

THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pastor to the People



Love Covers a Multitude of Sins

Newer Christians are sometimes disappointed and even shocked when they experience relational conflict with other Christians. Nevertheless, we know that this side of heaven, the church is made up of sinners, and conflict among brothers and sisters in Christ is inevitable.

Thankfully, the Scriptures have provided clear principles which we should understand and seek to apply with humility and grace. One important principle repeated in Scripture is “for love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). Most grievances and hurts that we encounter are the sort of garden-variety conflicts that fall safely within this category.

Before we charge off to confront someone, or perhaps bring an issue within the church to the elders, we should always ask, “Is this something that falls under the category: ‘love covers a multitude of sins?’” If it does, we chalk up the situation to another unfortunate experience of life in a fallen world and move on without a direct confrontation. In other words, we drop the matter and refuse to dwell on it any longer.

But what if the grievance is more serious? What if you discern that the conflict or wound needs to be confronted? Under these circumstances, the principles outlined in Matthew 18:15-17 should be applied.

“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it the

church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

The principles are fairly straightforward. When someone has offended you (and it is too big for “love covers a multitude of sins”), you are required to approach that person directly with your grievance in love. Normally, this should be done one on one in order to respect the dignity and reputation of the person involved. In most cases, a one on one confrontation is all it takes to restore fellowship. Of course, this principle should not be applied woodenly as if every situation is the same. There are times when it is unwise and perhaps inappropriate for a person to address an offender alone.

If this first encounter fails, we should explain the situation to one or two others (who can be trusted to keep it confidential) and together lovingly confront the offender again. If this still does not bring reconciliation, and all members are a part of the same church, then the matter is to be brought to the church, which in our context means the elders. Often, the mere suggestion of taking an issue to the elders is enough of an incentive to bring about resolution. On occasion, elder mediation may in fact lead to the excommunication of the offender with the hope that he will come to his senses and seek restoration and forgiveness.

Continued on p. 5



View of ECC: New Member Class

By God's grace ECC membership continues to grow. As a church we understand the importance of membership and believe a decision by a regular visitor can best be made after a time of presentation and study. Our current class has gone through a variety of topics on what it means to be a Christian, the history of the traditions of reformed faith, how ECC operates, stewardship, and the sacraments. The class is then invited to consider membership and go through an examination by the elders. The final step is to profess their faith in Christ and their desire to come under the authority of ECC. Once they have been examined and approved they are formally made members of ECC during a Sunday morning worship service. This class will be welcomed as members on April 11. If you are interested in learning more about membership at ECC and when the next class will be held, please contact the Church Office (542-9025) or John Wood (382-6148).



THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

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Editor's Note

April brings a potpourri of articles. We start with a reminder about love covering a multitude of sins (always a good reminder) and the need to be honest in pruning away our imperfections. Other articles include a book review, thoughts from a recliner, more encouragement for community, and finally a report from an exciting ministry in Honduras. We hope that you enjoy this month's edition and invite you to let us know. Also, if anyone has always wondered if they could contribute to the Community Builder, the answer is yes. Let us know and we will see when we can use your talent.

Pruning

By Pam Dollard



I spent this morning at the zoo. While there, I watched the giraffes eating, took a picture of a preening peacock, and directed zoo patrons to their destinations, but mostly I pruned yew bushes. Our task was described as general cleanup of an area near

the giraffe exhibit, which included raking it out, cutting back bamboo and encroaching wintercreeper, and trimming a few dead branches off the yews. And, of course, picking up the ubiquitous trash that is constantly deposited.

I started in among the yews, removing dead ferns and the bamboo that was growing up through them. Having waded waist deep into the shrubbery, it made sense to do all that was needed before moving on. With the weeds removed, the dead branches showed up more, so the pruning began, at least where it showed and looked bad.

I discovered that it's hard to just prune *some* of the dead branches from a bush and leave others. Something makes me want to finish the job and make the appearance as nice as possible. So, an hour and a half and two cartloads of dead wood later, I was finished. I had removed two complete bushes and numerous dead branches. The yews were looking good, and the area was open and clean and attractive.

I sometimes wonder – does it hurt the plants to be pruned the way it does us? At least my experience has been that pruning is painful. We become so very attached to the parts of ourselves and even our surroundings that it feels like a little bit of death to let any of it go.

But the accumulation of dead wood isn't helpful to the bushes; it provides entry points for insects and disease without the defense mechanisms of the living organism for protection. Thinning the bushes also allows more air movement and light, encouraging healthy growth. Aesthetically too, there is benefit in removing what has died.

I found it easy and rewarding to ruthlessly prune away everything unhelpful on those yews because I had no emotional investment in what was lost. I had no history with those dead branches, no familiarity to cause me to miss them when they were gone. I hadn't grown them from seed, or planted them or nurtured them to maturity. In short, I was objective.

Not so when it comes to my own life, and to my attempts to assess what is helpful in it and what is not. I am very much attached and invested. The task of beneficial pruning is hopeless apart from the Holy Spirit and the discernment and motivation He gives.

Here also is one way we serve each other in the Body of Christ. We need others to speak truth to us from outside of ourselves. We need objective eyes connected to hearts that love us enough to want the best for us. We need discerning friends who know when to speak and when to remain silent – after all, there are seasons for pruning and seasons for waiting.

Some trees are known to be self-pruning – they naturally shed their dead branches as they grow. As we mature we should be more like that, exercising a healthy degree of self-evaluation and self-correction under the watchful gaze of the Holy Spirit. There are times, however, when we just need help to cut out what is hurting us in order to preserve what is healthy and allow for the best growth.

My hope and prayer is that we all have at least one good pruning buddy in our lives – someone we trust enough to hand them the pruners and saw and tell them to gently proceed. Some church traditions make use of confessors. While we believe that no one need serve as an intermediary between God and us, the Scriptures do direct us to sometimes confess our sins to one another. A discerning confessor can help us see where the pruning needs to happen. A trusted, Spirit-led brother or sister, wisely chosen, is often part of God's provision for our growth and maturity. When done well, the pain of pruning is eventually replaced by the joy of growing.

Mission Report: Honduras

By Ruth Cload



These last days are exciting times because God is fulfilling prophecy. Rejoice with Revelation 5:9 for what is to come. "For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." God is moving among us.

Ask Dr. Jeff Heck, founder of Shoulder to Shoulder (STS), a medical group working in Honduras. Many of you remember Jeff and Kathy from CHPC days. Jeff went to Honduras on a short-term mission trip, blessed the sick and broken with his medical expertise, and went home to organize STS. STS has brought doctors, dentists, computer scientists, engineers, and men and women to serve the material-poor mountain folks in rural Honduras for the past twenty years.

Another family you know is Tim and Fide Gehner. I asked Fide how they got involved with STS. "When I left Honduras in 1999 to marry Tim, I was excited on one hand, but it was difficult to leave my home village (Concepcion), given the many needs there. I prayed that God would give me opportunities to give back, even while living in the U.S. In the last ten years, Tim and I have both been very involved with Shoulder to Shoulder, a local organization that partners with communities in remote Honduras to provide healthcare services. It links medical schools in the U.S. with local villages, and I have been very involved as a liaison in these efforts."

Five years ago, STS arrived in Concepcion to survey the needs and concerns of the community and learned of the dream to have a health center with high

quality primary care services. Remember praying for Fide and her trip to Honduras in February? She was there to attend the opening of the new regional medical center! STS earned trust and respect through its uninterrupted twenty-year presence in nearby Santa Lucia, and understandably, the Gehners, STS leadership, and community of Concepcion are delighted with this milestone event.

In addition to their work with STS, Fide and Tim have led seven church mission trips to Honduras, focusing on the spiritual needs of the community. These groups worked on church construction, VBS, pastor training, Sunday School teacher-training, and youth outreach events. Especially meaningful is the time taken to connect personally with individuals and families; these are times of prayer as well as a time to distribute food and clothing. Perhaps you've heard rumors of our ECC youth traveling to Concepcion this summer. 'Tis true! They will be working with local Christians to conduct a VBS and a youth outreach event.

Pray for ECC youth and their adult leaders

- * that they be spiritually and mentally prepared

- * that travel and health would be protected

- * that God would use them to accomplish His will

You've heard the trilogy of pray, give, and go. Start with prayer. Pray that Honduran Christians would love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind. Pray that the Good News (how we can be in right relationship with the living God) is effectively communicated. Pray for economic change that brings glory to God. Many families live below the UN established severe-poverty level of less than \$1 a day. Also consider giving financial support to STS and/or joining a team with the church. Would you consider going on a short-term mission trip? Talk to the Gehners.

...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Matt. 5:16

Picture of clinic on insert

Thoughts from the Recliner

By Dave Matre

Growing up, I always gave up something for Lent. After my personal embrace of Christ (or should I say His embrace of me?) in my early 20s, I started the practice again. After a few years, I decided instead to take on a project, such as keeping a journal. Thus, I haven't given up anything for Lent in decades.

Perhaps it's ironic that this Lent I have given up walking, driving, riding my bike, and a whole host of other things. My broken ankle wasn't by choice, but it has given me time for reflection. Here are some thoughts from the recliner:

I realize how much I like to be in control. Not just making sure things get done, but that they get done "my" way. Being unable to do many of these things, I have come to be grateful that they simply get done. It has forced me to realize that it doesn't always have to be my way. (I won't share how long it took to come to that realization!)

I am overwhelmed and humbled by the outpouring of kindness from ECC members. Cards, calls, prayers, meals, driving the kids to activities, and the like serve as an almost daily reminder of how blessed we are.

I have always been thankful for my family, but never more than these last few weeks. My children run errands for me, and do so cheerfully. And I'm fairly sure that when Nancy vowed to love me "for better or worse," she wasn't planning on climbing a ladder in the rain to clear a clogged downspout, but she did it because she knew I wanted it done. Every day she runs the household and takes care of me and I've never heard a complaint. I can't imagine life without her.

Love Covers a Multitude of Sins

Continued from p. 1

Unfortunately, rather than employing these basic principles, many Christians insist on taking an in-between position. The offense may seem too big for "love covers a multitude of sins" yet too small for Matthew 18. So we stake out the unbiblical middle position of turning it over and over in our minds, or worse, venting (a.k.a. gossiping) about the situation to others.

There is great wisdom in Scripture. Though not easy, when we learn the discipline of resolving conflict

That leads to perhaps the biggest lesson of all. I'm getting a better understanding of grace. If he knew that I were chairbound, my dad would probably say, "That ought to keep you out of trouble!" Hardly. Sin is not out there somewhere; it resides in my heart. I have experienced moments in my chair that shame me. I'm not worthy of the church friends who help us, but I can make sense of it by reasoning that they're helping Nancy, who is worthy of good friends. I'm not worthy of Nancy. She knows me better than anyone and she still loves me. It's not just the physical care that reminds me of grace. Needing to be helped in the shower certainly is a reminder of grace, but it's that she wants to because she loves me that really helps me understand.

Paul tells us that godly sorrow leads to repentance. That is my hope and prayer. The Holy Spirit's work of sanctification is far from over. I want to do better, but I also realize that I can never do anything to deserve God's love and mercy. I thank God for His grace, and I thank Him for His church.



according to God's plan, it keeps accounts short, helps produce Christian maturity, and results in a more pleasant fellowship.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Rich

Building Community

One Meal at a Time

By John Wood



At ECC we are serious about our fellowship and offer many opportunities to come together in small and large groups to enjoy the sweet fellowship of Christians sharing a meal. The summer picnic, lunch after service, dinners for eight, summer Sunday nights, fall fellowship and other events give everyone at ECC a chance to connect. Another less publicized chance for fellowship comes without much church staff involvement or organization. It is the simple act of asking someone to your house to share a meal. I know many of you have been doing this for some time and I think the idea needs to be shared with the entire congregation; in fact, not only shared, but encouraged. Any of the ECC family who are hosting these informal gatherings will tell you that it need not be complicated or formal. A backyard barbecue, soup and sandwiches after Sunday services, a night of chili and games are just a few examples of how simple the event can be.

You can invite several friends to join you or you can even be bold and invite someone in the church you have been meaning to get to know better. In fact, you can invite old friends, new friends and people you want to meet as friends and create a wonderful time of fellowship. The event can even give you the chance to follow the church's lead and be intentionally intergenerational in your guests.

The key is to keep it simple. It should not be a time to increase the stress of the hosts but rather a time to share your home and a meal. Don't worry that your home is too small or not properly decorated and even a little boring. Remember your guests are coming to be with you and enjoy the fellowship, not to critique your house. Make sure to also make your guests comfortable by allowing them to bring something to add to the meal. (I am sure you would feel better if you were invited and allowed to bring something).

So I encourage all of us to consider inviting and accepting invitations. Let's spread our fellowship among everyone at our church. It will be fun, and we will grow in our love for one another (which I think is what God would desire). If you are a little timid about extending an invitation, let me know and I can pair you up with someone with experience and you can share in an event together and see how it is done. If you are bold (and love fellowshiping), let me know and I can help pair you up with some of our newer, less connected visitors and members. If you would like to be invited, let me know that too. I will be happy to pair people up (it is one of my favorite parts of my ministry).

Well -- what are you waiting for? Give me a call (382-6148) or stop by the badge table and let me help. For some of you, my help is not needed as you are already experienced at fellowship. Let's continue to fellowship and enjoy the gift God has given us in each other.

Community - It's our middle name!

By Colleen Grogan

Community. This is something I have thought a lot about this year as we have moved to a new city for the year. One of our first priorities was to establish ourselves in a community of believers, knowing that this would be key to our making the most of this year. And God has been so faithful. After a relatively short search, we settled at Cresset Baptist Church, where we have all been welcomed, challenged and nurtured.

I wrote about this recently in the Children's Ministry newsletter ("Family Matters" – if you are interested, you can find it on the ECC website), and there I noted that I really want ECC to be as welcoming to new people as Cresset has been to us. I don't just mean a hug from Toni at the door (though that's a fantastic start, and we enjoy a warm welcome from a man named Ray every week here, and it is a great way to start our morning!).

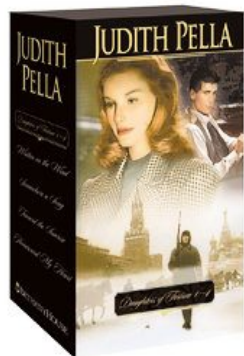
I pray that anyone who visits ECC will meet and talk with a number of people – the greeters at the front door and welcome desk, the people they sit near in Sunday School, other parents checking children into Sunday School, the people around them in worship. We have visited churches where we came and went without anyone ever speaking to us – and I assure you that we did not return.

But community goes a lot deeper than just welcoming people on Sunday mornings. Isaac shared a quote with me recently that said that a church where the members are not involved with one another's lives concerning the day to day things becomes just a collection of special interest groups. We have a good start on being a community who care for one another – but I think we can be stretched further. What is the best way for us to get to know each other? We can design fellowship events, and those are a good starting point. But from our experiences here in Durham, I have come to understand that

Continued on p. 7

Daughters of Fortune – an ECC Library Treasure

Erin Meyer



With all of the great educational opportunities at ECC, we hear a lot of recommendations for serious academic reading. I actually have a suggestion for those who may be in search of something a little lighter, but also enriching. A while ago I was in search of a good read for a car trip we were taking. After watching my daughter devour many books from the ECC library, I decided to look for something

there. Not only did I find a great book for the drive, I found myself lost in an exciting series that kept me engaged for quite a while after the trip.

The book I chose was “Written on the Wind” by Judith Pella. It is the first of four books comprising a series entitled “Daughters of Fortune.” The series focuses on the stories of three sisters, the daughters of an Irish American newspaper tycoon in 1940’s Los Angeles. The eldest daughter aspires to be a respected news reporter in a male dominated field, while the middle daughter gets caught in the pitfalls of pursuing Hollywood stardom. The youngest daughter endeavors to find herself as a UCLA freshman. The lives of all three daughters, and their parents, are complicated by the onset of World War II.

I found this to be a great story to get lost in. With drama, romance and suspense, it has everything I enjoy in fiction. The bonus for me was that, being historical fiction, it was also educational. While the characters and story line are the invention of Judith Pella’s imagination, the backdrop into which they are woven is the true story of World War II, told from many different perspectives. I found I recognized many city names, political figures, and battles mentioned from way back when I studied these events. Judith Pella’s story gave me a tangible illustration of what these names and facts that I memorized meant in the lives of real people. This series was definitely the beginning; I find I am now hooked on historical fiction.

Perhaps the best thing about the series was getting a terrific and thoroughly engaging story that included spiritually, edifying dialog and story lines. Many of the characters worked through spiritual struggles that I could relate to. It was also nice to read a good story without finding anything offensive.

Whether historical fiction appeals to you or not, I can assure you that a trip to the ECC library is absolutely worth the time; there are plenty of titles and subjects to be found on the shelves. I invite and encourage you to peruse the titles, make a selection, and share your discovery in an upcoming issue of the Community Builder!

Community... *Continued from p. 6*

real community is built as we spend time in one another’s homes. This doesn’t mean we have to put on lavish feasts for one another – a simple soup supper after church on Sunday, or a pizza dinner on Friday night will do just fine. There are some great books on this whole topic of hospitality that we should probably all read – and I am doing so (check the March/April Family Matters for a review of at least one of these books). The Hospitality Commands by Alexander Strauch builds a great foundation for why hospitality is such an important ministry. Open Heart, Open Home by Karen Mains and Practicing Hospitality by Pat Ennis and Lisa Tatlock are next on my list.

And, since I am the Children’s Ministry Director, I suppose I should say a word or two about how this affects our children. What could be better than a family with children spending time with singles or other families who

are at very different stages of life? Think of ECC’s children hearing about the lives of faith that so many of you have led. I’ll say it with a clear conscience – we have some wonderful families – of all ages - here at ECC, and nothing would please me more than for there to be a great mixing up of ages and stages of life in our homes. I love it when the children are greeted by adults outside their own families on Sunday mornings – it reminds the children that they too are part of the family of God. I am very grateful for the adults at ECC and here at Cresset who have befriended my children and who model the walk of faith for them.

Open your hearts and homes to one another. Take baby steps at first and find your own style. You will bless others, and I am sure you too will be blessed. Wouldn’t it be great if every visitor to ECC was invited to someone’s home for a meal within the first few weeks of their attending our church? Whether or not they ultimately make ECC their church home, what an opportunity to share the love of Christ with others!



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WHAT'S INSIDE . . .

LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS	1
NEW MEMBERS	2
PRUNING	3
MISSION REPORT: HONDURAS	4
THOUGHTS FROM THE RECLINER	5
BUILDING COMMUNITY ONE MEAL AT A TIME	6
COMMUNITY-IT'S OUR MIDDLE NAME	6
BOOK REVIEW: DAUGHTERS OF FORTUNE	

WE HOPE YOU ENJOY READING THE COMMUNITY BUILDER, THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY CHURCH. IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO RECEIVE MAILINGS FROM ECC, PLEASE NOTIFY THE CHURCH OFFICE AT 542-9025. THANK YOU!

APRIL

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				7pm Maundy Thursday Service	7pm Good Friday Service	
				1	2	3
EASTER SUNDAY	OFFICE CLOSED		7pm Precept Study 7pm Jamie Soles Concert	9:15am Moms 4:30pm Joyful Noise 5pm Prayer Group 7pm Music Rehearsal	10am Silver Heirs	Men's Bible Study 7:30 am
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5pm CREW 7pm Connect	7 pm Session Meeting	7pm Sr. High Life Group	7pm Young Adult Study	9am Women's Study 4:30pm Joyful Noise 5pm Prayer Group 7pm Music Rehearsal		Spring workday 9 am
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
5pm CREW 7pm Connect	7 pm Tri-Board Meeting	7 pm Trustee meeting	7pm Precept Study	9:15am Moms 4:30pm Joyful Noise 6:15pm Missions 7pm Music Rehearsal		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
12pm Fellowship Luncheon 5pm CREW 7pm Connect 7pm Joyful Noise	7 pm Session Meeting	7pm Sr. High Life Group	7pm Young Adult Study	9am Women's Study 4:30pm Joyful Noise 5pm Prayer Group 7pm Music Rehearsal		
25	26	27	28	29	30	

News & Notes

CLIMB FOR CROSSROAD

Please join us on April 24, 2010, for the 14th Annual "Climb for Crossroad," located at the corner of Liberty

and Vine in Over-the-Rhine.

Crossroad Health Center has been in operation since 1992, offering health care to the underserved residents of Cincinnati's inner city. The mission of Crossroad is to give honor to Jesus Christ by providing accessible, comprehensive health care in partnership with our patients and community, leading to healthy changed lives. Crossroad provides pediatric and adult health care, counseling, health education and Spanish bi-lingual services. In 2009 Crossroad had almost 14,000 patient visits! Since we are a Christian, non-profit organization and 35% of our patients have no form of health insurance, we need to raise funds to continue giving these services. We will not turn a patient away even if they cannot pay, so we need the help of businesses, churches and individuals in order to continue the work to which God has called us.

Crossroads needs volunteers to participate and support the Climb. You can either "climb" the 200 steps to Mt. Auburn and raise money per step (like a walk-a-thon) or you can volunteer to help run the family-oriented festival that follows the Climb. The festival includes games for the kids, refreshments, music, entertainment, clowns, a magician, a petting zoo and lots of fun events.

Registration is at 9:30 a.m. with the Climb taking off at 10:30 a.m., led by Santa's Goody Bag Band. Then it's back to Crossroads for the festival! The activities usually conclude by 2:00 p.m. The Climb and festival are free and open to the public. We are encouraging people to form teams with their co-workers, churches, family and friends with the goal of raising \$500 or more per team.

If you are interested in climbing or volunteering with the events, or need more information, please call Annie Scheid at Crossroad Health Center (513.381.2247) or Julie Schubert at 513.631.1324. Crossroad Health Center
5 East Liberty Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Annual Spring Clean-up Day April 17, 2010 9:00 AM to finish

It's hard to believe but spring is just around the corner...and that corner is a little dusty.



Join us at 9 am on April 17 so we can share the load and get our church, office and grounds in order.

Bring gardening tools and cleaning tools (including rags and cleaning products). Job assignments will be found in the church foyer that morning.

For more information see or call Tom Rielage (671-6118) or

Sign up in the church foyer



The Kid's Community

Fun search

Shoulder
Recliner
Community
Dinner
Workday
Concepcion
Pruning
Forgive
Library
Crossroad

Bonus words

g	o	d	a	o	r	s	s	o	r	c
n	g	i	n	m	m	t	d	y	y	a
o	r	n	t	s	o	p	a	t	r	s
i	i	n	i	n	a	d	i	e	a	h
p	s	n	e	n	k	n	t	s	r	o
e	e	e	x	r	u	s	s	u	b	u
c	n	r	o	m	a	r	e	s	i	l
n	e	w	m	e	o	w	p	e	l	d
o	f	o	r	g	i	v	e	j	l	e
c	c	a	r	e	n	i	l	c	e	r

Easter, Jesus, risen, stone



Shoulder
to
Shoulder
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