

# SIGNALS

NEWSLETTER for CHURCH NEWS, EVENTS & INSPIRATION

Spring 2007

## What LIFE is Really Like

As a pastor, I've found that the people who have the hardest struggles with faith seem to be the ones who were given a "children's story" theology.



That's the theology that says, "Every time your cat gets lost, it will come home when you pray. Every time your brother is sick, he will get well if you pray." It's similar to the televangelist theology, "Send the check and your prayers will be answered. You'll get the new car; you'll find the right spouse, and your kids will start getting good grades and respecting their curfew." But sometimes the cat stays lost, the brother gets sicker, and the tele-evangelist has two wives and you have no car. When Christianity's earthly benefits are overstated, people have a tendency to throw the whole belief system out when suffering comes.

While some Christians overstate the benefits of Christianity, there are others who downplay its miraculous power. Liberals can sometimes strip the miraculous from the life of Jesus in an attempt to reconcile the Gospels to their own disappointment with God or their own limited experience. But

the truth of Christianity embraces both the misery and miracles of life.

The first Adventist Church I attended was in the inner-city. There I learned African-American theology, which is realistic and yet very optimistic. It is full of pain but also full of hope. It was born in the lowest places of human suffering and yet rises all the way to the joyful throne of God. It is heavenly-minded AND incredible earthly good. (Remember we just celebrated the national holiday to commemorate the MINISTER who led the Civil Rights Movement.)

African-American theology focuses our hearts on the reality that there is misery and miracles running side-by-side in our journey here on earth. That is the picture I find in the Scriptures. You see Jesus beginning his earthly life while other children are dying at the hands of Herod. You have Jesus healing while John the Baptist is dying. It usually isn't explained why, but suffering is expected by the followers of Jesus. He clearly told them again and again that there is a cross before there is a crown. He said, "In this world you will have trouble... in Me, you will find peace." We are promised peace and purpose, not prosperity or a get-out-of-suffering-free card.

So as I've gone through this journey with my mother, there have been things I don't understand. I don't understand why God didn't send me a message before I took my family to the Midwest for Christmas. God has

redirected me a thousand times when there was something important to be done. Why would He not tap me on the shoulder or whack me in the forehead and ask me to cancel the trip. That's what I did the year before when my mom was sick and in pain. It cost us \$1,000 but we didn't care. She's our top priority. Couldn't the test results have come back before we left instead of the day after Christmas? Couldn't He have made it so that she wouldn't be in pain while I was thousands of miles away?

At the same time, I see the incredible blessings of God in our lives, especially in this difficult time. One Sunday I felt this terrible melancholy feeling thinking about my parents who haven't spoken in 8 years since the divorce. With the doctors giving



ing my mom 1-2 months to live, I felt sad that these two people I love so much haven't made peace with each other. So I prayed.

And I realize that when you pray for someone to change their mind, your prayers cannot brainwash them. A good son can't pray an alcoholic father out of drinking. But we're told to pray anyway. Perhaps there's a spiritual energy that is sent--a spiritual influence. And that makes it easier for receptive people to do the right thing. So I prayed for my mom and Dad. That same day my Dad called me and said he was sitting in a Catholic Church when God impressed him to send my mom a rosary that was made from the roses at her mother's funeral. Then they talked on the phone, and my mom said she was filled with peace. That was the biggest unfinished business she had in her life.

My mom and I have story after story of God's guidance and blessing. In summary, we're not surprised by suf-



# In God's Loving Hands

Pastor Sam's mother, **Kathleen F. McKee**, 63, of Santa Clara, passed away peacefully on Jan. 31 in her home surrounded by her loving family.

Kathy served as a teacher for Head-Start Preschools. She later became a medical transcriptionist and served several Chicago-area hospitals and taught courses at the College of Lake County.

Kathy was given 13 extra years of life through a kidney transplant that enabled her to see Sam's wedding and four beautiful years with her grandchildren. Kathy loved the Lord as a faithful Catholic and went to rest in Him while holding her son Samuel's hand. In lieu of flowers, please donate to Mi-



sericordia home for medically challenged children, 6300 North Ridge, Chicago IL 60606 and remember to become an organ donor and give the gift of life to others.



**Shirley Lindholm Chiasson** passed away on January 31st at the age of 81. Sunnyvale Church Member

David Chiasson is grateful that he has so many fond memories of his mother. She had a deep relationship with Jesus, and she passed that on to her children.

She led her family into the Adventist faith. She was the first employee of James Dobson when he first started Focus on the Family in Southern California.

The family would prefer instead of flowers, that any donations be sent to: the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research Grand Central Station P.O. Box 4777 New York, NY 10163



Joyce Karen Reece, mother of Sunnyvale member Gary Reece, passed away on December 18, 2006. In addition to raising her own four children, she served the youth of the Adventist Church as a Master Guide in Pathfinders. Pray for Gary and all of our members who are mourning the loss of loving friends and family.

*Continued from front cover...*

## What LIFE is Really Like

fering, although it breaks our hearts. And we're not surprised by blessings either. We expect it from the God of love who showed us His face in the life of Jesus. And the stories of His life are a beautiful mix of joy and pain, of weddings and funerals, of life and death, of the badness of men and the goodness of God.

And as the calendar marched toward Easter, my mother and I were thinking of Jesus bravely carrying His cross--and ours--to his moment of death. And we walked together to the end of her earthly life, with a God who knows the path well, whose love is strong enough to face it, and eventually rise again.

It was the way it should be at the end--the way it always was--her and I facing something bigger than us, but doing it together, holding hands and saying our prayers. And on January 31 at about 2 a.m., I saw her breathing short peaceful breaths and I knew it was her time to go and rest in God. So I kissed her on the forehead, I said, "I love you mom," and I began saying the prayer she had taught me when I was a little boy. And the last thing she felt was my kiss, and the last sound she heard was my voice saying the Lord's prayer.

And I felt the truth of this Scripture: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life... neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We walked this path with much hurt but also with much hope, with tears of pain, but also many, many tears of joy.

This is what life with Jesus is really like, and I'm more grateful than ever that it is a life that never truly ends.

Thanks for your love that carries me and so many others, — Pastor Sam

# NEW SERIES: BUSINESS spirituality

Saturdays  
February 24, March 3 & 10  
9:15 & 11:45am

**February 24 - March 10**

Come and hear three top leaders from the business world share how spirituality has enriched their lives, guided their careers, and given them a purpose that goes way beyond simply making a profit. Here's the biographies of our esteemed guest speakers:



## February 24 **Greg Jamison,** President & CEO San Jose Sharks

As CEO of the San Jose Sharks, Greg Jamison has overseen the transformation of the Sharks into one of the National Hockey League's most respected and successful franchises. In his nine seasons as president, **THE TEAM HAS ADVANCED TO THE STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS SEVEN TIMES**, including the franchise's first-ever appearance in the Western Conference Finals in 2004.

Jamison arrived in San Jose after a notable stint as vice president of business operations with the Indiana Pacers of the National Basketball Association from 1987-93. From 1980-87, Jamison served as director of marketing for the Dallas Mavericks, where he was pivotal in raising the club from expansion team status to one of the most respected front offices in the NBA. Jamison's career in athletics began in 1977 with a three-year stint as director of marketing for Athletes in Action, a Christian amateur sports organization.

**A HEART FOR THE COMMUNITY:** In March 2001, Jamison presided over the renaming of San Jose Arena to Compaq Center at San Jose, and later the HP Pavilion. This important agreement also created the HP Pavilion Community Fund, which provides a minimum of \$500,000 annually to community endeavors throughout the Bay Area.

Since Jamison's arrival, the Sharks have also implemented numerous creative programs to benefit the Bay Area community. First and foremost

was the creation of The Sharks Foundation — established to meet the educational, social, and cultural needs of the local community. Last year, The Sharks Foundation donated nearly \$100,000 in cash to seven beneficiaries and a total of \$3.6 million since its inception. Other community-related programs, such as the innovative Reading Is Cool program, clearly place the Sharks at the forefront of community relations and strengthen the team's policy of being a good neighbor to Bay Area residents.

## March 3 **John Brandon,** Long-time Silicon Valley Executive

John Brandon has served as **VICE PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAS AND ASIA PACIFIC FOR APPLE COMPUTER SINCE 2001**. Before joining Apple, he spent twenty-four years with other high technology companies. He also leads a team of Silicon Valley executives who speak at the nation's top business schools on the subjects of integrity and business ethics. John lives in Atherton, California with his wife and three children.



## March 10 **Barbara Taylor,** Corporate Executive.

Barbara attended the University of Denver and has been in Sales and Marketing for the past 30 years. Her Sales and Marketing experience has covered the **HOTEL INDUSTRY, PLAYBOY INTERNATIONAL, GENERAL MILLS, LORD JEFF SPORTSWEAR, BARLO INC., AND BETWEEN U.N.ME, INC.** She taught a course at the University of Colorado on Professional Women in Sales and Marketing. She was selected by Corporate Connection Magazine as one of six Women to Watch in the 90's. Barbara resides in Copper Mountain, Colorado where she is helping to plant a Church.

# Church News...



## *Resurrection Celebration*

11:45 am Saturday,  
April 7, 2007

Don't miss our combined Easter service at 11:45 am on April 7. Our special service will feature:

- The Sunnyvale Church Choir
- Compelling Biblical Dramas
- Contemporary Praise Songs
- A Children's Story
- And a few other surprises to fill us with joy and hope.

Remember it's a great day to invite friends, neighbors and others who need to hear and experience God's hope. There will be no 9:15 am service. Sabbath School begins at 10:30 am. If you are able and energetic, please park at Fremont High School so we have the best spaces for guests and seniors.



## *Annual Mexico Mission Trip Yard Sale*

The Mexico Mission Trip Yard Sale benefiting the high school mission trip is March 4. Please save your good old stuff for our Yard Sale. The storage bin is in the parking lot for your convenience. For more information, please contact Connie Walikonis at [cwalikonis@juno.com](mailto:cwalikonis@juno.com) or 650-595-3093.



## *Office Manager Needed*

Office Manager needed for the Sunnyvale Church Office. 24 hours per week. Computer skills are re-

quired. Experience with Page-maker, Indesign, Powerpoint and Dreamweaver helpful. The most important characteristic we're looking for is a heart for God and for people. Training would begin in March. If interested, please send your resume to:

[office@sunnyvalesda.org](mailto:office@sunnyvalesda.org)



## *The Lord's Supper*

Saturday, March 31

There will be communion at both services. The fellowship hall will be open from 9:00 am - 9:30 am and 11:30 am - 11:45 am for those who wish to participate in the traditional foot-washing that Jesus modeled in John 13. Guests are welcome to observe or participate.



653 W. Fremont Ave.  
Sunnyvale, CA 94087

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

