



*Eastern Home
Missions*

Newsletter

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Trials

Our heavenly Father sends to all the children in His household various afflictions at different times in their lives. These burdens or cares are as diverse as life itself. And all of them result in a struggle in us or in our homes to keep our lives as normal and happy as possible, though God's heavy hand is upon us. Every affliction is a blow (some softer, some harder) to our souls. At times it takes everything in us not to be pulled under by that affliction, but to remain as busy as possible with our life and labors.

This is a lot common to man. God's children are no exception to that rule, except, of course, we have a place to which to flee in our troubles. We flee in prayer to the Rock. We flee to God our Father for strength to withstand the storms of life. We flee to Jesus Christ our only comfort in life and death. When we do, we receive what we ask for and God strengthens our faith. This is why the psalmist says, "Affliction has been for my profit." We confess that together with him.

These past several months my wife and I (and since Lydia still lives at home with us, she too) were given by God a small dose of affliction. In October of last year, Mary underwent surgery for certain personal problems she

was experiencing. I was scheduled for surgery six weeks later for right knee replacement. Both our surgeries were routine enough, but complications from Mary's surgery appeared a week before my surgery.

She was admitted to the hospital for treatment of C-diff. and an ulcerative colitis. C-diff. is a disease actually caused by the antibiotics a person is given during surgery to avoid infection. The antibiotics kill the good bacteria in the large intestine, leaving the bad to take over. If not treated immediately, the disease can be life-threatening. She was admitted to the hospital for another week, to be released on the day of my surgery. She did well while I was down in bed for the next number of weeks. When I was able to get up and hobble around a little, Mary needed to return to the hospital, because the symptoms of her disease returned. A few days later she returned home, and now, though there are still flare-ups, she seems to be feeling better again.

God has been good to us. The saints here in Pittsburgh have been good to us too. We have all the reason in the world to rejoice. Sad to say, we do not always rejoice when God sends hardships. May God forgive the murmurings He has heard escape our lips during our time of affliction. May He give us (all of us) the grace to know: all things work together for the good of God's people.

Now you know why you have not received a newsletter from me for so long! We have been busy trying to deal with these cares and keep up with our life and work as well as possible. Some things must needs be put on "the back burner."

Old News

Perhaps some of the events I am reporting in this newsletter might, by this time, be deemed old news. But they are certainly worth mentioning because they were highlights in our work here.

On October 31 of last year we held our 11th annual Reformation Day lecture. Rev. Kenneth Koole was our speaker. He spoke to us on the subject of "The Reformation and the Family." We and our few visitors had an enjoyable evening. The subject of this lecture was

meant to start off a series of workshops that we are planning in the next year or so. This was the first time Rev. Koole was in Pittsburgh, though his name has always been familiar here. We enjoyed the time spent with him and his wife, Pat.

We were again favored with a visit from a delegation of men from our calling church, Southwest PRC. These men arrived on November 28 and left again on December 1. Most of the meetings they had with us were held in my living room, since I was unable yet to leave the house. Rev. denHartog in my absence filled our pulpit for both services on Sunday. I returned to the pulpit on December 14, four and a half weeks after surgery.

The most memorable event of their visit was the examination of the confession of faith of Anthony Bauman and Lydia Bruinsma. I was privileged to ask them the questions. The delegation approved their confessions, and public confession took place on December 28. I know that confessions of faith in our congregations are very common. But there was something special about the confession of faith of these young people in our Fellowship. Anthony and Lydia represent the next generation of members in our Fellowship. Anthony is the son of Keith and Peggy Bauman, who themselves made confession of faith only a few years ago in our group of believers. Anthony represents the next generation of believers growing up in our Fellowship. This is evidence that God is choosing to carry on His covenant in the line of generations here too! This gives us great reason to rejoice.

Recent News

Most of my labors since surgery have been the routine labors of the congregation here. But there are a few items of interest in our work. First, our website, under the care of Ben Mahtani, continues to develop. My sermons are now available on sermonaudio.com with a link to this site on our own website. We receive a report each month on the downloads of our sermons for that month. I have been preaching a number of sermons on the signs of Christ's second coming. This past month I preached about the Antichrist. Sixty people downloaded the first of these sermons from sermonsaudio.com! There must be a real interest in this subject in our

changing world! Many of the downloads of my sermons are in China.

We have begun plans for our Spring workshop on marriage. The topic is "Is Marriage Worth It?" The seminar is aimed this time at how to find a godly spouse and what is the proper conduct in "dating." Though this seminar is aimed more at how to enter into a good marriage, we will need to define marriage immediately as a permanent bond. We have made it known in our advertising that we are targeting couples who are looking to marry *for the first time*. We believe that, given our view of marriage, we as churches have something positive to pass along to those who seek to marry. Our view concerning marriage is not negative (no unlawful divorce and no remarriage) but very positive (marriage is a permanent bond in Christ that lasts a lifetime). This view alone can give a young couple confidence and hope when entering into marriage.

Of course, all of this hinges on faith and repentance and a turning to Jesus Christ. The call of the gospel will indeed need to be issued in connection with this subject. We intend to give this four-hour-long workshop on May 8. Then, several months from that date, we intend to have another workshop on marriage; then another still later, on children in marriage. We pray that God will use these seminar/workshops for His glory and the gathering of His church.

Finally, in December of last year Southwest Church, with the approval of the DMC, granted our Fellowship special membership in Southwest Church as per the decision of Synod 2005. Seven families and three individuals have now been placed on a separate record of membership. Eligible members of the mission will partake together of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (also according to the decision of Synod 2005) on March 15, 2009. Again, we rejoice in God's blessing upon our work in leading us to another level in our development as a church-in-forming. May God use this sacrament as a means of grace in the lives of His saints here to help confirm and strengthen us in our faith.