

Inspire Uplift Renew

December 2008

I was talking to my mom today and she told me about something that happened that really hurt her. As I was listening to her, I felt her hurt and felt upset about it but then she shared with me what the Lord told her and I was very convicted. She shared with me how she went to prayer meeting and her Bible Study class one Wednesday evening and as she entered the class she saw her mother sitting down in a chair. So my mom pulled a chair close to my grandma and for a brief moment she looked elated to see my mom! Then her expression changed to a frown and said, "Oh, I thought you were Jeff" (her grandson). So my mom pulled her chair away and sat by herself, very hurt. Then over the next few minutes, God spoke to my mom's heart and whispered to her, "That's how I feel when you shove me aside to read the newspaper or a book, to watch TV, or have something more important to do than sit with me". As I listened to that, tears came to my eyes as I thought of the times that I "pushed aside the Lord" for a task that I made more important than sitting quietly with Him. Then my thoughts turned to this holiday season, and *Christ-mas*. What is this holiday supposed to be about and what do we make it about? It's easy to get caught up in the tasks we have to do: baking, shopping, writing our Christmas cards and going to Christmas parties. There's nothing wrong with doing those things but let's not "push aside Christ" to celebrate it. Remember, Jesus is the reason for the season!

Sheri

Giving All Year

By Helen Martin

Maybe this has happened to you. The snow starts falling and the Christmas music starts playing, and you seem to have an easier time remembering the poor. In fact, you get highly motivated to do something for them, so you think of a very unique and self-sacrificing idea like, "I should volunteer at a soup kitchen! I'll give up my Thanksgiving to do it!"

Except, when you call "the mission" you find out they're all booked up on Thanksgiving! *And* on Christmas! And Easter, too? Yes, on Easter, too. Apparently your idea isn't so unique. And while you were willing to give up a Thanksgiving holiday dinner, you are about to find out if what you were seeking was to make a sacrifice, a statement, or (what you dread most) a display of your religion.

If you were in that situation, *you* would probably say, "When is your slowest time of year?" and sign up right then on one of those days. But sadly, I must admit that my response was to ask, "How far out do you have to go to get in on one of the holidays?"

So, if you don't mind doing me the favor, will you please challenge me this coming year to do what I failed to do a few years ago, or any time since? In fact, let's challenge one another. Let's carry our planners with us this

Christmas season and whenever we are prompted to do something for the poor, the lonely, or the hurting, let's pray for direction, pull out those planners, and make a date with ourselves and God to do something about it in response—something manageable, something real. Let's be intentional and spread this holiday cheer out over the whole year. Here, I'll do it now—OK, I just popped over to my calendar and made plans to make a shopping trip I have been putting off for years; and Cindy's article last month about blessing a homeless man helped solidify the plan. Here's the list:

- instant hand warmers
- granola bars
- real-juice juice boxes
- moist towelettes
- disposable razors
- toothbrushes and floss



I will tuck these items into small bags, and on oversized card stock gift tags I will write, "I'm trying to be the hands and feet of Jesus and I think He wants you to have this."

I will keep a supply of these gifts in our cars and pray that the Holy Spirit will lead me to the people He is seeking.

Next time you see me, ask if I did it. Please. Ask.

Getting to Know You: Jennifer Loucks!

1. **How long have you been attending Redeemer?** 10 years
2. **Share with us your family:** I have Katlyn who is 15 and Paul who is 14
3. **When and where were you born?** I was born on August 4, 1968 in Milwaukee, WI
4. **What is your occupation?** I am a mom, a teacher, a Mary Kay consultant, and a reading tutor.
5. **What are your hobbies?** Reading and writing
6. **What is your testimony?** I was saved when I was 7 years old. My uncle had died and the following week I was talking to my mom about where he had gone after he had died and that's when she led me to the Lord. Then I was baptized when I was nine at Calvary Baptist Church in Watertown, WI.
7. **What did you dream of as you were growing up?** A teacher. I briefly wanted to be a librarian but when I found out you had to be too quiet, I decided I didn't want to be a librarian anymore!
8. **Who is your best friend?** My college friends, Shelly, Donna and Ruth.
9. **If you have a night to yourself, what do you do?** Read.
10. **What are your God-given talents?** God has given me the talent of teaching and I also think he has given me a way with words.
11. **Area of ministry on your heart?** I have a passion for helping people. From helping children learn to read or understand numbers to coming alongside women who are struggling. There are so many needy people who are hungry, homeless and hopeless who need help and God has given me a passion for helping them.
12. **Favorite things:**
Book- *Friday Night Knitting Club* by Kate Jacobs
Color- Pink
Verse- Matthew 7:7
Food- Anything that's not good for you!
Hymn- "The Old Rugged Cross" and that was the first song my daughter and I sang together.
13. **Share one of your pet peeves:** Everyone, one car length between cars is not enough room to squeeze in! Also, when the sign says slow traffic, keep right, it does not mean right where you are!
14. **Share a tradition your family has at Christmas:** I want to start a new tradition this year—doing a service project. But the tradition my sisters and I have had forever is that we sneak out in the middle of the night on Christmas Eve, turn on the tree lights and sit and talk.
15. **What do you look for in a friend?** Someone who sees me, warts and all and still appreciates me for who I am.



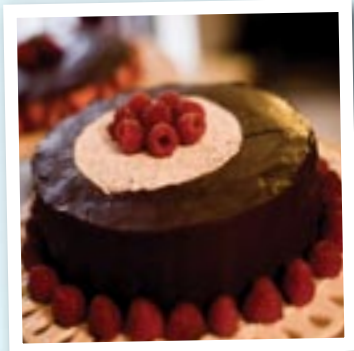
Mountains

Sometimes God moves mountains and sometimes He leads us over them. On this topic, Jennifer Loucks shared, "I still feel like I am climbing this tall, tall mountain and I am not sure some days if I will ever reach the top! But God has helped me to raise two beautiful, unique children and to provide for them these last twelve years on my own."

"Being a single mom is not something I whine about because I am not single really—God has and will always be leading the way and Praise Him for that!! He provides each moment and each day."

Amen, Jennifer!

December Birthdays



- 1 Robert and Shirley Raiter
- 16 Helen Wood
- 21 Katie Lerud
- 26 Ruth Ferraro
Phil and Mary Lou Sanders
- 29 Brenda Pilgrim

Get-Away Take-Aways!

We had a powerful and profound time at the MN/LaCrosse Autumn Getaway. Three women will share some of their most memorable experiences from the weekend.

Sheri Pope ~ I was blessed with the opportunity to attend the Women's Fall Retreat a couple weeks ago and I had such a wonderful time! I really took home the truth that we were made for relationships. Women were not made to be isolated, living life on our own with no help from others. Women need other women. We were created for relationships, communion, community and connection. What do I want in a friend and as a friend? I want their emotional presence, a kind word, hug or a kind gesture. If I desire that, I need to ask myself, "Am I offering that to others?" The speaker, Carla Barnhill, also brought out another awesome and powerful truth; we often put on a front of perfection. We want other women to think we have it all together and that we don't need help. But all that says to other women is that we are unapproachable and that invites women to compare each other. The one place that comparing shouldn't take place is the church- I pray we all feel comfortable to be "who we are." The church should be the one place where love and acceptance is freely offered and received. What a powerful testimony that would be! For all you ladies who seek a life of perfection (myself included!) remember this- "You miss out on a lot of life when you try to live a perfect life." Last but not least, the fellowship with other women was so fun and relaxing and I really enjoyed sharing with them my dreams and failures! We stayed up very late sharing, laughing, crying and of course, eating! It was an incredible time of bonding and making a lot of memories together and the only sad thing of the whole retreat was that it was too short! I sure could've used a couple more days and nights of learning, singing, eating out and hanging out at the hot tub! I am really looking forward to the next retreat!



Jennifer Loucks ~ A few weeks ago God sent me to the women's retreat. For a variety of reasons I didn't want to go but God in his infinite wisdom and foreknowledge knew that I needed to go and he provided a way to have me there. One important thing I learned is that we as women *are* created by God to need relationships with others especially other women. The catch is that we are not honest in reveling ourselves to others but rather hide our imperfections and weaknesses from other women because we don't want them to think of us badly. When we hide we don't allow them to show us their true self and then we can not form a true relationship. At the retreat God gave me a unique opportunity to show five other women a part of me that is not perfect and they in turn shared themselves with me. What a gift those relationships are and I will cherish and tend to them as the precious gifts they each are.

Laurie Arco ~ My favorite part was our circle time and getting to know some very special ladies. I would go to another retreat and encourage others to go.

And Last, But Not Least...

Cindy Schwerdtfeger ~ God created us for connecting with others. Women were created for community. We are to be a part of the Body, (1 Corinthians 12:24-27).

I love to hear about studies of people and our retreat speaker talked about a study done at UCLA where it was found that when women are under stress they create a hormone called oxytocin. What I found fascinating is that when this hormone is at increased levels in women, it has a calming effect.

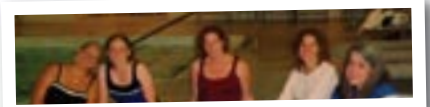
By relaxing with other women, we can lower our blood pressure, heart rate and cholesterol.



We need each other so we can relax and to keep us healthy! God really knew what He was doing! This was such a timely topic because our Association Women are discussing whether we should continue with the retreats or not. I think we need them to connect because that is exactly what the six of us from Redeemer did.

We stayed up late on Saturday night connecting with each other sharing our hurts, our laughter, our tears and even our dreams.

I wouldn't have traded the time I spent connecting with these five other women that night for anything!



Songs of the Season!

As we all know, Redeemer is full of great kids, and those kids are full of talents which are often showcased at this time of year! Here are some fun (and often times free!) opportunities to see these kids shine as we enjoy the music—and theater—of the season!



Holly Haugen: Holly is in a production of “Miracle on 34th Street” with the Rosetown Playhouse Theater in Roseville which is playing at Roseville Area Middle School Theater on December, 6, 12, and 13 at 7 PM and on December 7, 13, and 14 at 2:00 PM. Tickets are \$5-12.

Peter Paul: On December 1, at 7:30 PM, Peter will be in a jazz band performance at Roseville Area High School. This is a free concert!

Kyle Schwerdtfeger: The Fridley Holiday Choir Concert will take place Thursday, December 18th, at 7:00 PM at Fridley High School’s Auditorium, (6000 West Moore Lake Road, Fridley, MN 55432) The Middle School, HS Varsity Choir, and HS Concert Choir will all perform, as well as the Chamber Singers, of which Kyle is a part. This is a free concert!

Katlyn Lessner, Paul Lessner, Harmony Arco and Isaac Arco: All of these kids will take part in the Woodcrest Baptist Choir and Band Concert on December 16 at 7 PM, at Woodcrest Baptist Academy in Fridley. This, too, is a free concert!

Kenny Martin: Kenny is in the North Heights Christian Academy Christmas Musical. It will be performed on Tuesday, December 16, 2008 at 6:15 PM at the Arden Hills Campus of North Heights Lutheran Church. Kenny is also part of the school band which will be playing a prelude concert that evening (starting at 6:15 PM.) This is a free event.

Spreading Warmth

There are two women’s ministry service projects that we’re doing this winter so, of course, we need you women to help us!. The Hats and Mittens Drive (and gloves and scarves...) is going on until mid-winter. For this, we’d love gently used, store-bought, or handmade items. The other project is to give each of our shut-in church members a gift bag at Christmas. Donations of money are needed to get what we need to bless those who worship with us in spirit only, due to infirmities of health or advanced age.

Cool Water Ministries’ December Calendar



Tuesday, December 2
Self-check Day

Friday, December 12
White Cross 10 am - 12 PM

Wednesday, December 24
Christmas Eve Service at 4 PM

Thursday, December 25
Christmas Day!

Looking ahead:
Winter Movie Night! Join us for *Emma* on a date and time to be announced.

Heads Bowed by 6:07

By Helen Martin

At the retreat, we felt and answered the prompting of the Holy Spirit that we women needed to get together to pray. We’re meeting at 6:00 PM on Wednesday evenings, (before Awana) in the youth office—not to visit, not even make prayer requests, but just to pray. The short time we have motivates us to get right down to business.

All women of RBC are heartily welcome to join us. We start praying at 6:07 sharp. Please, do join us!

