

December 2008



HAPPY NOTES *at home*

for the Vineyard Church family



Adjusting Our Course

by Happy Leman

Our Changing World

The only thing constant about life seems to be that it always changes. Very little stays the same for very long. Since September 2008, our country – especially the economy – has taken a wild roller coaster ride. In many ways, our society has been redefined from one of great surplus, opulence, and excess to one of economic loss, layoffs, deficits, and financial ruin. Our jubilation has been replaced with a great cloud.

Our God Still Reigns

Regardless of the situation, we can rest assured that our God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 12:7). There's no shadow of turning from the goodness that He provides for us. Psalm 91 says that He still provides shelter under His wing and that no harm will befall us. Matthew 6:31-33 says that He knows our needs and He will provide everything the world is seeking after if we will put His Kingdom first of all.

Prudent Steps

With the major turn of events, we have taken several prudent steps to address where we are at the moment. While the following actions are not all permanent, we will keep them in place as long as we need them.

1. We began by tightening our belt in every possible way. We looked at excess spending on areas that were not critical to the mission we have.
2. We reduced the budget for various programs or eliminated some that were not being used. Obviously if this was one of the programs that touched your life, we apologize. Hopefully we can reinstate many of them when things turn around.
3. The Senior Leadership Team (Hap and Di, Ben, and Carla) voluntarily reduced their salaries by 8.25% by giving up their salaries for the month of November. We thought it was important that we as leaders set the example by sharing in the reductions as well as everyone else.
4. We offered generous severance packages to several staff members who wanted to redirect their lives. Both Don Follis and Penny Moisson have agreed to accept the offer. We are blessed that they are both staying active in the church and will in fact be hired on a part-time basis to do some of the things they are now currently doing.
5. At least 2 other pastors are reducing the number of hours they're working and thereby their salaries. They felt that was a sacrifice that was worth it for the sake of the Kingdom and the good of the church.

6. We've reduced several significant positions from the support staff. We felt it was important to make the changes across the board.

These kinds of actions are never easy for any of us. It's particularly hard in a church where we consider ourselves family. Please be praying that this level of reaction to the situation at hand will be more than sufficient to carry us through the next 12 months.

Wonderful Family Response

On November 8-9, I shared a message entitled "*Crisis = Danger + Opportunity.*" We shared the danger that the church was hurting financially. At the same time we shared about the amazing opportunities for the Kingdom of God, for the church, and for us personally. Some of your testimonies about what you've been able to share and do during this time have truly warmed and blessed us as a church leadership team.

As a church, you have responded amazingly. Through the end of November, we're ahead of budget for the first 3 months of the fiscal year. In addition, someone gave another \$100,000 toward reducing our \$1.1 million debt on the building. As a result we have been able to gain both by minimizing our expenses and enjoying the overflowing generosity of our membership. To all of you who have given to help in this situation, I pray the full blessings of Malachi 3:8-12 upon you.

Some economists are saying that the first few months of the next year could be even worse. Regardless, I'm confident that God has more than enough resources to get us through so that we can prosper in all that He has called us to accomplish. Thanks again for doing your part. God Bless.

Happy

Happy Notes at Home are a monthly reflection of community life at The Vineyard Church and are produced by Happy Leman.