

Words of Faith

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Church library set to re-open

The church library, mostly in mothballs for the past year, re-opened in September in the new wing of the church.

After years of operating in a stub of a hallway, and sharing space with coat racks and restroom traffic, the new library finally has its very own space, on the upper story of the new church wing, according to church librarian Mrs. Maggie Moores.

The approximately 1000 volumes in the current library will be joined by at least that many books from the Covenant High School library, as the new facility will function as library for both congregation and student body.

Existing library sections will continue as they did in the old building. Doctrine/theology, Bible exposition/study, Christian history, biography, Christian fiction, devotional, children's books, evangelism/apologetics, current

issues, marriage and parenting, and reference books will continue with their color-coded stickers. In addition, science, history, and literature sections will be added, along with a new pamphlets section.

Magazines, heretofore consigned to file boxes above the coat racks, will now have space of their own as well.

The new library will also have one item that has long been a staple in other libraries—a librarian's desk, from which Mrs. Moores will be able to preside over the inventory of literary and auditory offerings.

Of the existing inventory, some 125 volumes have come through the Evangelical Library, an English organization that provides out-of-print titles to church libraries and other institutions.

The church's collection of library materials also includes nearly 100 audio tapes, ▶ 7

CHS class of 2005 sees stars at commencement

Most high school graduating classes are urged, as they go out into the world or on to college, to reach for the stars.

But relatively few have stars reaching out to them, even before they are graduated.

The 28 members of the Covenant High School class of 2005, however, did have that unique experience on June 3, as did all those who came to witness the end of their years of study at the Tacoma-based Christian high school.

That is because the graduation speaker was Major General Bentley Rayburn, Commander of the U.S. Air Force Doctrine Center at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama.

General Rayburn is a graduate of the Air Force Academy, a former fighter pilot, and (not coincidentally) the brother of Dr. Rob Rayburn, pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church in Tacoma, whose congregation started the 13-year-old high school and has been a prime

supporter of the school ever since.

He urged the graduates to appreciate what their parents had done in sending them to a Christian high school, to learn how to think Christianly, and to be men and women of courage. He illustrated his remarks with examples ranging from the 1964 World Champion St. Louis Cardinals all the way back to the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, in which the heavily outnumbered English defeated the French through the use of advanced technology, in that case the use of longbows against the well-armored but suddenly-obsolete French knights.

But even before graduating, the class was already aiming high, with every member planning to go on to college, technical college, or university. In addition, nearly 30% of the graduates had been named as recipients of the Washington State Honors Award, given to those who are in the top ten percent of the state's graduating seniors. ♦

Second in a Series

Presbyterianism

By Rev. Rob Rayburn

We began our study of Presbyterian church government by pointing out its historical importance to Western democracy, an importance largely unknown and unappreciated even by Presbyterians nowadays, and its relative unimportance as a part of the teaching of Holy Scripture.

Church government is not Jesus Christ or his cross! Before we go any further in our study, we must define our subject. What is Presbyterianism? The term itself suggests government by elders or presbyters. But Presbyterians aren't the only Christians whose churches are ruled by elders, just as Baptists are not the only ones who practice baptism. Indeed, every form of church government employs elders understood in some fashion. Congregationalists or Independents have elders; so do Episcopalians ("priest" after all is only an English transliteration of the Greek word for elder, "presbyter").

Fact is, to define Presbyterianism is no simple matter. Presbyterians themselves have had great difficulty agreeing on a definition of their own church government. James Henley Thornwell, the great 19th century Southern Presbyterian, once offered this definition: "The government of the church by parliamentary assemblies, composed of two classes of elders, and of elders only, and so arranged as to realize the visible unity of the whole church." Unfortunately, only the last clause of that definition is uncontroversial. Thornwell's contemporary, the Princeton theologian Charles Hodge, for example, would not have consented to "two classes of elders." (We will return to that interesting and important disagreement in a later installment of this series.) Others would object to the too easy comparison of a presbytery to a civil legislature.

One simple way of defining Presbyterianism is to distinguish it from its alternatives. Presbyterianism, for example, is not Congregationalism because it does not locate ultimate church power in the will of the local congregation. Ultimate church power, in the Presbyterianism system, is held by the assembled elders, whether called the presbytery, the

synod, or the general assembly. Presbyterianism is not Episcopal church government because it does not organize its elders in a hierarchy, with some of its elders exercising authority over others. Presbyterians have no bishops or archbishops (at least in theory!).

Another way of defining Presbyterian church government is to reduce it to those principles in which all Presbyterians concur. In the 19th century, the Irish Presbyterian Thomas Witherow, in an influential little book, *The Apostolic Church: Which is it?* argued that Presbyterianism consisted in the presence of six convictions. *First*, Christ is the only King and Head of his church. There were many in older days who argued that the government of the church was subject to the government of the state. There was a mixture of church and state in those times that we in the early 21st century find almost incomprehensible. Erastians argued that the government of the church, whatever its form, was subject to direction and even control by the King. Presbyterians asserted, to the contrary, that the government of the church was subject to no other human government, but directly to Christ the King. That conviction led to much bloodshed in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Second, office bearers—ministers, elders, and deacons—are to be elected by the people. Bishops in the Episcopalian system assign ministers to congregations; Presbyterian congregations choose not only their ministers, but their elders and deacons as well. In Scottish church history the assertion of the right of congregations to elect their office bearers—in earlier days local nobles controlled the settling of ministers in particular congregations—was a source of continued and bitter controversy and resulted in at least one major division of the Church of Scotland (the "Disruption" of 1843).

Third, in the New Testament the terms "bishop" and "elder" are synonyms and describe the same church office and the same church officer. "Bishop" (*episkopos*), which means "overseer" describes the *function* of the office. "Elder" (*presbyteros*), which literally means "old man," describes his

"To define Presbyterianism is no simple matter. Presbyterians themselves have had great difficulty agreeing on a definition of their own church government."

character and qualifications as a man of spiritual depth and experience. While Episcopalians regard bishops as exercising a greater authority and holding a different office than elders, Presbyterians maintain that their office is the same. Every elder is a bishop.

Fourth, there is to be a plurality of elders in every church. In Episcopalian and some forms of Congregational church government, the minister/priest is the only elder or presbyter serving the congregation. Presbyterians maintain that the New Testament always and everywhere shows us congregations with more than one elder. Local church government, therefore, is not held in a single pair of hands.

Fifth, ordination is an act of the presbytery. As opposed to Episcopalian theory, it is not the bishop who holds the authority to confer upon a man the authority of church office but the elders acting in concert.

Sixth and finally, the congregation has the right of appeal to and the obligation to submit to the larger church. Congregations are not sovereign, they are not the last word as in Congregational or Independent forms of church government.

These six principles are held, at least in some form, by all Presbyterians. However, none of them is unique to Presbyterianism. Presbyterians share some of them with Congregationalists, others with Episcopalians. Presbyterianism, in other words, is a unique combination of principles that are all individually found in other polities. This fact serves to remind us of the point made in our first study, namely that church government does not separate Christians from one another in nearly so serious ways as do some other doctrinal differences.

But something else must be said about Witherow's definition of Presbyterianism in six particulars. Add them up and we have so far only the barest outline of a church government, certainly nothing approaching the elaborate systems of practice and procedure that Presbyterian churches have produced through the centuries. It is striking, for example, that in Witherow's summary of Presbyterian principles,

no specific mention is made of presbyteries or synods or general assemblies. The existence of the larger church as an organ of government is assumed in the sixth principle above but only in the most general way. A system of graded church courts is, to most observers, one of the essential parts of all Presbyterian systems, but, according to Witherow, that system is not itself one of Presbyterianism's fundamental features.

What is more, it is a simple fact that Presbyterian churches around the world operate in ways quite different from one another, no matter their agreement on these principles. For example, Francis Turretin, the 17th century Genevan theologian, an important historical representative of Presbyterian thought, argued that it would violate no principle of Presbyterian polity if the church were to invest significant powers in a president, so long as those powers were subject to the review and control of the church's elders acting in concert. However, Turretin's authority notwithstanding, English speaking Presbyterian churches have so jealously guarded the parity of the eldership—the equal authority of every elder—that such a proposal strikes them as manifestly unpresbyterian. In Scotland, Presbyterian ministers are paid by the denomination; in America by the local congregation. In the Netherlands, Presbyterian pastors are members of their own churches; in the United States they are typically members of Presbyteries. The list of differences in both principle and practice is very long and, as we shall see, some of these differences bear mightily on important issues of church life.

So, while we may say that Presbyterianism consists of a certain set of convictions regarding the government of the church, those convictions are quite general and must be fleshed out into a working church government with practices and procedures nowhere directly taught or illustrated in the Bible. As the history of Presbyterian thought and practice proves, these fundamental principles leave a great deal of room for both variety of application and innovation in practice. ♦

“Presbyterianism is a unique combination of principles that are all individually found in other polities. This fact serves to remind us...that church government does not separate Christians from one another...”

My brother Dean

By Ron Boydston

I wondered if something was wrong, that summer day in 1972, when I came home for lunch to find two of my sisters standing outside the front door of our home in southern California, talking.

It struck me as unusual that they would be outside in the middle of the day, where temperatures at that time of year regularly climbed to 100 degrees and beyond. Conversations were usually carried on inside, where it was cooler, until the sun went down and the high desert was cooled off by the night air.

And indeed something was wrong—very wrong. Our brother Dean, 21, had been burned in an explosion at the plant where he worked, and had been flown by fire department helicopter to the burn unit at Los Angeles County Hospital.

Dean, the fourth one down in a family of eight children, was the largest of us, at 6' 1" and nearly 200 pounds. Fun-loving and gregarious, things like a clean room and good grades had never been high on his list of priorities; he preferred instead to spend time with his friends or to ride his motorcycle in the brush-covered hills and canyons around our home. Gifted musically, he could play almost anything that he picked up or sat down to; in this area high marks came effortlessly, and he had landed a scholarship in voice after graduating from high school, securing the prize with a rendition of the Rodgers and Hammerstein tune "You'll never walk alone."

He was not diligent in his studies, however, and had dropped out of college during his first year. From there he had gone into the Air Force, where he was trained as a security officer and sent to South Korea. After getting out of the service he had gotten a job at an ordnance company that produced products for military and space programs. He and two other men had been mixing up a batch of chemicals when something touched them off that July morning, burning all three of them badly, but Dean the worst.

The report from the hospital was bleak. With burns over more than 75% of his body, he was given no more than a 10% chance of surviving. The skin on his head, face, arms, legs, and abdo-

men had been burned, he had been put into intensive care, and would need all of the attention he could get.

My parents had gone to the hospital immediately upon hearing the news, and in the following weeks would literally live there. Dean's company rented a nearby motel room and our folks moved into it. My mother, a registered nurse, took a leave of absence from her job to assist in the nursing care.

The days following the accident introduced us to the workings of a burn unit at a large metropolitan hospital, and the daily ration of misery that went with it. Victims of fires, explosions, car crashes and other accidents were brought there from all over Los Angeles County for some of the finest treatment available anywhere. A teaching hospital, it was a place where doctors and nurses came to learn and practice burn care, and there never seemed to be any shortage of patients.

The skin on a human body is thin but marvelous. This waterproof wrapper that we are all covered with is an astonishing organ that works wonderfully to regulate body temperatures, to keep fluids inside of us and infections out, and to provide us with a sense of touch by means of nerve endings that translate outside stimuli into a whole range of sensations. These functions are taken by granted by most of us when healthy, but their absence becomes very apparent when the skin is gone, or so badly damaged that it can no longer perform its duties.

Doctors and nurses worked around the clock to keep Dean's temperature constant and his body chemistry in balance, to change his dressings, and to monitor the function of the other systems in his body, which had also been impacted by the sudden and drastic nature of his injuries. Specialists made their rounds, plotting strategies, checking on treatment, and consulting among themselves on the best way to combat crises as they came up. Technicians and therapists came and went. Shifts changed, day turned into night and back into day again while Dean's life hung in the balance, with none of us knowing how it would turn out.

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Although badly hurt, Dean showed a remarkable resolve, and slowly began the long swim upstream. Where he had been restless before, moving from one interest to another, he now could not go anywhere, and had to focus his attention and energies on the task before him. This he did with great courage and tenacity, and I believe he grew more in those weeks of adversity than many of us do in years or even a lifetime.

The explosion, in addition to the damage done to his body, had also burned away all of the flowers of casual faith, which bloom colorfully when life is good and when blessings are of the sort that we find agreeable. This situation, however, required faith of a vastly different sort: a faith that would keep going in spite of no indications that anything good could come of the circumstances, that would be able to grow in a scorched and pain-wracked soil. And however improbable it may seem, this was the kind of faith that showed itself during those days.

One night, when I was preparing to leave, he called to me as I was waking out the door. I paused. “Thanks for coming in.” Burned badly as he was, he was expressing gratitude for a very small thing that I had done.

On another occasion, when he was having yet another treatment, he said “Mom, God had a purpose in this, didn’t He?” In spite of all the difficult days, he acknowledged the sovereignty of God in a context where it would have been very easy to dismiss any such notion.

And he also sometimes sang. Partly it was a way to help cope with the pain, but it was also perhaps a way that he could bring music into a place that was largely devoid of any. One memorable evening he sang The Lord’s Prayer, his baritone voice filling the room and spilling out into the hallway. The audience was small, just a few family members, nursing staff, and other patients, but I think it was one of the finest performances of his life.

I would like to be able to say that Dean pulled through this debilitating experience; that the medical attention he received, along with the prayers of many people and his own fortitude, brought him back to health. But although he made surprising progress during the first few weeks, to the point where his chances were put at 50/50 and some of the doctors were cautiously encouraged, it was not to be. After a little more

than nine weeks he lapsed into a coma, and towards the end of September of that year he slipped away to where there is no more death, or sorrow, or crying, or any more pain.

Those long few weeks have now been followed by many short years, but the lessons from that summer have taken root and grown as time has gone by. Life is short and death is certain. Our bodies are wonderfully made and extremely resilient, but at the same time also frail and easily damaged. The unexpected can happen at any time, to any one of us. The best things in life are relationships with other people, especially family members, relatives, and friends, and should be worked at as often as possible. A stable and loving family is one of the greatest blessings a person can have, and family members are to care for and look after each other. Life is to be lived one day at a time, and we are to be thankful for everything we are given and are able to achieve.

Dean’s accident was one in which there were no easy days, and for which there are still no easy answers. I don’t know why it happened, or why he suffered so much, or why his young life was cut short.

But I do know this: he did not go through the storm alone. He had the love and support of his family, friends, and many members of the body of Christ, who carried him on their prayers and saw him to the end of his earthly days.

And I also know this: there was Another who walked with us through those days. This is a great mystery, but the words of Scripture ring down through the centuries affirming it: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” Shall accidents or tragedies or heartbreak or any of the other baffling and unexplained circumstances of life? No, the words go on to say, nothing—not death, nor anything in life—nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Scriptures also speak of Christ as our elder brother; one who, having shared fully in our humanity, was not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters. “Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family” (Hebrews 12:11).

This being the case, Dean was not only our brother—he was the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ as well. ♦

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New Members

Jeff & Ellen Banker came southeast to get to the Pacific Northwest, having moved from Anchorage, Alaska, where Jeff was stationed at



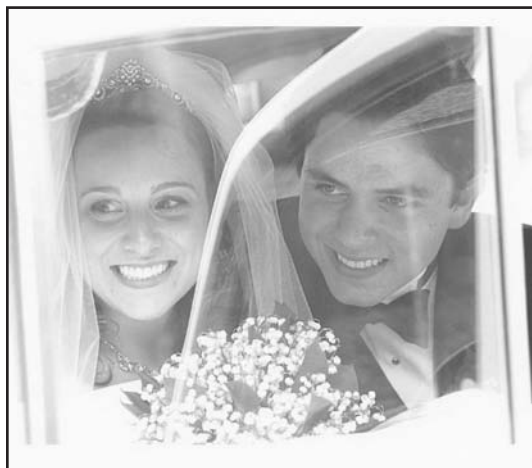
Jeff, Ellen, Jake, and Ian Banker

Elmendorf AFB. A native of Coming, GA (north of Atlanta), he graduated from Georgia Tech, where he became a Christian, in part through the influence of several fraternity brothers. Ellen attended Oral Roberts University, graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso and worked as an accountant before marrying Jeff four

years ago, having met when they were both living in San Antonio. They have two children—Ian is 2½ and Jake is 18 months. They are now stationed at McChord, where Jeff is a C-17 pilot.

Dale & Pat Dawson are the parents of Kent Dawson, who is the husband of Aubree Pribyl Dawson, who is the daughter of John and Carol Pribyl, which may indicate that Presbyterianism is contagious in a very positive way. Dale is an MK—his parents were Wycliffe missionaries in the Philippines and Australia—and spent nearly 20 years as an Army helicopter pilot, flying Scouts, Hueys, Cobras and Apaches; he is now a civilian logistics officer for the U.S. Army. Pat grew up in Byron Center, Michigan, where her pastor was the Christian Reformed Church author William Hendrickson. The Dawsons live in Olympia.

Nathaniel Gutierrez is a new college graduate (Covenant College class of 2005) and a new



Nathaniel and Alicia Gutierrez

husband (Alicia Skrivan Gutierrez, FPC wedding class of 2005) as well as a new member of the church. One of the six children of PCA missionaries Jerry and Ruthie Gutierrez, he also recently started a new job, working with Mission to the World, to develop a YFC ministry to Hispanics in Tacoma. He hopes to attend seminary next year and ultimately to relocate

to Peru as a missionary.

John Gilman is an account manager at Russell Investment Group. He was raised Catholic but stopped attending church early on in life, and

therefore had no adult church background. But “The Holy Spirit chose to work through a number of people in the congregation to bring me to Christ; so when I decided to join a congregation, it was only natural that I join the FPC family.” He has a nine-year-old daughter, Katie, and lives in Gig Harbor.

Jeanette McAllister has been a legal secretary with a Tacoma law firm for the past 15 years. A Christian since junior high, she did not have a regular church home, and decided several years ago that “I couldn’t drift my whole life,” and started looking for one. When she visited Faith, she “knew immediately that this was it,” and was drawn by both the expository preaching as well as the quiet and reverential approach to worship. She is a graduate of Mt. Tahoma High and Bates Technical College, and the daughter of Roger McAllister (see below).

Roger McAllister retired from the retail grocery business several years ago, having spent some 36 years working for everybody in Tacoma except Safeway, and in every job except meat-cutting and upper management. He came to a saving faith in 1979, attended church at various places over the years, then joined Jeanette in a serious search, feeling that they needed to be a permanent part of a church body. They were both impressed by several of Pastor Rayburn’s sermons that Jeanette downloaded from the church web site. “Expository preaching is rare in this day and age,” he says. He has a particular interest in the first 500 years of Christianity, and has been reading “The Story of Christianity” by Justo Gonzalez, who teaches in an interdenominational center in Atlanta, Georgia.

Baptisms

Infant baptisms: *Carolyn Cassis, Hudson Sukhia, Claire Mellott, James Lewin*

Adult baptism: *Sandra Main*

Child Professions of faith

Kathryn Cassis

High school-age communicants becoming voting members

Lucas Andersen, Scott Johnson, Hans Kvale, Andrew Lee, Jennifer Lind, Benjamin Love, Laura Murphy, Zachary Pappuleas, David Perkins, James Rayburn, Heath Salzman, Sarah Straws, Anna Pace ♦

Mike Troxell: 1947-2005

Mike Troxell, a long-time adherent of the church and friend to many in the congregation, died from complications following a seizure on July 16. He was 57 years old.

A memorial service was held on August 9, officiated by Pastor Rick DeMass, who was one of the regulars on Mike's schedule.

Speakers at the service remembered a man who, while possessing limited skills in some areas, was nevertheless a source of inspiration and kindness for those who knew him.

While he could not read, or drive, and lived most of his life in a group home, he had an outgoing personality, a love of routine, and a flashbulb smile that would light up not only his face, but also all those around him.

In addition, he had a very proficient mental calendar that charted meals, holidays, and particularly his birthday, August 11, a date around which most of the rest of his year revolved.

"He never forgot a meal," recalled Pastor DeMass, who had lunch with him monthly for more than 11 years, "And he never forgot to call regarding a scheduled meal."

Others remembered his regular

appearances for breakfast or dinner in their homes, and at church functions of various kinds in which food was served.

Tom Tuell, who knew Mike for more than 30 years, explained Mike's idea for a "surprise" birthday party (Mike would hide downstairs, and then appear and shout "Surprise!" to the assembled guests), a celebration that became an annual event that grew at times to include more than 60 people.

Faith was not the only church on Mike Troxell's circuit, but he came around often, and Dick Hannula recalled his last appearance at the church, in which he took communion and confessed his faith through both words and his participation in that simple but profound sacrament.

While not a formally recognized member of Faith, or perhaps any other of the churches that he visited, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Mike Troxell was in fact a member in good standing of the church universal. In his lifetime he provided many opportunities for other believers to demonstrate the scriptural maxim that "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

*Tony Hillerman, the author of a series of mysteries set among the Indians of the Southwest, married after World War II. He and his wife were able to have only one child, so—though they starved on a journalist's salary—they adopted four, and when a child who really needed them came along, one more... He was able to take in these children, he explains in his autobiography *Seldom Disappointed*, because "the Pill was not yet in universal use and the practice of bumping off unwanted sons and daughters pre-birth had not yet been legalized."*

Whether our children are born of our bodies or adopted, they are not really ours; they are God's. He is the Creator; we are but instruments. Alas, our imperfections as parents, even when we try to be good parents, affect them, but they have a true Father who is more their father than any of us, and who loves them far more than we ever could. And because he is the true Father, when we reject his children, by neglecting or abandoning or aborting them, we reject him.

Our children are given to us but for a short time; the years fly increasingly fast, and they go their ways in the world. I pray for my children daily, that we may meet in heaven as friends and brothers and sisters, as sons and daughters of the one Father who let me represent him for a time.

—Leon J. Podles, writing in *Touchstone* magazine

Library, continued

1 ◀ more than 100 videos, and a couple of dozen CDs.

While the opening of the new library is being looked forward to, not all of the books and other materials that should be there will be there. Some 143 items that have sprouted feet and gone missing, some of them during the months in which most of the library materials have been in repose. Church members are encouraged to check their homes for any of these transplanted items, and to return them to the church. ♦

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Church Calendar

September 4: CHS

Convocation ♦ **September 5:**

Church picnic ♦ **October 14:**

Presbytery meets in Edmonton

(Last meeting of the Canadian
and U.S. churches in the Pacific

Northwest Presbytery; in January

2006 the Canadians will be meet-

ing in their own Presbytery of

Western Canada) ♦ **October 28:**

Men's Night of Prayer ♦ **October 30:**

Reformation Sunday ♦ **November**

24: Thanksgiving ♦

Hurricane Katrina slams PCA churches

There were a number of PCA churches in the areas hit hard by the hurricane, including the Presbyteries of Southeast Louisiana, Louisiana, Grace, Mississippi Valley, Southeast Alabama, Evangel and Gulf Coast.

Rob Oates, pastor of Faith PCA in Brookhaven, Miss., reported that about 250 people in the church were without a place to live as a result of the hurricane; at least half of his immediate congregation has sustained damage to their homes and businesses.

Richard Bailey, pastor of Plains Presbyterian Church in Zachary, La., whose church was preparing to open as an evacuation shelter, reported that "We already have one family who showed up today - seven folks in a small car. All that they have is in their trunk. The enormity of this is mind boggling. It is almost surreal. They may be here for weeks. Most will have nothing to go back to. Nothing. This is a big blow to Southeast

Louisiana Presbytery. We may have lost three churches, two church plants and a Ministry. The fate of all of these is unknown at this time. Life around here has changed for a while. Pray that we will minister as the church should during this lengthy event."

Batch Batchelder, a member of First PCA, in Biloxi, MS, reported "Nearly every home on the beach has been destroyed. First Presbyterian is one of the few remaining structures. I cannot adequately convey how smashed everything here is. Nine of 10 homes on the beach are either completely gone or have been reduced to a pile of rubble. Three of four buildings in downtown Biloxi are gone. Where there was once a bridge connecting Biloxi to Ocean Springs, the road drops off into the bay. Cars are in the bay. Cars are crushed on the side of the road. The reality is beginning to set in for us... I am beginning to come to grips with the fact that we may be finan-

cially kaput. We have been cared for in so many ways by so many people. Our hearts are warmed and comforted by the outpouring of support. The coming months will become a great test of faith and endurance. I cannot begin to thank all of you who are finding ways to help us. The show of love and kindness and compassion is truly remarkable. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

MTW Minuteman Appeal for Hurricane Relief

Mission to the World has issued a Minuteman appeal to respond to hurricane relief needs. To read the appeal letter, to respond with gifts, and to volunteer, go to <http://www.mtw.org> and click on "Minuteman Appeal."