

News from the Valley

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There is welcome for the sinner, and more graces for the good; there is mercy with the Savior, there is healing in the blood...There is plentiful redemption in the blood that has been shed; there is joy for all the members in the sorrow of the Head. – Frederick Faber

These verses from the hymn “Souls of Men” are rich with imagery of the Love of God, and have been a meditation for me through Lent. I cherish the word “Welcome” How rich in its invitation and acceptance, a word not only of hospitality but of familiarity. This is Jesus’ word to us, whether we are in a Shack or not. And not when we are in our best clothes, either. *There is welcome for the sinner.* Welcome for the rebel. Welcome for the traitor. And not just forgiveness or pardon or “substitutionary atonement.” Not tolerance or overlooking or discounting. Not disapproval nor even disappointment – but **welcome**. But that isn’t all, not at all—“and *more graces* for the good!” It isn’t only about an objective transaction, though that is its necessary beginning; it is about the creative work of the Spirit in our hearts, in our bodies, in our minds. “Grace” is the word that describes how God works, it is what he does. People ask, “What do you do?” And we say, “I am a butcher, I am a baker.” God says, “I am a gracer”—it’s what I do. It’s my day job, well, frankly, it’s my night job too. I don’t know how to not be a gracer. Yahweh Gracer. I am what I am, and that is Gracer. What does that mean? It means that I bring energy, hope, and creative work—artistry really, I am a very good artist—to those who are deflated, despairing, and disordered; I bring color to monochromatic lives that are open with expectation.” It is not parsimonious, episodic, or fickle, but *plentiful*. It is redemption, the purchase by blood. We are bought with a price, and how expensive that price!--*the precious blood that has been shed*, given willingly. Jesus endured such agony, such sorrow, such gut-wrenching sadness at having to leave life, this life, his friends, his passion for this earth and its people. People say that heaven is Jesus’ home, but that never sat well—Jesus was no reluctant tourist to a messy place—but as a fully aware lover of all that He had made, and the friends and enemies he so willingly engaged. Such sorrow in the Head. Such joy in the members. *Welcome!* -- the message of Easter.

A Lenten Thought

STICK A FORK IN IT



Members of the Intersvarsity Christian Fellowship placed thousands of forks in the William Pitt Union lawn yesterday to recognize people dying of hunger across the world.

University of Pittsburgh Outreach

– At the end of January, at maximum winter conditions (what were we thinking?), we held a major outreach about global hunger at Pitt. Students from IV at Pitt and Carnegie Mellon, as well as staff from my division and other organizations (World Vision for one), sought to highlight this issue and to invite Pitt students to feast on the Bread of Life. The picture to the left is from the Pitt student newspaper. There were 13,000 forks, to be exact—the number of people who die *every two hours* from malnutrition. We invited students to engage this issue through teaching, participation, and giving. We also invited them to consider the hunger in their own hearts. Close to 300 heard the gospel in some way, and of these 141 responded with a desire to be involved in some way, whether a followup study on poverty and the gospel (35), to hear more about Jesus (26), or to commit to join in a local service project about the poor (78). And 24 made a commitment to follow Christ in a new way, at least four for

the first time. I love the boldness and compassion of our students to seek justice on campus, and to see their classmates find life in Christ. I am very proud of the staff team in Pittsburgh too – Amy, Nicole, Andrea, Jason, Dabney, and especially Chloe, who led the team for months on this project. **Pray for the ongoing followup, and for God to “open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ.”**

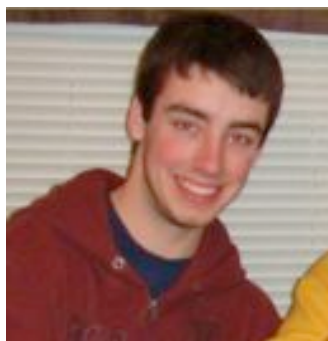
Passionate Outreach



Living Stones Conference



Peter tells us, “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house” as he describes the church of Jesus. We are committed deeply to seeing that happen among students in our division, and one of the chief gifts and challenges to that is our ethnic diversity. At this conference Feb 20-22, we focused on ethnic identity development in a holistic way, recognizing the gifts of each ethnicity while also telling the truth about the sin and brokenness in each as well. I am proud of how students in our surprisingly diverse part of the country responded to each other so well. One student said, “I have [had] trouble finding multiethnic references in the Bible, but now I know it!” A Caucasian student said, “There’s a lot about ‘white culture’ I never knew was white-specific. I feel [now] more like I have an ethnicity” and another said “[I have] actual thankfulness for my white culture as opposed to being ashamed of it...but my prejudice is sin.” Said a minority student, “I’ve had to realize that though we’re discriminated against, we can forgive, and that we need forgiveness.” And, sadly, but not unexpectedly, there was this: “Don’t tell me to align with a race not my own. This was a waste of time.” ***Do pray for chapters as they seek to challenge racial paradigms on their campus and work to foster reconciliation and to witness across cultural lines.***

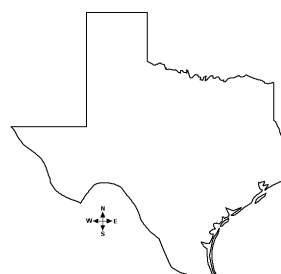


Evangelism at West Virginia University

Mike

This school year we have seen at least four students at WVU make decisions to follow Jesus. The most recent is a sophomore named Mike. Mike started coming to IV this year after his friend Tyler was intentional to invite him. Through Mike’s small group and other IV events, he came to realize that there was more to being a Christian than going to church. He told staff Karla Myers that through being involved in IV he now had made a decision to follow Jesus.

Since President Bush has ridden off into the sunset, we decided that it was OK to mess with Texas. So I took my divisional leadership team (the people I supervise) on a whirlwind tour of Austin and Houston on March 4-6. The six of us met with our IV colleagues and learned about chapter planting and building in multiethnic contexts. We sat in on vision gatherings, ate at the Hula Hut, and enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of our teammates Andrea and Jason Thomas. We came away with a stronger vision of how to grow a culture of abundance, to coach new chapter planters, and to enjoy our team. We are serious about planting many new chapters around my division, and building those that currently exist. We also hired **eight** new staff this Spring for my division, so there is plenty of coaching to do. I’ve included a one-page vision summary for our division on the back of the next page so that you can see it as well.





This is my *precious* Divisional leadership team; please remember them as you pray! From left, Ram (Central Ohio), Michael (West Ohio), Julie and Violet (East Central Ohio), Jesse (West Virginia), Anna (Northeast Ohio), Paul (Western Allegheny), Chloe (Metro Pittsburgh), and me.

PRAYER

1. Celebrate with our **new believing friends** at Pitt and West Virginia, and pray for ongoing outreach efforts this Spring at Ohio State, at Clarion, and at Oberlin.
2. Pray for my team to grow as **coaches** for their staff in chapter planting and building; and pray for the new staff as they faithfully work to raise support in an economy that is tough. Our God is sufficient, and we know he isn't checking his portfolio. But we know that the loss of work is real and so do pray for us all as we seek sufficient income. Personally, **I am seeking to raise \$8,000 more by June 30.**
3. And not to repeat, but please do ask before God for funding of a couple of key staff – **Rachel** at OSU and **Anna** as the Northeast Ohio Area Director. They are very competent, hard-working, mission-minded, *and* underfunded. As a result, they have much less time on campus than they would like. Our God is able!
4. I am **teaching Philippians** to 70-100 students at our Chapter Training at Cedar Campus in Michigan on **April 25-May1**. I love studying this text, and communicating it in a hopefully compelling way. Let me know if you want a copy of the CDs or mp3s.
5. Pray as we seek a **home church**.

Marc and Pam

My mother is quite ill. I include a picture of Mom and Dad below, from a few years ago. Now her body is giving up on her, and yet she remains witty and courageous. Her short term memory has already passed on, so we talk of stories of long ago, of grapes fat and purple hanging from her parents' arbor, of Timmy her ancient cat, her mother's red hair, and the big vacation in the '52 Ford to Yellowstone....stories are what craft a life, and Mom's life is a series of precious recollections of ordinary things – a WWII husband, their 50's Cape Cod in a new and treeless suburb, raising two very different boys in matching crew cuts, and a tow haired girl who loved snails and cats and Mr Green in Clue. Mom was a left hander before you were allowed to be that, so she always had an excuse for her righty produced-scribbled notes; and for why, when told to turn left at the next street, always held up her hands to see which one her wedding ring was on. '50's moms were like no others, strong enough to stay at home without apologizing for it, and free enough to let kids be kids. Once I saw her with a Dr Spock book about child rearing, but I think more to check if he had it right than to learn anything. She often reminded us that love covered a lot of mistakes people make--I found out later that even Solomon quoted her in a proverb. By my reckoning, she didn't make many mistakes, but she knows Love will cover even those when she'll soon meet Him. "Any day is a good day to have a Mom" says the cross-stitch hanging over her bed. Truly.

