation**
 Chris Allen preaching
- February 19** **Yours Is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory**
 Kory Plockmeyer preaching

Special Offerings for January

- January 1 Community Assistance Program (CAP)
- January 8Christian Services
- January 15 Seminary Scholarship Fund
- January 22 ... Shining a Light (Jennifer VanderGalien)
- January 29 Faith-In-Action

Missionary Updates

KERRY FAHY – on staff with Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) at Michigan State University

In her recent newsletter, Kerry reported on the annual Fall Retreat at Center Lake Bible Camp in Tustin, MI, that 300 students attended. The Traveling Team, a group of people who travel around and explain God's heart for the world, led the retreat. Kerry wrote that they walked the attendees through the whole Bible. The Team also challenged the students to go to the world and explain how each person is sent to reach those around them.

Kerry also reported on the two-week "I Agree with Kirk" campaign at MSU at the end of October. Ten thousand flyers were posted around campus with the question, "Do You Agree With Kirk?" The State News printed a full-page ad in which Kirk Cousins (MSU football quarterback) stated his faith in Jesus Christ. Twenty thousand flyers were distributed inviting the campus and community to hear Cousins speak about his faith on November 3. Twelve hundred students and community members wore t-shirts advertising the event. Twenty-five hundred people showed up on November 3 to hear what Cousins had to say. His message was bold and straightforward, as he shared about why building his life upon Jesus Christ was the best decision he has ever made. An atmosphere of spiritual curiosity was created on campus and throughout the East Lansing community, as people were encouraged to decide whether or not they agree with what Kirk believes.

Kerry shared stories from two of her Cru student leaders. One is a tutor for a football player. Over time the tutor said she learned a lot about this student's life and felt that the Lord was pursuing him. A Cru student leader chatted with another student while waiting at a bus stop. The student realized as the bus came that she had no change, so the Cru student leader gave her change. On the bus the student leader asked the other student what she thought of the Kirk campaign. She answered that she'd heard a bit about it from her mentor and thought it was cool. When the student leader shared what a relationship with Jesus is about, the other student said she wasn't ready but did want to go back to the Bible study in her dorm. At a praise and prayer meeting later, the student showed up with her mentor and said she wanted to start up her relationship with God again.



MATT and LAURIE KUIPER are currently at Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, where Matt has begun a PhD program in World Religions and World Church. Matt recently finished his first semester with courses in Medieval Islamic history, Buddhism and Christianity, history of religious studies, and Arabic. Laurie home schools their children, Justin, John, and Abby (who also attends a pre-school at Notre Dame).

TERRY and JUDY SCHRAM – with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Mexico. Terry periodically makes trips to Mexico City from his home in the Tucson area of Arizona to meet with translation assistants in the Mazatec language on the New Testament letters of Paul. Terry writes: "This is an important step before regarding the translation as finished – to simply read it and reflect on it and see what images it calls up in your mind. The interesting thing about this conversation, however, was that we continued by Skype, a connection between his computer and mine. Thank you for praying with us, making these Mazatec projects possible." Judy is an in-house counselor and trainer with Wycliffe.

ADAM UMBARGER – on staff with InterVarsity at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. In his December newsletter Adam wrote: "Since Alison and I moved to Green Bay, I have seen God at work in building our chapter from literally nothing to a growing group of twenty-five! We started with three small groups and we are now launching a brand new group led by a student. I'm so grateful for this, and we've started seeing more student leadership in our events. Pray with us that God would continue to use our work on campus to draw students closer to Him!"

BARB VAN STRATEN – Elementary School principal and curriculum coordinator at Dakar Academy, Senegal, West Africa. Barb is spending Christmas and New Year's with her family in the States for a couple weeks. As was mentioned on the recent Sunday when an offering was taken for her, in the next few months there will be elections taking place in Senegal and there may be violence during that time. The students at Dakar Academy have had drills for safety and evacuation if necessary. Barb asks for prayers for the school and the elections.

JENNIFER VANDER GALIEN – founder of Shining a Light in Arusha, Tanzania. Jennifer returned to the states in November and will spend a few months speaking to supporters and doing fundraising. She will speak to the RTC Adult Forum class on January 22. Shining a Light is a non-profit that helps to empower women, helping them to support their children through employment, education, and spiritual enrichment. The women are being trained in the art of beading and sewing to make beautiful handcrafted items such as sandals. Their children attend a Christian pre-school. For more information see Jennifer's newsletter at www.shiningalight.org

MY NEW LIFE

Clayton Libolt

I finally did it. That old resolution that I made each New Year and that each year I failed miserably to keep—you remember it: to carry out of my house over the course of the year more than I carry into it—that resolution I have



finally, definitely kept. In 2011 I carried more out of my house than I carried into it. In fact, I or, rather, the moving guys and Adria and I carried it all out. Much of it went into a big truck. Some of it we sold

or gave away. A distressing lot of it we hauled to the landfill. The truck left on Friday, December 9. We left in two cars on Saturday, each car packed with more stuff. What we took was less important than what we left behind. We left behind memories and friends and, of course, you—River Terrace Church, the church and people we still love. Our church.

Five days later we arrived, and the process reversed itself. The truck arrived on the following Tuesday. What we had carried out, we carried in. It didn't all fit—not as we had imagined it. The back wall of the garage is piled high with boxes of books and files. Shelves will have to be built for them. We are still sorting through things. How did we end up with so much stuff? And why did we move it? Partly, I think, because you want to bring your old life to your new place. But when you arrive, you discover that even your old stuff is different—fits differently—into your new life.

Not that we have actually arrived at our new life. We have been here for almost two weeks. Until, well, today, it's been mostly unpacking, seeing to the things that need to be done in order to make a new life: getting the internet up and running, arranging for garbage pickup, hauling stuff in and out, trying the furniture this way and that, disposing of the empty boxes, and more. We haven't read much or written much of anything at all. We haven't established a routine, a pattern for our new life.

But that will come. Along the way there have been surprises, graces, gifts from God. The first morning in our new place—we had flopped a mattress on the floor, borrowed a folding table and a few chairs, bought some plastic picnic dishes and a little food, and moved in—we went out for a run. Immediately across from our place a trail leads down a steep slope to an old road—now part of the trail system. It leads alongside Drayton Harbor to the Semiahmoo Spit—a long finger of land extending between Puget Sound and Drayton Harbor.

We ran the spit. East, across the waters of Drayton Harbor, are the Cascade mountains. West, the San Juan islands. North, White Rock, a resort community in

lower British Columbia. The water was filled with many species of ducks. A lone, lordly eagle surveyed all below from his perch in a bare tree. We finished our run and walked hand-in-hand up the steep trail, alongside a small stream, giddy with excitement. A gift—a gift of beauty.

There was better to come. Sunday—our first Sunday in our new place—we decided to go to church in Blaine. There are no Christian Reformed Churches in Blaine. The nearest are in Bellingham and Lynden, each about 25 minutes away. We chose, rather at random, a small Episcopal church. The church's website lauded their stained glass windows, created by a member of the church. We expected, this being our experience with Episcopal churches, the grand and ancient liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer and a brief, rather cursory homily. For us, on this day, the ancient liturgy would be enough.

We arrived at about the hour. The church was small, smaller than we had anticipated, and half full—about forty-five people. The service—the ancient liturgy—moves fairly quickly into the readings. The gospel reading for the day was Luke 1:26-38—the annunciation, the visit to Mary by the angel Gabriel.

The pastor of Christ Church of Blaine is Andrea McMillin. She preached from the first step leading up to the chancel. Immediately she had our attention. She spoke of the choice facing Mary between the life that she had been living—a good life, one expects, or at least a known life, a predictable life—and the life that Gabriel and Gabriel's God were offering to her—mother of the Messiah, a hard, unpredictable life.

As Gabriel's words ended with "Nothing is impossible with God," there was—so said Andrea—a silence, a pause. For a moment the stars stopped in their motions. The planets ceased to turn in their orbits. Heaven stopped. All the universe waited for Mary's answer. Finally, as the universe held its collective breath, Mary said, "May it be to me according to your word." And the universe exhaled, and the stars resumed their motion, and the planets swung into their orbits, and heaven applauded.

But do not each of us stand with Mary? So asked Andrea in her sermon. Do we not receive, each of us, the call of God, and does not heaven wait breathless for our answer? Even old pastors beginning a new life?

We were nearly in tears on the way home. So far from home, and yet God was here, and God spoke to us in the voice of a young pastor in a place as different from River Terrace as Lansing from Blaine. The same God in a little church with forty-five people.

We have been back twice since, on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Each time God spoke to us.

Gifts. Graces. May God's gifts rest on you. No, God's gifts are all around you. It's not the gifts that are the problem; it's seeing them. So here's my wish for you: may you see each gift God's gives you and celebrate it. May what you carry into your house be all the gifts of God's love and what you carry out be all the things that would cause you not to recognize those gifts. And may God bless you for a new year.

We love you and miss you.

Clay



My new life. The little boy is Keenan Deming, my grandnephew.

mom to mom

A Great Time to Join Mom to Mom

Barb Ilgen

If you have been thinking of joining Mom to Mom, January is a great time to start! Both the Tuesday morning and Wednesday night programs will begin a new unit of teaching and discussion. The unit is Parenting Growth: As We Grow Them, He Grows Us.

The Tuesday group resumes on **Tuesday, January 10, from 9:30 am to 11:30 am**. There are six small groups that are arranged by the ages of the moms' children and range from a group of moms with newborns to one with moms of grandchildren. We also honor requests to be placed with friends. Each morning begins with a buffet of breakfast treats and a DVD lesson by Linda Anderson. Then we break into small groups for discussion of the lesson and/or topics of concern to the moms. There is nursery care for infants through age 3 and Kid to Kid for 3 to 5 year olds.

On **Wednesday, January 11, from 6:30 pm to 7:45 pm** the evening group resumes. This group is smaller and led by Susan Medendorp and Grace Kreulen. They use the same curriculum as the Tuesday group. The DVD lessons are followed by discussion. Some moms come after dinner at Community Night and others come just for Mom to Mom. Childcare is provided for children of all ages.

There are informational brochures at the Welcome Center in the Gathering Hall. If you have any questions, please contact the church office or Barb Ilgen at 349-3913 or ilgenb@msu.edu. We hope to see you there!

Welcome!



Pete and Blythe White were welcomed into full membership of River Terrace Church on December 11. Pete, Blythe, and their thirteen month old son, Quentin, moved to East Lansing from Montreal, Canada, where they both did graduate degrees at McGill University. Pete is a postdoctoral research scholar at MSU and Blythe is a part-time administrative assistant for Campus Edge, but considers watching Quentin a full time job. Pete is interested in reading, cycling, guitar, sports, and playing board games. Blythe is interested in languages, traveling, music and cooking. They became aware of RTC when they met Lauren Plockmeyer their first week in the area.

The Box Has Moved!

For many years River Terrace people have generously supported Lansing Christian School with offerings and with their Box Tops for Education and Campbell's soup label codes. The box for collecting the labels and box tops has now moved into the church office. This gives you the opportunity to say hello to staff as you drop off your donations. Thank you for your continued support.

Adult FAITH Formation

Sundays – the Forum
10:15 am in the Gym

Beginning Sunday, January 22
10:15 am in the Music Room

Faith Stories

We are creatures who live by our stories. From early on we are told stories by our parents which help us interpret how life is or how life ought to be. We are naturally drawn to stories and learn from them. All of us have a faith story to tell. And when we hear one another's stories, we hear echoes of our own life's journey and are encouraged to live our lives with intention, deeper faith and trust in God. In our **January Forum** (beginning Jan 8, 2012), we invite you to hear faith stories from several people in our church community. Each one is different and each one is unique. Come and hear about what God is up to in our lives. (The Forum meets in the gym during the Sunday School hour between the services.)

January 8

"From Churchgoer to Rebel
to Beloved Child of God"

Jeff Conklin



"Standing Firm In Faith As
We Walk With God On Our
Cancer Journey"

Chuck & Janie Aylsworth

January 15 Congregational Meeting

To receive a year-end report and approve the church budget for 2012. All members are encouraged to come.

January 22

"Shining a Light"

Jennifer VanderGalien



January 29



"Keeping Faith in Challenging Times"
Barb Zuker,



"A Surprising Answer
to Prayer"

Janelle and Diane Ball

"The Last Words of Jesus Spoken to ALL His Disciples"

A Five Week Bible Study led by Jack Voss

In the last hours before his crucifixion, Jesus brought his disciples together in the upper room. He knew he was about to be betrayed and to suffer the terrors of the cross. He took the opportunity to gather his disciples in the upper room to wash their feet and to share with them his last words of love. In John 13 – 17, we have his words of encouragement and duty to his disciples. In the weeks between Christmas and Lent we may want to hear again the last words of Jesus and apply his words to our lives as his disciples today. Please come to listen and share in the discussion.

Prayer—A Greater Power

In his book, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?*, Philip Yancey writes about his experiences traveling around the world. His travels have taken him to places like Myanmar (Burma) and China, where there are still restrictions. Yancey met a Chinese pastor who has spent two decades in prison for leading people in prayers of commitment to Christ and baptizing them.

When Yancey asked him, "What can Christians in the rest of the world do for you?" The pastor said, "You can pray. Please tell the church to pray for us." Yancey relates that when he heard that, he wanted to say, "Yes, of course, but we honestly do want to help. What else can we do?" He learned that these new Christians, who have no access to earthly power, truly believe that prayer gives them access to a greater power. They see prayer, in fact, as our strongest weapon against invisible forces. They believe the Apostle Paul's words: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

At the beginning of a new year, we have an opportunity to renew our intentions to be people of prayer. We believe that prayer is powerful. It connects us to God and his power. Of course, it is God who chooses to manifest his power in a variety of ways—certainly by the Holy Spirit, but also through his own agency and means. We, as children of God, are privileged to pray for God's power to move in the world and in our lives.

Come and join us in prayer. You are invited to gather with a group of ordinary praying people (not spiritual giants!) who pray with others for the needs of the congregation and the community. We also pray for one another's concerns. Come and gather in the **Prayer Room** (East Lounge) on **Wednesdays at 12:15**. Bring your lunch and coffee. We invite anyone—from the youngest to the most senior among us. We've had babies to great-grandparents in our group. If you cannot come, email your prayer request to Pastor Delianne, Delianne@riverterrace.org.

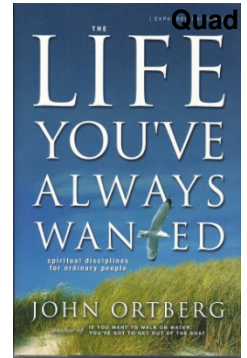
Wednesday Dinner and Community Night Activities Resume on January 11, 2012

Join us for dinner in the gym at 5:30 pm. Children and adult activities begin at 6:30 pm.

Discipleship Class in the Quad

The LIFE You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Practices for Ordinary People

Do you want to live a meaningful and significant life, a life that you've always wanted? That's what the Gospel offers every person who is seeking Jesus. It's a new way of life that Jesus offers as a free gift. Learn to live that new life by incorporating Jesus' teachings and practices into our own lives. The Christian life is about more than being forgiven and more than just making it to heaven. The heart of Christianity is about transformation—about a God who isn't just concerned with our "spiritual lives" but who wants to impact every aspect of our everyday lives. It's realizing that God meets us not just in worship on Sundays but on Main Street, and that all of ordinary, daily life has the potential to be lived as if Jesus himself were the one living it.



Pastor and author John Ortberg calls us back to the dynamic heartbeat of Christianity—God's power to bring change and growth—and shows us how we can attain it and why we should believe it. Salvation without change was unheard of to Christians of other days, so why has the church today reduced faith to mere spiritual "fire insurance" that focuses on getting to heaven rather than transformed living?

Ortberg's book, *The Life You've Always Wanted* offers modern perspectives on the ancient path of the spiritual disciplines. But it's more than just a book about things we should do if we want to be good Christians. It's a road map toward true transformation, compelling because it starts not with ourselves but with the object of our journey--Jesus Christ. We plan to use Ortberg's book in the Discipleship Class, beginning **Wednesday, Jan. 11 at 6:30 pm**. The class will include humorous stories and practical examples in reading and reflecting on scripture that is the foundation to discussion. When we follow "the Jesus Way," we get the life we *really* want. You're invited to come! Plan to have a good dinner first with friends in the gym and then join us in the Quad.

Delianne Koops

David: Seeking a Heart Like His. *God will never give up on you.* Explore how David's life proves this promise to be true in this updated edition of the best selling **A Heart Like His: Seeking the Heart of God Through a Study of David**. In this examination of the "man after God's own heart," David will delight and disappoint you. You'll want to be just like him at times and nothing like him at others. If you've ever experienced doubts, temptations, losses, family problems, or personal inconsistencies, this study is for you! Men and women are welcome to participate in this Beth Moore Bible study. Facilitated by Lis Weston, the class meets in the Music Room, Lower Level



Wednesday Mom to Mom

East Lounge

This group is led by Susan Medendorp and Grace Kreulen. They use the same curriculum as the Tuesday group. The DVD lessons are followed by discussion. Some moms come after dinner at Community Night and others come just for Mom to Mom. Childcare is provided for children of all ages.

Looking for...

a part time care giver to assist an 82 year old woman in her home. Should be available 1-2 days a week (flexible), usually 5 hours per day and occasionally work additional days or hours to "fill in" for other care givers or specials needs. Some experience helpful but being able to build a caring relationship with the woman is most important. Some lifting required. If interested, call George at 332-6999.

Friends and Flicks

Thursday, January 26
6:30 pm at RTC



Women of all ages are welcome to join us for a fun and relaxing time. Come and enjoy adult company with no responsibilities. We meet at 6:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall for fellowship, popcorn, pop, pizza, and a movie on the big screen—all free. The featured movie, *The Help*, will start promptly at 7:00 pm.



A New Year's Blessing

On your head and on your home,
the blessing of God,
In your going out and coming in,
the peace of God,
In your life and believing,
the love of God,
At your end and new beginning,
The arms of God to welcome you home.
Amen.

Giving Box: Personal Needs

Personal needs items are supplies that cannot be purchased with food stamps: toilet paper, paper towels, shampoo, laundry soap, dish soap, toothpaste, and sanitary napkins. Place your items in the giving box located in the gathering hall.

Collections for CAP:

Breakfast items—pancake mix, syrup, cereal, powdered milk. Place your donations in the collection container located on the lower level near the elevator