

# CONNECTIONS

SUMMER 2000

## Busy, BUSY, B.U.S.Y.

With this issue of *Connections* many of you are wrapping up another ministry year in Coffee Break, Story Hour and Little Lambs. You're probably heaving a heavy sigh of relief. Done! Another ministry year behind you. You may be dragging your weary body home and crashing on the couch just to catch your breath. Ministry can be like that.

So, what have you learned through all the busyness of the past ministry year? Was it worth it? Did the important things get done? What could have made the past year easier, more focused and less frenzied? Will you build in some time over the summer months for renewal and refreshment? What changes will you make next year to prevent a repeat of the past year's frenetic pace?

As I was pondering the topic of busyness, I looked with chagrin at the stack of papers on my own desk and the barrage of e-mails demanding my attention. An e-mail message entitled B.U.S.Y. caught my eye. I started reading. It seems Satan called a worldwide convention to halt the effectiveness of Christians. He addressed his evil angels with these words: "We can't keep the Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from forming an intimate, abiding relationship experience in Christ."

In fact, Satan fully admits that if people gain an intimate connection with Jesus, his power over them is broken. So, he says to his demons, "Steal their time,



so they can't gain that relationship with Jesus Christ." He tells them how.

In a nutshell, he says:

- Keep them busy in the non-essentials of life.
- Convince both moms and dads to spend long hours at work.
- Keep them from spending time with their family so it fragments.
- Tempt them to spend, spend, spend and borrow, borrow, borrow.
- Over-stimulate their minds so they can't hear that still, small voice.
- Flood their mailboxes with catalogs, sweepstakes, promotional offerings, free products and false hopes.
- Even in their recreation, let them play so hard they're exhausted. Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, concerts and movies so they're busy, busy, busy.
- Keep gorgeous models before husbands so they're dissatisfied with their wives.
- Prey on the "gotta have it" mentality so they work harder to buy more things that take time to use and time to maintain and then break and take time to fix.

You know how it works. Even the church is not exempt. Consider these tactics of Satan: "Go ahead, let them be involved in soul winning. But crowd their lives with so many good causes they have no time to seek power from Christ. Soon they will be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family for the good of the cause. It will work!"

Has it worked in your life? When we get busy to the point of no time for God, Satan's strategy has worked. Then being busy means **Being Under Satan's Yoke**.



Ministry can be hard work and it can be immensely rewarding. Touching lives with God's love is important, but it is not to be done at the expense of *experiencing* God's love by spending time with him. This *Connections* shares what others have learned about busyness. Spend some time reading and then spend some time alone with God. Without a season of refreshment with him, we can't be open to his leading, and that *must* be our priority.

Betty Veldman, Director of Small Group Ministries

## HUMAN BEINGS OR HUMAN DOINGS?

"I was so busy *doing* ministry for God, that I didn't have time to *be* with God," says Small Group Ministry Representative, Jane Voss.

She's been on a journey ever since the 1998 Coffee Break/Story Hour Convention in Boston. That's when she literally passed out and landed in the hospital emergency room hooked up to an I.V. She hadn't been feeling well, but—attributing that to jet lag—kept going. She was sure it couldn't be the flu, because she'd outwitted every flu bug in over a dozen years. As for her woozy stomach, she kept down 'n tic tacs!

Well, it was the flu, and the doctor prescribed compazine to combat the nausea. So, Jane, in her weakened condition returned to the convention to begin, on the second day, the first step of her journey. She was in a position to listen—*really listen*.

She heard Dr. Haddon Robinson say that in order to minister effectively, she first must be ministered to by her Lord



Coffee Break



Small Groups



Story Hour  
Little Lambs

Jesus—that she couldn't keep doing work for God if she wasn't first filled.

Next Jane heard Sharon Anderson telling her that everything she does in her ministry will be influenced by the amount of time she spends with Jesus. Then Lynne Rienstra's challenge was to ask God to show her what was on her plate and to show her what should not be there. And if that were not enough, Jane

heard Maggie Wallem Rowe advise her to share the workload, reduce the workload, carefully reload and then create silence in her life, allowing God to quiet her.

The message, repeated in a variety of ways, was this: God didn't really want her ministry; he wanted her. "If I'd bumped into a bulldozer, I don't think it could have been any more real," says Jane.

Convicted, Jane agreed with God that she was on overload. After making a list of all her commitments and obligations, she wrote a number of letters and released herself from committees. She attended an Alpha conference in her area. And then she began to drink in whatever she could find on the contemplative life, including an ancient practice of praying Scripture called *lectio divina*.

As for her journey, has Jane arrived? Not at all. But there's a new freedom about her: "Now when someone asks me to do something, I'm really selective as to what I commit to."

Back to the repeated message Jane heard two years ago. She still listens for it. She places herself in a position to hear from God, because she knows how he first wants the relationship. She responds, "It is my heart's desire to know God."

In Eugene H. Peterson's book *The Message*, Jesus responds like this: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me, and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

**"Get away with me, and you'll recover your life."**

Jesus

## PRACTICE SAYING NO—THEN SAY YES

If the word *no* is one of the most effective time management tools available to us, why do we women have such difficulty saying it? Here are six possible reasons:

- 1. We want our lives to be more worthwhile, so we say yes.** If we aren't doing something outstanding, important and fantastic, we feel we are worthless. Thus, we keep collecting more things to do—never saying *no*.
- 2. We seek approval from others, so we say yes.** After all, we reason, who could possibly like me for just being me? We feel we need to do something more so others approve of us and love us.
- 3. We feel overwhelming guilt if we say no.** Everywhere we turn, we are faced with pleas for help. Our spouse, our boss, our children, our child's school, our elderly parents and our friends cry out for our time and attention. It is too difficult to say *no*—the guilt too great.
- 4. We respond to the tyranny of the urgent.** Emergency after emergency seems to appear on our doorstep, and we are expected to respond immediately.

The urgent becomes a tyrant trying to make a slave of us, so that we never accomplish those things that are important to us. We are too busy responding to the urgent.

- 5. We have such unrealistic expectations of ourselves.** We try so hard to be the perfect wife, mother, daughter, co-worker and friend. Why are we so surprised at ourselves when we get sick or become tired of performing duty after duty?
- 6. We assume the responsibility is ours for everything and everyone.** When there is a need, why do we automatically jump to our feet, assuming we are to be the ones to meet that need?

If we see ourselves in any of the above six reasons, perhaps it's time to start practicing saying *no*.

The following five tips may help you know when to say *no* and how to say it more effectively.

- 1. Listen to what is being asked of you; get all the facts.** We often jump right in and say *yes* before we have all of the facts. For example, when asked to type a resumé for a friend, do we also factor in the time for the cover letter, envelope, making copies, consultation and corrections?
- 2. Take time to weigh the pros and cons.** Too often we think we need to respond immediately to a request. We don't take time to think a matter through. We say *yes* and then go on to the next disaster.
- 3. When you say no, say it politely and firmly. Don't waffle.** Can't we just hear ourselves as we waffle: "Well, let me see what will work out...I'm not sure...Aunt Maude may need me that day...I'd like to, but...Let me see what develops..." We give false hope when we give a wishy-washy answer of *maybe yes* or *maybe no*. It would be far kinder to come right out and say *no* if that is what we intended all along.
- 4. If you say no, say it without all of the reasons and rationalizations.** "It just won't work out" is a far better phrase than the 3,000 words we use to cover the guilt we feel when we say *no*.
- 5. As we say no, we can kindly offer an alternative.** For example, "It just won't work out for me to sew 5,000 buttons on the banner, but perhaps

**The reason we say no to some choices is so we can give a hearty yes to other choices.**

you could look in the yellow pages..." You get the idea. Offering alternatives can soften a *no* and provide a constructive alternative.

Of course, we don't want to go through our days muttering *no, no, no* to every request. After all, the reason we say *no* to some choices is so we can give a hearty *yes* to other choices.

Practice saying *no* this month, and then try a few *yes* responses too. Your time management skills will be soaring.

Used with permission.  
Dawn Ulmer Morrison,  
*The Hurried Woman Workshop*, PO Box 151,  
Fulton, MI 49052,  
tel. 616-778-3235



## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

From the beginning of time God has been writing a story of love for his creation and his people. You and I are a part of the unfolding drama as it continues yet today. In addition to being *in* the story, we're also called to *tell* the story. Our teacher is Jesus, the master storyteller! Over and over Jesus used examples of ordinary people to communicate truth.

In our Story Hour and Little Lambs programs we tell stories from the Bible, always emphasizing that they are true stories from God's Word. In many ways, though, you are also sharing *your story* with the children. You are loving as you have been loved, sharing as you have been shared with, being patient and kind as others have been with you, explaining the gift of salvation because you've accepted it.

Singer Babbie Mason says, "I've learned you don't need a degree in missions to be qualified to love people. You just go into your world and do your best to make a difference."

You may be recruiting new staff this summer for your children's program. Don't be afraid to ask people if they want to make a difference in the life of a child. It's a high and fulfilling calling.

On this page we've included stories of children connected with Story Hour or Little Lambs. They are "real-life" stories from real children. Read these stories and be encouraged and refreshed! Write down your own story of how a child has touched your life, and share it with us.

In your ministry of telling the greatest story ever told of God's love, remember these words from Isaiah: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, ...so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Diane Dykgraaf, Story Hour/Little Lambs Specialist



Arlene Lubbers from Churchill, Montana, works with the four and five year olds in Story Hour. One of the four-year-olds named Gavin saw her in church. He poked his mom and said, "That's my teacher from Coffee Cup!"

Lydia Foley had been involved with Coffee Break for seven years, but moved into an area where there was no Coffee Break/Story Hour program. She started a study in her home, and tells how her seven- and ten-year-old daughters also started their own Bible club similar to Story Hour. Even though she's been told she's "too old to attend," Lydia has observed how the children open with prayer, read the Bible, talk about it, have a craft, and then close in prayer. They've asked their mom to help them by writing some discussion questions. The girls have named their club, "God's Word is Good," and have written letters to friends inviting them to attend.

Lydia tells this story to encourage mothers who bring their kids to Coffee Break and Story Hour. She says, "We are told to be imitators of Christ, and for our children, they see Christ first in us."

Marlene Brands, grandmother of Brady and Christopher, shared the following story with Betty Veldman to encourage Story Hour/Little Lambs leaders to continue to plant the seeds of the good news of Jesus.

Six-year-old Brady came running outside full speed, shouting excitedly, "Daddy, Christopher just became a new Christian!"

"What do you mean?" his dad asked.

"Christopher just asked Jesus to come into his heart!"

What joy! Quickly Brady and Daddy were celebrating with Christopher as Mother helped tell the story. The four-year-old had been asking his mother lots of questions following family devotions, wondering about Jesus becoming his friend. That morning as he and Brady were playing together in their room, they were talking about knowing Jesus. Christopher said, "I think I'll wait until I'm six."

Brady replied, "But you don't have to wait. You can ask Jesus to come into your heart right now." And he did!

The Spirit was working in and through the hearts of two young children!

Did you know that a child's vocabulary at age two is about 300 words, and at age five it has grown to nearly 2000 words? Think about it. What are the words we want our children to hear and learn during this time of tremendous growth?

## BIBLICAL VIRTUES TO PRAY FOR YOUR KIDS

**Salvation:** "Lord, let salvation spring up within my children, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" (Is 45:8, 2 Tim. 2:10).

**Love:** "Grant, Lord, that my children may learn to live a life of love, through the Spirit who dwells in them" (Gal. 5:25, Eph. 5:2).

**Biblical self-esteem:** "Help my children develop a strong self-esteem that is rooted in the realization that they are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10).

**Love for God's Word:** "May my children grow to find Your Word more precious than much pure gold and sweeter than honey from the comb" (Ps. 19:10).

**A heart for missions:** "Lord, please help my children to develop a desire to see your glory declared among the nations, your marvelous deeds among all peoples" (Ps. 96:3).

From *Pray!*, issue #4

### WHERE DOES IT ALL BEGIN?

Where does it all begin –  
That moment when we understand  
salvation?

Where do we get the idea  
Of who he is and who we are?  
It begins when we live by his grace  
In the day-in and day-out of every  
Monday.

One day when we least expect it  
They surprise us and reflect it.  
For God's children are never too big  
or too little  
To know him as Savior and Friend.  
You and I are given the greatest gift  
in Heaven—

A chance to lead these little ones to  
him,  
For this is where it all begins.

Song by Karla Worley, reprinted from  
*Little Ones Need Jesus*, Core Values Series



Story Hour  
Little Lambs

# STORY HOUR

# idea share



## Coffee Break

### WHEN WE'RE TOO BUSY

Under the headline "Stressed-out Women Try to Simplify" in the February 26, 2000 issue of *The Detroit News*, Marge Colborn offered a number of tips for simplifying our lives, including sticking to a two-color wardrobe and serving the same five meals week after week. Think about that. Are we so busy, that we'd consider wearing only two colors? No change in meals except for weekends? For some of you who are wrapping up a long year in Coffee Break or Story Hour, this lack of variety may appeal to you right now.

When there's too much on your fork, when you overdo, when you start to burn

out, when you tire... , how do you refresh yourself? When you decide to slow down or take a break, what do you do?

Here are a few responses:

- ~ don't plan anything else
- ~ pray more; pray longer
- ~ nap (At some retreats, taking a nap is the first thing on the agenda.)
- ~ indulge in a bubble bath
- ~ play the piano
- ~ walk the mall
- ~ go for a run
- ~ take a long lunch
- ~ drive to the beach—regardless of the season
- ~ do nothing (and feel no guilt)
- ~ read a magazine
- ~ read a fun book such as *The Cat Who...* series by Lillian Jackson Braun
- ~ read *Too Busy Not to Pray* by Bill Hybels
- ~ attend a conference like the Grand Rapids Coffee Break/Story Hour Convention

What works for you? Share your ideas at [jordanm@crcna.org](mailto:jordanm@crcna.org) or drop me a line at 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560.

Marjo Jordan, Co-Editor



### IT MAY NOT BE TOO LATE TO REGISTER

Everyone is welcome: brand new leaders, veteran leaders, past leaders, never-involved-at-all leaders! Celebrate thirty years of God's blessing at the Coffee Break/Story Hour Convention July 11-13 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Refresh and equip yourself to do evangelism right where you live and work. Call 1-888-644-0814 to see if space is available.

**Convention Reminder:** If you are planning on attending, you may want to bring a tote bag. There will be a limited quantity for sale.

Also, as part of the registration package, you will receive a complimentary copy of Marie Van Antwerpen's *Coffee Break: Touching Lives with Love*—a collection of powerful stories of women whose lives were changed by God through Coffee Break!



## Story Hour Little Lambs

### CHILDREN SHARING JESUS

How about letting your children share Christ with their friends this summer? Invite young neighbors to your backyard picnic table or your family room. Let your children choose one of their favorite stories from the Story Hour material. Plan a simple craft and let an older sibling read the story from a children's Bible, your child's Story Bible made of the take-home story cards from the Story Hour curriculum, or the *God Loves Me* series available from CRC Publications. Serve popsicles for a snack on a hot day.

Or how about a "movie-morning" to share the story of Jesus. The JESUS Film Project has just released a new video called *The Story of Jesus for Children*. This hour-long video makes it possible for children of all ages to see and understand

the true story of Jesus, as adapted from the Gospel of Luke. The retelling of the story of Jesus is from a child's perspective, and comes with a booklet explaining how to make a commitment to God.

Be sure to watch the video with the children so that you can answer any questions they may have. The video is available by calling 800-432-1997, or by checking the web site at [www.jesusforchildren.org](http://www.jesusforchildren.org).



Any time you connect with children this summer in your neighborhood or through church outreach programs, give them an invitation to your Story Hour/Little Lambs program. Pencils, magnets, stickers, fliers, etc., with your church's name, phone number, and a child-like logo advertising the coming season of Story Hour is a good way to get the word out about your program.

Whatever it is that brings you closer to God, do more of it.

Bill Hybels

### CARING FOR TRAUMATIZED CHILDREN

Many of the children in our world have experienced trauma in their young lives. The following are suggestions for dealing with kids who have experienced some kind of physical or emotional pain:

- Meet physical needs first.
- Help the child feel safe.
- Offer a caring, non-judgmental ear.
- Provide a routine.
- Provide creative outlets.
- Be affectionate.
- Pray and trust that Christ can bring healing through the hands and feet of his people.

From *World Vision Today*, Spring 2000

### CONNECTIONS

SUMMER 2000  
A Small Group and Coffee Break Evangelism Quarterly Newsletter, Betty Veldman, Marjo Jordan, Editors  
A Ministry of CRC Home Missions  
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560  
1-888-644-0814, (616) 224-0771  
e-mail: [jordanm@crcna.org](mailto:jordanm@crcna.org)

# SMALL TALK

FOR SMALL GROUPS

SUMMER 2000

## MAKING BEAUTIFUL MUSIC

In the article *Making Your Small Group Work*, Dr. Dan Reiland, former small groups coordinator for John Maxwell's Skyline Church, shares the following insight:

"Guitar is a passion of mine, but I quickly learned that owning a guitar is one thing, and knowing how to play it is quite another. My son, at seven years old, picked up my guitar and was sort of strumming it. The noise was anything but pleasing. His response was: 'This thing doesn't work.' Much study and practice, along with some art and intuition is required to produce beautiful music. So it is with a small group. You may 'have one' but making it work, is altogether another issue."

If yours is one of the churches that has soured toward small groups because they haven't "worked right," don't give up. And if you have small groups but they're not building authentic community among your members, don't be willing to "settle" for less than the fullness of what small groups can provide.

The large-scale launch of small groups without a proper foundation rarely works. Learning to play the guitar takes time, and making beautiful music in small groups takes time too. Be willing to learn the lessons necessary to build a strong foundation for thriving small groups that build authentic, biblical community.

As our North American culture has changed over the past several decades, so has the focus of small groups. These "four revolutions" of small groups are listed by small-group consultant, Dave Stark, as prominent changes that will lead us into the 21st century:

### 1. Principle-based small groups rather than model-based

Ask "What is God up to in this church?" rather than "What do I want to have happen?" Develop small groups according to God's unique call for your church, not other churches' models. Their models "work" for them because they are doing what God has called them to do.

### 2. Multi-dimensional small groups, not "one size fits all."

As opposed to the cell model which expects all small groups to look alike, the multi-dimensional approach acknowledges the diversity of people's needs, passions, spiritual development, and gifts. It promotes a wide variety of small groups. Though the ultimate goal is to make fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ, it acknowledges people are at various points on that journey with Jesus.

### 3. Ministry of the members is central

People own what they help create. It is important to invite people to be a part of the process of developing small groups. Invite them to design small groups according to their gifts and passions.

### 4. A win-win accountability structure

Rather than top-down management that utilizes control and standardized reporting systems with small group leaders, the coordinator of small groups emphasizes spiritual accountability and serves as an encourager, equipper, and supporter of small group leaders.

Don't give up and don't settle for less. God has the perfect plan for small groups for your church. Ignite the passion that God has placed in people's hearts, and free them to use their gifts to build authentic community and make disciples. If you'd like to know more, the small group rep in your area will be happy to serve you. For information call 1-800-266-2175.

Betty Veldman, Director of Small Group Ministries

## CREATING COMMUNITY

If we are to use the word community meaningfully we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other.

*The Different Drum* by Scott Peck

First of all, community really isn't forged apart from things like conflict and suffering. Confessing sin and working through struggles together builds a powerful community. For instance, if you study a word like "compassion" in the New Testament it means "pain partner"—to come along side someone in pain. In moments like that, true community develops.

Bill Donahue, Willow Creek



Small Groups

# SMALL GROUPS

## TAP INTO PRAYER'S POWER

The Unification Church—a cultic movement—targeted a city in North Carolina for mass recruitment. Seventy followers of the Rev. Moon spent months saturating the city with all kinds of "evangelistic" outreach. They made non-stop presentations to the townspeople with a very seductive message. They were committed, well trained in communication, and highly motivated.

A Christian group in the city was heartbroken to see person after person fall under the spell of this cult. They began to meet at ten o'clock every night for several hours of prayer. They fasted weekly. But it seemed to them that their prayers were not making much of a difference. Finally the big night arrived.



## Small Groups

Hundreds of new converts to the Unification movement were to publicly declare their commitment to Moon and his teaching. The auditorium was prepared. A massive advertising blitz was implemented. Mr. Moon himself came for the sanctifying ceremony. Everything progressed as planned, except for one unanticipated detail.

That evening only two men showed up to commit themselves to the cult. The rest of the audience was composed of Moon, his traveling companions, his workers and a handful of Christians who had come to pray. Amazingly, half way through Mr. Moon's talk, the two potential converts got up and walked out.

Over the next year it was reported that church after church throughout the city experienced rapid acceleration of people surrendering their lives to Jesus Christ. Even when they couldn't see it, God was answering their prayers.

Dr. Alan Leach, Associate in Ministry, Presbyterian-Reformed Ministries International, *Renewal News*

**If we were to identify one principle as the *most important*, then without a doubt, it would be the multiplication of small groups.**

*Christian A. Schwartz*

### COMING IN MAY 2000: A BRAND-NEW CRC PUBLICATIONS WEBSITE!

In response to your requests, CRC Publications' entire catalog will soon be online. In May you'll be able to read complete product descriptions of all your favorite Coffee Break, Story Hour, and other small group ministry resources as well as download samples. A convenient shopping cart feature will allow you to place your order securely using VISA or MasterCard or your church account.



## CONNECTIONS

SUMMER 2000  
A Small Group and  
Coffee Break Evangelism  
Quarterly Newsletter,  
Betty Veldman,  
Marjo Jordan, Editors

A Ministry of  
CRC Home Missions  
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE,  
Grand Rapids, MI 49560  
1-888-644-0814,  
(616) 224-0771  
e-mail: jordanm@crcna.org

## LET US KNOW

This *Small Talk* is part of a larger newsletter that includes pertinent topics for small groups. If you wish to subscribe to the entire publication, let us know at 1-888-644-0814 or jordanm@crcna.org.

## A SMALL GROUP TO REACH A YOUNG MOTHER

**M**om To Mom, a three-year curriculum written by Linda Anderson, does the Titus 2 thing of older women teaching and encouraging the younger ones. This biblically-based parenting program is designed to offer a potential bridge into a church. Mom to Mom meetings begin with refreshments and a 40-45 minute lecture, after which they break into small discussion groups for another 45-60 minutes. In both the larger group and the smaller group, these moms form friendships, support each other and become a community. For more information: [www.momtomom.org](http://www.momtomom.org), email [info@momtomom.org](mailto:info@momtomom.org), tel. 781-862-6629.

### RESOURCES FOR SMALL GROUPS

**No Such Thing as Over the Hill: Making the Most of Life after 60** by James R. Kok.

Discuss issues seniors face: retirement, physical limitations, sex, putting your house in order. Available in June.

#151350CT \$7.75<sup>US</sup>/11.25<sup>CDN</sup>

## WELCOME VICTORIA

**J**anuary 1 began a new millennium and a new chapter for small group development. Victoria Proctor-Gibbs became our first African-American small-group representative. She will be working to educate and sensitize all the small group reps regarding issues of cultural diversity and racism, as well as implementing small groups in urban, multi-cultural, and African-American settings.

Victoria is no stranger to small groups. She has both started small groups and trained small group leaders in a variety of settings. Through her experiences she has learned the importance of being in honest, authentic relationships with other Christians as well as keeping Christ in the center of her life. Her warmth, enthusiasm, and accepting spirit have paved the way for a relationship of trust and credibility with those she is trying to reach with the message of life-changing small groups. Please pray for God to use her to raise the value of small groups in the African-American community and reach men and women with the message of God's love through authentic Christian community.

Betty Veldman, Director of Small Group Ministries



## IT'S A BOY!

Ezra James De Jonge was prayed into the world on January 26, 2000—a healthy baby son to parents Shawn and

Aileen. He is a joy to his parents, and Aileen loves being a mom. We thank you for your faithful prayers for our former *Connections* editor. Your prayers encouraged her as she grieved the loss of her firstborn, Elyse Marie, just a year ago, and comforted her as she and Shawn anticipated little Ezra's arrival. Please continue to pray for Aileen, Shawn and Ezra, but, above all, give thanks to God for protecting this new child of his.

## WELCOME TO MARJO

**R**eleasing Aileen to the joys of parenting means welcoming a new *Connections* editor and ministry partner, Marjo Jordan. A former Coffee Break leader with a background in broadcast journalism, Marjo adds a new dimension to our newsletter and we believe you'll enjoy all she contributes to the ministry of Coffee Break/Story Hour and small groups. We're happy to say, "Welcome to the team!" BV

### Co-Editor's Note

*I am very excited to join the ministry team here at Home Missions! My past includes coordinating volunteers for The Potter's House school, serving as a deacon at Rogers Heights Christian Reformed Church and gathering, writing and broadcasting news for WCUZ Radio in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And it is with joy that I return to my first love—writing. I invite you to share your topic ideas, tips and stories with me, so we all can benefit from each other's experiences. I look forward to hearing from you at [jordanm@crcna.org](mailto:jordanm@crcna.org).*