

Loon Area Christian Ministry

April—May—June, 2010

Personal Note from Skip

Usually this time of year the mountain shuts down when skiing conditions remain great simply because the shortage of skiers makes it unprofitable to continue. This year, however, the weather has taken its toll and the shortage of skiers are matched by more patches of bare ground visible than I can remember ever seeing in the twenty years we've been here.

It's been a good season, 'though not without it's share of serious injuries and deaths of two employees (natural causes) and one guest (not certain—death could have been preceded by a heart attack or caused by trauma to the heart upon impact).

Since January I've been meeting with a small group of ministers for mutual prayer and support. It's been the best mutual-support experience I've ever been a part of. There's an honesty and openness to one another that I rarely find in such groups. One of the results is that the experience has led me to reach out to others doing ministry at New England ski resorts for the sole purpose of passing on that feeling of support and encouragement. As often happens in such a situation, I leave strengthened and encouraged.

From the "Better Half"

Dear friends,

Skip and I recently attended a fund raising banquet for the Carenet Pregnancy Center of the White Mountains. I love the services that these committed Christians are providing to women who find them-selves pregnant and vulnerable to the world's view that unborn children are of no value. I was reminded of a devotional I read this month by Sheila Walsh.

Helen Roseveare is an English missionary doctor in Zaire, Africa. When she was in America recently she told this amazing story:

"One night I had worked hard to help a mother in the labor ward; but in spite of all we could do she died, leaving us with a tiny premature baby. We would have difficulty keeping the baby alive, as we had no incubator. A student midwife went to stoke up the fire and fill a hot-water bottle, it had burst. Rubber perishes easily in tropical climates. 'And it is our last hot-water bottle!' she lamented.

"The following noon, as I did most days, I went to pray with any of the orphanage children who chose to gather with me. I told them about the tiny baby. One ten-year-old girl, Ruth, prayed with her usual blunt conciseness. 'Please, God,' she prayed, 'send us a water bottle. It'll be no good tomorrow, God, as the baby will be dead, so please send it this afternoon.'

"Halfway through the afternoon, I got a message that there was a car at my front door. By the time I reached home from where I'd been teaching the nurses, the car had gone, but there, on the veranda, was a parcel. I felt tears pricking my eyes. I could not open the parcel alone, so I sent for the orphanage children. Inside the package was a brand-new water bottle. That parcel had been on the way for five whole months.'

Before they call, I will answer. (Isaiah 65:24).

Loon Mountain

In terms of attendance, things were pretty normal with an average of 24 at our Downhill Worship services. I've sought to make the message more interactive, and have enjoyed both people's responses and the atmosphere that such an approach creates. At one of our last services a lady from Brazil shared how God had delivered her from an especially difficult situation, giving her a peace she had never felt before and turning her life around—one of many services this year characterized by a sense of God's presence.

Easter Sunrise Service

Two years ago marked the coldest celebration we've ever had for our Easter Sunrise service. In 2008, with a predicted windchill factor of five below zero, we moved inside for the first time in the twenty years I've been doing the services. This year was just the opposite with temps in the high 50's. I started by welcoming folks to the first of our "summer services." The balmy weather helped attendance which was a little above average at about 280.

To underscore the importance of prayer, I had been struggling with the Easter message for several weeks. With false starts abounding, I finally requested the help of our email prayer chain. Those prayers were answered and two days before Easter the message began to come together.

“The Book”

As I write this, I'm preparing to take off for a week to work on “the book” (for new readers, the subject is ski resort ministries—the stories of five, including my own). I had to suspend work on it during the ski season as my responsibilities at Loon were too time consuming. I'm hoping to finish the story of my first minister, Dann Masters by the end of next month, which will be a year from when I started working on it. Hopefully, future stories will not take so long.

Prayer Letter – New Format

For the past twenty years of our ministry, we've been publishing a prayer letter with daily scripture readings accompanying prayer requests solicited from those who worship with us as our own needs. Over the past couple of years, we've added an E-mail format for more urgent requests, since the prayer letter itself was published only quarterly. As time went on, we've found that the Email version, with its ability to respond to immediate needs, has become the more popular. At the same time, there are ongoing needs that lend themselves more to a printed format. So here's what we're trying for this quarter: we'll be listing the ongoing prayer concerns in a one-page prayer letter, to be used daily for the three-month period, while our Email Prayer Chain will continue to respond to the urgent requests that come our way. As we've done in the past, we'll let you know as those requests are answered. I guess you could say that our prayer letter has gone “hybrid.” If you aren't presently receiving either the printed prayer letter or our email requests and would like to, just let us know by emailing me at the address below.

Financial Report

(Received from the Thrift Store, Real Estate Income, Weddings and Donations through March of 2010)

<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Received</u>	<u>Difference</u>
26,152	25,487	-665

At Other New England Ski Resorts

(While these ministries are independent of ours, I thought you'd enjoy knowing what's happening at them)

Shirley Marcroft, who has been at **Waterville Valley** the past couple of years and is experiencing the challenges and struggles common to starting a ski resort ministry was feeling discouraged the other day. She prayed, asking God for a sign as to whether she should stay or be open to going elsewhere. That afternoon, she met with a clerk at one of the shops in Town Square who was having a particularly difficult time in her life. Shirley sat down

with her and they talked. To make a long story short, that woman accepted Jesus as her saviour and Lord that afternoon and is looking forward to attending an evening Bible study that Shirley is starting.

Following her Easter Sunrise service, Shirley shared with some of us how people were seeking her out to thank her for the message and telling her how much it meant to them. The focus was on God's love for them.

I traveled to **Sugarloaf Mountain** a few weeks ago and had lunch with Pam and Earle Morse. They brought me up to date on the story of their 17-yr old son Ben who is on the U.S. Ski Team's “D” (“development”) team. It's a pretty expensive proposition (think really good college times two) for people like Ben to be on the team due to the extensive travel expenses incurred as they fly around the world to compete. With sponsors picking up about 2/3's of the cost, the individual is still left with a hefty bill. Ben (and family) were fortunate in that with scholarships and off-season jobs he was able to provide 80% of the remainder by himself.

Pam and Earle reported that their ministry's lay leadership has recently come alongside Pam and is taking a more active role in reaching out to visitors and helping with the service itself.

Pam and Earle also shared with about an upcoming showing of the film “One Year” an exciting collection of snowboarding scenes along with stories of faith from the snowboarders themselves. They were expecting about 100 kids to be attending.

Sugarloaf's Easter sunrise service continues to grow with over 450 people attending this year!

A week after my visit to Sugarloaf, I travelled to **Sunday River** to visit with Rev. Don Coverdale. Don, a retired guidance counselor in Boston area schools, has a particular love for teens and a way of talking to them that is both loving and effective. He told me about a family with a teenaged girl who was having some behavioural struggles related to her physical maturing. “You tell her she's going to spend the day with me on the slopes,” said Don to her parents. “We'll get her a ski rental package and she'll follow me around during the day. Where I go, she'll go. If she wants to take some runs by herself, that's fine, but basically we're going to spend the day together—grab a bite of lunch—talk, ski and maybe hit the pool at the end of the day.” Then he told me what he was going to tell her. I won't try to put it in print, because printed words wouldn't do justice to either the tone of his voice or the attitude of concern that he communicates. But suffice it to say that he has a gift for being direct and compassionate at the same time.

Don is also known as “the chicken man.” On the way to Sunday River from his home in Boston, he'll pick up a package of already-cooked broiler chickens at BJ's (“they only cost \$5 a piece) and give them away. Employees of ski resorts are typically at the bottom of the wage scale

and such small things can really help out.

Across the Desk

Over the years, our ministry has sponsored a number of missionary outreaches which we're able to do with funds procured through the sale of donated real estate. At present we're helping to support two missionaries in Guatemala, one in the Philippines, two ski resort ministries and a young lady working with at-risk teens. We also help support those going on short-term mission trips and recently sent a small donation for a 3-week missionary trip to India by Matt Greene, the son of our former bookkeeper Arlene Greene. He's now living on the west coast and attending Mosaic church in Seattle, which was hosting the trip. I thought you'd enjoy reading some excerpts from the thank-you letter he sent upon his return.

"I would like to thank you so much for all your support and prayers. This trip was a huge success. The money you donated helped bring 28 people to Christ. Fifty-three people were miraculously healed and three churches planted, as well as some amazing testimonies that are strengthening the faith of people all over the world.'

"One of my favorite stories was when we found a guy with a cast on his arm after breaking it a few days before. His hand was so swollen that he couldn't even move his fingers. When we went to touch his arm to pray for it, he pulled it away in pain. What happened next changed my life forever. After we prayed he started moving his fingers and the swelling started to go down. When one of the other guys grabbed his hand and declared that it was healed, all the pain and swelling left his arm. He received a full healing and a burning desire to know the Creator who loved him enough to heal him.'

"Another fascinating story took place in a coffee shop when we met two guys who only believed in science. It was fun watching God move in ways that scientists haven't quite caught up with. One of the guys on the team asked God to reveal things to him about the other man's life. He then proceeded to relate some very deep things about that guy's life that even his friend didn't know. He ended by asking, "so how does science explain *that*?" The look on the guy's face was incredible—he was speechless. We were able to sit down and explain the whole Gospel to him and he couldn't have been more willing to listen.'

"There are many other testimonies of what God did in those three weeks in India. We talked to close about a thousand people and saw people not get healed and reject the Gospel every day. I don't want anyone to think that India is a wonderland where God relates to people differently than he does where you live. We didn't go over there for miracles but to plant churches and share the gospel with those who have never heard it. While overseas trips like this are important, God can do the same

thing in your own back yard. I have no special ability that makes God want to work through me. He wants to do the same through you. . .

"As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." This verse is for you, too.

To Him be the glory for ever and ever,
(signed) Matthew Greene

From "Men of Integrity," April 12, 2010

He walked confidently up to me one Sunday morning, introduced himself, and said he'd been attending for over a month. The teaching met his standards, he told me; the music was acceptable, and he was pleased with the children's and youth ministries. He was married, he said, and had several children. When I asked him where they were, he explained that they weren't yet allowed to attend; he wanted to first check us out to make sure the products and services were in line with what he felt his family needed. This wasn't about theology; this was all about customer service.

Since we've been taught that we're the center of the universe, we evaluate everything on its ability to meet our needs. Some of the best communicators of the Scriptures I know have had people leave their churches because they're not "being fed." I know that we're all the sheep of God, and sheep require a shepherd to feed them. But there must come a time when we become shepherds who feed others. Over 60 percent of Americans are overweight or obese. Is this also true in the arena of personal spirituality? Are we too much about us getting fed and too little about exercising our faith?

—Erwin McManus in "Unstoppable Force"