

The Journal of Ron Boehme - 2008

Port Orchard, Washington

January 1, 2008 - 19,989 - 11,015

A new year has begun—and I am excited about the prospects that God has put before us. The older I get, the more focused my life needs to be to accomplish what God wants me to do. **It seems a little harder to operate by “faith” as you age, but that is good because you truly can’t live by your own strength. I sense God working deeply in my life as I begin this year and I humbly want to follow Him where he leads.**

There are three major focuses He has given:

The Paradise rally on May 25. I am rallying YWAM and leading a group from the Northwest to this time of consecration in Kansas.

China/Mongolia Gateway – Lord willing we will help to host the first ever national missions conference in Mongolia with hundreds of young people. We are beginning to recruit a team and want to take it also into Inner Mongolia and finally to Beijing for ministry prior to the Olympics.

Washington R&R – a long term strategy for mobilizing the churches in WA to corporate renewal and reformation in society. This is the greatest thing I can do to promote revival in Washington state in the coming years.

For the first 21 days of 2008 I will be fasting lunches and joining with many others that are praying for revival in America. Lord-- May 2008 be a year for You to be praised. **I dedicate my life to your purposes as I have for the past forty years (since 1968). This is my fortieth year to walk with you. Serving you has been the greatest privilege of my life.**

January 20, 2008 - 20,008 - 10,996

Wow, **I have crossed the 20,000 mark in days lived.** Thank you, Lord, for your grace. A good friend of mine, Don McKay, did not quite make that mark. He died this week after a six-month bout with liver cancer. As I have been praying for him in the past few weeks, I have come to see death like the lighting of a fireworks display. When you light the match it appears to go out—but then the light blinds into the sky almost like a shooting star.

That is what Don did a few days ago. His life ebbed into death—and then he SHOT into eternity to meet his Savior and experience eternal. We're praying for Cathy who's been left behind and also for their kids—that God would use Don's death to bring them back to Him. During the 21 day fast, I have meditated each day on the book of Hebrews. Here are the highlights:

CHAPTERS –

- 1 – Angels are real. Jesus is greater.
- 2 – God became a man in Jesus. We are family with Him.
3. I need to listen better, and never turn a deaf ear to God.
4. Obedient faith is the only thing that really brings eternal rest.
5. Trusting in God and being willing to suffer is the true pathway to life.
6. In everything I'm doing I must stay the course with committed faith.
7. The old covenant kills—the new covenant way of faith works!
8. God “new plan” is written on our hearts. It's an intimate relationship with Him.
9. Christ's blood is God's “final solution” for sin.
10. We must never be quitters, but trust God all the way to the end.
11. I must live my entire life with the “vision” of faith.
12. We must run the race as Jesus did—with complete faith and a willingness to die.
13. A good goal for life: “Live well before God.”

Thank you, Lord, for a good start to a new year. As I enter my 40th year of walking with you, I pray that I will love you more, trust you more, grow in purity, and do the will of God. Sometimes I feel very weak and aging. Help me to overcome through your power and grace.

Orlando, Florida

February 3, 2008 - 20,022 - 10,982

I am in the air returning from a very fruitful and invigorating trip to Orlando, Florida for a series of meetings. The main event was the inaugural **North American Global Congress, a part of the Call2All movement.** Call2All was the brainchild of Bill Bright shortly before he died,

attempting to link the pastors and missions organizations together for completing the Great Commission. It had its organizational ups and downs, but a year ago YWAM Impact World leader Mark Anderson—with whom I worked closely during 1994-2001—became the new president of the network and helped straighten out its trajectory. In the past year, the group has decided to call forty global congresses around the world to unite the Body of Christ with vision and encouragement to complete the task. It was a privilege to attend.

About 600 pastors and leaders from some 170 different groups assembled in Orlando for the four-day Congress. It was held at Northland Distributed Church, pastored by Joel Hunter, a gorgeous complex with a three thousand seat auditorium. The stage at the front of the worship center was probably 150 feet in length and Pastor Hunter said that they invested ten million dollars in their audio-visual delivery system. It was the best I've ever seen. Northland's worship team also led all the sessions, and they were incredible.

Filling the stage from one end to the other with about twenty musicians, you wondered how they could perform so effortlessly together because they could hardly see one another. The word “distributed” in their name means that they view their facilities as simply a delivery system for church planting and kingdom ministry both locally and around the world. Pastor Hunter put it this way: “A business with no distribution system is simply a warehouse. That's not what we want to be.” He also mentioned that they have based their ministry structure around the attributes of God. This includes:

- Singular and plural – one and many that is “field based.”
- “God among us” – each disciple serving in the marketplace is the distributed church. They also make many resources available on-line for churches and church planters to use all over the world.
- Holy-Spirit empowered everywhere – thought they do not have a Pentecostal background.
- Worship is to “serve” the disciples so that they can minister outside the walls.
- Leaders today are “connectors” in the global age.

I spent the first few days of the Congress rooming with Paul Fleischmann, director of the National Network of Youth Ministries who is a good friend. Paul had asked me to participate with him in the first evening presentation centering around youth. We asked Nancy Wilson to join our triumvirate to give some pizzaz to the presentation. We spoke on Tuesday night and it went well. Loren Cunningham and Steve Douglas, president of Campus Crusade for Christ were the plenary speakers that evening. They

gave a powerful presentation on the possibility of completing the Great Commission, with Steve even hinting that the goal could be finished in the next ten years.

After the opening evening, we did a TV interview with GOD TV, a new media group, which is trying to champion revival and missions around the globe. They are a great bunch, and I believe God is going to use them powerfully.

On Wednesday, YWAMer David Hamilton shared the vision of 4K—dividing the world into 4000 Omega Zones of about 1.5 to 3 million people each-- to be able to zero in on reaching every person with the Gospel. That afternoon we even prayed on and marched on a large 50 by 70-foot map of that world—reminded me of King’s Kids for adults—and really committed ourselves to doing our part. This exercise was one of many where the influence of YWAM and its “culture” really dominated the Congress in a good way.

In fact, I’m sure that YWAM had the largest number of people in attendance from any group with about 80-100 leaders present. The day also focused on reaching the last untargeted groups in the world—the UUPG’s (un-targeted unreached people groups). There are 639 such groups and one of the goals of the Congress is to see them penetrated.

On Thursday, Jack Hayford gave a great message called “A Prophetic Moment” where he laid out his perspective on our priorities for readiness in these potential last days. He mentioned four important trends: 1) The need for Discipleship – “many churches have stalled in discipling people,” 2) God’s plan for the Jews—this year will mark their 60th year anniversary as a restored people, 3) Intercessory Prayer which is becoming greater than anything in history, and 4) Mutuality, or unity, in the Holy Spirit.

That evening the focus of the Congress was on evangelism with Danny Lehmann, Mark Anderson and Luis Palau all describing different aspects of sharing our faith in modern culture. The previous day Mike Bickle, Lou Engle and Graham Powers (Global Day of Prayer) had all shared on the growing global prayer movement which is extremely exciting. I believe one of the greatest accomplishments of the Congress was the linking of the global prayer thrusts with the missions people.

The Congress ended with a protracted prayer and commitment sessions that really was flavored by YWAM DNA with John Dawson and others leading out. In the end the excited leaders made the following commitments over the next ten years:

- To preach the Gospel to nearly one billion people
- To see nearly 100 million souls converted and discipled
- To plant 1.1 million new churches around the world.

- To raise up 9000 “Orality Teams” to communicate the Good News in story form with the estimated 70% of the world who either cannot and don’t want to read and write.
- To plant works in almost 1000 of the 4000 Omega Zones.

This was a very powerful and visionary Congress. It was a delight to be a small part of it with so many other wonderful Christian visionaries and leaders. I want to do my part and be faithful to the heavenly vision.

Half-way through the week, I switched residences to the home of Greg and Randi Gregoire who work with the Jesus film project with Campus Crusade. They have a nice home in east Orlando and I really appreciated getting to know Greg (Randy was away) and saving some dollars on hotel bills. On Friday I dropped down to Crusade’s international headquarters near the airport to talk with some financial people about our IRS audit. That meeting was extremely helpful.

Saturday, Lou Engle and Mike Bickle were holding “The Call—Orlando” at the Silver Springs Arena and I dropped down there to pray with the kids and observe this phenomenal youth movement. God has really used these guys to call the youth of America to fasting, prayer, repentance, and involvement in the issues of the day. On Saturday, about 10,000 youth assembled for an eight-hour prayer and worship meeting that really rocked and powerfully called this generation to revival in America. In some ways, God spoke more powerfully to me at “The Call” than at the Call2All Congress. I was deeply convicted that he had called me to preach against the evils of abortion and not to lose heart. That I needed to rise again and fearlessly call our culture back to Christ. I thank God for using Lou Engle to challenge me. Yes, Lord Jesus, I will be faithful to that calling. You show me the way.

This trip and the Call also reminded me about two of the weaknesses of my life—my susceptibility to mental lust—and the tendency to pride and ambition in which I compare myself with other leaders. I repented of these sins at the Call and re-dedicated my life to the pursuit of holiness and growth. These were powerful moments of the dealings of God and I have a peace in my heart as I go home that God is going to “grow me” in these areas.

Praise His glorious Name. After the stadium event, I visited Michael Berg and YWAM Orlando briefly, and then had dinner with a friend from Campus Crusade. After a short night, I am on my way home to get back to work—with increased vision and determination to “do the will of God in this generation.”

I really want to set some reachable and godly goals for the next twelve years of my life, the Lord-willing. Much could happen on planet earth during that time. I pray that

it will be the reaching of the world with the Good News of Jesus. He is the only one worth living for.

Port Orchard, Washington

February 9, 2008 - 20,028 - 10,976

I'm in a stretch of faith again to raise the money for the **Mongolian Gateway Conference** this summer. I think it will take about \$50,000—and all of that is outside the budget. Lord, strengthen my faith and show me how you want to provide this gift to the nation of Mongolia.

Psalms 40:5, 7 really spoke to me this morning about the brevity of life:

"Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered, and that my life is fleeing away. My life is no longer than the width of my hand. An entire lifetime is just a moment to you; human existence is but a breath...And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you."

February 16, 2008 - 20,035 - 10,969

It was a great privilege to have David Bryant and Steve Hall in the area this week. They did a "Christ Huddle" at the Nazarene Church on Wednesday for about twenty pastors. It was a very rich time of focusing on the Lordship of Christ. David shared some amazing truths that left us convicted, challenged, enlightened, and determined to have a full view of the wonderful Son of God. In the evening we had a service at Christian Life Center where David shared the vision for *Paradise*. It was very powerful. May God raise up a good contingent that will go to Kansas this summer to exalt Jesus. I believe it is going to happen.

Friday night after a nice Valentine's Day dinner with Shirley (my sweetheart now for thirty-two years), I came down with the flu. I don't often get sick, but this one is a nasty bug. I'm taking it easy, reading a lot, and looking to the Savior to heal. He is Jehovah Rapha. My times and health are all in His hand.

March 6, 2008 - 20,054 - 10,950

I was praying about the area of fasting today. Since my throat problem in the nineties it has not been easy to go on longer fasts because my voice gets a little sore. I've stayed away from longer fasts since that time. However, I have wanted to do shorter fasts, and this year YWAM is encouraging us to fast worldwide every first Thursday of the month. Then there is the 1st Friday that I have tried to be a part of for many years. So here were two days in which I might be able to fast and seek God.

But there was a catch. I have a Ministerial luncheon every 1st Thursday of the month—right in the middle of the YWAM fast. And recently I started going to a breakfast with some guys on Friday mornings. That affects the IFA fast. What is a dedicated saint to do? I didn't know and decided to seek the Lord about it this morning. On my walk, after my quiet time, I felt the Lord gave me clear guidance through this conundrum. The principles are this: We are to fast *privately and humbly*, not drawing attention to ourselves. If we do this, the Lord will reward us in secret. We are also to be *disciplined*. That is one of the main aspects of fasting i.e. buffeting your body and making it your slave. I felt the Lord weave these two truths together in my mind in the following way:

I will use the 1st Thursday and Friday of each month as my spiritual tune-up every month. When there are meals to go to on those days, I'll eat so as not to draw attention to myself. I'll be disciplined to fast the other meals.

The Lord is amazingly wise. It seemed so simple, yet it meets the need. I am looking forward to this spiritual monthly tune-up now and will not waffle or deal with guilt. When I need to eat, I will. When I can fast, I'll do it. May God be glorified through this commitment to be both humble and committed before him.

Orlando, Florida

March 14, 2008 - 20,062 - 10,942

I celebrated my 55th birthday this year on airplanes and in airports. **The occasion was the National Association of Evangelicals board meeting that I attended for the first time in Orlando, Florida**—and it took a travel day from the west coast on my birthday to get there. I arrived in Orlando about 10pm and was picked up by Paul Fleischmann, my roommate for the next few days. We celebrated the end of my special day at a Perkins restaurant then arrived at our hotel about midnight.

Since I am now 55, I guess that means that I've finally reached the "speed limit" in my life and can now go full bore for the remainder of my time on earth. I certainly want to do that in spirit as I give my remaining days to the Lord Jesus alone. The body may be aging, but my heart wants to know and serve Him more and more. Thank you, King Jesus, for 55 years of life. This is my fortieth year to walk with you. I am very grateful for everyone that I get here on earth.

The NAE meetings began at noon on Thursday at Northland Church here in Orlando. I was just here in January for the *CalltoAll* Conference. Northland is a 10,000-member church with a 46 million-dollar 160,000 square foot high tech facility that believes in “distributing” its message and ministry all over Florida and the world. Their worship services go to 1000 sites globally. Pastor Joel Hunter is a personable and humble man who has a real vision for holistic ministry global outreach.

Our meeting began with a luncheon at noon with about 75-100 board members in attendance. Most of the afternoon was given over to reports and decision-making as well as a discussion between these the leaders of many evangelical churches and organizations. This is an older group, and its leadership style is old-fashioned, but their influence goes back to 1942 and has been significant in America. I hope that I can be a voice of renewal and modernization so that this vital ministry may truly make an impact in America.

As I said to the group, the NAE has been primarily known as an organization that defends Christian doctrine and causes in this nation. I’d love to see us go on the “offense” in evangelism and reformation and become known as the group that is leading the American transformation. My remarks drew a good response.

The board meeting ended with an evening banquet and, in my opinion, the highlight of the day. The guest speaker last night was Al Weiss, the president and CEO of Disney Resorts worldwide. He is one of the top executives in the United States and a very committed Christian. He told his Disney story: how he had joined the organization at 18 and worked in twenty different positions over 22 years before he became the leader of Disney World and then the global operations.

During his tenure he took Disney World from two billion in revenues to seven billion, with Disney staff (“cast”) growing from 30,000 to 60,000 and visits to the park numbering 116 million. He spoke of the importance of getting every cast member deeply involved in the cause of Disney. They were valuable and needed to clearly understand their roles. He then shared about Disney’s commitment to their guests—what would please them, how to meet their needs with first class hospitality. Under his leadership Disney World increased its repeat visitors by 70-85%. They must have been doing something right.

This was all very fascinating, but then Al Weiss turned to his real passion—church planting. He is the son of a church planter and believes that the Church in America is going to die and wither if we do not launch an entrepreneurial wave of church planting in the cities of this nation. He said that according to a new and very reputable study, only 17% of Americans go to church on a given Sunday. And from 1990-2006 the nation added 52 million people, with most of them not attending church.

His passionate call was that we need to plant new churches everywhere and aggressively. His own project in this regard, Vision 360, has already planted fifteen churches in the Orlando

area and is reaching out to other cities and nations. He is personally partnering businessmen with ministry leaders to accomplish this goal. He challenged us that we need to saturate and multiply churches in the US for the glory of God.

He also encouraged the board members to adopt another part of the world—something God has really been speaking to me about recently. Every person should really have an “adopted” nation or people group for prayer, research, giving and going. I enjoyed talking to Mr. Weiss after the meeting. His message was a fitting capstone to the NAE gathering. May we be faithful to do what God is telling us to do.

Port Orchard, Washington

March 19, 2008 - 20,067 - 10,937

In my quiet time this morning, always enjoyed in the privacy and quiet of my office, I meditated on John 10 and Jesus saying “I am the gate” – the entrance to right relationship with God, “I am the Good Shepherd” – the one who cares for us and will lead the way, and “I am the Son of God” –his divinity and uniqueness. No one makes the claims of Jesus Christ. He is who he is. I am inspired to know Him more and to let him be all the “I ams” of my life.

Washington, D.C.

May 5, 2008 - 20,113 - 10,891

Jason and I are now in Washington DC for the National Day of Prayer and a little father-son fellowship. I brought him back with me this year so that he could see Jon Cresswell--who went with us last summer to China and Mongolia—and to expose him to the power of the NDP and show him around DC.

We arrived on Saturday night at Dulles airport after a weather delay had forced us to land in Cincinnati for a couple of hours. After getting our rental car, we made our way to Manassas where we will be staying with Roger and Mary Cresswell (the first time I haven’t stayed with Ken and Pat Smith for years). They have a comfortable new home in Bristow, adjacent to Manassas.

Sunday morning with all headed up to Christian Assembly in Vienna and I spoke on what God is doing around the world and the Mongolia Gateway vision. The message was very well received. After the service I went out to lunch with John and Nancy Entzminger and the new head of the missions group. The remainder of the day we spent

in fellowship with the Cresswells. Jason is really enjoying his time here. He loves the “loft” that they have that includes a pool table, musical instruments etc. He is in teenager seventh heaven. I’m glad that he is on this trip.

On Monday I was able to go down to Fredericksburg and have lunch with Ray and Ginny MacAnanny. Ray is now 79 and has many physical ailments, but they are an amazing couple that God has really used to help “the least of these.” With John Gimenez dying in February, I really want to see Ray before he went on to be with the Lord. While we were there, Anne Gimenez called on the phone and I had a good conversation with her. The day brought back a lot of memories about Washington For Jesus—now 28 years ago.

The next day, April 29, I traveled down to the Tidewater area in our rental car, first stopping off in Williamsburg to have lunch with Mary McQueen. We had a nice time together. Then I jetted down to Portsmouth and spent part of the afternoon and went out to dinner with Rich and Nancy Ivy with whom I spent the night. Then I popped over to the CBN campus to the Founder’s Inn in Virginia Beach for our annual YMEC meetings. They have been going well. Tonight, after our meetings end, I will make the three-and-a-half-hour drive back to the D.C. area.

I got back at about midnight on Wednesday night (praise God for keeping me awake) and crashed at the Cresswells. Thursday morning the five of us headed out for Capitol Hill and the National Day of Prayer. I got there early to save us seats and the foursome arrived just as the color guard was coming in to begin the meeting at 12 noon in the Cannon Building. It was a great three hours in prayer and Jason said he really enjoyed it. Ravi Zacharias was the featured speaker and honorary chair this year, and there was also a great message by Judge Janice Rogers Brown, Senator Mike McIntyre of NC and the Interior Secretary. I was inspired as usual to stand in the gap for this nation.

After the Hill gathering ended, we went out for a bite to eat and then made our way to the west steps of the Capitol for the evening city celebration. There was a good crowd this year under gorgeous skies. Corinthia Boone did her normal wonderful job of leading the four hours of prayer and praise and the youth part at the end was inspiring. God is really at work in this city and his colors are red, yellow, black and white! The Cresswells and Jason left early, but I stayed to the end and then walked back up Capitol Hill to the subway station and made my way back to Manassas. It was a God-glorifying day.

On Friday it was time for Jason and me to prowl the city together. We started late morning and did the Capitol Hill end first. He especially liked the Library of Congress and we also prayed at the Supreme Court. Then we walked down the hill to the Air and Space Museum where we even took in an IMAX movie on the Sun. Then we leisurely strolled down the Washington Mall and looked around the WWII memorial, the Lincoln Memorial and ended our

day at the White House. It was good to be with my son, chatting with him and teaching him a little about our American heritage. He was a very good sport.

Saturday morning, I had a very good breakfast with Pastor Bill Jeschke. They will dedicate their new King's Chapel facilities soon. I also stopped off to see Ken and Pat Smith, my normal hosts this time of year and then made my way back home for an evening with the Cresswells. **Sunday morning, I shared at their church on the Mongolia Gateway project and some people very generously gave toward it and committed to pray.** Christ the Redeemer Anglican Church is an interesting mixture of liturgy, good worship, great teaching, testimonies and public prayers, and a heart for missions. It was great to make some new friends there. Tonight, we will see Inece Bryant and tomorrow make our way home.

This has been a great get-a-way with Jason this year and involvement in the prayer affairs of the nation. I've been stirred, challenged, and convicted about loving Jesus more and being faithful during this critical time in American history. One thing I have been prompted to think about is possibly doing a Renewal Team-YWAM DC reunion in two years—the thirtieth anniversary of Washington for Jesus. If this is the Lord, may it become an encouraging reality in 2010.

Port Orchard, Washington

May 19, 2008 - 20,081 - 10,923

I have been doing a lot of speaking on the Mongolia Gateway Conference vision and it's been amazing how people are responding. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for favor with your people. In almost every church I've spoken, people have given beyond my expectations. And on May 11, God really arranged a divine appointment.

A few months back I had written to Wayne and Debbie Macomber and asked them to consider being the “anchor donor” of the Mongolian project by giving a \$10,000 gift. I also tried to set up an appointment to meet with them, but because of wintering in Florida and Debbie's travel schedule, I could not set one up until late June. I resigned myself that I probably would not know about their decision until just a few days before we leave for Asia.

Then God went to work. I have been away from First Christian for months but was scheduled to speak on May 11 on the Mongolia Gateway vision. Unbeknownst to me, Wayne and Debbie's grandson had been scheduled to be baptized on that day—so the two of them flew in from Florida for that occasion. They also hadn't been here for

months. The grandson was baptized, and I preached my message—with them being able to hear the full presentation—and afterwards Wayne told me that what I shared had really moved him. It's the most he's ever said to me in my life. Three days later the \$10,000 check arrived This was an incredible divine set-up for us to rendezvous at First Christian and for God's purposes to be done. Thank you, my Savior, for bringing us all together for your purposes. May every penny be used to advance the fulfilling of the Great Commission. You are amazing.

Kansas City Area, Missouri

May 28, 2008 - 20,090 - 10,914

Last night our team of ten arrived back from one of the longest and best road trips of my life—the Paradise event in Kansas. We traveled over 3800 miles, gathered with thousands at the event that focused on Jesus alone, and came back very excited and emboldened by the experience to uplift the Lord Jesus in our lives.

The trek began last Thursday night when we loaded up at First Christian Church and then traveled through the night for eighteen hours all the way to Rapid City, South Dakota. Sara and Elise Morris were on the trip and their family had lived there prior to coming to Port Orchard. Joel Morris arranged for us to stay with the youth pastor of the First Christian Church there (Jared Dupont) and with a very nice family, Bruce and Sandy Rampleburg. Bruce is a banker who is very active in the community and state-wise politics. We hit it right off upon meeting the first night.

The next day we cruised all the way to Kansas City—about twelve hours—and made it all the way out to the Paradise site located on the 600-acre Youth Front campus in LaCygne, Kansas—about an hour south of KC. The camp manager there, Fletch Miller, had arranged for us to stay with some very nice families his home church in Louisburg, KS. After seeing the property and meeting with a few friends, we crashed for the night in Louisburg (the boys and I stayed in the home of Monty and Connie Bond).

Early the next morning we rendezvoused as a team and arrived at the Paradise amphitheater at 7 am. Groups were already starting to gather. The skies were threatening, and the ground was wet, but after an early rain, the sun came out and bathed the site with 90-degree temperatures. We located our group right near the front of the “foundation of the throne” and prepared for an awesome day. I will include below an overview of what transpired from the Southern Baptist National Journal:

“In a rural field at the geographic center of the nation, more than 3,000 college and high school students gathered around a symbolic "foundation of the heavenly throne" to worship Jesus through Scripture, prayer and singing May 25. "Paradise" began as students and youth leaders

toted coolers, chairs, blankets, and Bibles to the gathering place about 60 miles south of Kansas City. Some arrived early enough to worship Christ at sunrise in the open field, which was soggy from recent rain.

Around 8:30 a.m., students gathered in small groups under a cloudy sky to get acquainted with one another and talk about their relationships with Jesus. An hour of silence was set aside on the worship field for students to personally consider what Jesus might want to do in their lives at Paradise. Noon marked the beginning of a sacred assembly -- **four hours of Scripture reading and singing that addressed various facets of the supreme majesty of God's Son.**

Though storms dotted the middle of the nation, the sun had come out and the sky was clear. Corresponding Scripture passages for each category were displayed on a large screen above the throne foundation and were read by people hidden behind the structure. Students meditated on verses such as Psalm 84:1-2, which tells of a soul longing for the courts of the Lord. They claimed Hebrews 4:16, approaching the throne of grace with confidence because Jesus is their high priest.

Students sang worship songs that were familiar to their generation, such as "We Are Hungry," "Better Is One Day," "We Fall Down," "Indescribable," "Give Us Clean Hands," "Marvelous Light" and "Famous One." They concluded with "Here Is Our King" as some of them danced in the field in worship. The sacred assembly was followed by a time of late afternoon silence, when students could find a place to absorb what they experienced during the reciting of Scripture and singing of songs. They also met in small groups again to continue discussions and process together what it means to be followers of Jesus in today's culture. At sunset, another worship time was set aside, led by youth workers who addressed what God might want to accomplish among students as they return to their homes following Paradise."

It was an incredible day—smaller than we, the leaders of Paradise, originally expected, but very profound and Christ-honoring. **I can honestly say that it was one of the greatest and purest worship experiences of my life—especially the four straight hours of focus on Jesus alone. We sang and danced and knelt and meditated—and it was all about the majesty of the King. It got hot in the afternoon, but God helped us persevere to the end, drinking in all we could of the glorious praise. Many of our kids were deeply touched by it—Elise Morris crying at the end, and Jason having a vision of Jesus on his throne.** About 7 pm we went out for a meal and then met at one of our host homes for a good time of sharing and praying with each other. Paradise had been a highlight of many of our lives.

The next morning, we began the trip back to Washington state—driving the twelve hours back to Rapid City, staying with our gracious hosts again, and then putting

in a marathon day eighteen-hour day back to Port Orchard. During the final couple of hours, we shared in the van how God wanted us to continue uplifting up Jesus in our lives and had a great time “honoring” one another with the gifts and growth that we saw in each other.

As I was watching this little group of ten share in this way, I realized that it is these “God-moments” and discipleship settings that really set the course of a young person’s life. It happened to me many years ago, and here in May 2008, I was leading another group to experience God and set their course toward him. This IS what life is all about. These moments learning to love and walk with God have an eternal reward.

We arrived back home about 11pm May 27—grateful for an amazing five-day pilgrimage, and one day spent uniquely in the worship of King Jesus at Paradise. Thank you, Lord, for the faithfulness of Richard Ross and many others, to carry this vision to fruition. May its fruit touch many lives and literally go around the world awakening a generation to love and serve Him.

Los Angeles, California

June 26, 2008 - 20,119 - 10, 885

Over a month has gone by since I have been back to my 36-year old friend—the journal. It’s been a bust time as we’ve prepared for the summer missions trip to China and Mongolia. I’ve spoken every weekend in about fifteen churches and many individuals have helped us raise over \$42,000 toward this incredible project. I’ve seen more favor on this event than almost any other in my lifetime. People get the importance of helping launch a nation into its destiny in missions. Very exciting—and quite a privilege. May the Lord Jesus alone receive all the glory.

In the middle of the month our family took its annual vacation trek to southern California to be with Nathan and David. With gas prices now over \$4 a gallon, we decided to go by train. It is a 30-hour trip with about 25 stops but costs less this year than driving. We enjoyed the trip down (this is our sixth trip to LA) and then spent two great weeks in the sun, by the pool at the Versailles Apartments, and with our four boys. We always cherish these times.

The first Sunday we were there I was privileged to travel to downtown LA to speak at a Mongol Church. I know the pastor (Tsodo) and met one of the youth leaders there when I was in Mongolia in April. They meet in a large Korean Church near the Staples Center. It was a great service—and they give liberally and sacrificially to their brethren in the home country. I was really touched.

One Thursday we all went to Disneyland and California Adventures. We enjoyed looking at and riding some attractions that were new to us. Though it is expensive, these bonding times

are important for our family. On other days, we spent time with Nathan and David—went out to eat a lot—ministered into their lives and helped them with vehicle problems and other things around the house. They are growing up and learning to make good decisions, but we truly have a “godly jealousy for them for simplicity and purity in their devotion to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2,3).

On the final Sunday, we worshipped at the modern Mosaic Church in Beverly Hills. I hope David, Aaron and Robert will go there for discipleship. They have many artists, bands, and really reach out to this generation. Lord, find them a spiritual home where they can really grow in you.

The final train trip back was full of good scenery and sights but took quite a while (36 hours). I’m not sure we’ll go by train again, but it was a good experience. Now Mongolia and China await. Lord – do an amazing work this summer that will impact all of Asia and world. **This is my 36th summer in missions. May it be the very best.**

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

July 5, 2008 – 20,128 – 10,876

It was at the airport on July 2 that Chris Bayer and I broke the news to the team that some unusual things were happening in Mongolia. Just the day before we left, there had been a severe riot on the capital city over some national election results where some 20,000 protesters burned a government building and clashed with police. Six people died. This was a total shock to the nation--the first time this type of thing it had ever happened here in the modern era. The president of the nation then proceeded to shut down most media, install a curfew, and place a ban on all public meetings for four days under a state of national emergency.

That is the situation we flew into. **On arrival we learned that the Gateway Conference would have to be postponed due to the turmoil in the country.** This was a huge shock and sadness to us but there was nothing we could do. Since that time, we have been meeting with pastors and leaders, spending much time in prayer, and trying to be an encouragement to the people here during a very difficult time. We are not in danger but in need of prayer. We spent most of today seeking God in a variety of settings for his guidance, wisdom, and his peace to be upon the Mongol people. Tomorrow (Sunday), the pastors of the nation will address their congregations for the first time about the violence. We will be in church to support them.

After working on the Mongolia Gateway Conference for nearly a year, this was very difficult for me to swallow. Many emotions raced through me, and my moods swung

more than normal. But the team prayed for me, and we strengthened each other and committed ourselves to move forward with God revised plans for us.

July 7, 2008 – 20,130 – 10,874

Despite the unusual circumstances that we have faced here in Mongolia, we truly know that God has called us here for "such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). The state of emergency has now been lifted in the nation, but things are still very tense in the streets with an unusual police presence and daily bulletins being issued. Today an opposition party leader was arrested and may be executed. Another one who is being sought has gone into hiding. Two other sources of "blame" are being mentioned as behind the civil unrest. One is funding from China for the rioting--which makes our message of China's destiny in world missions unpalatable.

The other is blaming the very effective Christian television station here (Eagle TV) for also contributing to the violence via a call-in program. Because of the Christian notoriety of the station, **the pastors here are asking us to keep a low profile and not do any meetings in the capital city.** After an extensive day of prayer yesterday, we attended church services this morning in support of the Mongol Body of Christ as the pastors for the first time used their pulpits to speak to the people. That was an important source of healing and encouragement today.

It is for certain now that we will be postponing the Gateway Conference at least a couple of months, possibly merging with another youth conference in the fall. One way or the other, God will be bringing his message and power to this nation, and though it has been delayed, it will most certainly come. Our God has an amazing way of redeeming even the evil intents of men and fallen angels. This we know for certain: That **God has called us here to pray and encourage the Mongol believers during a very difficult time. We take that assignment with great sobriety and a determination to be faithful. As soon as we know God's alternate plan, we will act on it. We do know this: God will use even the wrath of man to praise him. Satan may have won this round in stopping the call to missions, but he is a defeated foe and will not prevail in the end. The Lord will grant his people the ultimate victory.**

July 8, 2008 – 20,131 – 10,873

After some trying days, the "fog" is lifting, and we are pressing forward in God's priorities for us here in Mongolia. We are "leaving the past behind and pressing forward to the mark." Due to the situation here in Ulaanbaatar, we have been advised by the pastors to be involved in low-key ministry during these initial days. The capital city does seem calm, but the Mongolian people are still dealing with the shock of the July 1 riots that left five people dead, eighty injured and over six hundred in jail. Much prayer is taking place around the city and God is using it to bring a strong and deep sense of peace.

Yesterday the team enjoyed going out into the ger district (that's the slum areas that surround the city of UB) and minister with an American missionary named Kathy Ribbs who has

started a number of churches and has a variety of humanitarian ministries to the poor and needy. The team ministered to the people near her compound, prayed over the area, and helped in the building of a kindergarten facility. It was a refreshing day of ministry that started with a good prayer and worship time in the morning.

The remainder of this week we will be involved in a variety of ministry opportunities here in the capital, and then on Saturday we will leave for Darkhan, Mongolia's second largest city, for a weekend of ministry there. We are excited about the revised mandate that God has given us: To pray, bring encouragement to the churches, and be involved in personal ministry. We have our new marching orders and are trying to obey the King.

The other good news is that the conference has been re-scheduled. We have finalized the arrangements to join forces with some other ministries and re-do the conference on September 25-27. This is an exciting development that took much prayer and some very extensive negotiations. We are giving our raised monies to the new event, and I will also be flying back in the fall to be a part of it.

July 9, 2008 – 20,132 – 10,872

Today we enjoyed "showers of blessing" in Mongolia in the literal sense. There was much rain today and it clogged the streets and almost brought life to a standstill. This is about the third day it has rained here--the most I have ever seen--but it has made Mongolia the greenest we ever encountered. The majestic mountains all around us look like they contain vast golf courses. This is real answered prayer in Mongolia as drought has been a real problem in the past few years. We are praying for the spiritual showers to follow. There are many victories to report today:

1. God gave us real grace this morning to get Dieter a visa into China. Many are being turned away, but the Lord showed us exactly how to approach it at the Chinese Embassy and gave us favor with the officials. It has been approved and we will pick it up on Monday morning.
2. We met with the Circus officials, and God put it upon their heart to give us back our entire deposit on the original conference. That is a real miracle. The money will be given over to fund the new joint Conference that will be held on September 25-27.
3. The team is having many divine appointments talking to people, praying for salvation, giving out Bibles, and bringing encouragement to the people. I am very proud of them for moving forward. This is a great team that is making an impact here every day.

4. Today we had the privilege of taking a tour of Eagle TV--the only land-based Christian station in Asia. They will again film the September Conference, and God is using them mightily to disciple this nation through the media. They employ about 130 people and more and more of their programming is sharing the Christian worldview in this Buddhist nation. Many Mongols know and love Eagle TV. We prayed fervently for them--that God would really use them to alter the destiny of the nation of Mongolia.

5. We also met with the coordinators of the September Conference and delivered the first payment of monies to them. The main leader is Axel Fischer, a German who has been in Mongolia for years. The September 25-27 Conference that we are throwing our weight behind will bring many streams of the Body of Christ together and may bring 4000 kids together. That's a resurrection of the vision--doubling the original conference. Isn't that just like our God? We traveled to the venue site at the end of our day through water-logged and car-clogged roads and prayed in the new conference facility. It is an Expo Center on the edge of town. Please provide prayer cover for the re-born September 25-27 Conference. Your prayers and giving have not been in vain—they are being multiplied.

6. Tomorrow we will travel with about fifty Mongol teen leaders out to the countryside to a resort area called Terejl where we will share an authentic Mongolian meal, have worship and teaching together, and spend the night in five gers. The team is really looking forward to it. Then we will return to UB on Friday and enjoy Nadaam--the national festival.

7. One other miracle: We found out today that on our train to Inner Mongolia on Monday will be a brother who will lead us to key contacts there. He just "happened" to be scheduled on our train--kind of like God providing angelic escort. Up until this answer to prayer, we had no firm contact in Hohhot--Inner Mongolia. We're pressing on because the King is worthy.

Terejl, Mongolia

July 11, 2008 – 20,134 – 10,870

On Thursday we rented a coach bus and took a beautiful drive with about 55 youth leaders to what the Mongols consider their "resort area" of the country--a large national park that is full of beautiful Mongolian terrain without any homes or towns. The area is about 80 kilometers to the east of Ulaanbaatar and is called Terejl. Because of the answer-to-prayer rains here, the drive was stunningly beautiful with fields and hills that look like a never-ending golf course. There were many flocks and herds along the way feeding on the lush vegetation. Right now due to the long green grasses everywhere, the animals must be in "herd heaven."

We ended the journey in a beautiful valley where there are a number of "ger resorts" and one of them was reserved for our team and guests. In the afternoon, the kids played games,

walked by the river, and had some good small group times. Then Sharron and I briefly spoke to the group and then we had our authentic Mongolian meal. We chose a live sheep to be the main course on the menu (\$100 buy) and then we watched the cook slaughter the animal in the most humane way you can imagine.

The animal lays on its side peacefully, and very quickly the "cook" makes a small slit in the upper stomach area and reaches his hand up inside in about one second the severs the main artery--killing the animal instantly. The sheep simply closes its eyes without any struggle and dies--all without the spilling of any blood. The cook then skinned and prepared the animal (quite a process) and later that night we had a wonderful meal of meat with noodles, soup and other delicacies.

Because it was raining around dinner time, we all squeezed into a large ger in the evening and after some worship, I shared about an hour's teaching on servant leadership. These kids are all leaders and were very responsive. After the teaching we had a good time of prayer for each one, then the kids stayed up late being kids (!) and us older folks went to bed. We are all staying in gers (about seven of them) and they are beautiful inside, cozy, and even have some hard beds. However, because of the rains and cool temperatures, we lit a fire in most of them for at least a portion of the night. It was a treat for the team to live in traditional Mongol style for this one day.

The next day dawned to radiant sunshine and we all got up and after a breakfast of rice with milk, we climbed a mountain above the camp and had an early morning teaching. The spot where we perched was breath-taking with rivers filled to overflowing in the valley and the green hills and mountains all around us. I felt very much like Jesus for this assignment because he "went up on a mountain and after sitting down, spoke to his disciples" (Matthew 5:1). That's exactly what I had the privilege of doing with our total group of about sixty. I spoke on the character and vision of David --whom Mongols can relate to as a shepherd and a warrior-- and called them to arise and be a David generation for both Mongolia and world evangelism. We ended with flags and praise on the mountain-top, then went back down and packed up and made our way back to UB. This was a very special 24 hours with some of Mongolia's future leaders.

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

We made it back to UB just in time for the Nadaam events--Mongolia's national holiday. They began with a ninety-minute ceremony in the city stadium that holds about 20,000. We were able to get tickets to the event and really enjoyed it. I had experienced it before years back, and it's amazing how it has improved with business sponsors, giant screens, the singing and dancing you'd expect at an Olympics opening ceremony, colorful

floats and much more. **The president of the country also spoke at the event.** Afterwards we watched the wrestling competition, saw a little archery--but did not make it to the horse race. It was a very festive day for Mongolia, and they have a bright future if you will continue to turn to the Lord and allow him to disciple them.

We will spend our last weekend in Mongolia in Darkhan with much church and youth ministry. That will also be a pretty drive north to the nation's second largest city. After a difficult beginning, God has really resurrected our time and blessed us at every turn. God is hearing and blessing.

Darkhan, Mongolia

July 14, 2008 – 20,137 – 10,867

We had a wonderful trip up to Darkhan and a fantastic weekend there. The team is doing well and working very well as a unit. We have had no sickness which is an added blessing. The trip to Darkhan was a long one--about eleven hours on bumpy roads--but through a gorgeous countryside that all the Mongols are talking about. They also feel that their nation is more beautiful now than in years. We certainly share that assessment.

One of the reasons our trip was so long as we made a detour to a town called Zunkhara to visit Sodoo's family. He grew up here--city that is the fifth largest in Mongolia. We had a great time. Sodoo's mother has a large garden and many animals--and that really gave us a look at life in the countryside. We prayed for salvation for her new husband.

We arrived in Darkhan late and yesterday we split up into two teams and ministered on Sunday in four different services. We gave testimonies, sang some songs, and a couple of us preached. We stayed in homes here that blessed us greatly with their hospitality. Darkhan is a prettier city than UB with trees and a little of a country feel and slower pace of life. It has a large park in the city center where last year's team prepared for ministry. **In the evening, we did a "mini-conference" youth rally with many churches coming together. The praise and worship were electrifying and after I gave the message, over one hundred Mongols committed to go out into missions.**

A Mongol friend and I were whisked out of the service before it ended to come back to UB by bus late last night. It was full, so we sat for three and a half hours on plastic stools in the aisle of the crowded bus. Great cultural experience. We got back to UB about 1am. The team returned from Darkhan about noon today.

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

We spent this morning getting Dieter's visa (it's all done--PTL) at the Chinese Embassy. Not an easy process. There were many disgruntled would-be tourists there. The Communists are not very friendly. We then met with a friend who is arranging our housing in Beijing. At the Chinese Embassy we also bumped into a "German angel" who will be on our train tonight and helped us without contacts in Hohhot. We get on the train tonight at 8 pm and will arrive in Hohhot at 10pm on Tuesday night.

We will probably be staying in a hostel in Hohhot. We are looking forward to two days there. Please pray that we will be wise--and be able to meet with some of the believers. I hope to get us on a train for Beijing on Thursday night. That will be a twelve-hour ride through the night. This part of the trip will be a little grueling, but very exciting. We are taking four Mongols with us including one unsaved young man. We believe these will be the days of his salvation.

Gobi Desert & Hohhot, China

July 16, 2008 – 20,139 – 10,865

We finished our time in Mongolia and on Monday evening boarded a sleeper train for China. It was a long trip through the Gobi Desert. But the scenery was enjoyable--including a lightning storm. We were in two next-door cabins on the train and we have a few Mongol friends with us--a total of twelve people. We slept through the night and reached the Chinese border about eight am. They took about an hour and a half to change the wheels beneath the train and then we traveled on through the Chinese countryside. The further we got south, the flatter it got, and more trees graced the landscape. We enjoyed talking to people on the train about the Lord and many other things and finally made it to Hohhot about 10 pm.

Our Mongol friends named Joshua and Calebina (female-Cecilia) had arranged for us to be picked up by a hostel. They flagged down taxis for us and we traveled through the wide and square streets of this two-million-person city to a small two-story home that reminded me of the "hippie trail" in Europe. It was called the Anda Guesthouse. We entered and were put into a guys' room upstairs and a girls' room downstairs. It was spartan, but clean. We crashed about midnight and then got up this morning, had a brief continental breakfast and then had to move to a hotel that is nearby and much nicer.

[It was at the Anda Guesthouse one morning where I accidentally lost a contact in the bathroom sink—and I had no back-up. Had to have a pair of back-up glasses made the next day in the city.]

Before we moved, we met two German guys who had also stayed at the hostel. One was a believer named Birgit Zepf who is a professor in West Palm Beach, Florida. She was thrilled to meet us, and we encouraged her in the faith. We then moved on to a small hotel nearby that was very comfortable and clean. The team was thrilled by this gift—and it only cost \$10 a night. We are grateful to God for arranging this oasis for the next two nights.

Today we had a wonderful northwest China lunch together with our friends (spicy), including a brother from the underground church who lives here in Hohhot. We ate Chinese style (family style) and really enjoyed it. In the afternoon we took a great walk through the two major Buddhist temples in town and prayed a lot about how the Kingdom of God can cleanse away all these idols. It was a very good time. We also let the team do a little shopping.

We met with some local house church leaders this evening and heard their stories of persecution and triumph. It was very moving. Through this group alone there are about one thousand believers in the city—but they must be very careful about their faith. At the end of the sharing time, which took place in our crowded hotel room, we laid hands on them and prayed for them. They are real saints living under very difficult circumstances. Ever since the Tibet riots earlier in the year, the police have really clamped down on the Church in Inner Mongolia. They don't want the demonstrations coming here. I hate to break the truth to them—but freedom is coming. You cannot stop the advance of the Kingdom of God.

We were able to get train tickets to Beijing on Friday morning. We leave at 8 am and arrive in China's capital at 7:35 pm. We will be met by a “friend of a friend of a friend” whose name is Yao Yung who will take us out to the northwestern part of the city where we will stay in apartments Friday and Saturday nights. Saturday will be our day to enjoy the sites of the Olympic city, especially the Great Wall, the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square. Then Sunday we will blast off toward home from the Beijing airport a little after noon. Amazing things are happening in China. We are glad to be a small part of it.

July 18, 2008 – 20,141 – 10,863

I'm sitting in a small Internet spot with whizzing cars going by me just outside the doorway. Hohhot is a planned city with large boulevards that are shaped like a checkerboard. There are multiple lanes for the many cars in the middle, then a large bike and pedestrian lane on the outside. Many people here ride bikes like in many Asian cities. I have also noticed many electric motorbikes. The city is flat, so it makes bicycle travel easy. I gave the team the morning off to sleep in, do some shopping and packing, and prepare for our final push. We will spend this afternoon and evening with our friends looking around the city. Our group has grown to about fourteen--and it's quite a process to do three-way translation much of the time from Chinese to Mongolian to English.

Beijing, China

July 20, 2008 - 20,143 - 10,861

On Friday we boarded and rode the train from 8 am until 7:30 pm where we arrived in the northern train station of Beijing. Of the fifteen hundred people on the train, I believe there were only two other foreigners besides us. We were met by Yao Yung, and surprise—by Bayarla and Todo his cousin—who had come in earlier by direct train from UB. We are united again. Yao helped us go in taxis out beyond the third ring of this sixteen-million-person city where we settled the girls into an apartment. It is in the University District. Then began what became known as the “Midnight Massacre.”

At about eleven pm, the guys left the apartment with their luggage to be settled a building-or-two- away in another apartment. This arrangement had been made in advance. We paid the officials who managed the building, settled into our rooms, and nearing midnight, I was drifting off to sleep amidst the heat and noise of the city when there was a loud knock on the door and we were told that we must leave immediately. The “officials” told us that we did not have copies of our passports. I said we would get them in the morning. They said “no” and they had to leave. (Communists have little sympathy for human beings. It is the regulations that count, whether they hurt people or not.)

At midnight, exhausted and confused, we found ourselves on the street and in need of a place to stay. The Scripture came to mind, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Fortunately, Yao Yung was already making phone calls and had found a college dorm that was willing to take us in for the night. We spent the evening in even nicer rooms.

On Saturday morning we gathered and had breakfast at the girls’ apartment (rented by a Chinese English teacher named Cindy) and then boarded into a rented mini-van to travel out to Ba Da Ling, the closest site of the Great Wall of China (where most celebrities visit). It was a beautiful trip through the city and out into the countryside, rising higher into the mountains.

After about a 90-minute drive we arrived at the site which has quite a few tourist amenities and thousands of people who were already there to make the climb. For the next few hours, we climbed the steep and amazingly-engineered walls—not an easy affair. The views were spectacular. As I thought about these fifteen hundred miles of fortifications that were created to keep out the northern tribes, I couldn’t but feel saddened at the thought of millions of slaves that perished doing the work. We had a great prayer time at one of the top lookouts, and then descended the wall to continue our day-tour or Beijing.

Arriving back in the city about 3pm, we had lunch at a wonderful family-run Chinese restaurant and then our driver dropped us off in the center of downtown Beijing where we walked to the center of Tiananmen Square. With Mao's picture facing us in the front, and many government buildings all around us, we prayed fervently for the freedom of China. We believe it will happen in our lifetime. During this time, we noticed that we were being watched and that continued for part of the day. We also watched by the Forbidden City – a 178-acre maze of buildings and gardens that served as the emperor's palace. We didn't go inside because the hour was getting late.

After a rest stop, we took some buses a little further south and arrived at the Temple of Heaven. It is a vast park with many trails and beautiful walkways that stretches for miles. In olden times, the emperors would go here once a year to give a "report" to heaven and pray for the harvests. We stopped by the entrance of the Temple and prayed that the Chinese would turn to the Living God. As we prayed, we noticed a Chinese woman who also approached the gate and looked longingly at it for many minutes. After our prayer time, some of our team approached her and had a tremendous time praying for her. She was really seeking the Lord and even began to sob uncontrollably. This was a tremendous divine appointment as God met the young woman through the heart-felt prayers and encouragement of various team members. She alone was worth the visit.

As the evening was getting late, we made our way by bus to the Olympic Village area and walked through it, praying for the Games to showcase God's glory. We saw the International Broadcast Center and the "Bird's Nest" Stadium that will soon be on every television screen of the 2008 Olympics. At the end of a grueling but wonderful day, we made our way back to our lodging and spent our final night in China's capital city.

In the morning we had a wonderful time of sharing and "honoring" at the girl's apartment. Birgit Zepf, the German woman we had met in Hohhot, even joined us for this time—she was so hungry for fellowship. It was a precious time as we told stories, thanked God for each other, and praised him Name for this incredible trip. We then boarded a few buses and made our way to the Beijing airport for our 2:30 pm plane back to the Free World.

There are great things happening in this part of the world and it will continue to grow. Nothing can stop it. I believe China is going to be at the forefront of our thoughts and prayers for many years to come. It will play a great role in the history of the 21st century. (By-the-way: Gas prices are high because the Chinese are now driving millions of cars that were non-existent a few years ago. Their gain is our pain.) China is a glimpse of the future—and it is also a glimpse of the past (great contrasts). But the God of Heaven and earth is moving greatly here, and it was a privilege of a lifetime to make this trip and contribute in a small way to what He is doing.

Port Orchard, Washington

July 30, 2008 - 20,153 – 10,851

I have enjoyed my days at homes between trips. It has been a nice summer in the Northwest and always is a nice change to the heat and humidity elsewhere. One of the major decisions that I finalized this week was the decision to complete my Masters degree at Northwest University in Missional Leadership. The classes start this fall, and though I know it will be a challenge, I am also looking forward to obeying the Lord in this assignment.

I'm now registered, have my first books—and was also glad to find out that Ray and Sandy Jennings will also be doing the course. We will have good fellowship together. It is amazing how God guides the steps of our lives—and how different they are from some of our original plans and intentions. For many years I was even anti-higher education. My view has now broadened to see the various ways God can even use it in my future. I'm so glad he is patient with our narrowness.

Chiang Mai, Thailand

August 19, 2008 – 20, 173 – 10,831

A few days ago, I returned from a very fruitful trip back to Asia—this time to Chiang Mai, Thailand. I had not been to Chiang Mai in twenty-eight years. My first flight was to Seoul, and at the Incheon airport they called me up to the desk and said that they'd noticed I was flying their airline a lot and they wanted to reward me on this flight with an upgrade to first class. I saw that as a blessing from God—nothing I had ever sought (in fact I don't think I've traveled first class in over twenty years or more).

I did enjoy the extra space and lavish food on the five-hour flight to Chiang Mai. It could be addictive—but at this stage in my life my simple values are clearly set. Thank you, Lord, for this special treat.

I arrived in Chiang Mai (“New City”) late at night on August 8, and a shuttle driver met me at the airport and transported me about an hour north to the Kam Tarn Resort where I will be speaking at the Operation Gideon III Olympics outreach conference. I got to my little A-frame bungalow about 2 am and crashed for the night. The next days were quiet ones of resting and looking around the beautiful property. The resort sits beneath the northern hills of Thailand, not far from the Myanmar border. The vegetation is lush and tropical, and I would not see the sun and encounter much rain for quite a few days. The temperatures were pleasant due to being in the mountains—

probably in the 70's and 80's. I used the day to enjoy some great Thai food, watch some of the Beijing Olympics on their first day of competition, and also began reading my Masters books which I had brought along on this trip.

On Sunday I had lunch with Noel, one of the Hellenic Ministry leaders from Ireland, went into town with a group of South Africans who are here for the outreach, and then in the evening we had our opening session of Operation Gideon III. There are 105 outreachers here from about fifteen countries. Greece, the US, and South Africa all had large delegations. The group reminds me of a normal YWAM summer outreach program—the kids and adults are all very motivated to know God and make him known.

On Monday I spoke to the entire group in the morning on “Why China—Why Now?” The Lord had awakened me at about 5:30 am to bring this message together and it was well received. In the afternoon I read and rested and then shared dinner with the leader of Hellenic Ministries, Jonathan Macris. He is a good friend who invited me to come and speak and whom I have known since our work together during the Athens Olympics. I love his passion and purity of heart. He is a great leader for Greece. In the evening, Australian pastor Bill Vasilliou good message to the conference on “Discipleship.”

The next day I briefed two Manchurian outreach teams on ministry in China and then spoke to the entire group about life as a missionary (they can do it) and the revival heart of King Josiah. I continued my schoolwork in the afternoon and then spoke again in the final sessions on “Is This the Generation?” It was very well received, and afterwards we had a very sweet communion time together which included a foot-washing time and a powerful season of commissioning (I read from 1 Chronicles 12:25). We finished the climactic service nearing 11 pm and at 4 am the next morning, the thirteen teams were on their way to seven different cities in China. These were special days in the presence of God with wonderful folks who are committed to Him.

One of the teams was staying to do their outreach in Chiang Mai, and I decided to join them for a few days before I went home. One of the YWAM Thai staff, a lady who goes by the name “Emmy” and who's been with YWAM for eleven years, picked me up at the resort and took me to the YWAM Chiang Mai staff meeting where I met and spoke to our workers. They are a good, international group of people.

Then Emmy took me to her newly opened “Lighthouse Guesthouse,” a beautiful facility that she is renting as a headquarters for her tent-making tourism business. The outreach team and I are staying there. It is a pretty, two-story building, much like a hostel, that can sleep about thirty people in very comfortable rooms. The Guesthouse is right in the downtown area, near the Street Market, the “moat” that surrounds this 700-year old city, and only 5-10 minutes from the airport. Emmy has a great vision for using this place in marketplace ministry.

On Thursday, Bruce Geske, the Chiang Mai YWAM leader, took me back again to the north of the city where he lives with his Thai wife, Nit, and their nine children (!) on three beautiful acres that they have developed into a training base. The beautiful rural property has a river gliding through it, ducks and chickens in the yard, a large pig, and some nice buildings that serve as a classroom and rec center for potential missionaries. In the afternoon, I spoke outdoors to the DTS staff on “Servant Leadership.”

Afterwards we had dinner in Bruce and Nit’s very nice home and then I enjoyed the rest of the evening in my “second” Thai A-frame guest house on the property. It was very nice. The next morning I completed my teaching on leadership, had lunch together with the family and staff, and then returned to the Lighthouse Guesthouse in the afternoon where I slept for a while to try to get myself back on US time before flying through the night to Seoul.

Seoul, South Korea

Emmy took me to the airport about 11 pm and my plane left at 1:30am for Korea, arriving about 8:30 am. That afternoon, I met good friends and supporters Kangmoo and Hyunsun Choi for lunch and we had a great time together. Then after a little snooze at the airport (which was an amazing feat for a guy like me who has trouble sleeping), I boarded the plane for a ten-hour return to the United States. I landed at about 12:30pm on Saturday, August 16, and enjoyed my reunion with Shirley and the kids.

Lord Jesus—thank you for the privilege of this ministry trip to Thailand. I hope I inspired your people to love and serve you in the vital nation of China and at this time in history. It is such a privilege to be entrusted with this responsibility of raising up recruits for the harvest. I felt like an older Paul and Apollos on this trip. They are great examples to follow. Now that I’m home, help me to plot your intended course for the coming year. You have been faithful in 2008. I look forward to my next steps of obedience.

Port Orchard, Washington

August 30, 2008 – 20,184 - 10,820

After lamenting the left-leaning momentum of His year’s presidential election, both Shirley and I were pleasantly stunned yesterday by the brilliant choice of John McCain in choosing Alaska governor Sarah Palin as his vice-presidential choice. She is exactly the kind of woman we need:

Sarah Palin has an 80% approval rating in Alaska, a former basketball star (nicknamed “Barracuda”), forty-four years old, ran for Miss Alaska, a union member, a life-long member of the NRA. a hockey mom, she was on the city council and then became mayor of her town.

She upset an incumbent Republican governor--has executive experience of two years. She's greatly reformed corruption in Alaska. She has five children including a four-month old Downs syndrome baby. She has a son going to Iraq. She's pro-life and pro marriage. She ran a business. She's an expert on energy policy. She's a person of faith. She's spunky and articulate. This is an amazing choice. I bet Obama wished he had picked Hillary.

September 1, 2008 - 20, 186 - 10,818

As I was outside feeding the chickens today and working the garden, God reminded me why I love to see plants grow. It's because I love CHANGE and GROWTH in all living things. When I speak and share God's truth, nothing makes me happier than to see the truth change people's lives. When they grow because of the impartation, I am very excited. That's also why I like to see plants and trees grow. There's something wondrous about change and new life. That makes a lot of sense. Now I know why I want to continue to be a gardener in heaven.

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

September 21, 2008 – 20,206 - 10,798

I am on my way to Mongolia, but first there's an enjoyable stop in Los Angeles to see Nathan and David. I arrived about 4pm, rented a car, and drove to Albertson's where David works. He has checking people out, and I hid behind a magazine until I was about three feet from him, and then from behind the magazine I mentioned the score of the Seahawks game—to get his attention—then dropped the cover to his surprise and delight. Then I proceeded on to their new home in Winnetka to spend the evening.

They have a nice suburban home further north in the valley that is very nicely laid out for them, including an enclosed yard. Later I made my way back to the airport for the thirteen-hour trip to Seoul. Then it was another three and a half hours on to Ulaanbaatar and I arrived there at 10:30pm on a Tuesday night. Sodoo and Aldaraa picked me up at the airport and took me to my new “apartment home” with Zuugii. It was great to see her and her brother again.

On Wednesday, after a day of seeing friends and visiting the church, we drove out to the Expo Hall on the south side of the city where the *Stream 08* (formerly Mongolia Gateway) Conference begins tonight. It was a good opening session with about 2000 young people crammed into the rectangular shaped hall. Great worship and many kids responding to God's Word. Thursday and Friday, I also attended the Conference and on Friday night I spoke to the

gathering and gave the call for them to go into all the world. Here's how I stated it in the *Revive America Blog*:

“In 1905 three Western journalists visited the poverty-stricken and isolated nation of Mongolia. They found an extremely poor people living in tents without any cities. One third of the nation's young men were Buddhist monks, many of them homosexuals, and venereal disease was rampant. Due to spiritual and material poverty, family breakdown, lack of children being born, and wide-spread disease, the three journalists made a dire prediction: *That Mongolia would cease to exist as a nation in less than fifty years.*

But God had other plans. First, Russia invaded the nation following the Bolshevik Revolution and forced half of the population into five newly created cities. They destroyed Buddhist temples and clamped down on immorality. After the Fall of Communism, Mongolia became a free nation in the early 1990s and the Gospel began to be shared freely throughout the land. In 1980 there were no Christians in Mongolia. But as free enterprise and ideas began to grow, the nation began an incredible resurgence. The dire predictions would not come true. Mongolia would come back to LIFE—and the center of that life was found in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Fast forward to September 26, 2008. Today the “Church” in Mongolia has grown to possibly 50,000 believers in 200 fellowships around the nation. Free enterprise is booming, and the once empty streets are crowded with cars with bustling masses who are pursuing their dreams. And as I stood before two thousand on-fire young believers in the Ulaanbaatar Exposition Center that night, *I realized that I was witnessing a miracle before my very eyes. And it was my privilege to tell this vast audience that they had been born for such a time as this (Esther 4:14).* Not only was Mongolia alive, but this night God was calling the youth of Mongolia to rise up and take their place in God's global plans for reaching the world. After I finished speaking passionately for an hour, all two thousand went to their knees on the cement floor and began to pray for the nations to which God would be sending them. They then rose to their feet, began to worship with all their hearts. It was a moment I will never forget.

Here's the full story. On September 24-27, the “re-do” of the Mongolia Gateway Conference that was originally scheduled for July took place in Ulaanbaatar. The conference partnered with another youth movement called *Stream* in calling the Mongol youth to world evangelism. What's unique about that? Thirty years ago, there were no Mongol Christians. The Mongolian people had never had an opportunity to join God's global kingdom advance. But that all changed during these special days as the youth across the nation gathered for fellowship, worship, training, and vision to make disciples at home and to share the Good News all across the world.

The first day of the Conference focused on personal purity. Because of past heartbreak, many Mongols struggle with alcohol, drug addictions, broken families, and a lack of hope. On this day, hundreds of Mongol youth confessed their sins, pastors and other leaders prayed for them and gave them counsel, and the young people committed themselves to a holy and committed life. On Day Two, the focus shifted to reaching the poor and needy and being bold in sharing their faith. During the morning session, some handicapped Mongolians shared testimonies and the entire crowd renewed their commitment to reach out to the poor and hurting with the compassion of Jesus. In the afternoon, teams took to the streets of Mongolia's capital city using dramas, music, street evangelism, and mercy ministries to share the love of Christ. More youth gave their lives to Jesus that day.

On Day Three the emphasis turned to going into all the world. Mongol pastors shared on making disciples in nearby nations, and it was at the conclusion of that day that I had the assignment of giving the global call. We read together from Esther 4:14 that God had "called them to the Kingdom for such a time as this." I then told them that they were born for a purpose—to take Christ's Good News to the ends of the earth. I said that there were four reasons *why* their generation just might be the one to complete the Great Commission:

- First, that 48 other generations had blazed the way and set the stage for them. They were the perfect generation ($7 \times 7 = 49$) to build on the amazing successes of past generations (two billion people coming to Christ in the last 2000 years) and reach the two billion that are still yet to hear.
- Second, that amazing developments in technology have finally made the world reachable. God has given them the tools of television, film, plane travel, computers, cell phones, the Internet, medical breakthroughs and many other things that can be used to reach the masses. They are a tech savvy generation. They were made for this moment.
- Third, that the satanic strongholds in the world are falling. The Builder Generation defeated Fascism in World War II; the Boomer generation saw the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989; All that remains is the Islamic Veil which many believe will be the next domino to fall. (For example, thirty years ago in the Islamic heartland of Iran, there were just a few thousand believers. Today there are one million and rising fast! And 70% of the nation has satellite dishes that are watching Christian programming.) I told the Mongol youth that it was their destiny to travel across Central Asia, to all the former lands conquered by Genghis Khan, to share God's love.
- Fourth, the devil is desperate and is killing off the youth. This happened before in history. In 1200 BC when God was rescuing the Hebrew nation in Egypt, the enemy tried to stop it by killing off the Jewish children. Moses and many others were saved, and God's plans fulfilled. In 4 BC, in response to God's plan to bring the Savior into the world, Satan again began killing the children to thwart the plan of God. Jesus was rescued, he died and

rose from the dead, and that generation birthed the Church into the world. I told the Mongol youth that Satan's attacking them today through abortion (800 million worldwide since 1972), and the breakdown of the family is just an indicator that *they were born for a purpose—to fulfill the Great Commission*. The devil must be very mad that Jesus is changing the world and that he is coming again soon.

The message ended with thousands going onto their knees on the floor and crying out to God to send them to the nations. Many reported God speaking specific plans into their lives and encouraging their faith. Then the two thousand young people got up off the floor and streamed to the front to worship their King. They also committed themselves to take this message to every young person and youth group in Mongolia. The age of Mongolian missions has begun.

On the final day of the Conference, the Mongol young people joined hands with their parents and leaders in “Generations Together” as the concluding theme. The youth are very aware that they need the wisdom and blessing of previous generations to achieve their destiny. They don't want to go it alone—but learn from their elders how to grow, share their faith, raise Christian families, and achieve God's desires. At the conclusion to the Conference, they then went streaming out of the Exhibition Hall with their marching orders: **Jesus for Mongolia and the world**.

I stand amazed at these early blessings of God in this nation. One hundred years ago they were given up for dead. Today they are alive and growing in the faith. Tomorrow they will be in the nations sharing the Greatest Story Ever Told.

Truly they were born for such a time as this.”

On Saturday I had lunch with Bat Ulzi, the “fallen” pastor of Christian Fellowship Church. It was good to talk with him and hear his heart. I believe he can be restored to leadership if he can place himself under the discipline and accountability of a group of 4-5 key Mongolian pastors. I encouraged him to do so. I then attended the final sessions of the Conference which ended on a very powerful note. After the close, I had some final moments with Batbold Munkhzul and Axel Fischer, the two main leaders of the event, and they gave me a nice photo of me preaching and some other mementos. Thank you, Lord, for this wonderful time.

A dream was fulfilled for me on Sunday morning as I was able to preach at the Circus. Living Word Church was having their third week in the new venue and I encouraged them to have a global view and reach the nations for Christ. Bold interpreted for me. When the Gateway Conference had been postponed in July, I wondered if I'd ever come back to the circus. God sure answered that prayer today. The afternoon was filled with seeing friends, and in the evening, I had a very nice dinner with Bold's entire family. They are doing well in the Lord.

Sharva had asked to meet with me on Monday and I enjoyed renewing our friendship. He is away from God, but I strongly proclaimed the Good News to him and encouraged him to return. He said he would deeply think about it. He wants me to help recruit a basketball player to come to Mongolia and work with his team. I will pray about it. Then after an afternoon rest, I said my final goodbyes and headed to the airport. When I landed in Seoul, Bataa came to have breakfast with me. It was good to encourage him in his leadership. He will return to Mongolia in the spring.

Port Orchard, Washington

October 25, 2008 – 20,060 - 10, 764

Much of the fall season has been spent writing and praying over the incredibly important 2008 presidential elections. With a far-left ticket of Obama-Biden going against a Center-Right ticket of McCain-Palin, there is certainly much at stake. I am grateful to Chris Bayer for helping me get the *Revive America* blog up and running to help with this task. I'm very burdened, but also prayerful.

Orlando, Florida

Taking a little interlude from the fray, Shirley and I greatly enjoyed taking our first entire week together alone in 22 years by going to Orlando October 14-21 for our 32nd wedding anniversary. I was able to arrange some free tickets (one was a ticket credit I'd held on American Airlines for over twenty years that was still refundable), some good accommodations, and the Lord had provided a few special gifts to make the week possible. In fact, the Sunday before we flew, Dave Nelson walked up to me at church and proceeded to count out \$350 in cash that he said the Lord had encouraged him to give to me. I saw it as a direct answer to prayer for the expenses for the trip—and I thanked him for being sensitive to the Lord.

We flew through Dallas to Orlando and arrived after midnight on the 14th. We took a shuttle to the Orlando Ramada Celebration Hotel which is very near the Disney parks in Kissimmee, Florida. It is a nice spread situated on 70 acres with many quads of rooms. Ours was nice and we enjoyed it the entire week.

Each morning we got up and ate a buffet lunch in their expansive dining area, then caught a shuttle to the parks. On Wednesday we visited the Epcot Center and especially focused on the educational side—though we stayed through the fantastic fireworks display over the lagoon at 9pm. On Thursday we went to Hollywood Studios; Friday it was the Animal Kingdom; And

Saturday we topped it off with the Magic Kingdom—the original Disneyland. Each day we walked many miles, enjoyed the rides, views, and looking around, and then came back to our hotel. It was a very enjoyable few days—two people still greatly in love and enjoying each other.

On Sunday we rented a car and I took Shirley to Northland Church where I'd been for a few conferences this year. We enjoyed the worship there. Then it was off to the ocean coast and a great tour of the **Kennedy Space Center and site of the Shuttle launches**. That was fascinating. I enjoy space flight, but really wonder about its value. NASA has three main points to its mission: 1) Using space travel to improve earth, 2) Exploring the galaxies, and 3) Looking for life on other planets. From my standpoint, points two and three are a complete waste of money and time. Yet I'm still fascinated by the technology and excitement of it all. We toured the Space Center and took a bus past the launch site to the building that houses the Saturn rocket that propelled the Apollo missions to the moon. We had a romantic dinner at Paul's Smokehouse and later in the evening returned to Orlando.

The final day was spent returning to Epcot and especially enjoying touring the World Showcase section which has cultural displays from many nations around a large and beautiful lagoon. The “villages” include Mexico, Norway, Germany, China, Japan, the US, France, Italy, Morocco, Canada and the UK. It's a lovely area to stroll, eat, and be together. It was a wonderful way to end a great time. **I dearly love my wife and greatly enjoy her company. She is a great gift from God to me—and I think those feelings are mutual. After 32 years together, we love one another much more than when we began. On a human plane, it doesn't get any better than that.**

Kirkland, Washington

We flew home on October 21 and I immediately headed to Northwest University for the best four-day module in my Masters course which was on “Creative Preaching.” Doug Green, the pastor of Brea CA North Hills Church was the instructor and did a great job. During the four days the ten of us preached three different sermons on the same passage of Scripture—a deductive, an inductive, and a personal narrative sermon. Both Ray Jennings and I were given the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. It was a very good week.

Now we're home—facing the elections again—a major economic downturn in America—and hope in the Lord, On a sad note—one of the fall-outs of the recession we're in is that **the Kesslers who bought the YWAM house across the street have been**

forced to leave it and it has gone into foreclosure. They tried flipping houses and borrowing on the equity of it and ending up losing it all. I wonder if we can get it back.

Port Orchard, Washington

November 11, 2008 - 20,077 - 10,747

I prayed and fasted and agonized and prayed some more—but on November 4th my beloved country took a decided turn to the left by electing Barack Obama the 44th president of the United States. It was as bitter a disappointment as 1976. John McCain was not the strongest candidate, but he would have been so much better than Senator Obama. I'm afraid our nation is in for some very difficult times—already rippling through a growing recession. And Obama will not point us to God and his principles—but to man and the increased power of the state.

I have written various blogs on the election and I will include two below. May God have mercy upon us—and lead us out of this present darkness into his great and glorious light.

A Far-Left Turn...You Can Believe In

I congratulate Barack Obama on his victory as President-elect of the United States. I'd also like to congratulate the American people on this peaceful transfer of power which has characterized our Republic for the past two hundred and thirty years. The freedom to vote and elect our own leaders is a special responsibility I hope we never take lightly. In 2008 the American people have spoken. Though I'm deeply saddened by the choice we made in this election year, I also believe in civility and respect in all of our political battles. There is no place for hate or bitterness in our social and political discourse. I commit myself to pray for our new president and support every good effort that he makes to lead America during the coming years.

I also commit myself to stand up to any efforts to turn America away from God and her historic underpinnings of faith. If our new leaders point us in destructive and God-denying directions, I will be one to speak out and resist those efforts in every appropriate way. Our new president is a gifted and talented politician, but his words and record speak loud and clear about the type of change he wants to bring to America.

Barack Obama ran on a message of *Change You Can Believe In*. If you can trust his words and stated positions, then these are the CHANGES that are coming:

America will become an increasingly secular nation with greater mocking and attacks on Christianity. Obama calls himself a Christian, but he is anti-Christ in many of his political policies. His ideas are doctrinaire liberalism or secularism. In this regard, he has the atheistic press firmly entrenched on his side since only 8% of them attend Church regularly as opposed to

40% of all Americans. This is a primary reason they were so vicious to Sarah Palin: She represented a young and vibrant Judeo-Christian worldview which needed to be discredited.

The press saw this as a huge threat to their secularizing agenda. The same tactic was used with Governor Mike Huckabee during the Republican primaries. In the liberal view it's not conservatives who are a threat to America--it is the Christian faith. Will an Obama presidency increase both the marginalization and persecution of Christians in America? Do we want to become a spiritually dying secular state like many European nations, or do we want to remain "America?"

America will become an increasingly immoral nation with the continuation of the abortion holocaust and the national triumph of gay marriage. Barack Obama told Planned Parenthood that his first act as president would be to push through the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) which would strike down most abortion restrictions in the nation. He also told Rick Warren during the Saddleback Forum that he would appoint activist judges to the Supreme Court. Since we have already killed over 45 million children since 1972, would this multiplication of the "shedding of innocent blood" bring an increase in judgment to our nation?

And though Barak Obama has said that he believes that marriage is between a man and a woman, he has strongly supported the gay agenda in America which threatens to destroy the family and could lead to a mass exodus from the public schools by forcing the acceptance of the gay lifestyle on school children. The homosexual lobby has one clear objective: the complete acceptance of perversion including marriage. Will Barack Obama respect the five-thousand-year history of marriage, or will he pander to the gay interests at the expense of our children?

America will become an increasingly poor nation with less wealth and higher taxes. Barack Obama does not believe in the capitalism-motivated creation of wealth and prosperity but in the re-distribution of wealth to groups that he favors. He has strong socialist leanings that will raise taxes on capital gains, personal income, and small businesses. In these difficult economic times, many are predicting that his economic prescriptions will turn a recession into a depression. Will he be flexible and pragmatic enough to abandon his liberal philosophy? If he doesn't, will the wealth and prosperity that America has enjoyed truly become only a memory of the past?

America will become an increasingly insecure nation with terrorism possibly coming to our shores. Barack Obama has promised to cut the military budget by 25% and bring the troops home from Iraq--regardless of security concerns or victory. He has

promised to sit down with dictators without pre-conditions--and our new vice president, Joe Biden, has warned that the Obama administration, due to its inexperience, will be severely tested in the first six months.

It's also very clear that America's enemies, including Al Qaeda, were rooting for Obama from the beginning. Will Obama's victory embolden our enemies to bring their fight to the cities of America? For all of George Bush's faults, the strength of his presidency was putting the enemies of America on the run and keeping us safe for the past seven years. Can Obama do the same with his inexperience and anti-military posture?

I'm not solemnly predicting any of the scenarios listed above. I'm just fearful that President Barack Obama will be who he has said he is. He talks about being a unifier--but with the 4th worst record on partisanship in the United States Senate, does being a unifier mean he will compromise some of his secular principles, or try to "unify" us all into sharing his liberal beliefs? I fear it is the latter.

I also have another concern: The almost messianic hysteria of the Obama election is incredibly scary. Did you notice the people crying and dancing in the streets? You'd think that the Messiah had returned to make everything right with the planet. Is this how they reacted when the Fuhrer of the Third Reich spoke to the masses? Are the people of America so smitten with Barack Obama's charisma and style that they will think and do anything that he tells us to do? The next four years will answer that question.

Despite these sobering thoughts, my heart is hopeful. Just before Jesus entered the darkest moments of his life on earth, he said to his disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God--believe all in Me" (John 14:1). He knew that God was in control of history, that good would triumph over evil in the end, and that the people of God would ultimately dispel the darkness through faith in his Name. He also knew that **the history of nations is like individual lives. There are "dark" chapters in which we must persevere through difficulties and problems, and there are "light" chapters where the grace and blessings of God are robust and clear.**

On November 4, 2008, we may have entered a dark chapter in our nation's history. But God is still at work. And it is our job--as the people of faith--to help turn on the lights again.

Why Obama Won

Now that the dust has settled on the 2008 presidential election, it might be helpful to analyze why Barack Obama was elected America's 44th American president. As stated in a previous column, though I did not vote for Mr. Obama, I believe it is very important to pray for him, support his efforts when we agree, and wish him well in his new responsibilities. He deserves credit for winning a highly contested election and making history by becoming the first African American president of the United States.

How did he do it? Let's look first at the *positive* things President-elect Obama did in defeating John McCain and the Republicans:

1. *Big Vision* - Barack Obama won the battle of Grand Ideas with his vision of hope and message of change. He began that journey with his book *The Audacity of Hope* and grew the message into the over-arching theme of "Changing the Status Quo in Washington D.C." and leading the nation in a new direction. His big picture view resonated with the people of America and drew them to his side.

2. *Communication Skills* - Barack Obama is a gifted orator who drew massive crowds and support with his speaking abilities. His words were articulate, his style was personal, and he had all the good mannerisms of an African American preacher. Though Ronald Reagan is called the Great Communicator, Barack Obama certainly inherits that title with the new generation. His golden tongue was a major factor that would carry him to victory.

3. *Disciplined Message*- Barack Obama was also very careful to stay on message during the campaign. It was hope and change, hope and change, and more hope and change. He rarely got side-tracked from his political mantra or lost in petty details and arguments. His advisers should be given kudos for keeping him on message through the ups and downs of the long haul. He was the consistent candidate.

4. *Strong Organization*- He also formed a powerful political machine that brought him millions of donors and thousands of volunteers who turned out the vote. It was Obama's organizational strategy of focusing on the caucus states with paid volunteers that led to his upset of Hillary Clinton in Iowa and eventually derailed the Clinton juggernaut. In the general election, he mobilized the strongest grassroots effort to share his message and get people to the polls. In many states, 40-50% of the population was personally contacted by Obama volunteers. The McCain campaign could only muster 30% in the best of states. And his use of the new media including texting, Facebook, and MySpace proved decisive. The young still didn't vote in larger numbers in this election--but a sizable majority of those who voted cast their votes for Obama.

These positive qualities of vision, communication, discipline and organization must be re-learned by the Republicans and other candidates if they seek to win elections. Barack Obama has set a new standard in critical areas that bring victory. But there were also some *negative* factors that contributed to the 53% to 46% Obama victory. Based on Obama's positives and circumstantial factors we will mention later, this race should have been the biggest blow-out in history. It wasn't. It didn't come close to Reagan's 1984 electoral landslide nor LBJ's 1964 popular vote victory. That's because quite a few people were concerned with the negative aspects of Barack Obama the person and the candidate. These include:

1. *Deceptive Imaging* - The Obama election was a victory of style over substance. For all his quirks, John McCain had the greater substance--he was a war hero who stood for a strong military, tax cuts for all, judicial restraint, and pro-family-pro-life issues. But Barack Obama had the better style--with the soaring rhetoric, special effects, and glitzy advertising. In terms of historic American positions, he was all bun and no beef. He even pretended to be center-right on numerous issues when his record had been nothing short of 100% liberal. He also posed as bi-partisan and inclusive while his actions showed that he rarely crossed the aisle to listen to the other side. If a lie is defined as "an intended deception," then the Obama campaign was littered with them. It was very reminiscent of the nation's last Democrat in office, Bill Clinton. Liberals call it nuanced and thoughtful. Most of us call it lying.

2. *Covering up the past* - Barack Obama was also very clever about covering up his suspect and radical past. His birth and education records are all sealed. What's he trying to hide? He spent twenty years in a liberation theology church, then cast his spiritual father off the boat when he threatened his campaign. His formative years were filled with radical friendships that he mostly denied or shrugged off as meaningless and distant associations. In 1984, an affair derailed Gary Hart's path to the presidential nomination. Barack Obama's ties to an unrepentant terrorist didn't cause a blink of an eye to 53% of Americans. If a person is "hot," do we no longer care who they really are.

3. *Racism* - There's no doubt that Barack Obama received 95% of the black vote in America because racism still exists--just in reverse. Blacks voted for him because he is black. If whites vote for people because they are white, then it's racism. But not the other way around. Obama also exploited the issue by playing up the race card on various occasions while John McCain chose to take the high moral ground. Dr. Martin Luther King wanted people to vote for individuals on the content of their character, not the color of their skin. That lesson remains to be learned in 21st century America.

4. *Media Bias* - Sean Hannity called it "the year that journalism died" and I tend to agree. From the moment Barack Obama announced his candidacy, the mainstream press backed him without shame all the way through election day. They didn't vet him. They rarely reported negative stories. They actively campaigned for him. His smiling face was everywhere. This was a huge reason he defeated Hillary Clinton and it certainly propelled him in the general election. He was the "media's candidate." And just who is the mainstream media? The Big Three broadcast stations (ABC, NBC, and CBS), cable network's CNN, the three leading national newspapers and their affiliates (New York and LA Times and the Washington Post), and the AP wire service. These news organizations, though in decline, still control most news reporting in America. By everyone's count, they were about 70% pro-Obama and 30% pro-McCain. This alone was probably a \$200 million advertising gift to Obama-Biden. Why did they support him? Because these news outlets lean leftward. For example: Only 8% of them weekly attend church, as opposed to 40% of Americans. Their view is limited--and the only person in their sights was Barack Obama.

There were other *circumstantial* factors in Barack Obama's election victory. The unpopularity of the Iraq War was big, though the issue was on the backburner. The hatred of George Bush and incompetence of the Republican Party was a big part. Another factor was the lack of a strong conservative alternative to run against Obama. Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee canceled each other out in the primaries and the mantle fell to John McCain. Sarah Palin brought back the conservative enthusiasm with huge crowds and All-American appeal, but she was in the number two slot.

And then there was the biggest circumstantial factor--the economic meltdown which was blamed on the current administration. John McCain was ahead by ten points in September, but after the disastrous bank bailout, Barack Obama surged to a lead he never lost. People blamed the Republicans for the mess though many of us would argue that liberal politicians over the past sixty years are primarily to blame. But the greatest single factor in Barack Obama's election as the 44th president of the United States is something you probably won't hear on CBS. Here are some sobering statistics:

- In 2004 22% of Christian evangelicals voted for John Kerry. In 2008 32% of them voted for Barack Obama--a ten-point increase.
- Protestants as a whole cast 45% of their votes for Obama.
- Catholics gave him 54%.

That was the ball-game--the margin of victory. It was professing Christians--especially *evangelical Christians*, voting for a far left, anti-Christian president that determined the 2008 election. God gave us who we wanted--with Christians casting the deciding votes. Now you know why "judgment begins with the house of God" in the coming years (1 Peter 4:17) and why the greatest need in America is the spiritual revival of the church. It's also our greatest hope--not the election of a man--but the hope of nationwide revival of the people of God.

Discovery Bay, Washington

This week I'm speaking up in Discovery Bay and it has gone well. What a privilege to speak for God. In the coming weeks and months, I must seek the Lord about what he wants me to do to be a part of his revival of our great nation. That is what I was born to do. May I be faithful unto death.

Juncos & San Juan, Puerto Rico

November 22, 2008 – 20,088 - 10, 736

I'm on my way home from a wonderful week in Puerto Rico. It was a special week where God really showed up and ministered in the lives of the staff and students. It is a very special place for me—and I thank the Lord for the friendships here. A week ago, the flights took me through Washington DC and down to San Juan, arriving late in the evening where I was picked up by friends and taken to the base in Juncos. I settled into my normal room in the central “hacienda” and tried to adjust to the four-hour time change.

On Sunday I had the privilege of speaking in a “tent church” near San Juan. Great pastor and people who really have a heart for their neighborhood and for missions. I tried to inspire them with how “Jesus Is Winning” all over the world. There was a great response and God blessed the time with faith and encouragement.

Monday morning, I began by teaching on “Character” with the sixteen students who have come from the US, Puerto Rico, and other Latin countries. This is one of the smaller schools—probably due to the economic difficulties that continue to mount. But they were wonderful students as usual and I enjoyed getting to know many of them during the week. In the mornings I spoke on “Character” and in the evening some School of the Bible students and a few locals also joined in the lectures on “Conscience.”

By Wednesday night the students were really coming under conviction of sin, and when I opened the room for prayer there was a torrent of tears and confession that was very precious. This continued Thursday and was quite powerful—and liberating. I also had some good “counseling” times with Nelson and Becky, two young leaders that have just called off a three-year courtship. I especially wanted to minister some fatherly love to Becky who was the rejected in the relationship. God told me to encourage her that “It was not her fault and that there was nothing wrong with her.”

She began to cry, and we had a good hour talking about God’s plans for her life and all that she has learned through this difficult time. Nelson also sought me out one evening and shared his struggles, sexual temptations, and what God was doing in his life. It was quite a privilege to “love on” these young leaders and encourage them to move on. Fortunately, Becky is going to Hong Kong in January and that will allow them the space to seek God about their futures.

After a great day on Friday, Yarley asked me to speak to the entire base on Saturday morning during a time of corporate fasting and prayer. I talked about the 2008 elections, what I felt was ahead for America, and gave a fresh version of the message “When Free Men Shall Stand.” That led to a mighty outpouring of intercession, prayer and tears that went on for hours. First, we broke into four groups and repented for the sins of our falling nation (I met with the

American group—it was awesome) and then we all gathered and stained the floors with tears. The meeting went until also 2pm—a lovely move of God—and in the end, the spirit of both repentance toward God and faith in His future was a glow in our souls. I met with friends later in the day including a great time with my friend Pastor Nelson. We went out for coffee and he asked me many questions about seeing revival in his church.

I also enjoyed reading some good books during the week. On the way to PR I went through Bill Wiese’s sobering testimony “23 Minutes in Hell.” It greatly impacted my heart and will pray about getting it for some friends and family members. It stirred my heart in these areas of truth we tend to forget. Then during my stay Yarley asked me to read Greg Boyd’s book “The Myth of a Christian Nation.” I have appreciated many of his books in the past. He is a scholar who writes very well. But I was shocked at the perspective of this work.

I learned that Boyd is basically a New Testament-only pacifist who condemns violence in all its forms (including serving in the military), and who had an amazingly weak view of both European and American history. His chapters on following the way of the Cross and sharing the love and compassion of Christ were excellent, but his rejection of the role of the state as “God’s minister to execute judgment on evildoers” was breathtaking for a man of his abilities. His non-violence stance obviously blurs his view of the different domains in Scripture and the fact that God has used many nations in history (the sword) to bring about his judgments.

He also rejected any role for the Church in promoting morality and its blessings in society—but rather we are to be “kingdom people.” I will be a Kingdom person—but that includes being the salt and light of the earth (morality) and leavening society with the truth and principles of Jesus. I have certainly learned over the years that honest hearts can civilly disagree.

The Lord also helped me to get all my advance papers done during the afternoons in PR for my next class at NWU. Yes—this is an interesting year. It was a wonderful, God-filled, friend-rich trip to beautiful Puerto Rico. I thank God for the trust they place in me and always want to honor it with giving my very best—straight from the heart of God.

Kirkland, Washington

December 2, 2008 – 20,098 – 10,726

We have been having group devotion at Northwest University in the third module of the Masters program. I arrived in Kirkland last night after a busy day writing blogs,

appointments with people, and getting ready for class. We had a good family dinner with Megan and Nicole before I left—and then I drove the sixty miles to my Kirkland home. This morning there are about ten of us in class with Dave Gable, a southern California AG leader as our instructor. He is a tall and gracious man who has served God for many years. I believe this is going to be a good and easy-going four days.

We began with a corporate devotion out of *A Guide to Prayer for Ministers*. I enjoyed listening to Psalm 95 and Colossians 1:9-23. We then read a couple quotes from Carlo Caretto. What stood out to me is **how God is the initiator in our walk with Him**. He comes to meet with me each day, regardless of my life, my works, or anything else. He comes out of his love and it his love that draws me.

Lord – **I thank you for drawing me to yourself forty years ago because of your love. You were the pursuer—I was the pursued. Finally, I awoke to your call, and you saved me from my sins and drew me into your arms of love. I’m eternally grateful. I enjoy talking to you every day and making you the center of my life. But you are the sun, I am only an orbiting star that is trying to stay in orbit. But that’s your job as well. “For from you and through you and to you are all things. To God be the glory.”**

I enjoyed the small group time at the end of class. Though I have not known Ray and Bethany (Ray for a few years) that long, there is a deep love and transparency between us. We shared our lives freely and prayed for one another—and it was intimate and powerful. Only God can create those kinds of relationships.

Puyallup, Washington

December 3, 2008 – 20,099 – 10,725

After a restless night’s sleep and **a constant ringing in my ears**, I am greatly in need of your grace and sustaining power today Lord Jesus. I thank you that your grace is sufficient for me—and that you are truly all that I need. I pray that my view of you would drown all other noises and distractions today as I rest in your Loving Hands. What a place to be. **We had a great reunion of YWAM leaders and prayer time in Puyallup last night. Peter Iliyn, our North American leader, called us together in the “Omega Zone” of Washington and encouraged us to pray out many Scriptures and intercede for the working of his Spirit among us. It was a wonderful time of worship, petition, and revelation from Him.**

Kirkland, Washington

Today we're back at school. I prayed for my classmates this morning and asked the Lord to bless and encourage them—to lift the many weights from their shoulders and allow them to focus on his truth. I really enjoyed reading John 18 this morning where Pilate asks the dumbest question of all time: “So you are a king?” The King of the Universe was humbly sitting in front of him and he could not see it. Lord, help me to keep my eyes open for all your visitations. I don't want to miss any of them.

In the devotion today, due to an assignment mix-up, I need to wing it on a portion that I didn't take time to study. Fortunately, many of these qualities are hidden away in my heart—and out of the abundance of that heart will I speak forth today.

We had a good look at the book of Romans. (Dave Gable is anti-moral government and Gordon Olson in particular—so it was an interesting discussion.). The book focuses on the problem of divisions and the need for unity. Our common problems lead to a common solution. Some ideas that we discussed:

- The background – Jews quietly living in a Latin world
- Jews & Gentiles are addressed in different ways
- Romans 15:1-7 is the ethical climax of the book = accepting each other
- Our ethics come out of our united faith
- (Book – Paul's Letter to Romans – Ben Witherington)
- Ch 1 - All people have suppressed the truth and broken the moral code.
- Ch 2-3 – Even Gentile moralists disobey their consciences. All have sinned.
- Ch 3, 5 – Grace is our unique message.
- Ch 6 – How we should live because of grace.
- Ch 7 – Paul impersonating Adam – good insight.

* We must confront our inner weasel. This is a great word picture.

We had a great lunch together at Three Amigos and then some heart-felt presentations in the afternoon. Both Nick and I shared detailed examples of personal examination and this seemed to touch some of them. I am a little bit amazed at their response to my “accounting” for my sins. Many hadn't heard of something like this and some said they might not want to do it. That's surprising to me, since freedom and

blessing are the goal as long as its done for the right reasons. Lord – help them apply this truth to their lives.

It has been a good day. Our class is a close bunch that both loves and likes each other and interacts well. May God continue to move mightily in all our lives.

December 4, 2008 – 20,100 – 10,724

[The following was a class assignment at Northwest.]

Dear God,

You met me last night and this morning in ways that brought delight to my heart. You gave me a glimpse of the future—and what you want me to do—and I'm excited about these new assignments and being obedient to you. It's amazing how you know how to reach out to each of your children. As Psalm 139 so wonderful tells us, you know us through and through and your thoughts about us are more numerous than the sands on the seashore. In my case, you know that I usually have a need to glimpse into the future, to be given dreams and vision from you, and then set my heart to fulfill them.

You know that I hear from you best in words—not in pictures. So, you chose this morning to speak precious words into my heart and mind that made me feel loved and useful in your service. I'm very excited about this book series that you want me to do. I'm also excited about taking the truths you've had me write about over the past twenty years and eventually put them into a devotional form. The entire project excites me, and I bow before you and worship you for your incredible goodness to me.

My life is nothing without you. You are my reason for being—my goal in life and eternity—and the One that I love with all my heart. I sing praises to your Name this morning with a grateful heart because you have spoken, and I want to obey. May your grace empower me to be faithful. As my grandparents wrote in the first Bible I was ever given, may I be “faithful unto death so that I might receive the crown of life.” In my later years when my flesh and heart are failing, please be the strength of my life, O God. May I wear the breastplate of St. Francis over my heart and life as passionately at the end as I desire to do now.

Lord, I love you and give this day to you. Teach me your ways once again that I might walk in your paths.

Love, Ron

We then used our “weak hand” to write a letter from God to us. I wrote mine in my Prayer Journal and it was simple, but powerful. Great time of sharing afterwards. During the break I spoke to Ray Jennings in the hall and gave him a word God gave me for him today. It was wonderfully timed. . .and he appreciated it.

December 5, 2008 – 20,101 – 10,723

We began the day with our good time of devotion –focusing on the Risen and conquering Christ. I really enjoyed sitting in the presence of Jesus, thinking of Him as my King—the one to whom I bow in submission and adore with great love. Lord – thank you for this vision of *you*. I tried to imagine your eyes more than anything—full of both love for me and all your creation, but also with the ability to look right through me with the piercing passion of holiness. I don't know any human eyes that can portray those characteristics as fully as you.

I do not want to have a distorted view of you that either trivializes your holiness or forgets the tenderness of your love. Only you seem to blend these characteristics into a unified whole that is wonderful to behold. Of course, I can't really imagine "that look" in your eyes because it is beyond me. On a human plain, when I think of holiness and hatred of evil, a meanness creeps into the view that I know you don't possess. On the other hand, when I think of human love, sometimes it is mushy and appears insincere.

But not in you. I want to spend more time thinking about you alone—not ideas and concepts—but just enjoying the pure sight of your presence—as much as my finite mind can understand. As I seek more of a reflective life this year, I commit to think more about you and you alone—not just the questions that I have and the problems that I face. I want to know you. I have really enjoyed the silence meditations in your presence this week. I don't experience it long enough in my quiet times and commit to do so. I love you and give this day to you. *Help me to know YOU more.*

Port Orchard, Washington

December 16, 2008 – 20,112 - 10,712

I have been involved up to my eyeballs this week in the in the miraculous closing and re-opening of Buck's A& W. The Lord had spoken to me weeks ago about seeing Rick. I did—and then waited for the right moment to get involved. Once the snowball began to roll down hill, I e-mailed the churches, formed a fund-raising plan, spoke at First Christian and joined a small team to rescue Port Orchard's most beloved business. God came through big time.

Here is the story:

The Miracle on Mile Hill

I'm writing primarily today to people who live in Kitsap County in Washington state. In my hometown, a legendary restaurant could have met a sad and unjust end this

week. But ten minutes ago, I heard the news that a miracle had taken place and the legacy lives on.

“If you live in South Kitsap, you are familiar with Buck's A&W. Started by Buck and Glennys Gehring in 1959, Bucks served as the only fast food restaurant in Port Orchard for nearly a decade. At that time Buck Gehring was a local Port Orchard basketball legend having led South Kitsap to its only state high school championship in 1950 (to this day South's only basketball championship). I remember driving my 1961 Chevy many times to Bucks A&W during the late sixties, asking the "carhops" for a teen burger, fries, and the best root beer in America.

In 1971 our South Kitsap basketball team made the final eight of the State Tournament. On game days, Buck opened his restaurant for free meals to the team--starting a tradition of supporting youth that would last for decades. Rob Gehring, Buck's oldest son, was a starting forward on our 1971 team. His brother Rick would go on to star in basketball from 1972-74. The Gehrings loved sports and kids--and they were always welcome at Buck's A&W.

Buck Gehring died an untimely death in 1982 and Buck's A&W scrapped its carhops and moved a half mile away under Rick Gehring's leadership where it has served the community ever since. If you walk into Buck's A&W today, you see signed balls, jerseys, sports league plaques and memorabilia adorning every wall and most of the ceilings. The elaborate displays give you the feel of a hometown diner that champions kids and families. Over the past thirty years, Buck's has continued its tradition of supporting youth sports, sponsoring teams, giving out free meals, and earning the distinction of being Port Orchard's hometown hang-out. And when you want the "shake of the month"--and in December it's always Egnog or Candy Cane--the only place to go is Buck's A&W.

Seven years ago, things went sour. Buck's was sued by a former employee for sexual harassment and though the restaurant was eventually exonerated, a complicated and unjust legal decision obligated Rick Gehring to pay up to one million dollars in exorbitant legal fees. Two weeks ago, I met with Rick to see if there was anything the community could do to help. The need still stood at over \$700,000. He was overwhelmed by the bills, and the years of fighting the complexities of the legal system. He thanked me for coming but didn't have faith to see his way out of this predicament. He said he had no alternative but to declare bankruptcy and close Buck's A&W after forty-nine years of legendary service.

The message on the reader board soon read "Closing on Sunday. We appreciate your prayers." This started a wave of interested press and townsfolk stepping up to help. On Saturday, I drove into the restaurant parking lot where hundreds of people were lining up for their last burgers and tearfully saying goodbye to Port Orchard's greatest family-oriented restaurant. Cameras flashed, reunions took place in every square foot of seating area, the mayor

read a proclamation, and the Gehring family basked in the tearful glow of a community's thank-you.

The scene continued Sunday, and both days I met with Rick and the Gehring family and a number of local businessmen to see if something could be done to save Buck's A&W. On Saturday I handed Rick a check from Youth With A Mission and while I was standing there a local businessman, Steve Krecker, handed him another. Steve told me "I'm not a religious guy, but I just told Rick Gehring that God is doing something here!" Steve didn't know that I'd e-mailed twenty-five churches the night before asking them to pray for Buck's A&W--that God would work a miracle and allow it to survive. Many people had already given sacrificially, and more were prepared to step up to the plate if necessary.

On Sunday night at 8 pm. Buck's A&W in Port Orchard, Washington closed its doors--seemingly for good. Behind the scenes, a deal was being painstakingly negotiated. These agonizing negotiations had been taking place for years and had been getting nowhere. Monday a few of us met again with the Gehrings and close friends. There was still no deal--and we were ready to do a "full court press" in the South Kitsap community to raise the funds to save Bucks A&W. But then came the call ten minutes ago. Rick Gehring told me with a relieved and grateful voice that the settlement had been reached at \$230,000--that the family had talked and prayed--and the money had been provided from some sources. I practically wept with joy when I heard the news. Seven years of unjust pressure and abuse had just been swept away. Buck's A&W would be reopened to continue serving the families of South Kitsap. I'm calling it the *Miracle on Mile Hill*.

All along this situation had reminded me of George Bailey and his building and loan business in the Christmas classic *It's a Wonderful Life*. In that film, George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart, sacrificially serves his small town of Bedford Falls, experiences injustice, contemplates suicide, then is rescued by Clarence the angel who convinces him he's had a "wonderful life" that impacted many people. The movie ends with the entire community bailing out George & his savings and loan through their generous and personal giving.

The parallel was clear. In our case George Bailey was Rick Gehring, the building and loan was Buck's A&W, and we were the people of Bedford Falls i.e. Port Orchard that Buck's had served for nearly five decades. Last week, as it looked like it was all going down, the community rose and prayed. They came down to the business and gave it its four largest revenue days in history. They gave money and support to the Gehrings. Then God cleared the skies and brought closure. Buck's A&W will re-open on Thursday, December 18. The legacy will continue. A miracle on Mile Hill has taken place. I want to thank all of you who prayed, gave to this great cause, and believed that

God would work a miracle. He did. Buck's A&W can continue its "Wonderful Legacy" that now includes a miracle. Merry Christmas.

P.S. If there was a "Clarence" involved in this deliverance, Lord, please be sure to give him his wings. Praise be to your glorious Name.

God also really spoke to me this week from Hosea on the economic problems facing the United States. Hosea 11:12 says: "The Days of Ease are Gone" – and that we must "plant seeds of righteousness, harvest a crop of my love" and "plow up the hard ground for it is time to seek the Lord." This is a powerful confirmation to my article "The Days of Indulgence Are Over." God always has it first and right. May we apply his remedies listed above.

December 26, 2008 - 20,122 – 10,702

It has certainly been a memorable Christmas weather-wise. About ten days ago we entered a period of unusual cold weather in the twenties accompanied by a series of snowfall. By Christmas Day we had accumulated six inches of snow—the largest drifts and accumulations that I have ever seen in Port Orchard in my fifty-five years. Most of South Kitsap looks like Snoqualmie Pass with snow walls everywhere including Bay Street in downtown. For a few days most of the side streets were impassable. And then came Christmas.

Christmas morning saw four new inches added to the record totals. The night before, Nathan, Joyce, and David flew into Sea-Tac and though the freeways were clear for the ride to the Kitsap Peninsula, once we reached the final mile home, it was quite a slog. It took me four tries to conquer the hill on Van Skiver, trying to dodge cars in the roadway and ditches. Then we inched up Vandecar and tried to keep from sliding, then fish-tailed through the snow and slush, finally making it to the homestead.

Back to Christmas Day, it looked like we might have to cancel our family gathering for the first time in history. Trying out the roads that morning, I realized I couldn't get to either my parents or the Cooksons. During our test run I ran into Vickie Minor who volunteered to delay their family Christmas to ferry everybody to our house in their big four-wheel drive SUV. At the last minute, we changed plans, called everyone and the celebration was on. In the afternoon over twenty people gathered at 6830 Arlington Place for prayer, music, great food and fellowship. It turned out to be a wonderful day thanks to our hero, Vickie Minor (she also ferried everyone back home late in the afternoon).

This morning we hired Chuck Cregier to plow both our street and Vandecar to allow us to get to the plowed arterials. It is now raining, and things are melting. But we will never forget "White Christmas 08" that almost canceled our family festivities. Thank you, Lord, for your gracious help through our neighbors. It was a wonderful day celebrating your birth.

The final sad note to 2008 was the death of Mittens on December 31. At nearly twenty years old, she'd been failing for a month or so, and that was understandable since in earth years she was approaching one hundred years old. By December 30th she was having trouble walking and we made a comfortable box for her in which to lie down. It was located near her food and water in the utility room.

On the morning on the 31st we sensed the end was near. After having my quiet time, O came into the utility room to check on her and found her sprawled on floor with a glazed look in her eyes and barely breathing. I spent the next hour and a half watching her and making her comfortable as the end came peacefully. Family members came in and out, some tearful and others concerned. After she died, I rolled up her body in a sleeping position, wrapped her in a blanket and put her in a large tin. Nathan helped me dig a hole underneath the window in the dining room in the graveled area outside. We buried her there and will put a prominent marker for this special tabby cat who showed up on our doorstep in 1990 and was really the only pet our kids grew up enjoying. We're sad, she will be missed, but we're grateful for the animal life of Little Mitts. I will be doing a blog called "Mittens & Me" to share the details of the life of our wonderful little pet. She was one of God's blessings to us that left us the last day of 2008.

[When we moved across the street in 2013, we transferred Mitten's "plot" to the backyard, underneath the kitchen window. She was really the one "family pet" that we ever had.]