

The Geneva Effect

God at work through Geneva Campus Ministry

September, 2011

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Donate Today!

Prayer Items

Thank God for:

- Geneva's 40 years of fruitful ministry.
- Generous donors and a successful Fall Fund Drive.
- The safe arrival of Marlino's wife and two young sons from Mozambique.
- A valuable experience for the 3 teachers and 1 principal from South Korea, along with their translator, who are observing at Pella Christian Grade School this month in our GCEP program.
- The students who are coming to faith and growing in faith.
- A fruitful semester for the Geneva Lecture Series, "Finding God at Iowa" Lunch Forum,

Celebrating God's Faithfulness Over 40 Years

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." 1 Corinthians 3:6

Paul's words certainly apply to our experience at Geneva Campus Ministry (GCM). In 1971 Rev. Jason Chen and his wife Donna "planted" Geneva at the University of Iowa. They served until 2005, when my wife Joan and I came to Iowa City to "water" the ministry. For forty years "God made it grow," and by His grace it is still growing and bearing much fruit for His Kingdom.

Of course, God has used many, many other people to "plant" and "water" as well: Volunteers, church leaders, donors, prayer partners, and the students, faculty, staff, and community members who have participated in the ministry. On October 8, 2011, about 100 of those people gathered on campus to celebrate Geneva's 40th Anniversary. Among the many highlights for me personally were:

- *Attendees filled the Union Ballroom with a ringing rendition of "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."*
- With soaring beauty, Kyung Mi Cho of South Korea sang "The Lord's Prayer."
- Students and partners read Psalm 117 in many different languages.
- One of the farmers on our "Pella Farm Tour" had told the students: "I have the best job in the world: I get to be out in God's creation every day, and do a job I love, feeding people." After the Celebration he looked me in the eye and said: "I have the best job in the world, but you have the most important job in the world. I feed peoples' bodies; you feed their souls."
- One of our speakers was Dr. Nancy Thompson, Professor of Public Health, who has been involved with GCM for 30 years. She concluded by saying: "In short, this ministry is precious to me and has been instrumental in helping me respond to Jesus' calling to follow Him and allow Him to bring me to the full stature of Christ."
- Rev. John White, a pastor in the Reformed Church in America and the founder of New Life Community Church in Coralville, Iowa, wrote: "Geneva has a warm place in my heart ever since I was touched by Jason's ministry when I was a freshman on campus in 1974.

and two faculty-staff weekly book discussions.

Ask God for:

- Someone to do Bible stories and crafts with the Women's International Bible Study children.
- Someone to do music for our Friday International Fellowship.
- Full recovery from the pneumonia that has plagued our Ministry Coordinator, Katherine Damisch, for months now.
- Connections with new students and increased involvement by "old" students in the ministry.
- Ask God for students who will come with us to the Festival of Faith & Writing at Calvin College, April 19-21. .
- A fruitful second semester of ministry at the University of Iowa and beyond.

It has morphed in many ways over the years, but it remains a great Gospel mission in a setting where secularism prevails...It has touched many lives for the Kingdom in many ways. You're doing a fantastic job, so keep it up and believe that more is yet to come!"

I do believe that "more is yet to come!" I picture Geneva as a tree: Every year its trunk grows another ring that makes the tree stronger and bigger. We now have forty rings-still a young tree! And God has used Geneva's persistent presence on campus over the years to accomplish His purposes. We thank God for His faithfulness, and for providing so many people who have helped the ministry to flourish.

Women's International Bible Study Flourishes

For several years my wife Joan has led a weekly Bible study at our home for the wives and children of male international students and scholars. Through it women and children have been introduced to the gospel, come to faith, and/or been strengthened in faith. Plus they have come to love and support each other across cultural, language, and historical barriers. Recently the group has grown to 9 women and 11 children age 5 and under! The countries currently represented are Japan, South Korea, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. One of our American students helps with the children, but her future schedule could make her unavailable.

Joan loves children's literature, and she is always giving the children books of Bible stories. This Christmas we had the joy of seeing three of the children participate in Christmas programs at local churches!

Other Items

- We brought Dr. Christian Smith, one of the world's leading sociologists of religion, to campus on October 18-19, and he was wonderfully received. Dr. Smith gave the Geneva Lecture and a sociology seminar, met with groups and individuals, and was interviewed on a state-wide public radio program and the campus radio station. He outlined some of the cultural trends affecting undergraduate students: Most students come to college to get a good job and to party, and are not interested in spiritual matters. That presents quite a challenge for campus ministers!
- On November 18, we hosted an "American Thanksgiving Dinner" at our home, complete with turkey and the works. It was attended by 37 students and family members from 13 countries and 5 continents. A graduate student from Africa wrote: "Many thanks...It was such an amazing gathering as we shared the peace of Christ and met friends from all over the world."
- A Christian Reformed undergraduate student from Iowa wrote: "Thank you for all your support over all my years here in Iowa City. You are truly fantastic people." [OK, take the last remark with lots of salt!]
- A freshman Chinese student began coming to our Bible studies last year. She knew nothing about the Christian faith and was very skeptical. She asked questions like, "Does God really exist?" But this fall she told me, "I love God!" She has been attending the Chinese Christian Reformed Church.

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