



COUNCIL TREE
COVENANT CHURCH

2015 SPRING JOURNAL

The Aslan Anthology

A JOURNAL OF REFLECTIONS & STORIES FROM COUNCIL TREE COVENANT CHURCH



Reflections

We liked doing it and liked talking about it. The challenge for us was to NOT talk about it.

After Tom's retirement weekend gala, I said to Bert, "It's all about Tom, Tom, Tom." I told him I had some thoughts about my years at Council Tree, too, and might like to share a bit about that journey. We thought the Aslan Anthology would be a good venue, so here goes.

Three things came to mind, as Tom's retirement grew closer. The first is from a pastor's wife's perspective. The second, a reflection on some personal events, and lastly my gratitude for the love, acceptance, care, and compassion you have shown to Tom.

I want to say thank you for allowing me to be myself and be involved in our church where I was gifted, and for not putting pressure on me to be something or someone I wasn't. The role of pastor's wife can be challenging. There are plenty of places and ways to be involved in the life of a church, and we are on display. And I really put myself on display when I stepped into the

"temporary" coordinator of worship and music position! But the longer I was at it, the more I loved it. Working with teams of people, putting a band together, and finding and making music every Sunday was a huge creative and personally challenging outlet, and working with Tom was just plain fun. I couldn't begin to guess how many worship services we've planned together. We liked doing it and liked talking about it. The challenge for us was to NOT talk about it. I confess that from time to time, when out to dinner, we would determine that church would not be the topic for the evening. But then one of us would think of a new idea for a choir, or a way to craft a service, or a new approach to a familiar theme, or how the gym could have more sacred

space and look less like a gym, and pretty soon we'd be sketching on napkins. The confession is that every now and then Tom would say, "I think we just worked our way through dinner. This one's on the church!"

One of the biggest challenges is what I called (and still call) the "shoulds." "I should do this, and I probably should do that. I should go to this meeting, or I really should be involved in that Bible study, and I probably should never miss a Sunday morning service or a business meeting." Somehow I needed to find and create some boundaries that weren't defined by "should," to care for my inner being. It was not easy. I would pray, "God please help me to know if I can skip this meeting." Sometimes the answer was clear—mostly not. Over

.How much do we want to be involved because we want to, and how much is because we think we should?

the years I have found peace in deciding that some time alone was the best gift I could give myself. I think all of us have this dilemma from time to time. How much do we want to be involved because we want to, and how much is because we

think we should? Creating boundaries can be tricky and sometimes not well received. But whether a pastor's wife or not, we have a tug of war all the time in this arena.

Thank you for letting me find other areas of interest besides music. I am still involved with the Creative Arts Team, and we do more than just dress the sanctuary and altar on Sunday mornings. We care for the interior of the building. We choose paint, furniture, and fabric for furniture, and I find that one of my gifts is moving furniture around and knocking out walls. I love that! Who knew? Well, maybe Tom when he would come home from a retreat or conference or fishing trip, step inside, and stop and look around and

Lexi Glossi



say, "What's different?"

I never thought I would like teaching piano—never thought I knew enough. Then a friend said, "You can teach them what you do know." And that was the start of the best and most rewarding job I've ever had. I teach some of your children here at Council Tree and cherish and value every minute of every lesson of every week with them. So I am still involved in music, just in a different way.

There were hard times over these years as well. There was the death of my father in 1993, Tom's father in 1996, my breast cancer in 1997, the death of my mother in 2011, and, shortly after, the death of my younger brother in December of 2012. The support and care I received from so many of you was overwhelming, cherished in my memory. And although the breast cancer was a long, hard journey, the death of my mother had the most profound effect on me. I still miss her every day and still feel her presence in our home, where she lived on our lower level the last 3+ years of her life, some days more deeply than others. I believe my younger brother died, in part, because of his own grief. I say in part because there is so much more to his story. It is a long, involved, complex, and sad story of his battle with addiction. But that's for the next chapter...

Then there is Tom, who led me to an understanding and awareness of God and Jesus Christ way back in 1973, not because he shared the four spiritual laws (that would NOT have flown with me, the wild child) but because of who he was and is: my spiritual mentor (although he wouldn't agree), counselor, listener to my rants and complaints about my braces, guide, giver of perspective, comforter in my

troubled times and periods of depression, tender care giver to my mother, cook most nights because of my teaching schedule, tolerance of my not-so-good attitude in the mornings until I've had my coffee, a quiet presence when my tears flow, teacher, speaker of truth, companion, loving, caring, and generous husband... I could go on (and he thinks I should!), but I suspect most of you have probably experienced at least some of these traits of Tom's in your own lives.

The support and care I received from so many of you was overwhelming, cherished in my memory.

So all of this to say thank you for how you have cared for him, and encouraged him with your words, notes, generous gifts, and friendship. They meant and still mean the world.

And now we enter into this phase of our life called 'retirement' with blessings beyond compare. As a woman raised with two brothers, then a mother of two sons, I never had the joy of a sister (although I would consider many of my friends sisters). But God has blessed me with two new women in my life. They are my daughter-in-law, Jami, who is married to Nate, and Kelly, who is engaged to Josh. I love both of these women more than I could ever imagine. They love our boys and bring out the best in them, and they love us. I love spending time with them and learning from them, and they have enriched my life immensely. And I know we brag about our grandson Sam, and granddaughter Elliot, and will probably continue to do so because they bring incomparable joy, and they are adorable! I guess in summary I would say that I can barely stop my cup from running over most days... I look forward to journeying with you as we watch our futures unfold.

With heartfelt love and gratitude,
Lexi Glossi

There and Back Again...and Again

A "Job"-ish Tale by Carol Christ

"How is it possible to have You, the God of the Universe, living inside of me and yet hide You so well?"

Several years ago I was asking the question to myself and, ultimately, God, "How is it possible to have You, the God of the Universe, living inside of me and yet hide You so well?" During that same time period, I was yearning with all my heart, singing along with Hillsong: "Show me Your heart, show me Your ways, show me Your glory—as we seek—fire fall down, fire fall down on us, we pray." And "The cry of my heart is to bring You praise from the inside out, so my heart and my soul, well, I give You control, consume me from the inside out!"—not really knowing what THAT meant. Within weeks my life was ransacked with health issues that have gone on for five long painful years.

It started with Bell's palsy (paralyzing the left side of my face), moved on into CIDP, Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Peripheral Polyneuropathy with axon loss (a rare disease—a stripping of the coating on the nerves of the hands, arms, feet and legs, giving a sensation of being on fire). At this point, I was curling up in Abba's lap asking Him for comfort when it seemed to me that He moved His hand and pointed in front of me and said, "He's the Comforter." For the first time I saw the Spirit as a person, with a face, a face that was on fire. But it was a holy fire, like the burning bush. *I had just met God the Holy Spirit.* As it turns out, there are more verses in Scripture that speak of Him as a fire or consuming fire than as the Comforter.

in hopes of stopping the stripping process, but they brought side effects of insomnia to a debilitating degree, dehydration, HIGH blood pressure, dizziness, falling, breaking bones, and nerve bundles being torn loose. By God's grace, He gave me Dr. Roger Billica, an M.D. and a powerful believer in God and how He has designed the body to work. Through my time with him, he gave my body what it needed to heal, and

I pretty well stopped asking God any questions because I no longer cared what the answers were.

1 ½ years later I tapered off steroids and found that I no longer had CIPD. Yeah, God! Thank You!

Three days later I was slammed with joint pain that was so bad, I could hardly breathe. It was the result of such a huge dose of steroids over such a long period of time. I was told it would take 9-12 months for my body to recover and settle down. So, eleven months and two joint surgeries later, I was free—again. During that season there were various responses to me while I was in so much pain. Loneliness, rejections, abandonment, and betrayal to name a few—because who wants to hang out with someone in pain and anguish? I pretty well stopped asking God any questions because I no longer cared what the answers were. Even so, all the way through, I was aware of God's presence, His unwavering love for me, and His peaceful eyes looking at me—far too calm for me in light of the pain I was in.

On the end of this round, I got to go to Cambria, California for two weeks. I stayed right across the street from the beach where I could

Carol Christ



see and hear the Pacific Ocean. Little by little I began to be willing to interact with God again. I spent those days at the beach listening to Him all day. At night, art journaling what He had spoken that day. It was tranquil and so refreshing.

Once back in Colorado, I spent my days living out my new health plan and enjoying God in my garden—summer and fall.

Around the end of fall I noticed that the headache I had on the left side of my head hurt no matter what I did. My speech became jumbled, and my thinking became very random. I had difficulty writing and typing—words seemed impossible.

So, I went to my neurologist at the Univ. of CO. Medical Center in Denver and after 6 ½ hours of having my brain tested for everything under the sun, they concluded, “Your brain works exceptionally well in this controlled environment. That means out there in your life there is something so big, like an iceberg, that you are suppressing, causing your brain this much stress.” I won’t bother telling you how mad I was at this new thing. There just isn’t enough space. This was one too many things. I curled up in a ball with the drumming assault against my soul—why was this happening to me? What did I do? What did I do wrong? Soon enough it became clear to Phil and I that the iceberg was our marriage and apparently NOW was

the time to address it.

Instead of divorcing, which looked like a grand option to me at the time, I decided to go back to the beach for three months, to a sliver of an island called the Outer Banks, off the coast of North Carolina. What was waiting for me there was anything but rest and tranquility. It was an El Niño year, and I had nearly three full months of Nor’ Easter—storms with hurricane force winds and incessant rain, sleet, and, in my case, snow. WHAT???? Through that nightmare, I was stuck indoors where I couldn’t see or hear the

beach or Atlantic Ocean. God did however have a special time with Him planned for me.

He began revealing to me several destructive relational

patterns in my life. He showed me how I had picked up some generational sins: from my Dad, anger & aggression; from my Mom, capitulation & relational bargaining. There were also several more patterns that I had developed by myself along the way. It was exhausting and just too much. My headache really wore me out, so I pretty much slept for two days.

On the third day I decided to try to live again. It was a cold but clear day where the Nor’ Easter wasn’t due in until after nightfall, so I decided to get in my truck, drive over the huge dune and go down to the beach. I had a great time picking up shells, singing, and dancing in the waves. The Lord spoke gently to me,

...His unwavering love for me, and His peaceful eyes looking at me—far too calm for me in light of the pain I was in.

“That means out there in your life there is something so big, like an iceberg, that you are suppressing, causing your brain this much stress.”

There and Back Again and Again A 'Job-ish tale

My response to Him was, "AGAIN, Lord, You seem FAR TOO CALM given my current circumstances."

Carol Christ

and I really just enjoyed Him and myself for several hours. Eventually I realized it was dusk, so I got in my truck and began to drive back over the huge sugar-sand dune to the house.

I got stuck.

In my research on this place I learned there are three venomous snakes that live IN the sand dunes. I had also learned on YouTube how to get unstuck in the sand. So, I got out of my truck, mad as a hornet at God that He couldn't even give me a whole day before He tightened up the VICE GRIP He had on me. I got out my tools: boards to go under the tires, flashlight—because now it was dark—and my shovel. I dug out all the sand from under the belly of the truck where it was suspended—just like the video showed, put the boards under the tires and gently tried to back down off the dune. I could tell I wasn't moving, so I gave it a ton of gas hoping that would help—which of course only suspended the truck AGAIN. With a great deal of blaming, name-calling, and meanness towards God, I repeated that whole cycle for nearly two hours. Yes, I know I am slow, especially when I think I ALREADY KNOW and that I'm RIGHT!

Eventually after suspending the truck for the sixth time—yes, I dug it out five times—I flopped over on my back in the sand, exhausted. As I did, all these next things happened in less than a minute. I remembered I was still in the snakes' habitat but

decided they could just go ahead and kill me, which resulted in my fear subsiding. I could feel the cold sand on my back and warmth on the right side of my face from being up against the tire. I could taste the sand in my mouth, and I saw the heavens—literally.

It was a pitch-dark night, and the sky over the land was clear. The Milky Way was so big and felt like it hung so low that it could brush across my nose like chimes in a breeze. Just then, from the far right, a meteor (shooting star) arched across the sky all the way to the left, brilliant against the myriad of stars. God said, "You said you wanted to see my heavens without all the light pollution." I did say that. My response to Him was, "AGAIN, Lord, You seem FAR TOO CALM given my current circumstances."

Just then I noticed how tall the wall of sand was where I had pitched it for the past two hours. It was taller than the cab of the truck. I was partly in shock and partly in denial. I heard the Lord say, calmly yet firmly, "I let you continue digging all this time so that you would never ever forget that I did not do this TO you, Carol. You dug yourself into this deep stuck hole." Sheepishly, through lots of tears, I reminded Him that He said He would rescue me. He replied back, "I will rescue you OUT of your traction-less, repetitive patterns AS you get up and move towards Me." So, taking Him literally, I got up, got my walking stick and began walking towards where people might be. Just at the top of the

continued

dune I heard a voice out of the darkness ask if I needed help. It was Robert, the 80+ year-old retired fire chief from that very beach. He called for the fire fighters to come pull me out and stayed with me the whole time. Just about the time they pulled the truck up over the dune, and I got back to the house, the Nor' Easter came in.

Many more similar adventures were had during that time. Some were about me. Some were about Him. On one of three warmish days I had with Him on the beach, we had a conversation about Romans 1:20, *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made..."* He asked me what the Atlantic Ocean and my time on the East Coast had shown me about Him. I answered in words that amounted to, "You actually are NOT a tame lion, but You are good." Up to that point, I thought that line from the Chronicles of Narnia was just a metaphor. Now I personally know that God is love and light (and many other lovely things) **AND ALSO** God is a consuming fire. "And Also" has given me a whole new perspective on just about everything.

By the end of May, my time in the Outer Banks was done, and I was back at home in Colorado. While I was gone with the Lord seeing and confronting my destructive relationship patterns, Phil

had been doing the same thing here in Colorado.

We began the quest together to forgive the past 29 years of hurt and to practice the new ways of relating that God had been teaching us. We are learning how to love each other (our neighbor) as we are learning to love ourselves—all in the context of loving God in the vastness of Him loving us first.

"You actually are NOT a tame lion, but You are good."

Finding out that our God is a consuming fire was so very shocking.

Going through so many different seasons of pain is so very hard. I can honestly say that I thought I would be consumed. But the truth is that the wounds of the past and the places where I was stuck in life—that have been harming me and my neighbor—they got consumed. I got to be free.

I am deeply calm now, like Him. I don't need anger or aggression now—I hardly use them anymore. I don't need to capitulate or bargain in my relationships now—I am free. I am no longer relating to God through appeasement, but now I am content to BE in Him—come what may. Now I know that I know that I know that any brokenness that comes up out of me or comes my way—and it does continue to do so—that He will consume it. I get to have greater freedom, AND I get the privilege and joy of living deeper into the presence, relationship, and heart of the Living God. I love Him so!

He said He would rescue me. He replied back, "I will rescue you OUT of your traction-less, repetitive patterns AS you get up and move towards Me."

Stephen Ministry and My Involvement

*...we learn as
Stephen Ministers
that "God is the
cure giver and we
are the care givers".*

Stephen Ministry equips and empowers caregivers—called Stephen Ministers—to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting. The Stephen Ministry logo tells a story—the story of a care receiver's journey from brokenness toward wholeness through the cross of Jesus. It is a journey made possible by "Christ caring for people through people," which is the Stephen Ministry motto.

Why the name Stephen? In the book of Acts, chapter 6, Stephen was chosen to provide caring ministry to those in need. Since the time of the Apostles, caring ministry has been considered a hallmark of the Christian faith community.

Stephen Ministers are laypeople—Christian men and women—trained to provide one-to-one care to people experiencing a difficult time in life, such as grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, relocation, or separation just to mention a few. Stephen Ministers have a passion for bringing Christ's love and care to people during a time of need.

*Bear one another's burdens,
and in this way you will fulfill
the law of Christ*

(Galatians 6:2, NRSV).

My Stephen Ministry experience has helped me grow spiritually because now I take the time to really pray more often and at such a deep level that I have seldom felt before. I believe that God is using me for his glory not because of who I am but because I trust in Him and I am grateful to be able to connect to those in need. I feel that I have deepened my faith as the Holy Spirit molds me into a Christ-centered care giver.

This has helped my personal growth because I see myself growing closer to God by helping others from the heart and not just from an idea that it is what I am suppose to do. I feel so honored to be able to provide emotional and spiritual support for people who are experiencing grief or other life crisis and in this way I am becoming a compassionate companion and a caring Christian friend.

I became a Stephen Minister care giver because when I was in my early 30's I had back surgery and was going through a divorce all at the same time. I was so over-

whelmed that my family wanted me to get professional help but I believed, in my heart, that I needed a spiritual based program with others that had gone thru similar issues to get me thru these events. I was so impressed with the results it yielded in my life by learning that in a time of crisis I can accept my feelings, allow the process to happen and have faith in God by using tools like prayer, journaling, and getting spiritual support from others and I was able to learn that I wasn't alone in my fears. I'm not lying when I say, it was a lot of hard and frustrating mental work but all worth it. I want to give back to others that same awesome feeling I got and walk beside those who are having difficult times in their life and need a way to process in a safe and spiritual environment in order to heal.

Being involved in Stephen Ministry has challenged me by learning that God is working thru me and uses me to listen and help me ask questions that will help my care receiver process. I like the saying that we learn as Stephen Ministers that "God is the cure giver and we are the care givers". It has been a challenge because before taking Stephen Minister training, I wanted to fix people and I have had to let go of the fact that I can't cure my care receiver, but I care for them and let the process happen with God's help.

At first I imagined it being hard to walk alongside my care receiver but the more I place my trust in God the better I get at listening and using the skills I have been taught. My understanding of the different levels of deep pain people go thru with issues that arise has increased tremendously, but knowing that God will be there to help me so I can listen, pray and help my care receiver feels very special to me.

There are many skills I have been able to translate into my everyday life from my experience and continued training as a Stephen Minister such as active listening. I have learned not to react or judge and have sharpened my listening skills and really can empathize with my care receiver. I feel very blessed that I have been given tools to help them on their walk through the rough patches in life.

Love one another as I have loved you .
(John 15:12 RSV).

*....learning that in a
time of crisis I can
accept my feelings,
allow the process to
happen and have
faith in God...*

Margie Michaels



Never Give Up on Praying for Your Neighbors

Now, I have to admit that I wasn't the one praying! My neighbor, a retired pastor, Jim, and his ailing wife were the ones praying for someone to start a women's study in the neighborhood. For 16 years they prayed while I went about my own Christian business, being friendly and thinking I should try sharing my faith with them but not willing to humble myself to build meaningful relationships with them.

For the 16 years I have been in our neighborhood I think I've been thought of as the Fundamentalist who shelters her kids and leads a life holier than thou. Although we've had a few events in our neighborhood, they haven't really built much community. Over the last couple of years I've really felt God calling me to be more involved in my neighbor's lives. God is reminding me that they are all His love, all the while giving me a love for them that I've never had before. After prayer, encouragement from Jim, and worry that I keep having to give back to God, we started a study last October with three from our neighborhood and three from an adjacent neighborhood. That in itself threw me for a loop, but God continued to show me that this was His idea, not mine, and He would create it His way, not mine.

After finishing Ann Voskamp's One Thousand Gifts DVD, the ladies were eager for what was next. I had no idea but thought we would take a break, so I could participate in Council Tree's winter study of The 7 Experiment by Jen Hatmaker. The extrovert part of me really thought I could do both as I (not very successfully) had done in the fall, but after trying one week of The 7 Experiment, God made it clear His plans for me were in my neighborhood. God wasn't interested in my weekly

sacrifices of food and clothes, etc. but was asking me to sacrifice my will to Him and totally give myself to these women. He promised He would provide my spiritual and relational needs, and He has done more than that. I have new friends in Christ that challenge and support me, and the gospel of John has really come alive for me.

Over the last couple of years I've really felt God calling me to be more involved in my neighbor's lives.

We just finished a six-week Margaret Feinberg study called Pursuing God's Beauty (on the book of John), and I'm blown away at how faithful God has been to meet each one of us right where we're at and move us one step closer to Him. Their hunger for God's word has gone from thinking they didn't need to bring a Bible to eagerly taking turns searching the scriptures for their turn to read. We also have all committed to reading all four gospels during Lent. They have truly embraced the study of God's word, and I am humbled to be a part of the journey God has each of them on.

Jesus says in Matthew 28:19-20 to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." I know that God is with me in this, and I'm glad to say that now I am the one praying for my neighbors, that one day they will each reach out and share their love for Jesus and His word with their neighbors.

God wasn't interested in my weekly sacrifices of food and clothes, etc. but was asking me to sacrifice my will to Him and totally give myself to these women.

Mara Davis



A Saab Story

Last October, Jacey and I received a call from Grandma. She informed us that her brother had a family 1983 Saab 900 being stored outside Las Vegas. Since Jacey was approaching “driving age,” she was offering the Saab to be used as a first car...free to take, use and own! Really?!?! A free car?!?! We needed only to go down to Las Vegas and drive it back to Colorado. We were delighted, surprised and a little skeptical. The obvious “responsible parent” questions started forming in our heads: Do we want Jacey to have her own car? Do we want that car to be an older model of a make we are unfamiliar with? (Who owns a Saab???) What potential mechanical problems are we likely going to inherit with this deal? Is it really free? Does it run?

...“hope for the best, but plan for the worst.” In other words, we always seem to be asking, “What could possibly go wrong?” then plan for it or change the plan.

Intent on honoring this family “gift,” we accepted the offer and started making plans to go retrieve it from Nevada. The first step was to make sure it was road worthy, so we waited for Michelle’s Uncle Ben (he lives in Thailand) to be in country so that he could get the car checked out at a local mechanic. In August, her uncle mentioned it was running a “little rough” but thought a few fluid changes and some tires should do the trick. Approximately two months and several hundred dollars (understatement) later, the mechanic deemed the Saab ready and road worthy...we could come pick it up and drive it home!

Jacey and I cleared our schedules, bought one way tickets to Las Vegas, packed our bags, and headed to the desert October 25th...a day marked in infamy! We were so excited to start our traveling—a genuine Dad/Daughter Adventure was underway. I (Kevin) was as excited to spend the next four days

being together as I was actually picking up the Saab. The gift of traveling with my kiddos has been unmatched for me as a parent. I love the alone time and the shared experience. Everything from the drive to the airport to the plane trip, to the coffee breaks and the legendary “In-n-Out” Burger along the way, were truly precious times to spend together.

Having never actually met the mechanic, we texted a meeting point once we landed in Las Vegas. He and his girlfriend walked us to the Saab, which we hadn’t yet seen. It was perfect! And NO rust anywhere due to a general lack of snow, salt, and mag-chloride on the roads! He handed us the keys and off we went. Our plan was to drive halfway to Durango and visit my Dad for a few days, then complete the trip back. Because the Saab was a standard transmission, I would do most of the initial driving and slowly teach Jacey how to manage the clutch on long stretches of highway. It was foolproof... What could possibly go wrong?

Having worked with Poudre Fire for nearly eight years now, I have picked up a few axioms along the way. The most prevalent one is to “hope for the best, but plan for the worst.” In other words, we always seem to be asking, “What could possibly go wrong?” then plan for it or change the plan. I used to think this was pessimistic but now believe it is brilliant! Especially in the fire department where the consequences of something going “wrong” could mean someone’s life.

We were approximately one hour from Flagstaff, three hours into our adventure, heading east when the Saab started having “issues,” which, to be honest, is an understatement. We start-

Jacey & Kevin
Lyon



ed feeling a “lunge/lurch/chiropractic-type-spine-adjustment.” This was not subtle. I actually thought we had dropped the transmission. We pulled over on the side of a busy freeway in the middle of the desert—unpleasant thoughts were being formulated in my head about the incompetence of the mechanics, irritation was welling, entitlement was brewing, and my voice was gaining volume! And then I looked at Jacey, all of 15 ½ years old. What was she doing? Watching me! Her emotions and conclusions were totally based on my reaction to our predicament. She had no category for this, and I quickly realized I was forming it for her. Oh, the conviction came quick. I don’t recall just how many deep cleansing breaths it took, but I paused long enough to calm down and assure her we were safe and going to be okay. We took a moment to pray out loud over the Saab and our situation and came up with a plan.



The following is an abbreviated snapshot of our “plans” as they evolved:

Plan A: Somehow fix the Saab in Flagstaff and continue driving—The mechanics in NV were blaming it on bad gas or “something else” and recommended getting to a NAPA repair shop. So Jacey and I were both on our phones calling every NAPA repair shop in the Flagstaff area—problem was, none of them worked on Saab’s!

Plan B: Tow it to Flagstaff—Unfortunately, no one would work on it anyway, and it was Friday night...in the middle of the desert.

Plan C: Rent a U-Haul and tow it ourselves—We did discover that we

could effectively drive about ten miles at a time before the lunging would overtake us. Then we would wait for fifteen minutes to buy ourselves another ten miles of travel. With only 700 miles to go, that was going to take awhile!

We finally found *Big Dogg Customs U-Haul and Repair Shop*. Yes, it was as sketchy as it sounds, and it was dark—very dark—a desert night kind of dark! (Jacey was now unable to hold in the tears. “What could possibly go wrong?” Apparently lots!) They convinced us it sounded like a fuel filter, replaced it, charged us, and discouraged us from renting a U-Haul. They were confident of their fix and off we went. To *Big Dogg’s* credit, we made it 50 miles past our average before the lunging commenced again.

Now safely in the booming metropolis of Tuba City, AZ we finally panicked (Plan C.5). We tried to keep driving but predictably had to turn around ten miles later. We were NOT going to make it and needed another plan. It was 11pm.

Plan D: I called AAA and started trying to arrange a tow to my Dad’s in Durango—300 miles away. Big money for a tow, but we were desperate. After an hour on the phone, AAA informed us no one wanted to tow us on a Friday night and instructed us to find a room and try again on Saturday.

Jacey and I debriefed the events of the day, deemed it crazy, thanked God out loud again for our safety and each other, and said good night. We woke refreshed, headed to Denny’s and called AAA again. About four hours later, they called back and said the only tow truck in the area broke down and

What was she doing? Watching me! Her emotions and conclusions were totally based on my reaction to our predicament.

A Saab Story continued

God....met us at every turn, or spine-adjusting lurch, in our case. ...it was awesome

was unavailable. The only other tow could come from two more hours away but was unverified. Wow! We laughed out loud this time. (We did a lot of that during the trip.)

Plan E: I called my Dad in Durango, a mere 300 miles away and said I needed him to come rescue us! Ten minutes later he had borrowed his friends truck and trailer and was on his way!

About this time, Jacey and I decided to start listening to “The Shack” on tape and continued driving ten miles at a time toward a slow rendezvous with my Dad. We met up with him around the Four Corners area (really in the middle of the desert), loaded the Saab, and headed to Durango. It was 24 hours after we picked it up at the airport. After much needed rest at my Dad’s ranch, we were ready to finish our trip home.

Plan F: We rented an SUV and a small car carrier from U-Haul and made it safely to Fort Collins. Jacey and I finished *The Shack*, laughed a ridiculous amount, and were grateful to be safe and together. We prayed out loud.

Though the inconvenience and frustration of the whole trip seems obvious, what really struck me about this whole fiasco was Jacey’s response a few days later. I asked what she thought about our adventure with the Saab and her answer was, “It was the best trip EVER!” Why? Because we were together...

What Kevin Learned:

I do not naturally respond well to inconvenience or interruption. What I learned was that this whole trip was exactly that: an inconvenient interruption. And that was what made it beautiful and unpredictable

and special! Plan A was boring, and God knew it. I believe He met us at every turn, or spine-adjusting lurch, in our case. We noticed each other, cried with each other, laughed, prayed, problem-solved, and relied on each other. It was awesome!

My daughter is a capable, intelligent, prayerful, strong, present, needy, sensitive, beautiful gift to Michelle and I and to this planet!

Jacey learned how to manage a car disaster—and that may prove priceless in her driving future.

I learned more about Saab’s and the desert terrain than I ever wanted to know.

Far more went “right” than went “wrong”—and I find myself grateful for this shared adventure!

What Jacey Learned:

Who to call when your car is violently jerking back and forth.

How to calmly manage a car disaster. Being as my dad is my biggest role model, I learned how to look at the best in the worst.

Tuba City is not where you want to be in the middle of the night with no escape, but Denny’s was spectacular.

Being with my dad, just us, was needed, and it ended up being a better trip than I could have imagined. Also, I learned how amazing my dad is and how he can handle any situation (even with his daughter in the car).

I learned that I am a lot stronger than I thought. When we got to the sketchy mechanic workshop, I broke into tears—all the anxiety and stress of the day couldn’t be held back anymore. I learned that being strong for others makes me stronger than I had realized, and after crying, I felt ready to take on anything (not really, but theoretically).



Chew What Is In Your Mouth

One of the many privileges of being employed as a Christian is that prayer is part of the work. On a recent day given to prayer I found myself having lunch on a park bench at Civic Center Park in Loveland. The fall air was warm, the breeze was low and it was one of those moments where largely things seemed to feel right.

On unique days such as these I do what I can to go after God. I have a more acute sense of want-

ing to hear something from The Spirit. Perhaps find some insight for a troubling situation, receive some comfort for the rough edges in life or gain some vision for what is to come.

The lunch menu was an unimpressive line up of leftovers, two cold chicken drum sticks eaten out of Tupperware. Yet, as I ate a distinct impression came over me and I think it was from the Almighty. In typical fashion I found myself racing through another meal taking one bite after another before the previous had a chance to even be tasted let alone enjoyed. A sentence came to mind, *chew what is in your mouth*. I did. Then again, bite-chew-swallow, all before taking another bite. Surprisingly, this method of consumption was liberating.

Not surprisingly, it served as a

metaphor. I had the deep sense the Lord was attempting some instruction. Something along the lines of, *Bert, engage and complete what is right in front of you before cramming more in, its better this way*. No lightning bolts, no tear soaked conversation and no wisdom from an ancient saint, just some leftovers.

With great confidence I know I have not learned this lesson in the sense that it is how my actual life functions

for I still cram way too much in. Yet because of the incredibly practical means the Great One used to communicate, I'm reminded at many meals to start at it again and just chew what is in my mouth.



I have a more acute sense of wanting to hear something from The Spirit.

Bert Wright



My MERGE Experience



Hello Friends, It is I Wesley Borden writing to you about my time spent working for Covenant Merge Ministries last summer. I suppose I should start with some sort of prelude in case you are new to this whole thing. I grew up in the church. My family has been at this church for the past 10 years, and my mother is your wonderfully talented Children's Pastor. Not long ago my family (all seven of us) spent six months in Nicaragua. We grew closer to the Lord together, studied Spanish, and jumped in on every ministry opportunity we could find.

Fast Forward to the final months of my high school days. I was looking for something to do over the summer. Something that will be fun, educational, and hopefully involve monetary payment (college is expensive).



Wes talking with girl at Fairview Rec Center

to fundraise to do it. I knew some Merge people, so I applied knowing that Merge does not usually hire people straight out of high school; I figured it was a long shot. As I prayed and moved through the application process it became more and more clear that this was the option God had for me.

After a Phone interview with Dale Lusk (Director of Merge Ministries); I knew I would be doing construction support and that I would either be doing it in Alaska or Ecuador. Dale asked if I had a preference, and I asked that he pray about it and send me where I would be most needed. I guess I was needed in both places because a month later I received my itinerary which included flights to both Anchorage and Quito.

Option One was quick to present itself through my Grandfather. This option was to work for the Forest Service trail crew in the Bighorn National Forest. This option would have been super awesome and I would have raked in the big bucks, so I went through the application process. Although I didn't take this option, I did go and volunteer for a week, and loved working on the trail crew.

Option Two showed up a bit later. I would work somewhere doing unspecified missionary things for Merge, and to top it off I would need

I sent out support letters and met with the Council Tree Mission Team, and was able to raise the \$2000 needed (thank you all so much). About a week and a half after Graduation I flew to Anchorage, and fell asleep on the couch of Kate and Phil Cannon (Kate is our Associate Superintendent, Rick Mylander's daughter). Above me was the mounted neck, head, and antlers of a caribou.

The next day I moved into the Arigaa house across the dirt alley from First Covenant church of Anchorage. On that same day the first

Wes Borden



continued

group of my summer arrived from Nebraska.

I soon learned that my job had little to do with construction. A typical day consisted of meal preparation, cleanup, and work with local ministries. The other part of my job was to work with the

church group and encourage them to serve and engage with the local church and ministries. After the group from Nebraska I had a group from Southern California and a group from Northern California. All the groups were fantastic. I also

worked with some other Merge staff members. Kate Cannon was the tour facilitator, and Alex and Amanda Velasco were also in Anchorage with us for the first and last group.

One of my favorite Ministries to work with in Anchorage was The Fairview Rec Center and Kid's Kitchen. kidskitchenak.com/home I also got to do some other stuff like climbing flat top (a mountain) and visiting the Wildlife Conservation Center. alaskawildlife.org/

After a little more than a month in Anchorage I took a long flight to LA and then another long flight to Miami followed by yet another long flight after which I arrived in Quito, Ecuador. Upon arriving I slept in the mall across the street from the

airport and waited for the church group from San Diego, CA to arrive. When they got there we got aboard a bus and I became the wake everyone up to drink water guy as we drove up into the Andes to the village of Punkuwayku. In Punkuwayku we lived in the church , supported

the church in building a wall around their side yard, and ran children's programs. We also had the opportunity to go on hikes and walks around the area, including one hike to the top of a nearby mountain where we slid down from the top on cardboard boxes or on our feet.



Climbing in Alaska

I then had a week off which I used to hang out with the other Merge staff Mandy, Ricardo, Daniela, Flor, Aubrey, and Esau. The next week I went with Esau, Ricardo, and Flor to Cayambe with a group from Warren, PA. Oh, and My sister Olivea was there too. We worked on a project to build a home for at risk kids with another group (from Coshocton Christian Tabernacle with Mandy and Daniela) for the Santiago Partnership (Joel and Kim Delp).

It was great, and I'd love to tell you more about the things that you personally care about, so If you have any questions about anything, or if you just want to catch up, call me at 970-631-7387 or shoot me an E-mail at wesborden@gmail.com.



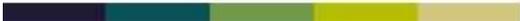
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Have a reflection or story you'd like to share? Let's start by contacting the office.