



BRAD AND NORMA: Husband and Wife Team

This is the fourth and final article in a series, profiling those who go above and beyond by working on the Arise Building Project.

The Topps have been active members of Arise since the very beginning and many have benefited from their warmth and caring. Brad and Norma have served Arise in various roles, both together and individually. Their work on the Arise building project over the past few years is just the next step in their faith journey together.

"The idea of having a church building of our own was what motivated me to get involved in the effort in the first place," says Norma. "It was a sign of moving forward and I see it as being a very exciting opportunity." Norma and Brad hosted the original Building Committee in their home every other week for over three years and continued being involved when the effort transitioned to become the Building Team—moving away from planning the project to actual building and renovation. On top of this considerable commitment, Norma has coordinated the ushers for the contemporary service since Arise started and has been the co-chair of Trustees during this last year. She has also served as Lay Leader and a member of Staff Parish, as well as being a faith friend to a number of new members over the years. When asked for her thoughts on working so closely with her husband on projects, she laughed. "Brad and I see things from different perspectives. This can make for some really interesting discussions. But we usually enjoy working together." A special education teacher, Norma works for the Howell school district. Their children Brian, Andy and Sarah are no strangers to Arise when they visit. Norma is keeping busy on the homefront, too, now that Andy and his new wife Teresa have moved back from New Zealand and are living at home for a time until they get settled.

Now it's Brad's turn. "Well," he jokes, "As I recall, I agreed to become Building Committee Chair because (Pastor) Doug talked me into it." In all



seriousness, Brad led the initial effort to gather data on other new churches, helped search for an architect and arranged group visits to new church buildings in the surrounding counties, among other things. "One interesting visit was to a home that was a renovated barn owned by Mr. Granger in Lansing. We got a chance to see what could be done by taking a barn and changing it for another purpose." His favorite part of working on the building effort is being out working with the people on site. "I have enjoyed the camaraderie and it's always nice to see new people get involved. We've got such a good group of people at Arise." Brad has helped arrange volunteers for the building effort since renovations began, in addition to being a frequent volunteer himself. "I wasn't that involved in our last church. I'd go on Sundays but, thanks to Norma, I've been much more active here. That's what it's all about." He has been a counter at Arise since he came here and fills in as usher frequently, which Norma appreciates, being the scheduler. In his work life, Brad is a salesman for a graphic arts dealer, but he'd much rather be out there catching the big fish or hunting up north, as anyone who knows him can assert.

Thank you, Brad and Norma, for all of your teamwork to help Arise build a church home and in sharing all of your other exceptional gifts with us!

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February

Pastor's Column



Pastor Don Weatherup

Several weeks ago, our dog Luke got out of the house. He's part chocolate lab and part beagle. They love nothing more than to run, following their nose to the next whiff of animal scent. When Luke gets out, he's gone in a flash. Usually Luke comes home in a few hours. But this time he did not because he got hit by a car. A sweet soul of a woman saw him limping on the shoulder of Dexter-Pinckney Road and stopped to help. She noticed a phone number on his tag and called us. Shelley and the girls were there in minutes and raced Luke to a Veterinary Hospital. He was bleeding from his nose, mouth, and a cut on his leg that he would not walk on.

In the end, Luke was fortunate. He had some bleeding in his lungs that should correct itself. His leg was not broken but has some kind of soft tissue or tendon injury resulting in a cast on his leg. To keep him from biting and licking the cast when we are not home, he has to wear this big cone shaped collar that is longer than his nose so that he can't physically get to the cast. We have to carry him up and down the stairs so that he can eat and get outside to do his thing.

Between the cast and the collar, Luke looks incredibly pitiful. Even his eyes look sad. It makes me want to cry just looking at him. He has no way to hide it. He is as transparently pained as a dog can look. His situation got me thinking.

How often do we allow others to see us so transparently? When we are in pain, how often do we allow others to see that we're struggling? Sometimes we have this tendency to try and hide our pain. Even from our brothers and sisters in Christ. The church.

One thing that I've discovered in ministry is that most people who attend a church have difficult seasons in their life. Problems in life are inevitable. The circumstances vary greatly. Some struggle with financial issues. Others battle relationship issues. Some have issues with raising their children. Some of us are dealing with parenting our parents as they age. Some have troubles with their job. The topics vary widely, but what many of us share in common are the strong emotions that these life issues bring us.

Many people are not comfortable revealing their pain, often for good reasons. Perhaps they have been transparent in the past and received judgment instead of compassion. That would lead anyone to hesitate doing it again. Are you carrying around a heavy burden that few people know about?

Let me make a few suggestions. The first step is to find a few people in the church that you trust. This step takes some time but it will happen if you stick with it. The best way to do this is to participate in one of our L.I.F.E. Teams or a Bible study where you can spend a significant amount of time with the same people. Trust often takes time to develop.

Then, try sharing your pain in small steps. Don't share all the nitty-gritty details at first. Simply reveal the basics. When we feel like we're partly responsible for our pain, we tend to be embarrassed to share the details. Don't feel that once you open the door to transparency that you have to share all the details. We're not bursting a dam here. Just opening the release valve a little. Take it slow. Once you see how people react to the first bit of information, (and I pray it is with compassion and understanding) you will feel a bit more comfortable sharing more details.

I find that the most effective churches are ones where people feel comfortable in their transparency. One of the reasons why I try and be very transparent with my life as I preach is because I think churches are at their very best when people can be real. Church should be a safe place where life problems can be shared without worry of judgment. Sometimes judgment hurts even worse than what's paining you in the first place.

Another important issue that even I need to be reminded of is that when people share their pain, rarely are they looking for help solving the problem. Not many

people have big problems to which they know of no solution. Usually what people need most are compassion, understanding and support. Not everyone is looking for a solution. I have said it before and its worth repeating, what people lack is application, not information.

If you think about it, God works best in our life when we're transparent with God. When we share with God



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Building on our Vision: 2008 Arise Priorities

From November of 2005 through October of 2006, a group of 12-15 Arise leaders met for eight "visioning" sessions of three hours each to discuss the issues and opportunities at Arise and revitalize our Vision/Mission, Core Values, Strategic Initiatives and Objectives. This overall, long-term strategy is our blueprint for the future, against which we set annual objectives.

During December and January, the Church Council has been discussing these strategic objectives to determine the overall priorities for Arise in 2008. These are the areas that we will emphasize for the year...those that we believe offer the most leverage to make disciples for Jesus Christ and grow our church community. They link to the Strategies covered in the January/February 2007 issue of Connections, and are posted on the wall of the Ministry Center. We also refer to them regularly under the four areas of Growing Spiritually, Meaningful Missions, Experiencing Worship and Caring Community.

The priorities which were unanimously chosen at January's Council meeting are:

1. Excellence in Overall Worship Experience
2. Increased visibility for Arise in the Community(ies)

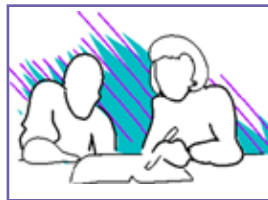
Some examples of excellence in overall worship include: skilled and consistently high quality



Caring Community



Experiencing Worship



Growing Spiritually



Meaningful Missions

musicians; high energy and participation; events that offer fun and fellowship and experiences that deepen Christian relationships. Some examples of increased visibility for Arise are: welcoming visitors and orienting them to membership; intentional programs and partnering in the community; hands on missionary work and new studies and LIFE teams. In addition, there are plans to structure a more formal public relations group to identify opportunities and assure that we get the same publicity as other church groups.

The trick, of course, is to be equally vigilant about deciding what we will stop doing, or postpone until 2009. We have wonderful people and resources at Arise, but both are limited. We cannot do it all, even when we want to.

You will be hearing more about them in the months ahead, including what you can do through committees and LIFE teams to make a difference by supporting them. It is important to note that everyone has a role in making these priorities come alive; as committee/team members and individuals, you will be encouraged to ask, "What is one thing that I can do to move us one step closer to fulfilling these priorities?"

Lay Leader's Perspective



This is your newly appointed Lay Leader; Alan Smith in what I hope is a series of articles that I might be able to share with you all. The first thing I thought I might do is find out everything that a Lay Leader does and then write about it. But this isn't that article, because I'm still finding out myself what I'm supposed to be doing.

This IS an honor for me, or anybody for that matter, to be the Lay Leader of a congregation. Since it has become official I have proudly told many that I had become the Lay Leader for Arise United Methodist Church. Most people are impressed, they may not know what a Lay Leader does, but they have heard the title. They usually

respond with "great", "congratulations", "sweet", "awesome" and some actually said "cool". Then of course they ask what a Lay Leader does...and then I refer them back to the first paragraph.

I can tell you one thing...KEEP THE FAITH! Sounds simple, but sometimes it's not. In future articles I will share with you my experiences and how God has changed my life. Some of you will be moved by my stories, others of you will line your bird cages with my articles---either way it's all good. The bottom line is we must serve our fellow man and if my attempts at wit and wisdom are best served at the bottom of a cage, I can live with that.

So until next time remember Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you," and serve like you've never served before! KEEP THE FAITH!

ARISE PARTY & CAROLING Great Success!



On Dec. 9th the Youth of Arise hosted an all church Christmas party at Community Congregational Church. The youth helped to plan the party and decorate the church which included table decorations and luminaries which light our way. It was a glorious event with about 35 or more Arise family and friends gathered to celebrate the birth of Jesus. We ate well in the grand, Methodist, pot-luck tradition with a delicious turkey and a special cake! Diane Griffin played the piano as we tried to remember the words to Christmas carols we sang together. We read the Christmas story and decorated a tree together that was complete with a beautiful star on top. When the evening was almost over, several of the youth and adults went out caroling and handed out cookies with a special message. It was a spectacular evening of sharing and fun. I would like to thank all of you that helped to make the party such a success. A special thanks goes out to the youth who keep our faith fresh and full of life.

Sherry Graham, Youth Coordinator





Pastor's Column:... *continued from pg. 2*

what's on our heart and we are truthful with God. The same truth applies to the church. The more we can create a place where people can be comfortably transparent, the more we will see the Holy Spirit producing healing and hope. I think we're doing pretty well in this area, but we can always do better. What it takes is lots of prayer. We need to be intentional about asking God to help us be listeners and not problems solvers. Compassionate, not judgmental. Do we need accountability in the church as well? Of course we do. But even accountability can be done with compassion.

What heavy burdens are you carrying around? Have you asked God for help with the burden? And, have you asked

your church family to listen to you as you share your fears and hurts?

Matthew 11:28 "If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest." A life in Christ leads to change. Real change. God doesn't want to put a band-aid on your wounds. God wants to heal them. That can happen, but it requires transparency on your part, and compassion and care on the church's part.

With you on the journey,

Rev. Don Weatherup

FINANCE AND THE FINANCE COMMITTEE: An interview with Matt Placha

Note: On December 31st, Matt completed his last and final term as Finance Committee Chair. This interview captures his reflections on the financial role, and why it is important to Arise.

Long viewed as “Mr. Finance,” Matt Placha has served as Chair of the Finance Committee since 1999. The 2007 committee consisted of Laurie Glover (Financial Secretary), Gail Osborne (previous Head Counter, now replacing Rob Wagner as Treasurer), Kevin Germain, Lance Korzilius, Mary Read Gannon, and Rob Wagner. They meet several times a year to discuss church finance operations and oversee the budgeting process, which involves creating a draft, sending it out to committee chairs for recommendations, making revisions and submitting to the Council for review and approval. In between meetings, offerings are counted and deposited by the Counting Team, Laurie tracks and records contributions and mails out quarterly statements; Rob pays the bills; and Matt has provided detailed analysis and advice, as well as general accounting, payroll, and payroll taxes.

The role of the Finance Chair, Matt says, is “to insure good stewardship of church finances; pay attention to having safeguards in place for handling contributions and sound processes for paying bills, and advise church council and others on what we can and cannot do with those resources. This is based on analysis of income and expenses against budget to determine what resources are available to use, based on priorities set by Council and others.”

There are two parts to the budget: the General Fund and the Land & Building Fund. The General Fund is for operating expense...what it takes to run our church. The Land & Building fund is geared toward paying the mortgage on our property loan (Arise Acres and all buildings, including the parsonage), as well as the renovation and expansion of the barn into a multi-purpose worship facility and classrooms.

In addition, all United Methodist churches should have an annual audit. This year’s

audit was completed successfully with an internal team consisting of Dave Yenor, Wayne Kieb, and Anita Pagano, with accounting support from Marie Yenor.



When asked why the Finance Committee is important for our church, Matt replied, “It’s through our finances that we are able to fulfill our ministries. Finance should play a critical role in the Church Council, which evaluates the effectiveness of the church and future needs, and allocates resources accordingly.” He noted that it is “important for the congregation to feel that there is good stewardship and accounting...to feel that those areas are well cared for. Our congregation gives generously to Arise and should have confidence their gifts are

used for doing God’s work.” For that reason, Matt has continually communicated the finances through a variety of methods, including the bulletin, newsletter, announcements and mailings. In addition, there is often financial representation on the Stewardship Committee, which prepares for Consecration Sunday.

Over the years Matt has chaired the Stewardship Committee, served on the Church Council, been a member of the Building Committee and currently leads the Building Team. He has particularly enjoyed managing the finances in the early years of Arise, because becoming “a viable congregation in the Pinckney area felt like missionary work.”

Matt turns over the reins to Debbie Short, who assumed the position of Finance Committee Chair on January 1st. He leaves it in solid shape, with a strong year end finish, and the following advice for Debbie: “Integrity is important, and good communications with the congregation is important. It’s an attitude of caring...not just numbers; it’s about stewardship.”

Thanks to the Finance Committee for your efforts on behalf of Arise and to you, Matt, for your personal stewardship... past, present and future!



FEBRUARY 2008 CALENDAR

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ~ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (New International Version)



WEEKLY EVENTS

Sunday _____

Worship Services at Arise Acres
 9:00 am—Traditional Worship
 10:00 am—Youth Sunday School
 10:00 am—Youth Life Team
 11:00 am—Contemporary Praise Worship

Monday _____

7:00 pm—Divorce Recovery
 7:00 – 9:00 pm—Men's Huddle at Morphew's (contact Lance Korzilius)

Wednesday _____

7:00 pm—Wednesday Night Bible Study (contact Ron or Gayle Fike)

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
January 27 6 pm The God Squad Youth Group	28	29 10 am Newsletter folding	30 7 pm Worship Committee	31	February 1	2
3 Holy Communion Sunday Boy Scout Sunday Transfiguration Sunday	4	5 7 pm Church Council	6 Ash Wednesday 7 pm Ash Wednesday Service Building Team	7	8 10 am TGIF Sisters	9
10 First Sunday of Lent 4-6 pm The God Squad Youth Group 6:30-8 pm Sister's Valentine Open House	11 7 pm Threads of Faith	12	13 Lenten Breakfast	14 Valentine's Day 	15	16
17 9 am Jammin' Kids perform Homeless Shelter	18 President's Day	19	20 Lenten Breakfast 7 pm Building Team	21	22 10 am TGIF Sisters	23 4 pm District Youth Eve
24 4-6 pm The God Squad Youth Group	25	26	27 Lenten Breakfast 7 pm Worship Committee	28	29	1



\$50,000 Matched Giving a Success!

A very heartfelt, special thank you goes to our anonymous donor who challenged us to go above and beyond in our 2007 giving. The total giving for this year that went above the 2006 level was \$47,033. In an extraordinary gesture of generosity, our donor gave the whole \$50,000 gift to Arise, since we came so close to reaching the goal. This money will go toward the Land and Building Fund to help fund our building project. The Arise congregation did an excellent job in meeting the Matched Gift. May God bless the matching gift giver and all those who stretched their giving to meet this challenge.

Mission Shoebox Alert

The Arise Missions Team requests that Arise members keep their eyes open for "really good deals" this year on items that are needed for the health kits, school kits, etc, that we assemble in

the spring, and for the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes we do each fall.

"If we all get in the habit of watching for good deals whenever they occur (as opposed to simply buying items during each mission event), our purchasing power will be increased for our missions, and the same amount of money will go further. We can have a huge impact on many more people who so desperately need these items," said Laura Bowen, co-chair of the Missions team. She and Ron Fike, the other co-chair, are excited about the prospects of this idea.

The Missions team also asks Arise members to remember that the whole congregation is invited to be part of our team efforts, so please be on the lookout and take advantage of the good deals out there.

Matthew 25: 40 The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'



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January & February Anniversary

1/5 Vlad & Norine Bibicoff
2/3 **E.J. & Kim Sherry – Happy 30th!!**

January & February Birthdays

1/2	Wes Richards	1/27	Evva Funk
1/4	Carolyn Stafford	2/1	Tony Whalen
1/6	Judy Miller	2/7	Gayle Fike
1/12	Norma Topp		Noah Sherry
1/22	Jerry Dawson	2/9	Rick Beaudin
1/23	Ellen Russell	2/12	Natalie Sherry
1/24	Jewell Smith	2/19	Laurie Russell
1/26	EJ Sherry		Myles Wagner
	Gene Smith		

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*Thanks to all who contribute;
please contact us with your
feedback and suggestions!*

• **Note: Arise Connections is now available online and in color at <http://www.arisechurch.org> •**