

The New Olympian

February 2009

The Monthly Newsletter of the Olympic View Community Church of the Brethren

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Living the Word

by Pastor Ken Miller Rieman

As I write, I'm sitting on my parents' bed, surrounding myself with memories of them, with the things that they kept closest to them each day.

As most of you know by now, this Christmas was a very hard one for our family. Early Christmas morning, Kate and I left Seattle's three inches of freshly fallen snow with the help of Carmen & Aaron's 4WD. Losing three hours, our flights brought us to Indianapolis where Daddy and sister Tina picked us up around 11 pm. We all had a few hours together with Mama before they left to pick up sister Cheri at the train station.

The morning of the 26th was too short. We were headed up to the Baldwin gathering two hours North in Manchester. Mama and Daddy left before us kids so that they could help prepare lunch for the whole clan. We said goodbye to them while we ate our breakfast and looked at the weather reports calling for freezing rain. The call from the Sherriff's deputy reached us on the road, just 20 miles out from Manchester. Their VW Rabbit had slipped on the ice and into an oncoming truck. Neither of them suffered at all.

Kate and Tina and Cheri and I crawled the last few miles to the family reunion. Our much too short morning had turned into the longest day of our lives. The pain that began to work its way through our shock found consolation in the sim-



Pastors Louise and Philip Baldwin Rieman, loved and missed by many.

ple things. We were with the rest of our family. The phone calls and prayers coming our way shared our pain. Our grief was not complicated by regret or brokenness in relationship with our parents.

It is almost a month since that horrible day. As I look back upon it, I perceive a collection of sharply focused images and encounters, a blur of hugs and cards and phone calls, but underneath and running through them is a klaxon alarm sounding, the kind that will not let you forget that you are in a profound crisis.

I have caught my breath. My stomach is mostly calm. Intellectually, I understand that my life has changed course—that every single aspect of my life right now is changed by this new reality. But that alarm, that inner demon of my fear has become an uncomfortable companion, the kind

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

that gets loud if it is ignored, but that doesn't make such great company no matter how nice you are to it.

I have spent most of my life with this demon. It's not that I've had any more to fear than most people, but until recently, my chief strategies in dealing with fear have been to orient myself toward adventures and challenges which stimulate other parts of my psyche, and which place me in the role of conquering my fears. And while that may seem like a basically healthy response, too much of it remains a response. Too much of it leaves me unaware of the lessons which my fear has to offer.

I find myself looking now, more than ever, to my parents for guidance. I know what my mother would want me to do. She would want me to make peace with my fears. She would suggest that naming them would bring them into the open, that sharing them with those I love would allow love itself to transform them into guiding lights.

On the wall opposite my parents bed hangs an image of a lighthouse needle-pointed by their friend Reba Fry. White, puffy clouds mark a bright blue sky. A few gulls hover above the caretaker's house at the lighthouse base. Until now, I've always thought it a little kitschy. Sorry Reba.

All of a sudden, I'm noticing the rocks. This picture downplays them a bit, but my life brings them to the fore. Lighthouses aren't really built for postcards or wall hangings. They are built to warn the mariner of mortal danger. Maybe that's what my fear is for. Maybe my fear is there to shape my course toward life, toward living in a way that allows love to find fullness in me and my relationships with family, friends, and strangers.

If mariners stayed forever upon the deeps, they'd not need lighthouses. But approaching the land is both necessary and dangerous. We need the love of others, but loss of this love is the greatest kind of loss.

Our church is quite literally placed in a land of mariners, of people who are wary of the rocks, and who have often found churches to be rocky places. Maybe it's time for us to make sure our

church is like a lighthouse among rocks, a guiding light that transforms fear into understanding, a beacon which points the mariner toward the safe harbor of Christ's compassion for all people.

A sign on the same wall of my parents' bedroom reads:

*Our creator gives us the gift of life,
and the way we say 'Thank You, God, for life'
is by enjoying our lives,
by living our lives intensely,
by being who we really are.*

I guess that means I'll be learning to live with the fears that losing my parents has awakened, to understand how they have shaped the person I've become, and to honor their love for this world in the person I am still becoming.



Northaven

By Roger Edmark, Moderator, Olympic View Board of Administration

For January, our ministry focus at Olympic View has been Northaven, our retirement and assisted living facility. I say "our," focus because that's what it is. We are not outsiders looking in at how others are helping to provide quality low cost senior housing! We are the ones doing it. And what we do makes an incredible difference. You make an incredible difference!

For the past 40 years, Olympic View Community Church, the Northaven Corporate members, the Northaven Board, and the staff and friends of Northaven have continually strived to find ways

(Continued on page 3)

Keep your faith in all things beautiful: in the sun when it is hidden, in the Spring when it is gone. Roy G. Gilson

