

January 1, 2009

Happy new year!!!

2008 Caboose! Ministry Year-End Report

Dear Friends & Family,

This past year, 2008, marked my **9th year** of itinerant work under the auspices of Elim Fellowship as a home-missionary, & my **23rd year** in full-time ministry, with **14** of those years in children's pastorates. I ministered in 2008 at least **49 times** in four different states: **DE, PA, NJ, & NY**. Travel to & from these ministry sites encompassed at least **4,333 miles** of driving, plus thousands more for "non-preaching" ministry related meetings. Ministry settings included Sunday morning family services, youth retreats, youth group services, inner-city children's meetings, camp services for staff & for campers, camp staff devotions, a youth small group meeting, a camp staff reunion banquet, a camp fundraising banquet, & a denomination's annual national conference, where I held the meetings for their children & youth. Expressions of the Body of Christ I ministered to were: Elim Fellowship, The Hopewell Network, The Conference of Conservative Congregational Churches, Assembly of God, Church of God, Urban Promise, & various independent fellowships. I also continued to serve once again as pastoral director of the Hopewell Network summer camps' program. It was my **18th year** doing so, & is the highlight of the year for me. In addition to the service rendered above, I tried to serve at our local church when needed; once again, as a room captain for our church's annual "Via Dolorosa" event; I also once again portrayed "Pontius Pilate" for this event, & assisted pastor with our annual "Magi" drama at Christmas. I also served in the area of worship either as worship leader &/or drummer. Some 2008 preaching themes were: The 3 Major Imputations Of Scripture, Judgment Day, The Holy Spirit, 2 Tabernacles, King Josiah, The Queen of Sheba, The Ark's Contents, Sovereignty, 2 Wisdoms, The Value of the Soul, The "Golden Chain of Salvation", & "Going Nuclear" Via The Scriptures. **"ONE NIGHT IN THE INNER-CITY OF READING, PA..."**

(12/5) Our son in law Nathan, a teen from his youth group, & I returned home late last night from an inner city kids' ministry event in Reading, PA. I am still somewhat in awe & dumbfounded as to how our God moved last night. When we arrived, it was raining lightly. Soon after I entered this old building, my sinuses went awry & I started getting a sinus headache. We proceeded to unpack & setup after having prayer with the two ministry site leaders. They said the kids would start coming in around 6 p.m., which was a good hour & fifteen minutes before the service began, and that's just what they did, &, as I "feared" & expected, they went right to the object lesson tables! More than one asked if these were the prizes we were giving away via our "Ezekiel's Wheel" game which we were going to play after the sermon as a review! I don't know what I would have done without Nate & Steven there. I told Steven his #1 job for the night was to "guard the table". He did so faithfully. We set chairs up, two neatly arranged rows, only to find within half an hour or so they were totally rearranged, as the kids, including me (to relate with them before I ministered to them) indulged in a wild game of dodge ball! The ball, the kids, & the chairs were everywhere, kind of like an old-fashioned western saloon brawl! Nathan & I would just looked across the room at each other & widen our eyes, saying with them something to the effect of, "Mommy! What in the world is going on here?!". Even one of the girls was often on the floor wrestling with the boys for the ball. Some of the older boys were bullying the little ones at times, but it didn't seem too serious? I stepped just outside this "gym-like" room to call Kim, as I regularly do on the road, just before I preach. While trying to talk to her, there were sirens going off everywhere! I later learned that a kid in the neighborhood tried to start fire to a house but he was caught. My preference before I preach is to be somewhere alone in a small, dark, quiet, closet lying on the floor in a fetal position, in intercession for the event. Instead, here I was playing dodge ball, trying to stay focused on the Lord. My prayer was, "Oh Father, if You don't calm these kids down & give me their attention, I can't lift up Your Son among them". I'm sure that was the Holy Spirit praying through

me, as His intent & mission re: the gospel is to exalt & proclaim Jesus. Jesus said the Spirit would take the things of Jesus and show them unto us! The Holy Spirit's purpose in the gospel is empowering God's people to proclaim Jesus, and Him alone. I was dumbfounded to see, in just a few minutes, this group of kids, I'd guess maybe 40 or so, sitting there as quietly & attentively as church-mice! It was the rowdiest group of kids I've ever been with, but it was also the most powerful manifestation of God's "crowd control" I have ever seen! We later learned from our host that about 15 kids who usually come didn't make it, as they were at the Life Line Center "North" practicing for a Christmas play. Our host said this was God's doing, as most of these 15 kids were girl "divas", whom the older boys who were with us would have been "all about" if they had been there! God is GOD! I was able to preach re: God's wisdom & the two paths of "life & destruction" from Mt.7, re: the broad & narrow ways; the Holy Spirit came & had His "hush" on the kids so prominently afterwards, after I turned it over to the host he just continued to minister to them & "tagged teamed" with me. We were very humbled.

"A 2008 HOPEWELL SUMMER CAMP REMINISCENCE" by Twila Ramirez

The flashing green light bulb cast its hue over the dimly lit room, captivating the audience. "This", Guerty's voice softly proclaimed, "is what happens when we go 'nuclear' with the Word of God". "Hmmm", I sighed, sinking back into my chair as the revelation sunk in a little deeper. My eyes lingered for a moment on the green glow, & then traveled back down a table laden with props to where the teaching had begun. An oversized Bible was opened wide & on it lay two gardening tools, painted in glittering gold. "So often", Guerty's voice echoed, "We don't dig deep into His Word. We are happy with scratching the surface & we miss the oil reserves buried beneath. His Word is rich & is waiting to spring forth, but we have to dig". The echo continued, "Jesus said, whoever drinks of Me, from his belly shall flow forth springs of living water. When His Word is in us, we can't help but overflow into others." Wow, I don't know about the campers, but I'm getting hit hard with these simple truths, I thought to myself. A glance across the room told me that I was not alone. Where else would over 100 children between the ages of nine & twelve sit mesmerized in quietness as the Word of God was cast as seed upon their young hearts? A moment later, Guerty cleared the front of the room and gave a simple invitation for the campers to respond. My eyes filled with tears as I saw more than half the room rise with little hesitation or fear of what their friends would think, & make their way to the front, posturing themselves before God Almighty, pouring out their hearts to Him. Among them were two of my own daughters, which caused the tears to form a little faster...the week sped quickly by & was filled with an exciting assortment of activities that effortlessly created lasting friendships between the campers. There were morning chapels, refreshing times in the pool, cabin devotions, mealtimes, cheers, challenges, & special events. But, nothing is as etched as clearly in my memory as that dimly chapel nestled in the woods, full of young, aspiring hearts leaning in to catch the Word of Truth. As the soft summer breeze flowed through the open windows, so the Holy Spirit flowed upon us, changing & conforming us a little more each night into the likeness of God. (Twila came w/her 2 girls this year as a 1st time counselor!)

Kim & I sincerely thank you for your love, encouragement, prayers, & support in 2008!

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Name: _____ Address: _____ Email: _____

[Please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485. Thanks!]

[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship itinerant home missionary, endorsed by his local church. He supports his family & ministry by preaching God's Word & through faith in the Lord & His provision through His people.]

Ministry/events for JANUARY & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

Dec. 18: EF area intercession mtg, City Church, Phila, PA

Jan. 6: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Elverson, PA: camp board mtg//pastors' mtg.

Jan. 30,31: Luke Martin Church Youth Retreat, Spruce Lake, Poconos, PA