

Raising faith in

# The Backyard

with a passion for generous stewardship

March 2009



## Stories to Tell: Gifts to Share

During January we celebrated the gift of stewardship and we used the title of this reflection as our theme. I don't know about you, but I was deeply moved by the stories of Shirley Leach, Jeff Bacon, Carolyn Blum and Sonyetta Bailey. It took courage for them to stand before us and share their thoughts and reflections about the way God has touched their lives. The key theme that seemed to weave its way in all their stories was one of deep gratitude to God; for the profound way that God touched them at just the right time with a deep and abiding grace. I am so thankful for all four of them and the way they described some incredible, transforming moments that occurred along their faith journeys.

I'm writing this on Sunday evening, January 25th, the final Sunday of our four-week journey of growing in faith and deepening our resolve to live as faithful stewards of all the gifts that God has given us. This is always the deeper theme of this publication, The Backyard, so it is also fitting to reflect for a moment upon the amazing gifts of Nancy Agafitei, Gary Hellner, John Gabrielson, Sue Loudermilk, Susan Greer and Bob Dejmaj (our Stewardship Team). These leaders put a great deal of prayer and creative effort to make the month of January an invitation for all of us to not only grow in our giving financially, but take the time to reflect on the deeper dimensions of stewardship, the grounding force for our response, namely the many ways God has touched each of us personally, enabling us to walk more closely with Jesus and strengthen us as His disciples.

And then, this morning, there was the commissioning of Ron and Heda Christ as they "leave their small boat" and heed the call of Jesus to follow Him to go to Botswana, Africa. What a profound experience for all of us and I couldn't help but reflect on the amazing ways that our Lord Jesus sends all of us OUT and BEYOND our comfort zones to be His love in all the world.

So...I'm sitting here writing this article in my kitchen with the next door neighbor's dog just barking up a storm. Normally, that would bother me but, for some reason, he's not even annoying me tonight. There is a glow of gratefulness within that no amount of howling can penetrate. There is a Grace so amazing that is all around me as I think of all that we, together, have to celebrate. And I feel like dancing. Kicking my heels up and dancing at the moon with my neighbor's four-legged friend. For I have seen the way we are collectively hearing the voice of Jesus calling, "C'mon, let's go!"

-Pastor John

## Did you know



...that three CREW members passed out Hosanna information flyers in surrounding neighborhoods the Sunday before Christmas?

# Noisy Offering

## February 15

The Mission of the Month for February is Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) a collaboration between area congregations of faith and Northwest Assistance Ministries to provide shelter and meals for temporarily homeless families. Families represent the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. IHN has been very successful in empowering homeless families to become independent. IHN provides an opportunity to take time out in a safe environment -- time to learn new skills, time to consider a new approach to things, time to regain self-confidence and time to step out again and claim the life that is possible with a community of support.



- 83 percent of the families who participated in IHN in 2006-2007 graduated from the program and obtained permanent housing.
- The families returned to the community with a plan and a support system, empowered to make a new start.
- The program provided 4,082 total bednights of shelter.
- 18 congregations provided evening meals, a safe place for program participants to sleep and a whole community of support.

On February 15 we welcome Amy Shue, a graduate of the IHN program, who will give a temple talk at each service, and Karen Weakley, director of IHN, who will share information about IHN.

Dig into your pockets and purses and pull out any loose change and deposit it in the buckets during the "Noisy Offering." Thank you.

## Glimpses of Grace 2009

<b>World Hunger</b>	<b>\$40.00</b>
<b>African Initiative</b>	<b>\$775.00</b>
<b>Mission of the Month</b>	<b>\$512.84</b>
<b>Mulkey Fund Income</b>	<b>\$25.00</b>
<b>Benevolence</b>	<b>0.00*</b>
<b>NAM</b>	<b>\$100.00</b>
<b>Abby Grace Fund</b>	<b>\$960.00</b>

\*Benevolence is paid at the end of each month, based on contributions received. Look for update in the March issue.

### Mission of the Month Gifts:

January—Lutheran Campus Ministry \$512.84

### Helping Hands Fund

**January:** Two families received money for rent assistance and Wal-Mart gift cards.

**Balance on hand:** \$805.81

## Did you know



...that Hosanna filled 56 Christmas toy bags for Northwest Assistance Ministries?

...that John Gabrielson made a wooden base for the Faith Chests presented to everyone baptized at Hosanna?

...that John also made crosses for Ron and Heda Christ to present to the bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana, Africa and to patients Heda will be helping in the hospital?

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## Supporting Needy Families

During the 2008 holiday season, NAM provided Thanksgiving food and groceries to 3,987 people and toy bags to 3,351 children.



*Tumeika rests outside the Northwest Assistance Ministries (NAM) building with her three children Jayvione, Javlene and Neiceyah. The family received groceries at NAM's 2008 Thanksgiving Distribution.*

The need for NAM's services continues in 2009. In the last twelve months, requests for help have increased by 20%. Your support means so much to needy families, like Tumeika and her children.

## Did you know?

- ...That \$50 provides a daily hot meal to a home bound senior for 2 weeks.
- ...That \$125 provides immunizations for 5 kids through our Children's Clinic.
- ...That \$187 provides life skills classes for one family transitioning out of homelessness through NAM's Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN).
- ...That \$312 provides counseling, emergency shelter and transportation for a family fleeing domestic abuse.
- ...That \$600 provides supplemental rent assistance for 20 Meals on Wheels clients.
- ...That \$1,000 provides well-child exams for 20 uninsured children through NAM's Children's Clinic.

Help a family like Tameika and her children by making a gift today! Donate online: [www.namonline.org](http://www.namonline.org) or place a check in the Sunday offering and Hosanna will pass your offering on to NAM.

Northwest Assistance Ministries  
15555 Kuykendahl Road, Houston, TX 77090  
281-885-4555

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## Did you know



A parting thought

# Through the back gate



## Stitching Lives Back Together Piece by Piece

The Interfaith Quilting Bee is a coalition of volunteers dedicated to creating quilts for families in need. Groups and individuals prepare quilts for the annual event, hosted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 16535 Kleinwood Drive, February 21, 9 AM-1 PM.

At the Bee quilts are registered and groups work together to complete their quilts, which are given to children, individuals and families served by area outreach programs:

- Meals on Wheels
- Homeless Recovery Program of Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN)
- Domestic Violence Programs
- Children's Clinic
- Society of Samaritans (SOS)

The quilts, symbolizing warmth, security and caring, are distributed to individuals with physical needs and those needing a spiritual boost to help them with the trials of life. For example: When families enter IHN's Homeless Recovery Program, each child receives a handmade quilt; parents receive quilts upon completion of the program. Local businesses support the event by donating quilting materials and other supplies.

Participating groups: Christ the Good Shepherd Catholic Church, St. Ignatius Loyola Catholic Church, St. Edwards Catholic Church, Hosanna Lutheran Church, Northwoods Presbyterian Church, Nimitz High School Cougar Care Club, Ninth Church of Christ Scientist, Klein United Methodist Church, Northside Christian Church, Millennial Quilt Club, Memorial Northwest Quilt Club, Killer Bees Quilt Club, KV Quilters, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints-Klein Stake.

More information: <http://tc3.hccs.edu/PublicService1>  
Hosanna members active in the Bee: Nerisa McConnell, Judy Rhodes, Lynne Coles, Barbara Dejmal, Nancy Wunsche and Dorothy Petersen. Feel free to contact any of these ladies if you too would like to help stitch lives back together.

"These quilts comfort the guests, bringing love with a new beginning. They give them a sense of security and knowledge that someone cares about them."

- Karen Weakly, Director, NAM  
Interfaith Hospitality Network

"Just as the number of hearts and hands that craft these lovely gifts continues to grow each year, so does the number of individuals whose lives have been lovingly touched by the kindness of strangers. It continues to be a symbol of security, warmth and a reminder always of NAM's mission to strive to meet basic human needs through neighbors helping neighbors."

- Carol Little, Executive Director  
Northwest Assistance Ministries

"These quilts mean so much to us. Our children came into IHN feeling insecure and with nothing to call their own. (Their quilts) help them feel safe and loved. The hours these quilting volunteers invest will remain with us for the rest of our lives."

- Quilt recipient

"My friends and I come together to make quilts. The camaraderie we share as we work is amazing to others. Sharing quilts with those in need fills our hearts."

- Maggie Shafer, St. Ignatius  
Loyola Catholic Community

"In September of 1999, I entered the IHN program at NAM as part a homeless family. My daughters were so nervous, but the IHN director took them to the quilt closet and allowed each of the girls to choose their own quilt. I will never forget the look on their faces as they asked her, 'Can I keep it?' Since that time, whenever they are sick, sad or things just aren't going right, they have found comfort in their quilts. I've seen what these quilts can do. They light up the faces of people who are sad and scared of what tomorrow may bring. You can't imagine the tears of gratitude a mother sheds when she sees her child smile while nestled in one of these quilts. In an unstable world, these quilts are theirs forever."