

## *The Pastors Connection*

March 2012

### **Faith and Faithfulness**

*“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows...and by his wounds we are healed.” Is. 53:4-5*

Two thousand and nine through eleven CMC members experienced remarkable physical health. True, we had exceptions, and I don't want to minimize those traumas. And true, we grieved the passing of several members. Yet the numbers of hospital visits were few; and each of the members who passed away approached death in peace having lived a full life. This congregation has truly been blessed!

How then shall we respond to recent illnesses? We know subsequent generations have experienced Jesus' words in John 21 *“When you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go”. Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.”*

God calls us to live Christ's story joyfully in life. That includes “glorifying” Him as age steals mobility; even as we die. Naming such is not culturally popular! You may even now find your fingers itching to turn this page.

Yet biblical people remain faithful through good and bad. So let us wrestle truth. God promises to heal wounds and carry sorrows. Our lobby shelf holds an excellent resource compiled by David Tennant of principles to build faith and strengthen prayer. I commend it to you.

While traveling together recently I emphasized to David the gift God gave Conestoga with he and Pegge's training at Rhema and their healing witness. We recognized that every Spirit outpouring has some extremes. Reading the extremes in my treasured Anabaptist heritage still makes me uncomfortable. Yet God was advancing Christ's kingdom in each generation's revival. And faith is enlarged as we celebrate the positive fruit each revival releases.

Most of us know someone God miraculously healed. We also know ones who, in spite of powerful, persistent, faithful prayers; live with brokenness, or died young. Since Jesus more than once tied the inability to heal to inadequate faith we must always check our own hearts. But to say the root is always inadequate faith would contribute to a works doctrine; as if God needs us to achieve adequate faith for Him to heal.

Gospel declares alternative reality: God is God; we are not. Therein remains mystery no simplistic slogan can capture.

Here is what we know: Our Creator God has power to re-create. Jesus is victor over sin and death. Jesus talked often about the importance of faith. He commissions followers to

continue his healing acts. The Hebrews eleven faith chapter applauds those who live and die in faith *without receiving* what was promised. We tend to define life as birth to death; scripture defines it as eternal.

God promises healing. We best achieve faithfulness by remembering His time frames for fulfillment include immediate options to eternal. That's wisdom to pray towards, and shalom within which to live.

Joyfully living His story with you, Pastor Bob Petersheim