

April 2, 2010

Greetings Everyone,

Peace and blessings to you all.

Since our last update (the Progress Report) we made a wonderful trip to South Dakota and Iowa to visit all our family. We were able to see (and hold) our new granddaughter, watch two of our grandsons wrestle in their regional finals, celebrate our oldest grandchild's 12th birthday, celebrate Shirley's mom's 80th birthday, spend time with everyone in both of our extended families and have our entire family together (4 kids, 2 daughter-in-laws, one son-in-law, 8 grandkids). Plus, we were able to visit with a few old friends here and there. Needless to say, it was a great time and we are very thankful to be able to have done it. Thinking of our kids leads me to my first prayer request.

1. Michael and Heather are expecting their first child together in November. So we thank the Lord for this tremendous blessing and ask folks to please pray for Heather's health and the safe arrival of this little one. We'll keep you updated.

Andrew and Christine, along with their two children Elizabeth and Alexander, are heading out to Kenya tomorrow. Andrew is doing his last Intern rotation at a hospital run by the African Inland Mission. Since this is the kind of work that is on his heart (and Christine's, who is a nurse) this will hopefully be an opportunity for them to discern the Lord's future call, as well as to do some good work now. So, besides for safety, please pray that God will use this time for all of His purposes to be accomplished.

2. Our missional community Sprout is getting all geared up for this next garden season and the opportunities that presents for them. They've had several productive meetings since I last wrote to you and are excited about the coming year and seeing people who thought this was a neat idea last year get more involved this year. They've gotten connected to a movement here in Montana called A 1000 New Gardens and have already made some good relationships with some people who have a great vision. They're planning on starting a greenhouse, expanding the garden, putting in an irrigation system and (in my opinion most significantly) have decided to have smaller groups come and work on the garden, eat and fellowship together (like 1/2 the size of last years) so they can connect more and have deeper conversations. We're all learning by doing in this missional/incarnational ministry (which I think is how Jesus loves to teach us) so pray that this group continues to learn, grow, adapt and develop into the missional community that Jesus wants and that is bringing His Kingdom to earth.

3. Our missional community Imagine...Growing Together is still doing a variety of intergenerational activities and since the Lord has added to their numbers they are right now in the process of reviewing their vision and values. They discovered that as new folks come along you have to have some way of "educating" them, that is, teaching and passing on what it is you're all about. They are actually finding this to be helpful process in two ways. One is that maybe it is time to change and modify their vision and values a bit or to redirect some of the activities to get back on track with what they truly believe God has called them to do (it is so easy to do stuff that gets you off track!). The other is that maybe it is possible this missional community is not really what some folks in it need or want. Either way it is good

and we are excited to see the life change and transformation that God is doing in people's lives through this group. So, pray that they'll be learning the lessons Jesus is teaching them right now and, just as important, to have the faith, courage and selflessness to put those lessons into practice. This group has now made Imagine an official partner with Family Promise, which means, we are cooking meals, hosting meals, and having two people spend

the night 3 times a week at 1st Baptist Church with one or more homeless families (like this week) four or five times a year. The more we learn about Family Promise the more impressed we are with their ministry that trains, counsels, provides tools and accountability to folks who for a variety of reasons find themselves in a situation most of us can't imagine, but for the grace of God could be in. We're discovering it's not a ministry that meets the needs of all the homeless (because they have to be part of a strict program and they are held accountable), but for those it does fit it's truly effective. And as always God uses it more in our lives to change us than others, I think so, please pray for this as well.

4. Shirley and I are seeking to get another missional community going with some of our real estate connections. In fact, we are meeting tonight at some friend's house, which you can sure pray for. We've discovered there are more than a few folks out there who have questions and thoughts about God, life, Jesus, the Bible, etc that they would love to be able to talk about, but don't feel the freedom to do so in either religious or secular situations. So, we're trying to provide that "safe" environment. It seems like with our other missional communities we have stressed "mission" and hoped "community" would come out of that (which has been fine since the people starting the missional communities together obviously had good relationships with each other), but in this group we are going to try and stress relationships and community and let the mission come out of that. Our real estate office is heading up the Habitat For Humanity build in June so maybe we'll just encourage people to get involved in that. Anyway, pray for these connections and relationships and that we can provide the kind of "place" where people can open up, be honest and where the Holy Spirit can really work and where Jesus can build His church.

5. Pray for our Huddle. The Lifeshapes that Mike Breen and Steve Cockram cover in Building A Discipling Culture are really remarkable. We've found that all of us going through them are learning, growing and being challenged, and that if we're not becoming better people, more like Jesus, the disciples Jesus is continually calling us to be, we don't have much to offer this broken world. As we read the Gospels we see all kinds of people being interested in and attracted to Jesus. These lifeshapes are all about becoming like Jesus. So pray for us in the journey and pray for those who are thinking about starting their own Huddles in this coming year.

6. Pray for Shirley and I as we develop our real estate business to help finance this missional work. These next several weeks we are going to be intensely working on developing some of our contacts to generate some leads and to get some more listings. As a team we are also working on how to best leverage our time and talents together. I believe we can make a great team with our combined gifts and experience to serve and help people with their real estate needs. I believe we've put together a great plan and are working for one of the best, if not the best, real estate companies around (Keller Williams' support, policies and ethics reflect the Kingdom values that I seek to live out and that personally excite me), so pray that the Lord will bless our efforts as we seek to serve Him, our customers and clients and our fellow agents in this endeavor.

7. Finally, pray for my work on behalf of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council here in our county. As some of you know I got involved in this to develop some new relationships (that has sure happened) and because I believe in the idea of empowering reentry and reducing the recidivism rate in our county (I passionately believe we can do better for offenders, families of offenders and for our community and that the Church has a significant role in this). Well, now I find myself as the point person in bringing out Barb Garcia, the Community Development Director, and Steve Allender, the Chief of Police, both from Rapid City, SD to speak to key county and city officials here in May. As chairperson of the Out Of Area Best Practices committee I've been communicating with them for the past several months. They are about two years ahead of us in putting together a very effective reentry program there and are willing to come here for two days and have received permission to

come here (even using a Rapid City city vehicle) to teach us what they are doing, how it works, the problems they've run into and to answer questions we might have. Our county attorney is the key person (I think) on our end here to setting this up properly and figuring out how to pay for our end which should be less than \$1000. So, pray for him and myself as we work to establish an agenda and schedule that will make the most of Barb and Steve's time with the County Commissioners, Police Chiefs, Judges, City Officials, Service Organizations and others that all need to be on board for Kingdom good to come out of their visit here. I've learned that in our community there is a general sense that we can do better in this area and that what we're doing now isn't working that well and is certainly not sustainable (kind of like the national debate on health care). However, because of politics or personal beliefs about offenders being rehabilitated by longer and tougher sentencing and thus our building more and larger jails and prisons (and where's the evidence this is working anywhere in the world?) I am realizing not everyone in our area is on the same page regarding how we should move forward as community on this issue. Sometimes I wonder how I got involved so deeply in this (just kept showing up and opening my mouth I guess), but I believe God has a purpose in it, so please pray for me and His will to be done.

Once again thanks so much for your prayers. I'll try to update you again in about three weeks.

For Christ's Crown and Covenant,

Randy

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