

November 2023

Garden Gleanings

A monthly publication of the Garden Community Church

Pastor Craig's Farwell

Pastor Craig Miller's last Sunday as Pastor of Garden Community Church was October 15, 2023. On his final Sunday preaching, Scot Loyd presented Craig & Julie with a sign "Be still Let Go and Let God". A potluck lunch was held following the service.

Craig joined the pastoral staff in 2016, as an associate pastor, part time helping with pastoral things in the transition time after Pastor Gary retired. In 2018, Craig accepted the head pastor position. Garden was privileged to be able to grow from Pastor Craig's teaching from the pulpit for the past 8 years. But all in God's timing, Craig felt the renewed call to continue pursuing the vision God gave Craig and Julie to develop a place of retreat for pastors and missionaries. Thank you Craig and Julie for their years of service to Garden as Pastor. Be sure to keep praying for Craig and Julie as they follow God's leading in developing the vision for a place of retreat for Pastors and Missionaries.



TO THE LEAST OF THESES

Our Annual Fall Missions Conference was held on November 3-5. The theme was *To the Least of These*.

Friday evening we heard from some of our own missionaries about their different ministries. Elwyn & Linda Goossen shared of their ministry in Brazil with Harvest Radio. Joe & Denise Goossen shared about their recent visit to Georgia and about how the ministry in Ukraine is still carrying on during all the conflict. Peter & Rachel Hansen were also able to join us for the weekend and share about their roll in helping missionaries across the world with Ethnos360.



Saturday morning was a work day at Camp David. Many hands meant that lots of things were able to be accomplished in a short amount of time. Special thanks to Dale Friesen and Gerhard Fast for bringing their skid steer and dump trailer to help speed up the process of hauling away many loads of branches that were cut down. Other projects included spreading mulch around landscaping, painting a curb red, power washing a shed and screws were tighten down on a deck.



TO THE LEAST OF THESES



Sunday morning Susanna Goossen shared during the Sunday school hour about her summer working at Camp David and her ministry to the kids that attended camp. Ben Smith, the director of Camp David, shared about Camp David and also brought the morning message. Following the service a potluck lunch was enjoyed in the fellowship hall.

Thank you to the Missions Committee for planning a great weekend.



ADULT/CHILD PRAYER MINISTRY

Brayden Klaassen—Ernie & Florene Goering

Ernie & Florene—What a privilege to lift each other in prayer, especially the children.

Brayden—Ernie & Florene’s prayers are greatly appreciated now and always. It is comforting knowing that I have prayer partners praying for me. Thank you.



Harper Kohls—Eldon & Eva Pankratz/Norv & Ev Schrag

Norv & Ev—What a delightful 45 minutes the Kohls family was to us when they called, asking if they could come for a short visit. It was such a pleasure to interact with Harper, (our prayer child), Karlee and John, these contented children. God bless these young parents for teaching their children by example how to respect the elderly.

Jenna Nelson—Sharon Smith

Sharon—Jenna has had a special place in my heart since we were pen pals when she was six years old. I have prayed that Jenna would continue to grow in the knowledge and wisdom and the love of God, and that she would be a light to those around her. She is beautiful inside and out. I love how her face lights up when she smiles!



Greyson Hanzlicek—Barbara Nelson

Barbara—I have enjoyed sitting in front of Greyson and his family in church for sometime. I was very excited when they drew his name as my prayer pal. I pray for him and his family. I pray he will continue to grow in the knowledge of Jesus and also what He has done and continues to do for us and that the Lord will give his parents wisdom and guidance as they nurture him.



Garden
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Vonnie's Views

Recently I switched up my prayer plan to use the familiar ACTS format: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, & Supplication. I printed the acronym on a single sheet which I fill out every Wednesday morning to pray for the coming week. Over the next few months, I've been unpacking the ACTS format and sharing how it is helping me to pray in a more focused way. This month I'll focus on Thanksgiving.

What is thanksgiving? The dictionary defines it as "the expression of gratitude, especially to God." In ancient Israel, a fellowship offering was an expression of thanks to God (Leviticus 7:11-15). It was offered at the tabernacle to praise God for salvation from distress, death, or sickness. The worshiper was to bring an animal sacrifice plus leavened and unleavened bread. The person who brought the thanks offering would share the meal with the priest.

As I was pondering the best way to give thanks to God, it occurred to me that a list that I pray over might not be the most genuine way to thank God! (I wouldn't want my husband, child, or grandchild to come read a list to me of things that they're thankful for!)

But I love getting a sweet thank-you note in the mail. I cherish a spontaneous hug with a whispered thanks. I treasure hand-drawn pictures my grandkids make for me. To me, those are the best ways of receiving gratitude.

So, this part of my prayer is usually not written down or scripted—unless there is a specific focus that I want to spend a week praying over. Sometimes during this part of my prayer time, I'll play a song that expresses my feelings or get out the hymnbook to read or sing my thanks. Sometimes I turn to Psalms to give voice to my gratitude to God. Although I've not done this as part of my thanksgiving prayer time, drawing, painting, creating something to celebrate God's goodness would be special.

I do think it's important to include thanksgiving in a daily prayer time but our thanks to God should expand beyond our prayer time. When I see a beautiful sunset, or a tree dressed in autumn colors telling God how much I enjoy it is a good practice! Really, everything I have and even my existence is due to the goodness of God.

What about when painful life blows send me spiraling? Even in the most troubling and challenging times, I am told to "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Giving thanks when I am sad, grieving, aching over unmet expectations, or feeling disappointed is an act of obedience to God. Giving thanks in tough times

reminds me that I'm not in control, but that I serve a Mighty God who is! It keeps me in a place of humility and dependency on Him, as I recognize He knows what's best for me and I do not have his perspective.

November is Thanksgiving season—but really every day for the believer is a day for giving thanks! It reminds me that God is the giver of all good gifts. A grateful heart reminds me that God is my provider.

All blessings and gifts are graciously given to me by His hand. A heart of gratitude leaves no room for complaining. It is impossible to be filled with negativity and ingratitude while expressing thanksgiving! "I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises. Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness let us exalt his name together!" (Psalm 34:1&3 NLT)

*Shout with joy to the Lord,
all the earth!*

Worship the Lord with gladness.

*Come before him, singing
with joy.*

*Acknowledge that
the Lord is God!*

He made us, and we are his.

*We are his people, the sheep
of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts
with praise.*

*Give thanks to him and
praise his name.*

For the Lord is good.

*His unfailing love continues
forever, and his faithfulness
continues to each generation.*

Psalm 100



Prayer Calendar and Memory Verse

Memory Verse: Ephesians 2:4-5—But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by Grace!

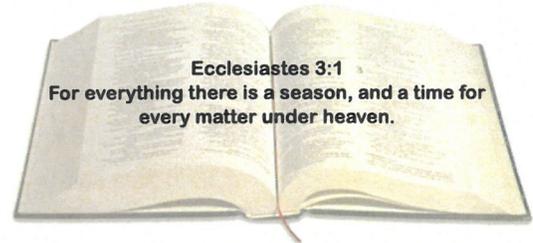
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					<p>1 Pray for a heart quick to hear and obey God.</p>	<p>2 Pray for a hunger for more of God and His word.</p>
<p>3 Pray for a heart that hurts for other people & seeks to share Christ with them.</p>	<p>4 Pray for healing & strength for the sick.</p>	<p>5 Pray those taking care of others will sleep well & be refreshed.</p>	<p>6 Pray Chuck & Connie have opportunities to share the gospel with neighbors.</p>	<p>7 Pray God would pour out His mercy.</p>	<p>8 Pray Tim & Renee have wisdom in ministering to others.</p>	<p>9 Pray those with a hard heart would be touched by the grace of God.</p>
<p>10 Pray Mark & Mollie & kids know the peace of being in the center of God's will.</p>	<p>11 Pray those needing hope look to the Savior.</p>	<p>12 Pray for those in the workplace.</p>	<p>13 Pray Wed. pm programs would change lives for all eternity.</p>	<p>14 Pray those facing change would be brave & wise.</p>	<p>15 Praise God for health care workers who serve with compassion.</p>	<p>16 Pray the Holy Spirit opens our minds to truths we need to know & understand.</p>
<p>17 Pray Daniel & Krissy have minds quick to learn.</p>	<p>18 Pray God gives strength & peace to His children.</p>	<p>19 Pray that each morning you would see the goodness of God.</p>	<p>20 Pray that God's perfect will would be done & we would trust Him.</p>	<p>21 Pray Elwyn & Linda are encouraged as they encourage others.</p>	<p>22 Pray those in hard places know the presence & peace of Christ.</p>	<p>23 Praise God that He is sufficient for every need.</p>
<p>24 Praises to our God & Savior, our Father & our King, our Guide & Comforter.</p>	<p>25 Pray staff at Harvest Radio walks in integrity and grace.</p>	<p>26 Pray God's light shines through you to the world around you.</p>	<p>27 Pray for your neighbors to receive Christ as Savior.</p>	<p>28 Pray we each have sweet times of fellowship with Christ daily.</p>	<p>29 Pray Ivan & Mary are sensitive to leading of the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>30 Pray God would help us each finish well.</p>
<p>31 Pray for God's hope to be evident in your life and a witness to others.</p>						



In Brazil

Seasons and times...

As the Bible teaches, there is a right time for everything. But that does not mean life is linear. For example, while we try to develop new relationships to reach people for Christ, we are also concerned about discipling those you have made decisions. Sounds like church, doesn't it?



Among other activities, we have regular church "services" on Wednesday night with an attendance of around 25-30. Instead of opening the coffee shop part of Café e Graça, we use the space for worship and a message from the Word.

And while we are "doing" church, something that we are thinking and praying a lot about lately is purchasing nearby property to build a church building. We are not sure which property this might be, but we are looking into possibilities.

Please pray with us for this next major step which could lead to a new season for the ministry.

A few pictures of what is happening right now...

Evangelism - Important to any church is an emphasis on being burdened for and reaching the lost. The "Wordless Book" concept is a tool we have used a lot.



Teaching - Many of us have learned Scripture and its teachings through simple Bible stories or lessons and through music. And a teacher always learns more than his/her students. Would you have taught the Bible lesson to your peers at 14-15 years old?





Ministering - Jesus, of course, is our best example of ministering to others and serving. We also try to teach by example. These pictures are of a very special Wednesday evening when we washed someone else's feet like Jesus washed the disciples' feet. It symbolizes how we should serve each other every day.



Special Visit - We also need to teach missions. Seth and Antônia Harms blessed us with a visit, coming all the way from East Timor. Of course, we were not the only reason for their trip, but we were honored to receive them. By sharing about their ministry in a different land and culture, they had an impact on the people of our church. Many of you know that we worked with Randell and Katy Harms in Fortaleza many years ago, so we have known Seth for a long time.



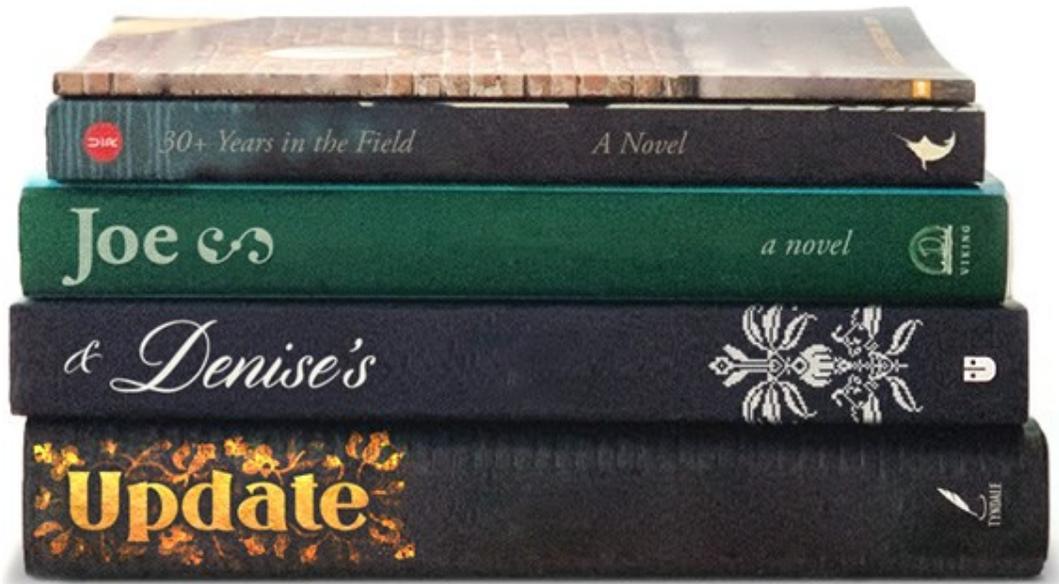
Your prayers have meant a lot - On January 9, 2023, I (Mary) began experiencing some significant hearing loss and a sort of tinnitus with stuffed up ears. On August 3, I had surgery on my sinus canals to open them up because they were very restricted. No one knows why.

So many of you have prayed about this! I am very grateful! I am hearing a lot better but still have some difficulties. However, both myself and those around me believe that each week is a tiny bit better.

I have explained what it is like by referring to being in a big, empty grain bin with a lot of echo. Now I would say it is more like I hear things through a long metal pipe. So there is progress with hope of more improvement! But much patience is needed! I can't thank you enough for your concern and prayers!

If you would like to give to this ministry, please go to avantministries.org/give.

Or send a check (earmarked Ivan Goossen) to
Avant Ministries
 10000 N Oak Trafficway
 Kansas City, MO 61455



November 7, 2023

Dear Garden Community Church,

Thank you so much for praying as we recently traveled to the Republic of Georgia and then on to Ukraine. It was a great trip and I'm sorry we are taking so long to let you know how much we appreciated all your prayers! We got back a week ago and have been fighting jetlag and trying to catch up on everything.

The Leadership conference in Georgia was so encouraging. We've got some great young leaders in the Avant East region. We also got to spend time with our Brazilian friends and continued the conversation about bringing more Brazilians workers to the areas where Americans can't go. Joe enjoyed several conversations with Taniel, the printer friend.

We then flew to Krakow, Poland, took a train to the Polish/Ukrainian border, and got on a Ukrainian train that took us to Kiev where we visited missionary friends for a couple days. We saw no war damage in the places we were, though there were soldiers, and sandbag piles here and there. We took the train on to our town, Oleksandriya, in central Ukraine. Even less signs of war were visible, though the memorial to the soldiers that had died from our town was the most graphic reminder that the war is real and lives are lost in the fighting.



Memorial to fallen soldiers from our town



Reconnecting with everyone at Digibooks Press, except the two that are serving in the army.

We did hear the air raid siren alert every day and sometimes at night, which meant missiles were flying somewhere. The locals had an app on their phones that showed where the missiles were detected, so people could know to be better prepared. To us it just felt like old normal times. But then we heard the stories of the beginning of the war, how everyone was so shocked and scared and didn't know what to do. We understood that it was a terrible time, and on the edges of the country it continues as fighting has not stopped. People, especially not near the front lines, have gotten used to life this way. We continue to pray that the war will stop soon. And we pray for the families that have lost loved ones as casualties in the war.



Seeing the press that was installed in our absence



Meal with friends

We were able to sort our stuff in our apartment, packing 6 suitcases to bring back and giving the rest away to friends and refugees that are living in town. We were able to visit all our friends that we'd hoped to see. It was hard to tell them this chapter is over, but we do hope to go back for short periods of time in the future to help with some printing projects. We were so blessed to fellowship 2 Sundays with the church body there. They have some amazing opportunities and outreaches happening all the time.



Two special Sundays at church



6 bags representing many hours of sorting and packing

Packing and cleaning out our apartment was especially stressful the last few days, but thank you for praying, it all got done. We have a possible buyer for the apartment which a friend will finish for us. Then 3 friends drove us by car back to Krakow, Poland which was easier with all our bags. They also had business to take care of in Poland, so the 15-hour trip, plus 6 hours waiting at the border were worth it for all of us.

We can't thank you enough for praying for us. God protected us, gave us wisdom and endurance in the packing and conversations, and the weather was awesome to boot!

Now we are hoping to visit a few churches and supporters before the Holidays and will continue making visits the first part of the year as we hope to see all of you. Thank you for following us on our journey!

In His Grip,

Joe & Denise

November 22, 2023

Good morning,

In the busyness of life, we have been terribly neglectful of communicating with you. Please forgive us!

After arriving in the US the first of July, we have enjoyed many special times with our families and friends. All of Elwyn's brothers and spouses were together to celebrate their mother's 90th birthday!



We have enjoyed frequent visits with Linda's siblings and Dad, as well as the joy of having our children Nathan and Su close!



One important part of our time here in the US is to update and say thank you to all our financial and prayer supporters! We have enjoyed connecting with many of you and hope to see many more before our return to the Brazil the end of January.

Have a great week!

Elwyn & Linda

October/November 2023

Dear Friend,

It has been some time since you heard from us. There were many things that have happened since that time, but God is still faithful, and your prayers and love expressed is amazing. Psalm 89:8 says, *“O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? Or to thy faithfulness round about thee?”*

Shortly after the last letter, the second of Ev's four brothers passed away, and she went without Norv to his funeral, since Norv was sick at the time. Ev also attended two other funerals, one for a relative and one for a friend. On Sept 14, Norv gave the gospel at our friend's (David Boswell) home-going "Celebration of Life" service. Ev and daughter Tonia sang. Please pray for Mary Alice, now a lonely widow, after 65 years together.

God not only cares about our grief and physical needs, He also proves himself faithful to us. On Monday, Oct. 9, when we were in McPherson, Ev lost her billfold in an outdoor shopping cart at Dollar Tree. After going to Dillon's, it had been around 2 hours when she realized it was missing. After backtracking mentally that it may actually be at Dollar Tree, we finally decided to go check. Praise the Lord, some kind, honest person had given it either to the store manager or clerk and it was safely stored in their vault for around 3 ½ hours, with credit cards and money still intact.

Norv was not in church for 3 weeks because of a bad cough that took two rounds of antibiotics before recovering. He wanted to get tests done on his aortic stenosis, so that we can proceed to the thing he longs for so badly, which is to visit our daughter and her husband, Jerri and Randy, in NC. (flying of course, something for which he has been saving for several years). He had three preliminary tests done in an all-day process and will have one more in the coming weeks. Please pray with us that the Lord's will be done in all this. Surgery will not be done until after the New Year.

Thank you so much for all your prayers, love, and care. It means so much to see how faithful God was, and is, and will continue to be. Continue to pray for God to honor and bless the tracts given during all these events, and safety in our flights and layovers, Dec. 19- 28. Have a blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas!

Looking up, continually, for Christ's return,

Norvin and Evelyn Schrag

