



March 10, 2007

Dear (patient) Friends,

*However we do it, it is the Gospel we have to present.
We cannot hope to do it:
unless we walk humbly with the modern man,
as well as with God,
unless we are much more eager to learn from him and about him, than to instruct him*
(Maybe you, like I, stumble on which “him” the author means. Who is the indefinite “him” in the author’s mind – the earlier “modern man,” or the grammatically correct nearest referent “God?” Most likely, it is “modern man,” but our pride keeps us from listening to either!).
*God help us (and He does!), it is all very difficult.
But was there ever a task better worth trying to do, or one in which,
whether we fail or succeed,
we more surely find our freedom?*
(Roger Bradshaigh Lloyd (born 1901), The Ferment in the Church [1964]).

Greetings from Montana – a place where people love “freedom.” Not many here would define “freedom” as Lloyd does above. Of course, I’m curious, do you define freedom in that way? I hope we can encourage you to find that kind of freedom. We taste such freedom – so, thank you for your prayers and support which enable us to seek it. We feel very privileged.

You haven’t heard from “the Bostroms in Montana” for a while. We’ve wanted to focus on the task at hand – networking – learning to love these people and this place. I’ve also wondered about how to tell you stories of people we’re meeting. I really don’t know how to do that at this point.

Instead, I’ve asked permission from another Montana church planter, Christian Cryder, to tell you the story of a young man he met. I do this because it’s a great story – because it is an example of “walking humbly with modern man” - and, because I want you to pray for Christian and Ryan and their families, church planters in Missoula.

Here’s the story as Christian told it in his newsletter: *Corey works for Trout Unlimited and helped found the Hellgate Hunters and Anglers conservation group (not bad for someone who's only 26 years old). He is passionate about fishing, hunting, the outdoors, about improving habitat. I asked lots of questions, but what really seemed to catch his attention was this: "What would it look like for a church to care about these things too?" His eyes lit up as he said, "We've never had a church express an interest in anything like this! Would you guys really like to be involved in these things?" Absolutely.*

We talked for a while longer, and then I got ready to leave. But Corey stopped me, saying "I want to know more about your church..." Turns out he's never been to one, never read the Bible, never been religious. But he considers himself spiritual, and he believes there's a God ("I see it in nature..."). He's not sure what to think about Jesus. So we talked for another hour, me explaining what Jesus is about, emphasizing

that we want to be a church where people can be in process, where they don't have to have it all figured out, where they can belong before they believe. His response: "This has been so refreshing." Then he asked me what he could read. I'll be buying him a Bible since he doesn't have one of his own.

Don't you long for conversations like that? Will you pray that God will continue to give you and us such opportunity and boldness?

Let me tell you about some of the opportunities we have had since I last wrote to you – opportunities to grow to love this community better:

1. Via has been working part time at the local toy store, Lasso the Moon on Last Chance Gulch – the downtown walking mall. It's a good place to serve – and to meet people in the community.
2. The boys have an early morning paper route - @ 85 customers. What a great way to serve our neighbors. They get up @ 3:30 each morning – and then crash for a few hours after they get home. Warmer weather is on the way! Occasionally, they see a few deer – out and about.
3. We have learned much about our community by reading the newspaper. Nearly every night there is some event we could attend. We go to many lectures and gatherings.
4. Among the regular gatherings I attend are:
 - a. Kiwanis – Monday lunch @ 60 Helenans gather for a meal and to hear a speaker. We pledge allegiance to the flag. Someone prays (so far each prayer has been in Jesus' name) – and we all sing “Montana” at the end of each meeting. I've learned much about Helena and Montana from the speakers and the men and women with whom I eat lunch. This club has been meeting for nearly 80 years – imagine!
 - b. Lieutenant Governor's Bible study – Tuesday at noon a few of us gather for Bible study and prayer at the capitol. The Montana legislature meets on odd years for 90 days. They are in session now. Weather permitting (i.e., even when it snows), I'll walk the six blocks to the capitol. It's good to get to know a few of the people involved in leading this state – to understand the challenges they face. Please pray for those in authority over you. Romans tells us they are our “ministers.” They are significant to God. He commissioned Paul as - “my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their **kings** and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15).
 - c. Monthly inter-faith luncheon of clergy and others – this gathering meets at St. Peter's Hospital. This group of mostly main-line pastors includes Mormons and Jews (Montana will have its first rabbi – moving from NYC to Bozeman soon).
 - d. We worship at a different church each Sunday. Afterward, it's good to talk about what we experience. The boys often comment about whether or not they heard the gospel. They comment on how friendly – or not – the people were. They sometimes miss references to God or scripture reading. Sometimes the church seems focused on itself and its programs. We miss the worship music at Peace.
 - e. I have just begun attending the monthly downtown business community gathering. They've been meeting for @ 40 years. I've had some fascinating conversations with people I've met there.
 - f. Our local neighborhood even has a monthly meeting, the Rodney Street Meeting. So far, I've been double booked on the nights it has met – but, I hope to attend the next gathering this month.
5. Here are a few of the special events we've attended:
 - a. Our artist friend, TJ Lynde, has gathered a group of @ artists who meet monthly to critique and encourage each other. He invited us to come too. Helena is known as one of the top 100 arts communities in the nation. We want to get to know these artists and encourage them.
 - b. Recently, we attended the Governor's Prayer Breakfast.
 - i. It was good to renew relationships with people we met at this gathering in 2004.

- ii. It was good to meet the speaker, Eugene Peterson. He has reviewed some of my proposals – and encouraged us to come.
 - iii. Each year, the evening before the breakfast, there is a gathering of @100 for a meal and fellowship. Unexpectedly, I was asked – on the spot!- to tell this group about God’s calling for us regarding Helena. What an opportunity.
 - iv. The evening of the breakfast, we met with the Alpha and Omega House – a community of college students from Missoula. Via and Rachel stayed in this house the summer they attended Rocky Mountain School of Photography. Deb and Jeff Greer lead the house. They asked us to come and lead a discussion about forgiveness and reconciliation
- c. I’ll be speaking to the men from the two PCA churches in MT about forgiveness and reconciliation March 16 and 17. God was often pleased to make the men’s retreats at Peace especially significant. Please pray for this retreat too.
 - d. I spent two days with @ 120 leaders from Helena meeting with Roger Brooks, CEO of Destination Development. He’s helped over 400 communities. I’ll write more about his work later.
 - e. Empty Bowls – local potters make hundreds of unique bowls – local eateries make a variety of soups – hundreds of people come to support Friendship House – the resource for abused women and children in Helena. What a grand community event.
 - f. Night to Shine – 20 acts by high school students from the two high schools in town.
 - g. The Launch of the Montana Quarter – by the Governor and the Director of the US Mint.
 - h. Alcoholics Anonymous – I visted my first AA meeting – an open meeting – with a friend. I learned that there are 100 AA meetings each week in Helena.
 - i. At the meeting of Rocky Mountain presbytery in Denver during January, Ryan Sutherland was approved for ordination. We were part of his ordination service at the PCA church in Bozeman.
- 6. We are grateful to be seeing people around town that we now know. We frequent coffee houses and Reilly’s Pub. We’ve enjoyed opening our home to others and now warm weather is on the way!
 - 7. As you consider how to pray for Montana, also give thanks that my former associate, Andy Jones, has been installed as senior pastor at Peace. Please pray for God’s blessings there.

In regard to family:

- 1. Thank God that our daughter, Rachel, was able to come to Helena for her spring break.
- 2. Please pray for our married children: Rachel and Nathan, Jordan and Claire, and Jared and Rebekah. If you haven’t heard, Jared, Rebekah and Jackson will be joined by another baby @ the first week of August! Via and Jesse already have their tickets!
- 3. Zach has been painting and, from time to time, surfing near Kitty Hawk, NC. In April, he will be traveling to the lake district of England to study at Capernwray for eight weeks.
- 4. Micah has completed high school and is working and playing soccer while deciding what to do about college next year. He has been accepted at Covenant.

Thank you for your interest and support (more about that next time). We depend upon your prayers.

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