

“The Final Count”

Harold Williamson, pastor of First Christian Church, Arcola, does something unique with his columns in that congregation's newsletter. He numbers them. The latest one, as I recall, is entitled, "My 94th Letter to the Church at Arcola."

I was moved by Harold's example to figure up how many columns I've done and got the number 338. (Multiply 28½ years by 12 months and then subtract the 2-3 months that I didn't do a column and the summer or two in which we did one issue covering two months, and the total is 338, give or take one or two.

I'm not usually much of a counter. Someone asked awhile back how many weddings and funerals I had done, and I didn't know. Generally I don't regret not having counted such things, but there are moments I wish I'd kept better records .

A bricklayer at the end of a career can say, "I helped build *X* number of houses." And he can drive by his work occasionally and see what he's done. But in ministry, it's a little harder to assess what you've actually accomplished. There is no way you can say, "People's love for God and each other increased 2.7% this year."

Maybe that's why some ministers keep careful count of weddings and funerals or board meetings (336 here) while others develop "edifice complexes" (if you help build buildings, you can see and touch the results of your work).

Counting *people* may be a little more to the point. And yet, Willow Creek and some other mega-churches have found in recent years that the vast majority of the thousands of people who have come to their worship services had not grown spiritually at all.

So perhaps it finally comes to this. We do our best (on most days anyway), offer it up at the end of the day to God, and ask God to bless the efforts. We do the same thing at the end of the year. And at the end of a lifetime as well.

Because the things that count most in life just can't really be measured, not in the short run anyway (and this life, when you think about it, is a pretty short run).

But if we can't exactly measure spiritual accomplishments, we can take satisfaction in – and give thanks for – the privilege of having been a part of God's life-giving work. And the people we have been privileged to work with.

That would be you all.

And I find that as I tally up the last nearly 30 years, what counts the most for me is ... you.

Thanks for everything.

P.S. My thanks to Paige Maffett whose portrait of me graces the front cover of this Visitor. I can tell that Paige has the sensitivity and perception of a true artist by the way she has captured the inner essence of the real me – with broad shoulders and a full head of hair – rather than being misled by my outward appearance as so many people are who do not have her gift of insight.

P.S.2 A note from incoming interim minister Rick Williams is on page 4 inside.

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE
AT MENNONITE CHURCH

The Arthur Mennonite Church will host this year's Good Friday service from Noon to 1:00 pm on April 2. The service is divided into three-four segments. All are invited to stay for the entire service, but those whose lunch hours don't allow them to stay the entire time can come and leave between the 10-12 minute segments, each presented by a different pastors.

This will be your first opportunity to hear our intentional interim pastor, Rev. Rick Williams.

Some segments will have a congregational hymn or special music, along with a brief meditation by the pastor. Others may include video clips along with a meditation.



GRADUATES'
NAMES NEEDED

If you know someone in our church who is graduating from high school, eighth grade or college (or who graduated last December), please let us know. We want to get a complete list for the Graduates and Families Breakfast in May.

NEWEST CHRISTIANS AND MEMBERS OF VINE STREET

Stephanie Alexander, Cassidy, Corrie, and Caitlin Drum, and Kyla Carson were baptized during worship on March 14. *Sue (Mrs. Barry) Williams and Dan Abercrombie* transferred their membership. *Howard and Linda Keiss* had transferred their membership earlier. We welcome them and the gifts they bring to our family of faith, and we look forward to sharing life with them as we journey in faith together.

COMMUNITY EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE – 6:30 AM, APRIL 4

This year's Community Sunrise Service will be at the United Methodist Church beginning at 6:30 am on Easter, April 4. Six area churches participate in this service in providing special music and sharing in worship leadership. John Stewart, pastor of the First Baptist Church, will be preaching. Other participating churches include our church, the Arthur Mennonite Church, the Arthur United Methodist Church, the Arthur Southern Baptist Church, and First Apostolic Church.

WE DELIVER MEALS-ON -WHEELS IN APRIL.

If you'd be willing to help, please call Cornelia Davison at 543-2209 and let her know what days to can deliver. The State Bank of Arthur provides a vehicle and driver. We deliver Tuesday-Saturday, 5 days a week.

From our interim pastor

“FINDING THE PONY”

My name is Rick Williams and I come from a long history of pastors. My wife, Melissa, teaches Family and Consumer Sciences at the high school in Taylorville. She has won numerous awards for involving her classes in community service projects and is also a talented musician. Our son, Greg, is a junior at Greenville College and is a true leader. He has been selected to serve as a Senior Resident Chaplain at Greenville next year. In the coming months we will get to know each other better, but let me speak to where you are as a Church.

I have immense respect for Pastor Johnson and feel privileged to be invited to serve as Interim at Vine Street. I was disappointed when I was not able to attend the Lakeland Cluster Farewell for the Johnsons, but I was invited to send a joke to be read (a tradition we have at our farewell dinners). Here is what I sent:

A man had twin boys, 11 years old. They were identical but you could hardly tell – they were opposite in so many ways. They wore different clothes and hairstyles. And their temperaments were completely different. One was a pessimist. No matter how good it was, he found something to complain about. The other was an extremely bright optimist. No matter how bad it was, he found something positive.

As they approached their 12th birthday, their Dad planned an experiment. Early in the morning of their birthday, he sneaked into the bedroom of the pessimist and left hundreds of dollars of toys and electronic games.

Then he went into the bedroom of the optimist, quietly laid down a tarp, and brought in buckets of manure until he had made a huge pile.

His work done, he got a cup of coffee and waited in his bedroom across the hall.

A little later he heard crying from the bedroom of the pessimist. He ran across and opened the door. The boy was on the floor with his gifts and he had tears in his eyes.

"What's wrong?" said his father. "You have some great gifts!"

"Look at these Dad! A lot of them take batteries and they will keep running down. And some of them are breakable."

Just then, they both heard yelling from the bedroom of the optimist.

As their Dad opened his bedroom door he heard the other son yelling, "Yippee! Hoorayyy! This is great!". The optimist was on his knees digging through the pile of manure with his hands.

"What are you doing?" asked his father.

"Dad, look at all this!" the boy said, "I know there's got to be a pony in here somewhere!"

My guess is that some of you may be feeling a little apprehension about the future and a little empty at this time. One of my least favorite words is "Goodbye." I wonder if what we feel is similar to what the disciples felt in that last week? Worried? Empty? Afraid? I give you the words of Jesus. "Let not your heart be troubled...if you believe in God, believe also in Me."

Isn't it amazing what God brought out of such a dark time? In the coming months, we will celebrate the many blessings and gifts that are a part of the Vine Street Christian Church. And we will celebrate the many gifts that the Johnsons have imparted to this congregation.

But we will also go hunting for ponies. Out of uncertain times, God wants to bring light and love and victory! If He can take the cross and the tomb and bless the world with the greatest news in the history of the planet, I know God will do an amazing work through us.

Remember...the future is not uncertain and it is not dark because Christ is leading.

Rick Williams
Interim Pastor

OUTREACH OFFERINGS

We'll be receiving contributions this coming Sunday and Easter Sunday to the Easter offering, which helps support the life-changing ministries of our church in the U.S. and around the world.

Our just-finished Week of Compassion offering, which goes to help meet emergency needs around the world in the event of natural and man-made disasters, in great need since the Earthquake in Haiti, brought in a record **\$4,745.98**. This includes the \$1,068.65 that the children raised to make hygiene kits for Church World Service. We sent off 53 actual kits, and raised enough for CWS to put together 57 more, for a total of 110 kits! That's more than double the original goal of 50 kits. Thank you for the generous outpouring of Christian compassion!

We also way exceeded our goal of \$350 to help support the camp intern ministry (hiring a college age person interested in ministry to work with youth at our church's Camp Walter Scott during the summer).

We gave **\$426.82**.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: JUNE 7-11, 9:00-11:30 AM FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL!

We have a rainforest theme this year based on John 3:16. We are also going to continue this theme for our Summer Quarter of Sunday School. It incorporates worship, music, crafts, and games as a group! Please prayerfully consider helping at either VBS or Sunday School this summer (or both!). Who knows? You may even learn something too! Let Carol Huffman or Shana Condill know if you'd like to volunteer.

SAVE YOUR CAN PULL-TABS

Teri Malin is collecting the pull-tabs off the top of aluminum cans to raise money for Shiners Hospital. You can drop them in the container outside of the sanctuary from now through June.

FREE BOOKS!

The books in the bookcase downstairs by the main east door are free to a good home. Please take a look at the books, and take home any and every book that you or someone you know might like. The bookcase will be up through March. There are empty boxes in the education wing if you need any.

Congratulations!

To Shawn, Jessica & Karaline Vanausdoll on the birth of the newest member of their family on Monday, March 8th: **ANNABELLE ROSE** who was 7 lbs, 15 oz. and 21” long. Maternal grandparents are John & Jo Watkins, and great-grandma Marilyn Watkins.

To Boy Scouts Joshua Kauffman and Ty Duzan who placed in the annual Pinewood Derby on March 6th. Joshua won 1st place for the fastest car, and Ty won 2nd place for Best of Show. They will compete at a regional derby in Champaign in April.

To the 8th Grade Girls Volleyball Team, coached by Jessica Vanausdoll, who was the first Arthur volleyball team—on any level—to advance to the state competition! Emily Kauffman and Karly Goodman are members of the team.

NEW REGIONAL MINISTER

A new Regional Minister and President of the Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin has been nominated. Her name is Rev. Dr. Teresa Duluea-Parker and she is from Ohio. A special Regional Assembly will be held on April 17 in Springfield to vote on her nomination.

THANK-YOU'S

Thank you to everyone who helped make the **Mystery Dinner Theatre** a success—a lot of work went into rehearsals, set construction, Audio-Visual, and of course, the fantastic food! Thank you also to everyone who came to the show—the production raised over \$600 for our church’s audio-visual program! And a big thanks to directors **Sandy Dolan** and **Alice Ray**

Dear VSCC Family,

Thank you for all the cards, ice cream, and popsicles. I liked getting the cards in the mail. I loved the ice cream.

Love,

Madeline (Ray)

To my good friends,

I so very much enjoy receiving *The Vine Street Visitor*! It is such a joy to read news of several of my former students who are grown with families...so far from when I was in the trenches with them in junior high!

Much has changed over the past year to reshape my priorities. My son, Darren’s, wife was diagnosed with breast cancer in August ’09, had surgery in Sept. and did chemo. From Oct ’09— Jan ’10...and now we wait.

I drove down as often as I could to help out during the chemo, and at some point realized that I just needed to be there. Between that and the toll that is taken in the high stress job of running a group home 24/7 365 days a year, and after much prayer, I am taking an early retirement, packing my bags, and moving back to Branson.

I have been keeping you in my prayers as well as Mike and Glenna as they retire. Love to all.

Judy Godfrey

APRIL 2010

<u>EVERY SUNDAY</u>	8:25 am	Singing Group Practice
	9:00 am	SUNDAY SCHOOL
	10:00 am	WORSHIP
<u>EVERY MONDAY</u>	8:30 am	Crafts Group
	5:30 pm	Weight Watchers

<u>SUNDAY, MARCH 28</u>	<u>Palm Sunday</u>	
	10:00 am	Children's Palm Parade during Worship
	11:30 am	Retirement Celebration Potluck for Johnsons

Thursday, April 1 4:30 pm VBS Directors Meeting

Friday, April 2	Noon	Community Good Friday Service at Mennonite Church
SUNDAY, APRIL 4	<u>Easter Sunday</u>	
<i>Food Pantry Sunday</i>	6:30 am	Community Sunrise Service at Arthur United Methodist

Wednesday, April 7 1:30 pm CWF meeting

Saturday, April 10 8:30 am Women's Birthday Breakfast
at Yoder's

SUNDAY, APRIL 11	<i>Home Communion Sunday</i>	
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Wednesday, April 14 9:30 am Women's Bible Study
7:00 pm Board Meeting

Thursday, April 15 4:30 pm VBS Directors Meeting

SUNDAY, April 18		
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Monday, April 19 Noon Visitor article deadline

Tuesday, April 20 7:00 pm Education Meeting

SUNDAY, APRIL 25		
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Wednesday, April 28 9-11 am Toenail Clinic
9:30 am Women's Bible Study