

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.

Sin is like walking in front of a bus (What my recent accident taught me about repentance)

KAREN SWALLOW PRIOR

Ed.’s Note: After our two sermons on Ps. 51 in the elders’ series on the Psalms, this article is worth the read.

Sin is like getting hit by a bus. Surviving it requires the divine intervention of the Creator. Even when it doesn’t kill you, it causes needless pain. And we can’t get out of its horrible consequences on our own.

I was away from home for work, on my way to a meeting and, having decided to walk the 20-minute distance on this beautiful, late spring morning, I lost my way. I decided to turn back to my hotel and take a cab from there.

I didn’t see the bus until it slammed against me. According to the police report, I was thrown 15 or 20 feet into the air. I don’t remember that flight or the landing that followed. I remember coming to with a crowd of people around me and my whole body in excruciating pain. I couldn’t see anything but the blood running from my head down my arm. I could hear two women saying they were nurses and giving instructions to the other Samaritans who’d come to my aid. I could hear a man who was holding my hand warmly and firmly and asking my name. When I gave it, he just kept saying, “Karen, don’t lose consciousness. Stay with us, Karen.” I was in such pain that I couldn’t stop screaming.

What remains in my memory most from those moments is the blood and the screaming and that man holding my hand. He held it the entire time while I was placed onto



*Karen Swallow Prior
with her Weimaraner, “Eva the Diva”*

the stretcher and into the back of the ambulance. Just before I was slid into that dark cave, he prayed for me. All I could manage to say was, “God bless you.” And I meant it.

Sin is like this.

Sin is like this in that, so often, it’s just a tiny step away from the standard. A split second error in judgement. A little thing, like paying too much attention to one thing and not enough to another. A way we go amiss in the course of trying to do what’s right and good, just as I was on the day I got hit.

Earlier that morning, the announcement had come that a long revered, powerful leader in my church denomination had been removed from his position because of a long record of wrongs against women. Thousands of women in the denomination made a collective call to the leaders overseeing him—asking them to take a strong stand against such behavior—and because I was at the forefront of the outcry, I had been doing interviews late the night before and early that morning.

My focus was on doing right and

calling others to do right, as well. I wonder now, if being focused on these things is what led me to get lost on my walk that morning. Similarly, those in leadership (along with the rest of us) can, by focusing on one right thing, sacrificing countless other right things along the way. But to neglect other goods in the service of one other good is sin.

Sin is like this in that one small lapse can cause great damage. The split second in which I did not see the bus resulted in the breaking of my body and the torment of physical and emotional pain—damage that will take months to heal. Likewise, even small decisions by those in positions of power to look the other way, to fail to see or heed, can result in a multiplicity of brokenness in the church body—brokenness that, like the fractures in my body, must be tended to with great care, time, and skill in order to prevent deformity and malformation from setting in.

Sin is like this in the way its consequences roll like a small snowball into a heaving avalanche. The moment in which I failed to see the bus rendered profound costs for many other people: the members of the medical teams serving in the ambulance crew, emergency room, and the trauma unit; the other patients sharing space and resources in an over-crowded hospital; the witnesses to my accident, one of them a fellow believer, connected with me through the increasingly small world of social media and blessed me with her

(continued on p. 2.)

Sin is like walking in front of a bus (cont.)

prayers, but who needs prayers herself because of what she and her husband saw that morning; the family and friends whose lives are directly impacted by the care, concern, and service they offer now out of their love for me. Even when the original error seems small and insignificant, sin's toll is infinite.

Sin is like this in that it's terrifying to acknowledge that you might be the source of your own pain as well as the pain of others. Sin is like this in that it's easy, when facing this truth to become entangled by self-pity, regret, and a sense of helplessness.

And yet, the God of the universe doesn't leave us alone in our own error. He offers help in the form of people made in his likeness, whether they be strangers who reflect the image of God by intervening out of compassion or brothers and sisters in Christ who serve as his hands and feet in our time of need.

God also intervenes through the person of Jesus Christ, who suffered on our behalf to remove our pain once and for all, not here on this old earth but in the new earth to come: a new earth where busy crosswalks will become streets of gold, where buses will be replaced by horse-drawn chariots, where medical personnel will make way for the Great Physician, and where every tear wrought by our own sin—and by those who have sinned against us—will be wiped away.

But to ignore our sin, to refuse to repent of it once it has been pointed out to us, is as disastrous as ignoring a massive bus bearing down on us.

Karen Swallow Prior, PhD, is a Professor of English at Liberty University and a research fellow with the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. Her article was posted on Christianity Today International (<https://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2018/june/karen-swallow-prior-sin-is-like-walking-in-front-of-bus.html>), for June 4, 2018.

The McKee Circle . . .



Left to right: Brian Judd, Manfred & Janet Adalem, Deb & Steve McKee, Kathy Barth, Carol & Bill Miller.

JULY 2018

- 1 Elder Jadae Fox preaching on Psalm 23.
- 5 Women of Grace 4-part Bible Study dealing with our perspectives on circumstances in life that do not seem to change. 6:30-8:00 pm. in the Tim Barber Youth Building. Call Kay (419-282-9505) with questions.
- 8 Elder Jon Vega preaching on Psalm 32. 🍷🍷
- 14 Wilma Phelps birthday bash at the church, starting at 5 pm. Beach theme!
- 15 Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on Psalm 33.
- 19 Women of Grace Bible Study, 2nd session. 6:30-8:00 pm. in the Youth Building.
- 20 TrailNotes deadline. Send to bucy talent@aol.com
- 21 Youth to Tidal Wave at Beulah Beach - all day event.
- 22 Pastor Eric Byrom preaching on Psalm 47. 🍷🍷
- 23-27 Clear Fork High School Band Camp renting our facilities.
- 28 Women of Grace progressive picnic, 10:45-2:00. \$3.
- 29 Celebration Sunday, potluck lunch following worship.

Coming in August: August 3-5 (Friday-Sunday)
GFC Campout Weekend.
August 6-10 GFC hosts a 5-Day Club for
children 6:30-8:00 pm

. . . ON THE "SQUARE"



Summary of Women of Grace's new Bible Study

"When changing nothing changes everything" *Laura Short*

We often face circumstances that we cannot change: a job we are forced to keep, a relationship that did not work out, a decision we cannot take back. In this series, Laura Short reveals how even if we can't change our circumstances, we can still make a change in our life by the way we see it. With the help of our four "lenses," she shows how to access God's perspective on our circumstances, which can impact the way we live.

We will view short videos and have discussion and prayer from 6:30-8:00 pm; July 5 and 19, August 2 and 16.

Adam and Hannah Hange add baby girl to their family



"Introducing Vera Teresa. (*Vee-rah Teh-ray-suh*) born May 7, 2018. 6 lbs 9 oz., 18.5 in. Mom and baby are happy and healthy! Her big brothers are thrilled with their new baby sister!" states Adam.



*The Hange trio
L to R:
Paxton, 2,
Dietrich, 4,
and
Vera Teresa*

The Laundry Basket Library Project



A charitable organization providing books to lower income children and families.

Serving the Mansfield area since 2001

Over 1,000 books per month to 2 dozen+ sites

Happily accepting books published within 10 years

Special needs: Children's books and board books

Deb McKee, Coordinator - 419-566-5091
djmckee53@yahoo.com

NOAH STONE in "RICHLAND SOURCE"

The earlier children receive access to books, the quicker their world is exposed to information and learning. Thanks to the Laundry Basket Library, members of the Mansfield community of all ages are able to get free books. Laundry Basket Library gives books to anyone who wants or needs one.

"Mansfield City Schools' free and reduced lunch rate is really high (83 percent)," comments Deb McKee, Coordinator. "That shows a certain level of low-income poverty in the area. I've been in many homes, and there are just no books."

The library, operates out of Sherman Elementary School, and has distributed nearly 1,000 books a month over the past 17 years. "Most importantly," McKee said "is that once the children, youths or adults have the book, it is theirs. I think that's our biggest accomplishment because that's a lot of books," she said.

Stephen Rizzo, Chief Academic Officer, agrees that students need to be exposed to books early, especially with the pressures Ohio schools can create. "It's our number one focus with math being a close second. A lot of our efforts in the elementary school are focused toward reading. A student's ability to be promoted to fourth grade is based on a reading test all third grade students are given," Rizzo said.

Currently McKee said the library is looking for book donations, especially board books and children's books. Any book will be accepted, including cookbooks. The Laundry Basket Library has 23 sites where anyone can pick up new books. Contact Deb for more information. Here are some of the sites:

CATALYST: The Center and Rehab Center, Sterkel Blvd.

CLEAN JEANS, Ashland Rd.

COLONIAL COIN LAUNDRY, Marion Ave.

CVS, 4th and Trimble Rd.

DEWALD COMMUNITY CENTER

E.K. MARKET, Springmill Rd.

FAMILY DOLLAR, S. Diamond.

FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN, Preschool, After School and Soup kitchen, Park Ave. W.

FRIENDLY HOUSE, N. Mulberry St.

GRACE EPISCOPAL, Food Pantry, Bowman St.

JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER

MANSFIELD RESTAURANTS, Park Ave. W. and S. Main St.

OHIO HEALTH HOSPITAL

RCT BUS STATION, S. Diamond.

RICHLAND PREGNANCY

SERVICES

SALVATION ARMY, S. Main

SHELL GAS STATION, S. Diamond.

SPEEDWAY STATIONS, Park Ave.

West and Trimble Rd.

THRIFTY WASH LAUNDROMAT, Ford St.



SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

A favorite graduation story

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

They walked in tandem, each of the ninety three students filing into the already crowded auditorium. With rich maroon gowns flowing and the traditional caps, they looked almost as grown up as they felt.



Dads swallowed hard behind broad smiles, and moms freely brushed away tears. This class would not pray during the commencement, not by choice but because of a recent court ruling prohibiting it.

The principal and several students were careful to stay within the guidelines allowed by the ruling. They gave inspirational and challenging speeches, but no one mentioned divine guidance and no one asked for blessings on the graduates or their families.

The speeches were nice, but they were routine until the final speech received a standing ovation. A solitary student walked proudly to the microphone, and then, it happened. All 92 students, every single one of them, suddenly **SNEEZED!**

The student on stage simply looked at the audience and said, **“GOD BLESS YOU each and every one of you!”** And he walked off the stage.

The audience exploded into applause. The graduating class found a unique way to invoke God’s blessing on their future with or without the court’s approval!

...The Rest of the Story:

This account was mentioned in an email on May 20, 2001 during the commencement exercises at Washington Community High School in Washington, IL With the help of the ACLU, the family of Natasha Ap- penheimer, that year’s valedictorian, brought suit to prevent the inclusion of the invocation and benediction traditionally given at the school’s commencement

ceremony. The suit was decided in favor of the Ap- penheimers when three days before the ceremony, the court handed down a temporary injunction barring the inclusion of the prayers, on the basis of their hav- ing been deemed “school sponsored” (and thereby an unconstitutional violation of the first amendment’s “establishment clause”). Though the school had said it would contest the ruling that barred it from sponsoring prayer at its graduation ceremonies, it dropped such plans in July 2001 once it came to some appreciation of how much such a legal battle might cost.

People were angered by the decision, which over- turned a tradition of 80 years’ standing at the high school. It was the act of Ryan Brown, who was sched- uled to give a speech during the event, that is now celebrated. Other schools have followed suit over the years. In 2004 the version switched the roles: the *speaker sneezed* and all the students blessed *him*. At last year’s graduation at the University of Maryland, a similar event took place.

(Update from Snopes.com)



Grace Fellowship Church

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|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Eric Byrom | Elder/Pastor |
| Jadaé Fox | Elder |
| Andy Heining | Elder |
| Robert Key | Elder |
| Jon Vega | Elder |
| Rick Widener | Elder |
| Rick Widener | Treasurer |
| Kay Berry & Karen Gates | Women |
| Lori Barker | Missions |
| Andy Heining | Worship |
| Circle Church Serve Group | Greeters |
| Angel Vega | Dance |
| Judy Nichols | Prayer Chain |
| Kay Berry & Jadaé Fox | Office |
| Kathy Barth, Manfred & Janet Adalem | Communion |
| Andy Anschutz | Sound/Power Point |
| John and Donna Kurtz | TrailNotes |