



"Think about ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds." (Heb. 10:24)

The Encourager

A publication of the Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Church

November 2010

An Inside Look

Affirming words for Hillsboro MB



In the past few weeks it has been encouraging to receive several affirmations in regard to the good things that are happening in and through our church family.

The first was in relation to the Meet, Eat & Skeet event that was delivered through our men's ministry. The team did a fantastic job with this great outreach event and their hard work was rewarded by having 175 people participate, many who were not from our church.

In addition to great attendance, there were men from First Mennonite Brethren in Wichita in attendance in order to see how the event was run so they might be able to reproduce something similar in their ministry context. They indicated that they were very impressed with how things were executed and the heart that was present in those who were there.

It was affirming to see them there and to think that God might extend the reach of our Men's Ministry by building into the lives of others in another church. Great job, guys, and thank you God!

Another great affirmation came this past Sunday. Because of Tabor's homecoming, we had quite a few guests with us from out of town who attend Mennonite Brethren churches in other cities and states. Two of those people approached me after our service to share their excitement over what they see happening in our congregation, especially as it relates to

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IT'S OUR DUTY, IT'S OUR PRIVILEGE

We give thanks



...FOR THOSE WHO RESPOND TO THE CALL TO LEAD

At the beginning of this new church year, the Encourager team wishes to highlight the transition from one outstanding church moderator, Don Ratzlaff, to another, Bob Loewen. In order to do this, we asked Don to write briefly about his experiences as moderator and Bob to write some of his thoughts about the future of our church. Then we asked three others who have worked closely with Don in church leadership to write their personal thanks to him. From the Encourager team, thank-you, Don, for leading our congregation in your unique and humble way during the past seven years, possibly some of HMBC's most challenging and exciting years. And to Bob, may you be encouraged as you look to the future and to the Lord's leading of our congregation.

LOOKING BACK

Serving as moderator of this church for the past seven years has been the hardest thing I've ever done. And I wouldn't trade the experience for the world.

Most people who have lived through this period in our journey will remember it for the traumatic events we faced — the fire that destroyed our building, living "in exile" for three years during the long process to rebuild, and the frequent and sometimes difficult transitions in staffing.

I will remember these years as God's gracious refining fire that led to spiritual renewal, vision transformation and new energy for reaching beyond our walls for the sake of God's kingdom.

I marvel how God used these sometimes difficult events to prompt people to step into new roles of service and leadership, to launch grass-roots ministry initiatives, to try new ideas and forms, to open

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LOOKING AHEAD

How would you respond if you were asked: What is your vision for the future of Hillsboro MB?

It can be difficult to think about and plan for the future. Everything around us changes so quickly. And how does the church present an unchanging message of faith and forgiveness in a changing world?

Information overload and changes in technology are mind boggling. Education, family, employment, retirement, health care, cost of living, music and news—so much to think about and to understand.

There are changes that are great and easy to understand. Things like cruise control on my car. Most of my cars have not had cruise control. They do now and I have to admit that I like the cruise option. Maybe a little too much.

Cruise control is great, all I have to do while driving is sing along with my

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Thanks, Don

Don's life exemplifies that of a true servant leader. His leadership after the church fire and during the church building process was steady and not threatening. Don is interested in starting new ministries only if they meet the needs of people. I appreciate Don's ability to articulate his ideas as well as his ability to communicate effectively in written form. I'm grateful for his years as our church moderator and his continued willingness to serve. —John and Carol Dick

Faces In Our Places

Finding a place for connections

Tom Siebert and Tawnya Stuewe were married Feb. 15, 1997, at St. John's Lutheran Church in Salina. Following their marriage, they lived in Salina.

Today they are the parents of three children: Jordyn, 13; Justin, 10, and Joshua, 5.

Tom is the son of Deran and Sharon Siebert and has two sisters, Shawna Vogt and Jennifer Kreutziger. He was adopted by the Sieberts when he was 18 months old, following the death of his birth mother, Rebecca Ridge, in a car accident. He has two older sisters, Barbara and Tammy.

Tawnya is the daughter of Terrance and Barbara Stuewe, who are both deceased. Her father died following a motorcycle accident the day before her third birthday, and her mother passed away in 2006. Tawnya has three brothers: Rick Vignery, Bill Menganin and Shawn Stuewe.

After graduating from Hillsboro High School, Tom attended classes at Emporia State University and Kansas State University-Salina. Tawnya is a graduate of Salina Central High School, where she was an honor student.



Tom and Tawnya Siebert with children (from left) Justin, Joshua and Jordyn.

When Tom was in the fourth grade, he began attending Wednesday night classes at HMBC. During his high school years, he was a part of MBY and was baptized by Dennis Fast, pastor, the summer before his senior year.

Although Tawnya was not raised in a Christian home, she attended vacation Bible school and Sunday school with friends every chance she got. At age 22, she was baptized at Faith Assembly of God Church in Salina.

Family is important to Tom and Tawnya. Because they wanted to learn to know Tawnya's paternal relatives, they moved to Belle Plaine, Minn., and lived there from 1998 to 2002. All of her dad's relatives live in Minnesota, and they learned to know a lot of them.

From 2002 to 2007, the Sieberts lived in

Hillsboro, where the children made lots of good friends.

Tom had a friend who lived in the "most beautiful place in the world," Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. From the time Tom had visited his friend back in his college days, he had a dream of living there one day. When the time seemed right, they moved there and had a "long and beautiful vacation" from 2007 to 2009.

Their connections to Hillsboro never waned. They all started to miss their family and friends back home. Through letters, phone calls, e-mail and social networking sites, they all stayed in contact with their Hillsboro friends. Family, good schools and friends drew them back in October 2009.

They began attending HMBC again, particularly enjoying the Wednesday evening meals and the children's programs. Now Tawnya is a member of the Strategic Leadership Team, which has been meeting each month since June 2010.

At this time, Tawnya is a stay-at-home mom and Tom works on the production line at Hospira in McPherson.

They recently purchased a home at 101 S. Cedar. Their children have a big yard in which to play, and they are all involved in lots of sports as well as community, family and church activities.

Tom, Tawnya, Jordyn, Justin and Joshua, we're glad you're a part of HMBC.

—Carrol L. Ediger

AFFIRMING, *cont'd from Page 1*

our Sunday morning worship experience. They indicated they sensed a great spirit of excitement and said they had really enjoyed their time worshipping with us.

One gentleman even made the comment that he hoped that what is happening in our church family will spread to other ministry venues within the conference.

Again, these were affirming words, and we're thankful to God for whatever is happening in and through us because we know that ultimately only He can bring about the spiritual work that He wants to do.

I share these words with you not to toot my horn but rather to say thank-you to God and to pass on these words of encouragement to each of you. It is your heart and devotion to God that God is using to do the things that others are noticing.

Great job, and thanks for letting me serve with you.

—Pastor Brian



...FOR THE CHANGING SEASONS OF OUR LIVES

The song we often love to sing says, "The Lord walked beside us all the way and He will walk with us because He knows the future." He walked with us 26 years as we served the Lord at Pine Ridge, S.D. We knew He would go with us in our retirement years in the Hillsboro area.

We enjoyed times together with friends and planned a visit to a country we often read about in the Bible. This trip would take us first to Egypt, then Athens, Greece and on to Israel. While in Egypt, we were reminded of the many bricks the Israelites had to make for the Egyptians, and the miraculous way Moses led them out of Egypt.

We were glad to stop in Athens where Paul, the missionary, had the opportunity to tell the idol worshippers who the

unknown God was. This reminded us of our American Indians and the religions they followed. When we came to them with another message, they loved to hear more of the true message.

The last stop on our trip, the land we wanted to see, the place where Jesus walked. Our guide on our bus said, "Be sure you have your Bibles with you so I can tell you where we are and give the name of the place."

We saw the place where John the Baptist baptized Jesus, where Jesus called Lazarus out of the grave, and the important empty tomb of Jesus. Here we had communion and a time of thanksgiving to know we have a living Savior.

Israel is a good place to visit. It is God's chosen people in their land.

See **SEASONS**, *cont'd on Page 3*



...FOR A CHURCH WHERE WE CAN BE NURTURED AND CHALLENGED

■ **TANNER SECHRIST:** I'm thankful for the way the church can share with each other. I feel like I could walk up to almost anyone in the church and after just a short while have a conversation with them.

■ **RON HIEBERT:** I'm thankful our church is a place where the Word is taught every Sunday and that I can leave for the week challenged to grow in some aspect of my walk with the Lord.

■ **ELISE HEYEN:** One thing about our church I am thankful for is that the church family is so supportive of one another. Whether it be by actions, words, or financial gifts, I am extremely grateful to be a part of our church family. I experienced this personally when I went to SOAR Montreal this past summer. I received many financial donations for our trip, but, most importantly, I also was on many people's prayer lists. To be thousands of miles away from home and still know your 'family' is always praying for and supporting you means a lot.

■ **CALEB REMPEL:** I am thankful that our church has a good pastor and staff.

■ **AUSTIN REMPEL:** I am thankful for Sunday school.

■ **COLTON REMPEL:** I am thankful for the bouncy house from VBS.

■ **KATIE REMPEL:** I am thankful for my teachers.

■ **SARA REMPEL:** I am thankful for the

sermons and worship, which always encourage me. I'm thankful for the teachers who love Jesus and teach our kids.

■ **GORDON HIEBERT:**

1. I've always appreciated the beauty of the outdoors, so each time we drive to church I enjoy seeing the landscaping around the church.

2. I'm blessed each Sunday by the greeters and ushers with their friendliness and help, knowing they care.

3. I'm thankful we can attend church every Sunday with confidence of God's Word being proclaimed.

4. I'm thankful for Pastor Brian's love for the Lord and his passion for the unsaved, and how that same passion is growing in me.

Give Thanks to the Lord for he is good; His love endures forever. (Ps. 135:1)



Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 THESS. 5:18)



...FOR OUR PASTOR AND HIS FAMILY

■ **ELTON & ELLA BERG:** We want to express our appreciation for our pastor. He certainly puts himself on our level and is a Christian who desires always to be on a growing edge and to lead by example.

After being on the giving end for many years, we are really blessed by the challenging messages. God has led Pastor Allen to us as a gift. We love you Pastor, Carol and boys, and pray for you often.

■ **NAOMI TOEWS** I appreciate the way that Pastor Brian challenges us to seek to know God and then to talk about Him. Pastor Brian's joy and enthusiasm have encouraged me in this.

■ **KURT FUNK:** After getting to know Pastor Brian through Men of Prayer, I appreciate and admire his love for Christ

and his desire to be more like Him. His deep love for Christ is reflected in his passion to see an unbeliever come to the saving knowledge of Christ. His love, concern and care for his family and church is evident in his interaction with his family and with the people he meets.

■ **KATIE MORFORD:**

Pastor Brian has such a genuine, warm and confident attitude, both on the stage and when relating to his congregation. He

shares hard truths and challenges us to grow. Most of all, though, he is passionate about reaching the lost and is willing to make difficult changes in order to see more people come to worship the Lord. He and his family are God's answer to our prayers and I am very thankful for them.



...FOR PASTORAL SERVANTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THEIR SERVICE

To Dave and Elvira Plett,

You have blessed us in countless ways during your time of service among us. We marvel at the number of contacts and follow-up visits you made in a week's time—visits to the sick, the seniors, and those dealing with difficult events in their lives. Many are the hospital visits and the hours spent with loved ones during surgeries.

Thank you, too, for the help and encouragement you have given to grieving families in planning memorial services and dealing with end-of-life issues. You always made it an occasion for celebration of a life, bringing comfort and hope from the Scriptures.

We appreciated the many Bible studies, hymn sings, and senior events you planned

and organized to enrich our lives.

Elvira, you have always been such an integral part of Dave's ministry. You were always a team — visiting, inviting, showing thoughtfulness, and unnumbered kindnesses.

Now as you struggle to find your way to a much-deserved retirement, we can learn from you. You continue to read books, study the Word, and search for deeper truths as you strive to know God more intimately. Your lives will continue to spill over in blessing to those around you.

For all this and more we thank you. We ask our great and awesome God to bless and repay you as only He can.

*With humble thanks,
John and Hilda Vogt*

SEASONS, cont'd from Page 2

Retirement for us is an unscheduled kind of activity. I've pastored a church in Durham, we did custodial work at Hillsboro MB, I was a board member at the Senior Center, chairman of the Extension Committee many years, secretary of the Lions Club, and I am still a board member of the Union Rescue Mission.

I am enjoying the health the Lord gives me and I want to be a blessing here.

—Art Unrau

Men's Ministry

Having a blast in God's outdoors

This year's Meet, Eat & Skeet on Oct. 3 was well received by the community with many new faces in attendance.

This year, the event was opened to young women who also enjoy being out in nature and participating in hunting activities. It was good to see that they could participate toe-to-toe with their male counterparts, and usually much better.

As in previous years, an array of activities were offered. Younger participants could participate in BB-gun shooting, archery and paint ball, while older enthusiasts could try the .22 rifle target shoot.

At several stations, clay pigeons were the target for those with shotguns, and Rex



Rex Regier explains the features of one of the guns he brought to this year's event.

Regier was once again present with his collection of pistols and rifles for the more mature marksmen. Each willing marksman was given instruction in the proper grip, stance and safety precautions for shooting a weapon, which in some cases was foreign to those who are novices in the

fine art of hitting a bull's-eye.

A new twist to the afternoon was "Top Gun" competitions, one for skeet shooting and one for handguns. Lynden Thiessen was the top skeet shooter and Sam Unruh won the pistol competition. Awards were presented to the Top Gun winners.

Men's Ministry wants to thank all who donated their time at the different stations, and contributed ammunition, clay pigeons, bows and arrows, guns of all sorts, paint balls and guns, set up and clean up and delicious food consisting of barbecued hamburgers, fried beans and brownies. To top it off, a prize drawing included everything from caps, shells, multi-purpose tool sets, binoculars and hearing protection.

Tons of donated time, effort and material came together in one afternoon, all in the name of promoting our life in Christ.

—Glenn Thiessen

Mom and son unite in China

It has been awhile since I last sent a mass e-mail, most likely because I was not in China over the summer. It was a very different but wonderful summer as I stayed home to work on adaptations to the old farm house. We all worked very hard, finished the new garage, and got the elevator installed. And now God has continued His amazing faithfulness and Wenxi is coming "home."

After only 10 months since I officially started the adoption process, the final travel authorization has been received and my sister and I are off for China and will have my precious son by Monday morning



Leann, Wenxi and an orphanage official hold the note left with Wenxi when he was abandoned.

(Sunday evening, Oct. 24, for you).

It is the beginning of the "Big Change" as it is called for Wenxi and myself. This means an amazing Thanksgiving and Christmas at the farm.

As I think about how God has worked I know without a doubt that there is no luck involved in this. This is nothing short of God's miraculous plan, and I am humbled

to be a part of it.

Wenxi Daniel Funk is no doubt a very special boy to our Lord and Savior: I do not take lightly the responsibility and gift He has given me.

Please lift Wenxi and me up in prayer as we come to your thoughts. Also pray for my parents as I will be raising him with their help at the family farm in Hillsboro, and there is no doubt a little 6-year-old wheeling around will change their routine (I hope for the better).

I am excited for Wenxi to meet all the wonderful people who have prayed for him for so long, and I know he will change your life as well.

We'll be back with one more Funk in the family on Nov. 9. Thanks so much for your encouragement and support.

—Leann, Wenxi and Auntie Danita



Bridal showers: A way to show support

Women's Ministries hosts a bridal shower for each young woman and man from our church who is getting married. Karen Wiens coordinates these events. The most recent shower on Oct. 3 in our Hearth Room honored Tina Regier with 38 women in attendance. Hostesses for the shower were Marilyn Hiebert, Charlene Driggers and Lu Janzen with help from Helene Funk and Fran Rhodes. Judy Hiebert provided the devotional. Pictured in the photo are (from left) the groom's mother, Janet Post, bride Tina Regier, Tina's aunt, Joyce Wall, and shower attendees Malinda Nikkel and Celia Gross. This ongoing ministry continues to be significant in the lives of our young adults, many of whom now live away from Hillsboro.

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our pocketbooks with unparalleled generosity — not only for the sake of a new building, but for the purpose of serving and reaching our community. We prayed with more passion during these years because we knew our future was beyond our power to orchestrate. God graciously stepped in to fill the void.

Who wouldn't be both humbled and honored to be part of that?

I see those years now as a season of renewal and rebuilding. God decided to use me as a leader for that season, I believe, to prove that his power truly is made perfect in our weakness. I say that with a smile on my face, but with all seriousness. Whatever good I contributed through the years was made possible by God's grace and power.

I believe God is now leading us into a season of mobilization and implementation. Different gifts are needed for a different season. I believe, in God's timing, that Bob Loewen is the lay leader for these times — someone with the experience and gifts to lead us powerfully into the future in tandem with the gifted and visionary pastor God has given us in Brian Allen.

God is good and in charge. I can hardly wait to we see what God does next!

—Don Ratzlaff

Thanks, Don

My observation of Don has been in the servant role of church moderator and occasional times for preaching. In both he has excelled in my mind. Gifted with leadership qualities, he has guided our church council through the tough years after the fire until now. His insights into God's Word, especially the message given in the school gym from Psalm 126, still rings in my thinking. With the Spirit-gifts God has given him, Don has served God's people at HMBC with distinction. —Dave Plett

Thanks, Don

We are blessed to have godly leaders like Don who have stepped up to the challenge of leading our congregation through some difficult times. Don is a selfless leader who has been able to unify our congregation in spite of facing issues that could have divided us. Thanks, Don, for leading us to a point where we can chart the course for the future of HMBC, you have served well! —Clint Seibel

AHEAD, *cont'd from Page 1*

favorite music, talk with Darlene once in awhile and watch out for pot holes and the Highway Patrol. When I think of my personal walk with Christ as if it were a trip, I would have to admit I have been traveling with the cruise turned on and in control far too often and for far too many miles.

When we study the life of Christ, the acts of the apostles and the development of the early church, cruise control does not seem to come into play. They were on task, on mission and fully involved in spreading the good news, teaching new believers and caring for those with needs. A vision for our church that would be different from that of the early church seems somehow misaligned. They were hands-on and openly presenting the forgiveness of Christ to all who would listen. Their passion and faith drew others to faith in Christ.

Following the loss of our church to fire, a vision for ministry in a new facility began to develop. People with similar thoughts came together and ministry opportunities began to take shape. Building plans were created with a vision for

member and visitor friendly space. We were a congregation filled with a vision for serving and drawing people from our community to Christ.

How do we do that? How can we help people that we share life with come to faith in Christ? That is the big question. And it is at the core of Strategic Leadership Planning. Our faith walk together as a church demands the same or greater level of passion for ministry to unbelievers as we demonstrated in rebuilding our church.

If I have one desire, one vision for our congregation, it is this: That whenever we gather together for worship, fellowship or as small groups, we are in the company of those who have a newly found faith in Christ.

My question for me: Does God have authority over my cruise control?

Note: I want to publicly thank Don Ratzlaff for modeling the way for our congregation through seven years of ministry, fire, relocation, rebuilding, reorganizing and reaffirmation of our ministry within the local church, the MB Conference, the local and extended community and those beyond. Don's love for God and this church provided optimism for us all.

Thanks, Don.

—Bob Loewen

C.E. CLIPS, *cont'd from Page 6*

story where a family finds itself in crisis, having its faith tested as well as a community that unites in love.

Dean Cain stars as Randy Simpkins, a husband and father torn between the demands of his job and commitment to his family. Asked by his wife to watch their 2-year-old son Joe for a few minutes, Randy is distracted by his work and Joe disappears. Randy and Christal's strained marriage now stands the test of the potential loss of a child.

Invite your friends and join us for the story of Randy's powerful spiritual journey back to love, faith and a godly understanding of a man's priorities. Childcare and activities will be provided in the Children's Wing for children fourth grade and younger.

■ **As I conclude this month**, I want to encourage parents and grandparents in our responsibility to spiritually train our children. The biggest struggle we have is that life gets in the way. Let's face it, doctor's appointments, homework, school activities, piano lessons, car repairs, mountains of laundry, etc., all rob us of time. Spiritually training our children is not easy, but it is so important. We have to

be intentional and make it a priority. We have to make a plan.

Here is one easy way to begin to make this happen. Start at mealtime and be intentional about guiding some of the conversation. Here are just a few examples of conversation starters that you might try:

1. What happened today that reminds you of God?
2. What did you hear or see today that did not agree with the truth in the Bible?
3. What part of God's creation did you enjoy the most today?

Make the questions easy, something with which you feel comfortable. The important thing is that we continue to influence our children to make God part of all of our day—not just when we say our mealtime prayer or go to Sunday school. God wants to be a part of everything we do.

Blessings!

—Bev Vogel, director

HMBC FAMILY LIFE**WEDDINGS**

Tina Regier and Seth Post, Nov. 12.

DEATHS

Marie Schultz, Oct. 23.

Kids' activities roll on as we roll into November



It's November. Wow! What a beautiful fall we've been having and how quickly the year is flying. Here are just a few of the things that have

been and are happening in the Christian Education Department.

■ **More than \$200** worth of groceries were purchased by the first through fourth grade Wednesday night classes Oct. 20. The food was delivered to Main Street Ministries the following day. The children are doing a great job of wearing their class T-shirts, memorizing Scripture and completing their home devotions each week to earn these Bible Bucks. Thank-you to all of our adult Sunday education classes for financially supporting this Bible Buck grocery project for the Main Street Ministry Food Bank.

■ **The Next Steps Class** has now been in session for two weeks. The Next Steps class is something being taught for the first time here at HMBC and is being offered to students from second through the sixth grade that received Jesus as their Savior this past year.

We recognize this first step of faith in Jesus Christ to be a very meaningful turn-



The first- through fourth-grade Wednesday night classes "purchased" groceries with their Bible Bucks in October.

ing point in the lives of these children and the Next Steps class is designed to help them take the "next steps" in growing in their life as a new Christian.

For four consecutive weeks I work together closely with these students and keep in close contact with their parents as well. Over these weeks we cover topics such as: "Belonging to a New Family," "Getting to Know God," "Bible Reading and Prayer" and lastly, "Belonging at Church."

The purpose of these classes is to enable the children to talk about the decision they have made for God and to guide them in taking the next steps in their walk with Jesus. I want to encourage them to

really get to know God and to explore what it means to be a part of the church.

My desire is to connect often with parents about the things we discuss and cover in class so they will be able to join their child in his or her important learning and growing time as well as to reinforce the things we have learned.

I ask you to pray for me and the students involved in this time over the next couple of weeks as we walk through the "next steps" of their Christian walk together and learn

better what it means to be a follower of Christ.

■ **"It's a Meaningful Life,"** a just-released VeggieTale movie, will be shown in our fellowship hall at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 31. Children from 2 years of age to 50 can enjoy a fun afternoon together with snacks, drawings and laughter! The movie has a great message on the importance of being content, which is depicted to us through a football game, Stewart (Larry the Cucumber) and his family.

■ **You don't want to miss** "The Way Home," a Family Movie Night at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 7, in our sanctuary. "The Way Home" is based on an inspirational true

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LOVING GOD
LOVING PEOPLE

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Brian Allen, lead pastor
Paul Raugust, youth pastor
Bev Vogel, coordinator of CE ministries
Bruce Heyen, worship music & choir director

THE ENCOURAGER TEAM

Brenda Sechrist, Sara Hill, Carrol Ediger,
Marilyn Hiebert, Marion Regier,
LeOra Grunau, Don Ratzlaff



Students in the Next Steps class: Collin Brown, Elliot Ollenburger, Dylan Wiens, Noah Bartel, Kylie Brown and Corey Brandt. Not pictured: Dakota Klein.