



Faith

September 1, 2006
Volume VI, N°16

CONNECTIONS

PARKING MINISTRY WILL GET YOU TO THE CHURCH ON TIME

For your parking convenience
on **September 10:**

What:
A continuous shuttle provided

When:
Beginning at 8:30AM for the
9:00 service ONLY

Where:
Upper Gorton Lot
(SE corner of McKinley & Deerpath)

Who: All members

Why:
To ease congestion & parking
stress during construction

How:
Go directly to the Gorton lot for the
shuttle instead of going to the church

700 N. Sheridan Road
Lake Forest, IL 60045
(847)234 6250
Fax: 234-6283

www.firstchurchlf.org

Rally Day



Sunday, September 10, 2006

New program year, new programs, new life at First Church!

Worship Schedule beginning September 10

Worship services 9:00 and 11:00AM every Sunday



Sunday School 9:15 to 10:15 for children;
classes through the week for adults

Music opportunities for children and adults –
choirs, handbells, instruments and voice

Youth groups for 5th & 6th; 7th & 8th; high school

ADULT EDUCATION

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY
WITH ELLEN HYNDMAN...resumes September 10
at 10:10AM in the Parish House.



This semester will focus on **The Gospel of John**, with study of the Johannine letters to follow in the Spring. The first session on **September 10** will be an overview of the Gospel including its authorship, date, location, context and purpose. Subsequent Sundays will cover approximately two chapters per week, beginning on September 17 with Chapter 1 (The Word Became Flesh), and Chapter 2 (The Wedding at Cana).

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU!

THE TIME IS NOW...^{W³}

Women's Wednesday Worship resumes Wednesday morning
September 13 from 9:30-10:30AM in South Parlor.

Study the scripture planned for Sunday's service.

Bring a Bible and your desire to grow in faith and love of the Lord.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!!! Come as you are.

No previous Bible knowledge necessary.

Please call the church office to sign up (234-6250).

For more information, call Laurie Valassis (234-5326).

Reaching out.....gathering together.....working for Christ.

Dear friends,

It seems impossible that summer's already winding to a close. The school year is starting for so many of our families, and our church calendar gears up with it.

As autumn draws near, I invite you to be intentional – even prayerful – about your schedule. It's easy to squander time on foolish worries, or over-spend ourselves in labor. But the stewardship of time is in our hands, and we offer up our minutes and our years for God's best purposes.

How do we hang on to room for the things that really matter? I've found that Sunday worship and daily prayer are the finest compasses for my priorities. When God's majestic beauty and joyful love are first in my life, everything else falls into proper perspective: I can relax into generous care for my loved ones, enthusiastic diligence in my work, creative attention to our church family, steadfast compassion for the needs of the world.



My prayer for you is that you will find time for the things that God most desires for your life. And my dearest hope is that as we come together as Christ's church, we can help one another find our way.

Every blessing,

Christine Chakoian

FALL 2006 MUSIC MINISTRY

"O come, let us sing to the Lord;

Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!" Psalm 95

FIND YOUR PLACE IN OUR MUSIC MINISTRY THIS FALL!

CHILDREN'S CHOIRS, Elizabeth Weismehl, Director

CHERUB CHOIR, 4 YR OLD THRU K....Thursday, 3:30-4:15 p.m., beginning September 14

CAROL CHOIR, GR. 1-6.....Sunday, 10:15-11:00 a.m., beginning September 10

JR. HIGH CHOIR, GR. 5-8.....Thursday, 5:00-5:45 p.m., beginning September 14

ALL CHILDREN ARE WELCOME!

YOUTH MUSIC MINISTRY, ALL ARE WELCOME! Lesley Byers, Director

JR. HIGH, GR. 7 & 8.....Sunday, 4:30-5:30 p.m., beginning September 10

HIGH SCHOOL, GR. 9-12.....Sunday, 5:30-6:30 p.m., beginning September 10

Bring your instruments-guitar, drums, saxophone, trumpet--whatever you play, and your voices.

SANCTUARY CHOIR, Tom Tropp, Director

Wednesday, 7:30-9:30 p.m.,beginning August 30

ALL SINGERS FROM HIGH SCHOOL THRU ADULTS ARE WELCOME. NO AUDITION NECESSARY.

HANDBELLS, Jill Hunt, Director

Lakemister Ringers, Wednesday, 5:30-7:00 p.m.,..... beginning August 30

Youth and Adult Handbells, 5th grade thru adult.....Tuesday, 6:30-7:30 p.m., beginning September 12

THIS WILL BE AN INTERGENERATIONAL GROUP FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS, NEW AND EXPERIENCED RINGERS. WE WILL ALL LEARN TOGETHER.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT THE MUSIC STAFF AT (847) 234-6250, x 230.

Jill Hunt, Jhunt@firstchurchlf.org

Tom Tropp, Ttropp@firstchurchlf.org

Elizabeth Weismehl, Eweismehl@firstchurchlf.org

Lesley Byers, Lbyers@firstchurchlf.org



First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest

847-234-6250

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

10:00AM Worship

Reverend Dr. Gordon Butcher

Lectionary: Song of Solomon 2: 8-13

Psalm 45: 1-2, 6-9

James 1: 17-27

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

9:00 and 11:00AM Worship

Rally Sunday

Reverend Christine Chakoian

Sanctuary Choir at 9:00 and 11:00

Lectionary: Proverbs 22: 1-2, 8-9, 22-23

Psalm 125

James 2: 1-10 (11-13) 14-17

Mark 7: 24-37

IN MINISTRY TOGETHER

Pastor/Head of Staff

Rev. Christine Chakoian

cchakoian@firstchurchlf.org

Executive Associate Pastor

Rev. Dr. Don Dempsey [Interim]

ddempsey@firstchurchlf.org

Assoc. Pastor **Rev. Dr. Gordon Butcher**

gbutcher@firstchurchlf.org

Parish Associate **Rev. Kent Kinney**

kkinney@firstchurchlf.org

Assoc. Pastor Family Life **Rev. Patrick Day**

pday@firstchurchlf.org

Children's Ministry **Donna Birney**

dbirney@firstchurchlf.org

Youth Director **Kristie Finley**

kfinley@firstchurchlf.org

Director of Music/Organist **Jill Hunt**

jhunt@firstchurchlf.org

Director of Sanctuary Choir **Thomas Tropp Jr.**

ttropp@firstchurchlf.org

Director of Children's Choir **Elizabeth Weismehl**

eweismehl@firstchurchlf.org

Director of Youth Music Ministry **Lesley Byers**

lbyers@firstchurchlf.org

Preschool Director **Ruth Luke**

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Church Business Manager **Herb Smyers**

hsmyers@firstchurchlf.org

Church website www.firstchurchlf.org

Faith Connections is published bimonthly and mailed to 1300 members and friends of

First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest

700 North Sheridan Road, Lake Forest, IL 60045.

Submission due dates are the

1st and the 15th of every month.

Submissions may be emailed (preferred method) to

publish@firstchurchlf.org

INSPIRED BY OUR HERITAGE

Stephen Ministers Care

Our Stephen Ministers provide confidential, one-to-one Christian care to people who are:

- ✦ Grieving the death of a loved one
- ✦ Hospitalized or recovering from hospitalization
- ✦ Lonely or discouraged
- ✦ Coping with a terminal illness or caring for a family member with a terminal illness
- ✦ Unemployed or in a job crisis
- ✦ Disabled or caring for an ill or disabled family member
- ✦ Anticipating the birth or adoption of a child
- ✦ Homebound or institutionalized
- ✦ Transitioning into retirement
- ✦ Facing a life transition
- ✦ Experiencing a spiritual crisis
- ✦ Victims of a disaster or accident

What Is a Stephen Minister? A Stephen Minister is ...

- ✦ A child of God who walks beside a hurting person;
- ✦ A member of our congregation who has received 50 hours of training in how to provide distinctively Christian care;
- ✦ A person who is ready to focus on your needs;
- ✦ A trustworthy confidant who will keep everything you say-and even your identity-confidential; and
- ✦ Someone who will faithfully meet with you on a weekly basis for as long as your need persists.

A Stephen Minister is NOT ... ✦ A counselor or therapist;
 ✦ A problem-solver; ✦ Someone who runs errands or helps with chores;
 or ✦ A casual visitor.

On this Rally Sunday 2006, take note that Our Stephen Ministers are ready to provide you with the confidential, one-to-one Christian care you need to make it through a crisis or help you through a difficult time. For more information, look for one of more than 60 Stephen Ministers or Stephen Leaders wearing a green name tag, or call Rev. Kent Kinney at (847) 234-6250.

IN MEMORIAM

Charles L. Fry died on August 10, 2006. Chuck joined the church in 1988. His love for music led him into leadership of the board of the Lake Forest Symphony. He will be missed by his wife, Meredith, his daughters Erin (Tom) DeNardo and Jennifer and his grandson John. A memorial service was held in the sanctuary on August 26, 2006, Reverend Christine Chakoian officiating and Pastor Kent Kinney assisting.

Howard James Douglass died on August 20, 2006. Mr. Douglass was a part of the First Church family for many years. He will be missed by his family. A memorial service was held in the sanctuary on August 30, 2006, Reverend Dr. Gordon Butcher officiating.

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, October 21 FALL RUMMAGE SALE

Check our rummage website for the latest information and volunteer opportunities
www.1stpreslfrummage.org

Volunteer Opportunities at A Safe Place

A Safe Place/Lake County Crisis Center is a multi-faceted organization committed to becoming a model for the prevention of domestic violence through empowerment and counseling, intervention and education, research and evaluation in collaboration with the community. A Safe Place is a focus agency of the Deacons Board.

Volunteers are needed in the Speakers Bureau (8 hour training required) who will raise awareness surrounding the issues of domestic violence and articulate A Safe Place services in Lake County schools, community groups, and professionals, as well as represent A Safe Place in the public by attending fundraising events.

Volunteers may also assist with general upkeep of facilities, with office and clerical assistance as well as volunteer in groups.

Certified Domestic Violence training is scheduled in September at College of Lake County. For information call Sharon Larson, (847) 731-7165, ext.101. Or visit www.asafeforceforhelp.org.

Attention - Individuals & Families looking for a Special Volunteer Opportunity!

Balmoral Care Center -- a residential nursing home at Lake Forest Place -- is looking for individuals, families (including friendly pets!) or civic groups who are interested in visiting with their residents during the weekends. A visit to a resident might be spent playing games, reading mail, or taking a walk. To spend an hour with one of the residents is such a lift to their days! For more information on how you might participate, please contact Gale Hartman at Balmoral (847) 604-6724

Bringing the Family Closer Together,

a program sponsored by **LEAD**
 (Linking Efforts Against Drugs)
 will be held **Monday,**

September 11
 9:45 a- 11:00 AM

at Gorton Community Center. Reverend Christine Chakoian will present this workshop. Practical ideas will be offered on how to keep the bonds strong and everyone feeling connected. No Fee. Contact LEAD (847) 295-9075

LAST CALL!! CHURCH FAMILY PHOTO DIRECTORY

September 6-10, 13-16
 A few time slots are available; call the church office to make your reservation!

Growing in Faith *How the Bible Came to Be*

SUNDAY SCHOOL 2006 FALL SCHEDULE

	Art Room 011	Mission & Outreach Room 212	Science & God's World Room 012	Bible Discovery Room 213	Games Fellowship Hall	Theatre & Drama Room 216
September 10	2nd grade	4th grade	3rd grade	5th grade	1st grade	6th grade
September 17	1st grade	6th grade	4th grade	3rd grade	5th grade	2nd grade
September 24	5th grade	2nd grade	6th grade	4th grade	3rd grade	1st grade
October 1	3rd grade	1st grade	2nd grade	6th grade	4th grade	5th grade
October 8	4th grade	5th grade	1st grade	2nd grade	6th grade	3rd grade
October 15	6th grade	3rd grade	5th grade	1st grade	2nd grade	4th grade

Please send submissions to publish@firstchurchll.org

September 1, 2006
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 is published
 twice monthly.
 Submission
 due dates
 are the
 1st and the 15th
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 Fax: 234-6283



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**FIRST CHURCH
 VISION STATEMENT**

Called together and centered in Christ's service, we are a fellowship growing in faith.

Relying on God's grace, we commit to fulfilling God's purpose for us by creating a welcoming, inclusive environment that inspires spiritual growth and celebration.

We journey together, caring for each other as we make deeper connections through prayer, worship, education and mission outreach.

We embrace the challenge to be faithful stewards of our God-given gifts and talents.

Inspired by our heritage of service and leadership, we are disciples of Christ, committed to making a positive difference in our families, community and beyond.

We call others to join with us as we journey into the future, strengthened by God's guidance and love.

A **Weekend**
 with **Dr. Marcus Borg**
Friday & Saturday
September 15 & 16



REGISTRATION FORM

Sign up for:	Time	Price
Friday Night Lecture alone	7:30 ^{PM} - 9:00 ^{PM}	\$10 ⁰⁰
Saturday Seminar alone (includes lunch)	9:00 ^{AM} - 3:00 ^{PM}	\$20 ⁰⁰
Friday Night Lecture & Saturday Seminar combined (includes lunch)	As above	\$25 ⁰⁰
TOTAL		\$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT

- Check (Payable to First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest, reference Borg Seminar)
- Visa MasterCard American Express

Credit Card # _____ Exp. date _____

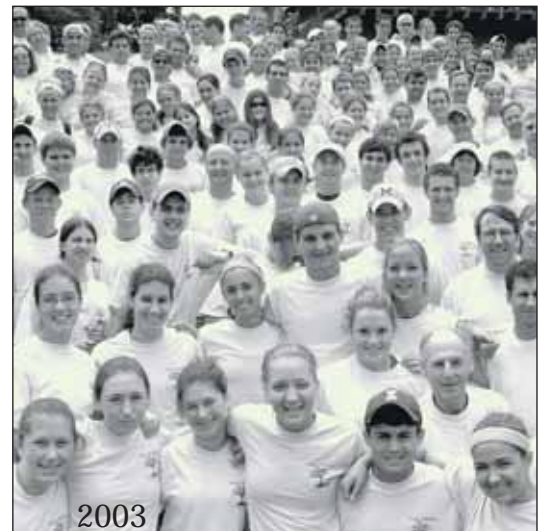
Signature _____



WORKTRIP STORIES

HISTORY OF SENIOR HIGH WORK TRIPS FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LAKE FOREST

- JUNE 1975 (2 WEEKS) PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH & PINE RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION WAKPALA & MOBRIDGE, SD (JOINT TRIP WITH CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT)
- JUNE 1976 (2 WEEKS) COMMUNITY CENTER - SAN LUIS, CO. (JOINT TRIP WITH CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT)
- JUNE 1977 (2 WEEKS) WASATCH ACADEMY - MOUNT PLEASANT, UT
- JUNE 1978 (2 WEEKS) PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH & SCHOOL - SELLS, AZ (PAPAGO INDIAN RESERVATION)
- JUNE 1979 (2 WEEKS) BOGGS ACADEMY - KEYSVILLE, GA
- JUNE 1980 (2 WEEKS) CAMP AT THE EASTWARD - STARKS, ME
- JUNE 1981 (2 WEEKS) WASATCH ACADEMY - MOUNT PLEASANT, UT
- JUNE 1982 (2 WEEKS) BOGGS ACADEMY - KEYSVILLE, GA
- JUNE 1983 (2 WEEKS) FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - LEADVILLE, CO
- JUNE 1984 CANARYVILLE - CHICAGO, IL
- JUNE 1985 HABITAT FOR HUMANITY - GARRETT COUNTY, MD (THE WISP)
- JUNE 1986
- JUNE 1987 (2 WEEKS) THE SHACK - MORGANTOWN, WV (PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH & COMMUNITY CENTER)
- JUNE 1988 (2 WEEKS) PRESBYTERIAN STUDENT CENTER - CLEMSON, SC
- JUNE 1989 HABITAT FOR HUMANITY - GARRETT COUNTY, MD (THE WISP)
- JUNE 1990 (2 WEEKS) THE SHACK - MORGANTOWN, WV (PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH & COMMUNITY CENTER)
- JUNE 1991 (2 WEEKS) CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY - DUNKIRK, NY
- JUNE 1992 (2 WEEKS) WONDERLAND CAMP - ROCKY MOUNT, MO
- JUNE 1993 PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - WEBSTER COUNTY, WV (4 H CAMP)
- JUNE 1994 HOWELL, MI. (DETROIT PRESBYTERY'S CAMP HOWELL)
- JUNE 1995 (MULTI-WEEK) WONDERLAND CAMP - ROCKY MOUNT, MO (INTERGENERATIONAL WORK CAMP BUILT CHAPEL)
- JUNE 1996 INDIANAPOLIS, IN. (CONCORD COMMUNITY CENTER)
- JUNE 1997 BOGGS RURAL LIFE CENTER - KEYSVILLE, GA
- JUNE 1998 JEFFERSON AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - DETROIT, MI
- JUNE 1999 WONDERLAND CAMP - ROCKY MOUNT, MO
- JUNE 2000 BOGGS RURAL LIFE CENTER - KEYSVILLE, GA
- JUNE 2001 ROSCOMMON COUNTY - ROSCOMMON, MI (CAMP WESTMINSTER - HIGGINS LAKE)
- JUNE 2002 WONDERLAND CAMP - ROCKY MOUNT, MO
- JUNE 2003 LEBANON JUNCTION, KY. (LIONS CAMP CRESCENDO)
- JUNE 2004 ROSCOMMON COUNTY - ROSCOMMON, MI (CAMP WESTMINSTER - HIGGINS LAKE)
- JUNE 2005 WONDERLAND CAMP - ROCKY MOUNT, MO
- JUNE 2006 FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - OCEAN SPRINGS, MS



2006 WORKTRIP Ocean Springs, Mississippi
 First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest

Working together to keep Hope Alive!

By Morgan Finley

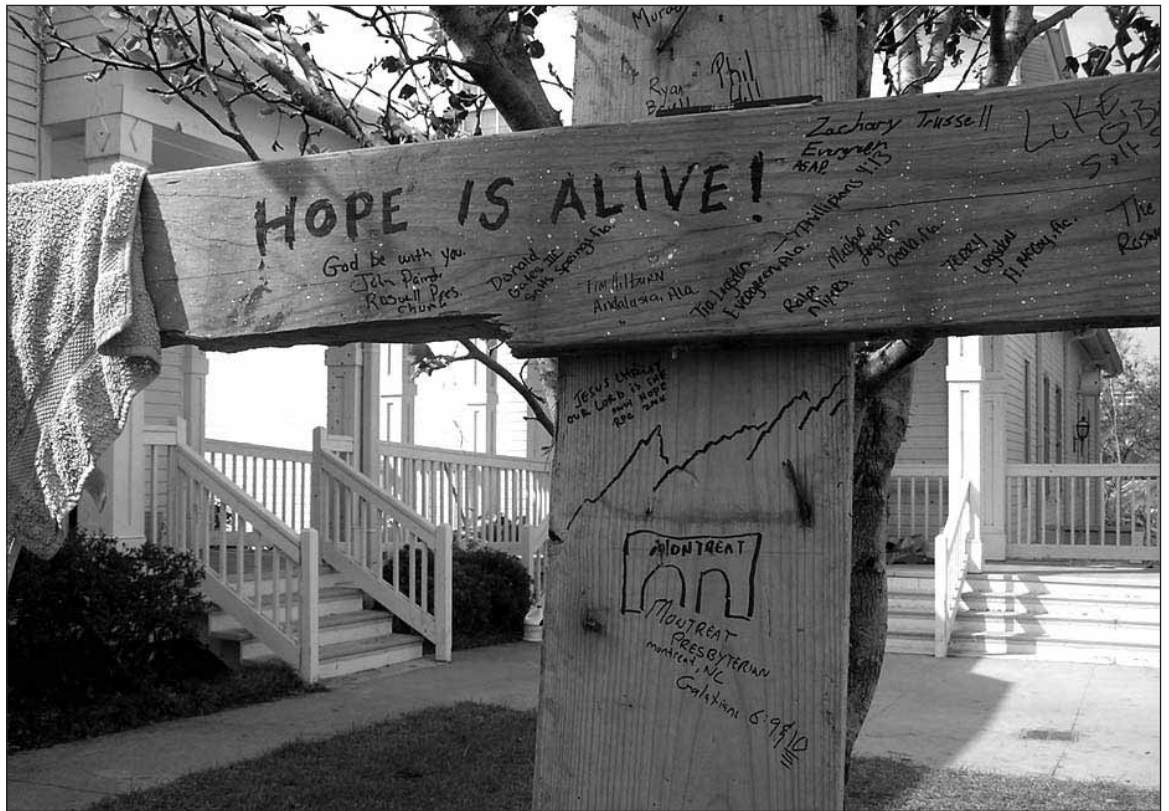
Nestled between the bayou and the Gulf of Mexico in Ocean Springs is the two-story home of Kirk and Genny Halstead, just a few hundred yards from the shore. As one of the few houses on the coast that withstood much of Hurricane Katrina's ferocity, it became a symbol of hope and faith.



As Katrina flooded the entire coast, one neighboring family, not heeding the evacuation order for all coastal residents, took refuge from the churning water on the top story of the Halstead house.

When Kirk and Genny returned, they found their residence so enveloped in debris they could not get in the front door. While some refuse was removed before the First Presbyterian Church trip arrived, 10 months after Katrina there still remained an overwhelming amount to be carted away.

There was a time when the street leading to their home, named for the Halstead family in the community for generations, was lined with orange groves before the family business moved elsewhere. What remains in an area once dominated by his ancestors is this house, built by Kirk and reduced to a shell on its stilts because of Katrina. He and Genny now live in an adjacent, temporary trailer home as the rebuilding process takes place.



As a work trip tradition, there is one day set aside in which family members---siblings and/or parents who are on the trip---work together on the same site. The Halstead house was the location for me and my family.

Working side-by-side among ourselves, as well as with Genny the spirit of work trip and faith was truly alive and united by our belief in Christ.

On this particular day, pieces of lumber that had been moved from under the house by crews earlier in the week needed the nails to be removed for the Halsteads to salvage the boards for the rebuilding process. These pieces of wood were left behind by the water, as well as other belongings from neighboring homes, and prying the nails out was a crucial task for re-use of the boards.

This was hot and tedious work in broiling Mississippi humidity, but as necessary to the appreciative Halsteads as anything we could have done for them. Their house may have been badly damaged by Katrina, but, with the help of love and patience, it was not left irreparable.

At the same time, our work trip effort on the house solidified the bonds of family between two churches while infusing new life into the Halstead home. In the process, the work on a structure founded upon love and dedication showed us the everlasting power of God to provide tools for survival and endurance even in moments of utter despair.

Ultimately the loss of others contributed to the salvation and rebirth of others brought together through God. The house again served as a symbol of hope and faith for us.



George Fossell: The maestro of the rooftop

By Wicks Barkhausen



Any work tripper who set foot on Site One, the Ocean Springs Presbyterian Church Preschool addition, would have noticed the incredible, talented work ethic of senior advisor George Fossell. He left a lasting impression on many of the workers because of his gifted teaching abilities and unmatched hammer skills.

Most work trip participants were rookies when it came to building a roof. This complicated construction required accurate mathematical calculations to solve for the exact angles involved in setting up the roof. George Fossell, a retired Lake Forest High School math teacher, was the perfect match for the job. However, his contributions went far beyond graph paper.

George led a team of senior boys on Senior Day at the preschool site as they carefully erected the entire framework for the roof complete with rows of beams and rafters. As temperatures climbed well into the nineties under the heat of a blazing midday sun, he could be found gracefully traversing the new rafters with more bounce in his step than any of the eighteen year-olds. We could only watch in awe as he would pound in a four-inch nail with three strokes as we struggled to get ours in straight after ten hits.

George kept us energized with his positive attitude and constant encouragement. After climbing over a series of beams to carry plywood from one end of the roof to another, George would occasionally say, "Oh man it's hot out here, I am getting too old for this. But hey, if I can do it, then you guys can do it."

Whatever he felt may have been missing because of his age, it was certainly replaced by his work ethic. Throughout the week, he became famous for being the first one on site and the last one to leave. He would take the shortest lunch break of the entire group, and he would never slow down once he started working again. Rumor has it that one night, after the entire youth group went for an after dark walk down to the beach, George went back up on the roof to make some adjustments.

He demonstrated his excellent instructional abilities as he helped a bunch of amateurs build a roof in two days. His expertise in mathematics was particularly helpful as he taught us all the physics behind the stability created by a triangular roof. Not only is he skilled with a hammer, but his power tool abilities are unmatched as well. We will always remember watching George leaning over the edge of the roof smoothing the edge of the plywood with a power saw as sawdust covered his sweat-soaked t-shirt.

George Fossell's hard work did not go unnoticed and I am sure it will be remembered by all who were fortunate to work with him on this site. His constant energy and catlike acrobatics put even the most athletic members of our youth group to shame. His thoughtful, teacher-like approach to his work made him a great mentor and a true friend.

Thank you, George Fossell.



What your kids don't tell you about Work Trip By Mitch Engel

Compared to Jim Cochrane (Boss Man), Donna Short, "J.J." Johnson, Judy Telander, Art Chantler or George Fossell (Secret Weapon of All-Things-Construction), I'm still wet behind the ears.

I've had the privilege of making seven work trips - whereas the half-dozen just mentioned are well into double figures, collectively triple. It's quite an institution we have at First Church.

Describe the Senior High Work Trip to folks from other churches, and their reactions affirm how staggering our numbers are. Each year: A hundred-plus kids, tens of thousands of dollars in materials, trucks full of tools and equipment and, literally, thousands of meals prepared and served. Over time, scores of homes and buildings built or renovated.

There's a growing lore to it all.

For Kristie Finley, plus stalwarts like Jim Mayhall, Linda Martinat, Jim Mynhier and Donna Johnson who help her throughout the year, the logistics are nothing short of transporting, housing and feeding a small army.

Climbing onto a roof to spread tar in ninety-five degree heat ... freshmen learning a new power tool a day ... sleeping on a hard gym floor with a hundred others in close proximity ... sharing less than a handful of showers with only a few gallons of hot water among them. On the surface, a perverse combination of Survivor and Fear Factor for North Shore teenagers.

So why do our kids flock to a tradition of such total inconvenience the very week school lets out, when they seemingly should be looking to chill out from finals?

Ask them. They'll tell you. But not everything.

They'll tell you about how gratifying it is to help others, to learn the meaning of mission and outreach. To have the opportunity to share gifts of time and resources.

But those answers were already in the back of the book, obvious the moment they signed up for their first Work Trip. Too easy, but probably the most we can hope to get out of a great many sons and daughters who have mastered the short answer.

Some might further confide that in spite of the sleep deprivation and related hardships, there is actually something quite fun about sharing these experiences with peers. A few might even acknowledge the innate satisfaction of learning how to hold your own with a circular saw or a nail gun.

What you aren't hearing much about is something the kids have labeled Work Trip Spirit. Sure, they may toss you that phrase, but from there it gets kind of blurry.

For seven work trips I've watched our kids struggle to define the magnetic pull in heartfelt discussions during their nightly worship services. It's like trying to capture love with a net. A totally right brain concept in our left brain worlds.

Something happens to everyone who goes on Work Trip, kids and advisors alike. Sometimes not the first day, or even the second, but it happens. It might start with something small, below your consciousness. Perhaps it hits in a cathartic blast. But big and little, the moments build and the dots connect.

Someone reaches out to you in a way you didn't expect. You reach out to someone in ways you wouldn't normally. And these someone's aren't the usual someones you expect to connect with. Before long you notice, everyone seems to be reaching out to everyone else. Caring. Respecting. Helping. Willing to be helped.

Without even a casual good-bye, something is gone. Something ever-present those other 51 weeks a year. Pretense.

As the days build on one another, there's an incredible comfort in this sense of genuine community. Kids from different school years, from different schools. From different cliques, from different activity groups. No one is judgmental. A hundred kids on equal and extraordinarily positive footing. Simultaneously, an equal and positive footing with adults. Adult advisors they may know, some they're just meeting. Better still, local adults at the work sites -- some in need, all with different stories to tell. Learning about each other ... walking in each other's shoes. Pretense gone.

I'm confident I speak for all the advisors in saying we couldn't be prouder of our kids, of what they do, how they behave on Work Trip. But for all that is accomplished in outreach, every Work Tripper would agree much more is received in return. Indeed, Work Trip is a powerful practicum of Biblical teachings. A gift to our kids, a gift to our congregation.

