

The Christian life is a journey.

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing.

ElderTalk

More often than I’d like to admit, I find myself asking, “Now what was I talking about and how did I get on this subject?” Then I realize I’m off onto another rabbit trail. What is a rabbit trail? The internet describes a rabbit trail as veering off the subject or off the point of the conversation, a story or explanation leading to nowhere. Just ask my lovely wife, Marie. I have been known to veer off course from time to time, meandering in all sorts of winding trails of thought or conversation. This seems like a good topic for my first TrailNotes contribution, not having to follow a literary format, just some of my rabbit trails.

My first trail recalls a conversation I had with a coworker. It was **Valentine’s Day** and we were discussing the ways we as a society celebrate this holiday. Cards, candy, and candlelit dinners came to mind!



She said she really didn’t know the story behind the holiday’s namesake, so I gave it my best shot to manufacture the details of St. Valentine’s story. In my understanding, he was marrying soldiers to their beloved girls against the emperor’s edict which outlawed marriage in order to make the soldiers more focused warriors. Valentine united these couples in holy matrimony and was executed for doing what he determined was right, for following his beliefs. So I’m guessing we give our significant other cards and sweets on that special day to honor such conviction.

The Rabbit Trail

The second trail I’ll lead you down involves another holiday we recently observed, **St. Patrick’s Day** celebrates all things Irish and almost anything green. Shamrocks, green outfits, green food and drinks, leprechauns dressed in green, punishing others for not donning something green all remind us of that special day.



It makes me think, what is the story behind this holiday? Saint Patrick was an ambassador for Christ and took the Gospel to Ireland. He used the **three-leaf** clover as a representation of the Divine Trinity, three in one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then my rabbit trail immediately leads me to ask, how does the **four-leaf** clover fit in to this story, why is it lucky, and who’s the fourth leaf?



My third trail is probably the most popular one involving that **jolly old saint, Nicholas**. He somehow got a name change with his holiday—**Santa Claus** (or is it Kris Kringle)? Come to think of it, so did St. Patrick. Anyway, we know this holiday very well, celebrating

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our Savior’s birth by going into considerable debt. Presents, presents, presents—big ones, small ones, all as a reminder of how St. Nicholas kept the young ladies out of slavery or jail or whatever, all with the aid of his small minions and flying deer.



And now my brain trails off and contemplates, what if the most influential evangelist of our time, **Dr. Billy Graham**, got a holiday? I can just envision us all going out on that special day to buy a ballpark frank, some peanuts or popcorn and a cold beverage while wearing our big foam hand with one finger pointing to the sky and faces smeared with paint representing the colors of our favorite sports team. All because Dr. Graham brought God’s Good News to countless stadiums and arenas all over the world. I think Superbowl Sunday would work nicely.



Does it really matter if I’m slightly off on my details regarding these holidays or my hope that Billy Graham gets his own special day? I take comfort in knowing the day set aside to celebrate the single most important event in history has not been distorted. Without the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, Emmanuel, there would be no point in gathering for church or even being a Christian.

(concluded on page 2)

April 2018

- 1 “HE IS RISEN!” Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on Psalm 118:10-24.
- 7 Men’s prayer breakfast, 8 am. at Burger King. Women of Grace begin study on the Armor of God, 10:30 am in the Youth Building.
- 8 Pastor Eric preaching on Psalm 32, Beatitude Psalm. Communion.  Circle Church leaders meet 6:30-8:00 pm in multi-purpose room.
- 11 Tom & Kathy Russell begin a 7 wk. parenting class. 6:30-8:00 pm in the sanctuary.
- 13- 14 Table Fellowship Conference (formerly the Alliance for Renewal) at Grace Church, 3700 Dorr, Toledo. Friday through Saturday See article in the next column.
- 15 Table Fellowship (ARC) speaker TBA.
- 21 Women of Grace continue study on the Armor of God, 10:30 am in the Youth Building.
- 22 Pastor Eric speaking on Psalm 8, Creation. Communion. 
- 29 Celebration Sunday. Missionaries will speak. 5th Sunday Potluck after Worship. No Circle Church.

On May 5 there will be a Church Work Day Stay tuned.

The Rabbit Trails *(concluded)*

This is the event we celebrate every Sunday at church and rejoice in every day of our lives. It’s the event in



which our whole faith is anchored. That’s the holiday that must not, that shall not, that cannot be altered. Somehow that reminds me of a song I sang as a child, and it goes, “hopping down the bunny trail, hippity hoppity Easter’s on its way”...now how did I get here?

Rom. 12:2 *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Rabbit trail...now how did I get *here*?

Church Conference April 13-14

“The Table Fellowship” is the new name for the Alliance for Renewal Churches (ARC). Consider this quote by Henri Nouwen:

“The table is the place of intimacy. Around the table we discover each other.”

We gather together to know each other and, more importantly, to know our God better. This year we will study Genesis 1-4 with Tom Kelby.

The meetings will run from 9:00 am April 13 to 1 pm April 14. They will be held at Grace Church, 3700 Dorr St., Toledo 43607. If you register by March 31 you will save money! Check out the registration information on thetablefellowship.com

The change of name will be discussed at the Friday morning session. On Thursday evening April 12, at 7 pm a couple who grew up in Bangladesh and now pastor pastors there will speak. There is no charge for this session.

Introducing...

Finnegan Eugene Morris-Weberling!

Welcome to the world, Finn! You have made Bill and Bonnie Weberling grandparents and Ryan and Meghan parents. Here are your statistics:

Born on Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018

At 6:51 am

Almost 10 lbs.!

We’re thankful for your healthy birth and pray for the three of you as you settle into “newborn life.” God bless you all!



Connie Zhu honored

Ed's note. This article was printed in the Mansfield City Schools newsletter. Deb McKee passed it on for TrailNotes. "Every Student, Every Day Champion" goes extra mile.



Connie Zhu was recognized for all that she does to help and support the students.

A teacher who “stays late and comes in on weekends” to prepare to help students with disabilities in Mansfield City Schools...Connie Zhu of Mansfield Senior High School was honored by the district’s Academic Service Leadership Team. She was selected from multiple nominations from around the district.

Zhu was nominated by fellow teacher Margaret Gaverick, who described her as “very patient and caring. She helps all of the students academically every period every day,” Gaverick said of Zhu. “She will call parents and go to students’ homes. She has bought things that the students need for personal hygiene and school supplies with her own money.”

Connie has transported parents who did not have a ride to conferences about their children’s Individualized Education Program. She has also helped raise money so students can participate in field-trip activities by baking and selling cookies after school and assisting students with recycling.

“Connie has arranged for the special needs prom at our school for several years and it has had a great turnout and been very successful,” Gaverick said. “For graduation she makes each graduate a scrapbook with pictures and notes from all of the other students and staff. She then arranges a banquet to honor the graduates.”

Zhu supports Mansfield City Schools students who participate on the Richland County Bears, a Special Olympics basketball team. She transports them to practices and games and provides a snack before they go.

“Connie stays late and comes in on weekends to prepare for her students. She is the best co-worker and communicator and it is a pleasure to work beside her,” Gaverick wrote.

As part of her recognition Zhu received a \$20 Starbucks gift card donated by the Academic Service Leadership Team.

...and so was John Falls

Local Modern Woodmen honor Hometown Hero Local volunteer John Falls, Mansfield, OH, was recently recognized for countless hours of service to the community...John Falls doesn’t care to rhapsodize about the many contributions he’s made to Mansfield Christian’s soccer program over the past two decades.

The unassuming mentor would rather talk about defensive and offensive tactics or discuss the virtues of a 3-5-2 formation as opposed to a 4-2-3-1 alignment. Falls may not be the face of the program, but he is one of the primary components of an engine that has driven it to unprecedented heights. The former Lambert Sommers’ assistant and girls head coach spends his free time these days studying MCS’s upcoming opponents and preparing detailed scouting reports.

“He’s a wealth of knowledge. He’s seen it all, so you’re not going to fool him,” Mansfield Christian athletic director and former boys coach Stephen Armstrong says. “It’s a big deal to have someone like him, especially at a small school like ours. There’s not that many people who can do what he does and can do it as well as he does it. There’s not that many people who are even willing to do it. Who wants to drive two hours away and sit in the stands to scout?”

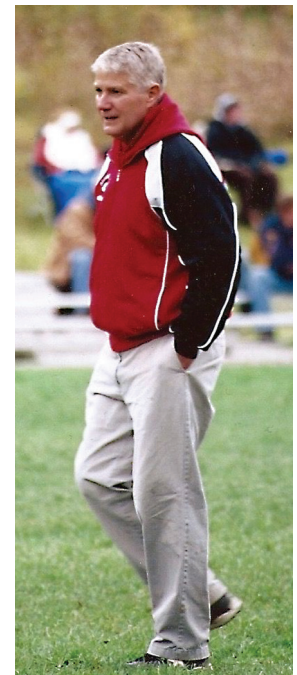
Falls grew up in Akron and played for Ellet High School’s club team before soccer was an Ohio High School Athletic Association-sanctioned sport. He moved to Mansfield to pursue a career opportunity.

“I came down to teach at Ohio State (Mansfield)” he says... “I just love the game. I like high school soccer and the competition.”

After stepping down as the girls coach, Falls remained close to the MCS soccer community. He began scouting and continues to help out both the boys and girls programs...

“We really value the work John does for us. He is so knowledgeable and dedicated,” says Coach Jesse Rider, a 2002 MCS graduate. “When he comes back from scouting a game, he has 10 pages of very detailed notes with tendencies and weather conditions and field layout. It’s all very specific. He’s a great asset to have.”

(from article by Curt Conrad)



Teachers headed to Japan this weekend 今週末に先生たちが日本に向かった

DONNA KURTZ

Six new English teachers are completing their training time at Grace Fellowship Church this week. They will be leaving for Tokyo on Easter Sunday along with Nathan Tucker who is the U.S. director of the program which Kosuke Maki started in the mid-80s. (Mr. Maki was Ray Nethery's translator in Japan when Ray was working with Campus Crusade there.) Our eldest daughter, Karin, was the first teacher to go as an American English teacher under this program.

It will be about a four hour trip by bus to the Fukushima Prefecture. The school, Wakakusa Gakuen, which Mr. Maki leads, was in Funehiki. In 2005 this town and four others were merged to create the city of Tamura. Some of these teachers will teach in Wakakusa Gakuen. Others will teach in the city's middle schools.



Teachers this year are (L to R) Tim Case, Allison Clay, Abigail Swartzbaugh, Mekayla Morrison, Robyn Eisel, and Jared Curtis. This is Jared's second time as a teacher there. He is fluent in Japanese and has helped with the program for several years.
Godspeed all! 主が皆さんを祝福して欲しいです!



DONNA KURTZ

Palm Sunday this year...

I loved seeing the exuberant joy of Palm Sunday's all-church palm procession! We had prayed for that joy! I had remembered a Palm Sunday when Jay Shifley invited the congregation to join in the celebratory march. As I considered the choir's role in Palm Sunday this year, I wanted us to do that again.

Bob Gardner, who would be leading worship, agreed to invite everyone to join in. Choir members were spaced every eight feet or so, and you all quickly filled in the empty spots. In fact, one group of children started dancing and waving their palms before the music even started!

I wish you all could have seen what we at the front could see...the smiles, the lifted faces and hands, the joy. We sang "Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest..." "Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings." Then, the round, "King of kings and Lord of lords, glory, hallelujah!" After several rounds of the church, the choir remained at the front while the congregation began to find their seats. Then together we sang, "He is exalted, the King is exalted on high..." and finally, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!"

What a way to begin. Then, more worship, the Eucharist, the commissioning of the English teachers to Japan, Jadae's sermon on being thankful.

Looking forward to the whole week: Maundy Thursday and Jesus' words to His disciples, Good Friday and His indescribable gift of redemption, along



with the reminder this year of the Christian martyrs who have been crucified.

On the great Day of Resurrection, Debbie Key has planned to start with songs of the Crucifixion. Pam Phillips will sing Twila Paris' "Lamb of God" to bring us toward the Resurrection followed by the tolling of the church bell to begin "Hear the bells ringing..." and "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today!"

God, bless us again as we celebrate the Risen Christ!

Blessed are You, God, Father of all nations.
You are the God of light, and in You there is no darkness.

As we gather to rejoice in the risen life of Your Son, Jesus,

May our home, and those of our brothers and sisters, be bright with laughter and warm with love.

Amen.

-Rev. Thomas G. Simons

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|----------------|--------------|
| Eric Byrom | Elder/Pastor |
| Jadae Fox | Elder |
| Andy Heininger | Elder |
| Robert Key | Elder |
| Jon Vega | Elder |
| Rick Widener | Elder |

(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month)