

THE AGAPIAN

May 2014 — Agape Church of the Brethren

How a Tattoo saved a man's life - From prison to freedom

I spent a weekend in prison. I spent with a group of guys who I came to love like my own brothers. I served on the team of a prison ministry called KAIROS. In order to protect the life of the principal in this story, I cannot share who I was with or where I was.

We sat inside the chapel area in "family groups" at five different tables to discuss impressions on what is known as "a short course in Christianity." During some "down time" on Saturday, I asked if anyone wanted to explain the significance of any of their ink. A brother, who is serving a life sentence, quickly jumped in. His tattoo was a view of Christ on the cross. At the foot of the cross, he had a gang symbol for the gang he had been "representin'" since 1983. He told us: "My religion is ***** (his gang) but my faith is in Jesus." Now the fact that this man was intelligent was obvious. He had a real gift for writing and he gave incredibly insightful summaries to our table discussion talks.

But this statement bothered me. How can he consider faith as something different from religion? When I asked him, he said: "religion is what you practice but faith is what you believe in." I thought I understood his perspective, but for some reason the misuse of the words bothered me. And it isn't that I am that concerned about abuse of the English language (keep reading my blog, that will become obvious). Something didn't set right in my spirit. He said that even though his gang is known for violence, enslaving people to drugs, and coercive recruiting, originally they intended to be a positive group. His desire was to restore them to a positive perspective. That, he said, was why he had the tattoo of Jesus on the cross mixed in

with his gang symbol. It was then that he then told us that he was trying to make his gang "way of life" an official religion so that he and his fellow gang-members can wear their colors, just like the Muslims wear the Kufe.

Gang colors would cause a powder keg to erupt on the prison campus. Sitting on my left were two Hispanics. As soon as this gang leader mentioned the name of his gang they withdrew and became quiet. The tension soared at the table. There are subtle power struggles going on in the prison beyond what we outsiders can easily see. I started praying!!! I remembered that the ethos of approach to the men in the prison during the weekend was to be: "Listen, Listen, Love, Love and never judge." So, I didn't directly challenge his statement, but I questioned his use of words in order to help him consider that faith in Christ is a way of life.

I could hardly sleep that night. In the course of the conversation on Saturday, he told us that converting to Christianity would cost him his life. He told us that he would defend his fellow gang members to the death and that in the course of his defense; he had already been shot with 6 bullets on three different occasions. But the fact was: the Holy Spirit was calling him to Jesus. Joel, my table leader asked me to "step up" and be a little more direct. We all prayed about the situation, the fact of gang violence and the cost of discipleship.

God was calling him to Jesus. And for this man, that wasn't a simple call. God's call reminded me of those early Jewish followers who died for their faith. It reminded me of the early Roman converts who were slaughtered in the arenas. It reminded *(continued on pg 4)*

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Free Garage Sale- May 22-23

To refresh everyone's memory on this event, 4 years ago, the Service Nurture Group had a great idea to de-clutter our "stuff" and help others by giving it away. Not wanting to do a traditional garage sale with pricing everything, we decided to make it FREE and see what happened.

The results were amazing! The fellowship hall was full of "stuff," people came steadily, and at the end we had a small pile to donate to Goodwill. One surprise was that people WANTED to give something for what they got, so we put out a jar for donations to give to the food bank. A total of over \$300 was collected and given to the Associated Churches Food Bank.

Year #2 - we thought, let's try it again! Same results, and same outcome. Year #3 - pretty much the same thing, but there were 19 people waiting in line outside the doors when we opened. The BIG stuff went fast and the first morning was crazy! Both years we had a dozen or so boxes that we donated to the Salvation Army.

The Service Nurture Group is no longer functioning, so this has become the AGAPE CHURCH responsibility. We hope everyone will step up and help make this (obviously) needed event happen again this year. A handful of people cannot do it - we need a village.

SIGN-UP SHEETS ARE ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT BOARD. Please sign up for any and all time slots where you can help. Tuesday, May 20 will be a primary day for setting up tables, sorting and organizing the stuff, and getting ready in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Wednesday, May 21 will be a continuation of duties until the work's done.

WE NEED AT LEAST 12 PEOPLE ON THURSDAY MORNING. As all garage sales, the first morning is the biggest, and last year we were woefully understaffed. We are open from 9-4, so morning and afternoon times are available - if you can't commit to 5 hours - sign up for what you CAN do. FRIDAY AFTERNOON IS CLEAN UP although we consolidate and tear down as we eliminate the stuff, there's a certain amount of packing up and moving out at the end.

SO - we hope you're de-cluttering your own areas, save and KEEP all of it until after Mother's Day, and then the Woods Room will be a collection area as we begin the 5th year of offering a FREE Garage Sale to those in the community who need it! Questions - as somebody and we'll be giving more details through April and early May.



Looking Forward to the Real Mother's Day

Mothering is a ministry to the future. It's a ministry that, in the end, only God fully sees.

by [Barbara Rainey](#)

My first memories of Mother's Day are sitting as a child in church as the minister recognized all the mothers. I remember them standing in recognition of their day. I also remember them all wearing corsages. It was a tradition in that generation, and somehow the men knew it was part of their jobs to provide the corsages for Mother's Day Sunday.

By the time I became a mother, corsages had vanished, but recognition in church on Sunday morning remained. In my early mom years, I felt funny standing in church, as if that role still belonged only to my mother and not to me. But by the time I had three or four kids, I was firmly established in my new identity. As my daughter Ashley said during her fourth pregnancy, "I don't know what happened to the old Ashley. She got lost somewhere along the way." Mother was indelibly who I was, and the vestiges of the old me were now to be found only in photo albums.

Honestly, Mother's Day was usually somewhat of a disappointment to me. The inherent promise and expectation of a day set aside to honor mothers was never met. It's not that my husband didn't try. He always bought me something; usually it was a rose bush or another plant for the yard, which he knew I liked. And my kids always made me a sweet card or a crayoned picture in Sunday school. They all said, "Happy Mother's Day," and gave me kisses and hugs. But then everyone needed lunch and naps, and there were squabbles to resolve and needs to be met ...

The kind of honor I longed for and needed in those harried years of selfless, endless labor was not to be found on the second Sunday in May. It's not possible for children to really appreciate you for the enormity of your service. What I wanted was a day free from sibling rivalry and a simple, genuine, "Thanks, Mom," that was unprompted by my husband or the Sunday school teacher.

In hindsight, I now understand what I longed for is only possible when your children grow up and become parents themselves. Then they begin to "get it"!

You see, mothering is a ministry to the future. It's a very private, unseen ministry. It's like a long-term, 20-year investment in which you cannot withdraw any of your money until the 20 years is up. You place your bets and then wait to see the outcome many years ahead. In mothering, there are moments of glory when you see hints that your investment is paying off, but they are not permanent until the end.

Interestingly, it's only now that my children are grown that I really appreciate my own mother. And even so, I really have no idea what sacrifices, worries, and suffering she endured for me and my brothers. Only God knows, and He is the One who will give the ultimate honor when He says one day, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

And that is the real Mother's Day. May your focus be on the honor to come on that day, and may you raise your children to walk closely with Jesus all their days.

And remember, as I so often forgot in the daily-ness of life, that a mother's job is laborious not because it is small, but because it is gigantic. Mothering is the most important calling on a woman's life. Mothers can indeed change the world.

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Bridal Shower

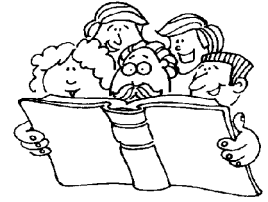
“Invitations” were distributed through the mailboxes for a Grocery/Kitchen Shower for Ross Robison and Holly Kearney. (If you were missed, contact Beth or Judy.) A table will be available in the narthex for your gifts beginning May 4. Ross and Holly will be present on May 18 to visit with you and express their thanks. Punch and cake will be available after worship in the narthex for the celebration.



FAITH
HOPE
& LOVE

THE SONSHINE CLASS....

will begin a new study on June 1. “On those days when French fries litter the floor of your car, when you think bad words about other drivers, when your smile hides an anxious heart—in those moments when you fall short of all you’d hoped to be—what does God see when He looks at you?”



Lisa Harper is a master storyteller and author of A Perfect Mess. Participants are encouraged to purchase their own book to contemplate the interactive questions, personal reflections and group discussion that accompanies the book.

SECRET GAL PALS

Those cute bags and packages near the mailboxes have been fun to watch and anticipate the goodies inside. For those ladies who participated in our Secret Gal Pals program, the time for revealing is nearly here. We plan to share through April, and get together in early May to see who was sneaking around and sharing the love!



(continued from pg 1) me of the Brethren and Mennonite farmers who gave their lives and farms in order to create the underground railroad and stop slavery in the US. It reminded me of the courage that believers had in WWII when they hid our Jewish brothers and sisters, sometimes at the cost of their own lives. These were people who rejected the doctrine of the empire and the false forms of Christianity that mix politics with religion in order to justify racism, extensive materialism, oppression and war. They are people that Charlotte, a beautiful Jewish woman who is my friend and next-door neighbor, would call “sincere Christians” because their faith isn’t about domination, but serving humanity like Jesus did. As God was calling this man to Himself, our table looked at Jesus’ words “if anyone seeks to gain (maintain control of) his or her life, they will lose it. If they lose their life, they will gain eternal life.” That man was faced with a real hard choice. He was faced with physical life and spiritual death or physical death and spiritual life.

At the closing, he went to the microphone and said, “You all know what I have been representin’. I have been representin’ since 1983, but now, I represent Jesus.” Pray for Him. I won’t give his name, because I don’t want to paint the bull’s-eye on his back, but the Lord knows who he is. Pray that God use this man to bring the peace of Christ to that campus. Those prisoners became the Lord’s freemen. They were set free from sin, from prejudice, and from unforgiveness.

-Pastor Phil

AGAPE can Help!!!!

Annual Conference Service Project

The COB Annual Conference will partner this year with the YMCA/YWCA of Columbus Ohio for the annual "Witness to the Host City".

The Witness Commission will be collecting Men and Women's socks for our delegate to take to Annual Conference, July 2-6.

There will be a collection basket set out in the Narthex from May 18 – June 29.

Thank all of you for your donations !!

FOOD BANK news

First of all, THANKS to all the volunteers working the Food Bank in May. Your service is very much appreciated. The Food Bank continues to need our donations to help those in need in the 46815 zip code. We want to emphasize the following items for the May collection.

CATSUP, DRY BEANS, VEGETABLE OIL, TOILET PAPER, KLEENEX, DISH SOAP AND TOOTHBRUSHES.

Thank all of you for your donations !!

Diana, Jim, Ron

Women's Fellowship

June 6-7 is the Women's Retreat at Winona Lake! If you'd just like to come up for the day and enjoy the Art Fair, we'd love to see you! Contact Peg Robison or Kara Morris for more details.

WORRY BRINGS STRESS, GOD BRINGS REST.

**Fear says we can't.
Faith says we can.**

God gives us what we need when we need it, which isn't necessarily what we want when we want it.

VBS 2014 - JUNE 18/19 AND 25/26

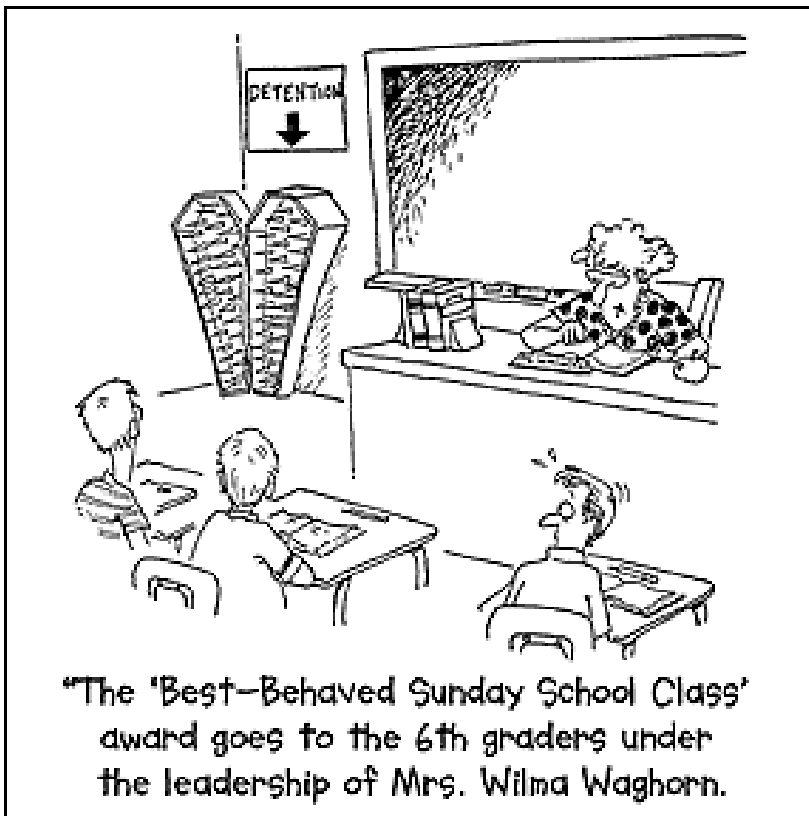
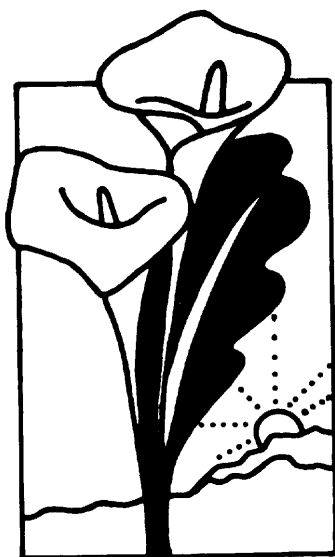
SAVE THE DATES

Plans are underway for our annual VBS with the theme "In the Beginning, God Created. . . the HEAVENS." We are trying a Wednesday/



Thursday night format for 2 weeks this year to better fit our schedule and we hope you mark calendars now to participate. Details to come!

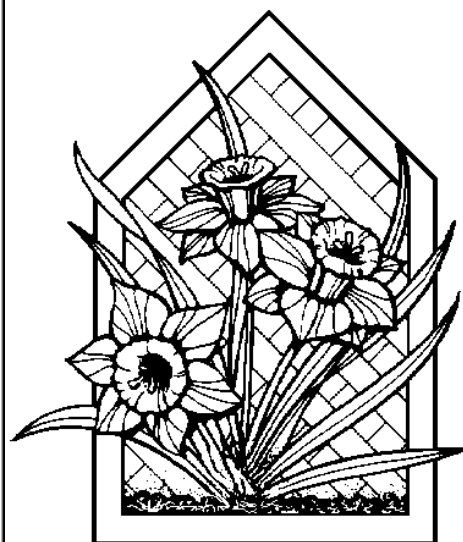




"The 'Best-Behaved Sunday School Class' award goes to the 6th graders under the leadership of Mrs. Wilma Waghorn."



"Remind me never to ask the Youth Group to help fold the church bulletins again."



MAY 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 6:30 Aerobics Laura LeMay Kyle & Kendra Morris	2 8:00 a.m. Men's Break-fast* Kayla Fox Gene & Mary Jo Wort	3
4 Council Meeting	5 4:00-7:30 Piano 6:30 Aerobics Polling set-up, evening	6 6 am-6 pm Polling 6:30 Youth Group 6:30 Scouts Cameron Shipe	7 12:00 Senior Moments 7:30 Choir	8 6:30 B4G 6:30 Aerobics Duaine & Bette Scribner	9	10
11 Ranee Robison Mother's Day	12 4:00-7:30 Piano 6:30 Aerobics Bill Barnhart	13 6:30 Youth Group 6:30 Scouts 6:30 Crafty NG*	14 7:30 Choir Bonnie Roebel	15 6:30 B4G 6:30 Aerobics	16	17 Lauren Hale Jim & Deb Wetzel
18 Deacon's Meeting Wedding Shower for Ross Robison	19 4:00-7:30 Piano 6:30 Aerobics	20 Garage Sale Set-up 6:30 Youth Group 6:30 Scouts Lowell & Rose Black	21 Garage Sale Set-up 7:30 Choir	22 9 am-4 pm Garage Sale 6:30 B4G 6:30 Aerobics	23 9 am-4 pm Garage Sale Lowell Black Joe & Charlotte Schafer	24 Rick Flickinger
25 Memorial Day	26	27 6:30 Youth Group 6:30 Scouts Brian & Martha McComas	28 10:00 Daytime N G 7:30 Choir Phil Reynolds	29 6:30 B4G 6:30 Aerobics	30	

* Denotes an event held outside the church. Contact the person in charge of that event for details. **Red** = Anniversary **Blue** = Birthday



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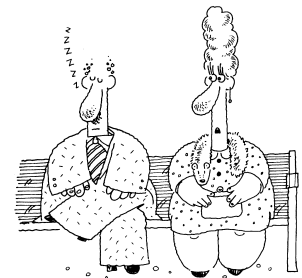
Sent to our friends at:



Continuing the Word of Jesus—Peacefully. Simply. Together.

Senior Moments

The next Senior Moments meeting is on **Wednesday, May 7th at 12:00 noon**. Bring a covered dish to share!



Honor our Moms.....



with new books donated to Kate's Kart. A cart is available near the bulletin boards for your new books. Forms are also there that can be completed with your mother's name and then post them on the bulletin board. Books will be collected through Mother's Day. This is an activity from the Parish Commission.