



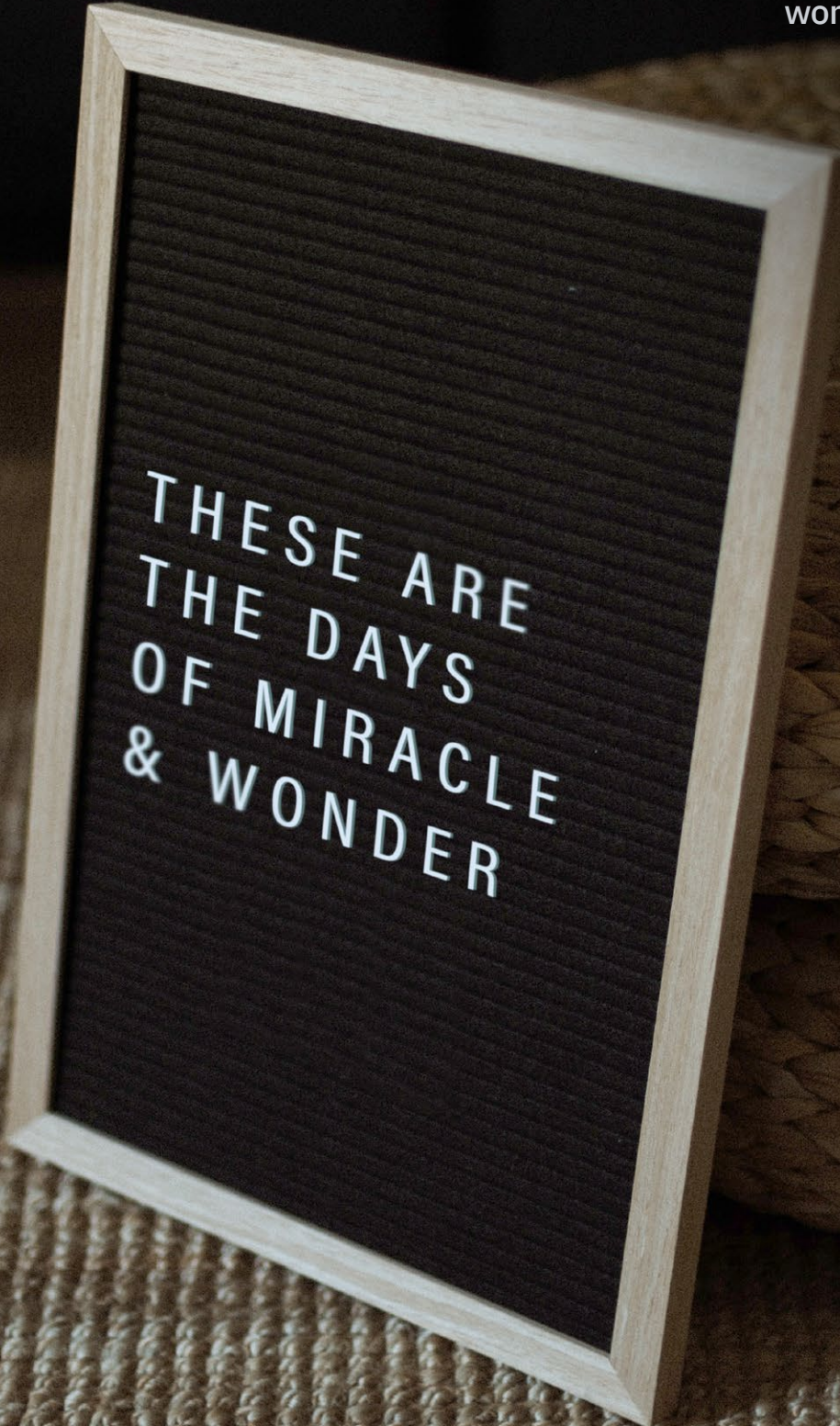
Beverly Heights
Presbyterian
Church

scattered seeds.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2022

We remember the
wondrous works that
He has done,
His miracles...



THESE ARE
THE DAYS
OF MIRACLE
& WONDER

the miracle on desoto street

BY ART FLICKINGER

If the walls of Children’s Hospital could speak and tell stories, they would easily fill up a library with volumes of stories about medical triumphs, tragedies and miracles. This is just one of them. But it is our story and, in so many ways, a Beverly Heights story as well.

Punctual like her father, Mary Grace was the only baby out of her two sisters and brother who was born on the due date. After bringing her home from the hospital, we quickly fell into the routine of feeding schedules, diaper changes, homework and after school activities. Everything seemed normal.

Then one Sunday, while sitting in church and holding Gracey, I heard and felt what seemed to be a slight gasping for breath noise, but it passed away quickly. It was a harbinger of things to come.

My wife Tracey had taken Mary Grace to her three-week checkup. It was the day after Christmas in 1991. I stayed home with the kids and later received a frantic phone call from the doctor’s office that Mary Grace needed to go immediately to Children’s Hospital for a heart catheterization.

Mary Grace was diagnosed with a ventricular septal defect (VSD), a common

— “ —
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— ” —

heart flaw that can be treated with surgery or in some cases closes on its own as the baby grows. A VSD is basically a hole in the wall (septum) of the heart that separates the heart’s lower chambers (ventricles) and allows blood to pass from the left to the right side of the heart. The oxygen-rich blood then gets pumped back to the lungs instead of out to the body, causing the heart to work harder.

Her problem would require surgery and, as we would later find out after a variety of tests, was in a very unusual position anatomically, presenting difficulty for the surgeons. A newborn’s heart is about the size of a walnut and the hole in her heart was the size of a dime. The surgery would be scheduled for some time in the beginning of March. The idea being she would be bigger and easier to operate on.

After calling family to let them know what was going on, I called Rick Wolling at home. Mary answered. That was the most important call I made that day as it set into motion relentless prayers that stormed the gates of heaven on our behalf.

The wait for surgery was tough on everyone.

Mary Grace’s heart grew quite large in size, as it pumped to keep up with demands, much like any muscle would that is exerted. The calories she expended exceeded her intake even with extra feedings. She grew weaker and lost a large percentage of body weight.

Several weeks before the surgery she was inconsolable; her feeble

cries sounded like a bleating lamb and tore us up emotionally.

The surgeon visited our room the night before surgery and relayed to us how serious her condition was and to be prepared for her death.

I remember handing Gracey over to the nurse to take her to the OR, it was a relief in a way, but it was not without a great deal of angst and trepidation that I placed her in their care and the Lord’s. Alvin Smith, the visitation pastor, was there with us.

He prayed with us the night before surgery. Unbeknownst to us, until he told us afterwards, Alvin overheard two doctors on the elevator mention the Flickinger baby case the morning of the surgery. He discovered they were believers and ended up praying with them.

After a long wait with family and church friends, we were summoned to a conference room where the surgeon gave us the news. Technically the surgery was a success but she was in critical condition.

She had arrested before the surgery and was stabilized, so the decision was made to proceed with the surgery. Had they known at the time that she was infected with a respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), they would have canceled the surgery.

The surgeon told us the decision to proceed with the surgery saved her life. RSV infections are a death sentence for

cardiac kids. Mary Grace developed RSV pneumonia, was placed on a respirator and given inhalation treatments of ribavirin, an antiviral drug that basically is a last-ditch effort for treatment.

Tracey spent 16 hours a day at Mary Grace’s bedside. I would come right after work and stay until visiting hours were over. We spent our time praying and reading our Bibles. My parents stayed with us for a while caring for our children and when they left, Beverly Heights stepped in with meals and child care. Countless mothers brought Tracey lunch and sat and prayed with her for hours at a time in the hospital.

The darkest hour came at about week four in the ICU. Doctors could not wean Gracey from the respirator. Her lungs were scarred and damaged by the pneumonia and the respirator. The care team was beginning to think that she would not make it.

Word got out and people gathered in the old chapel to pray after church on Sunday at Rick’s urging. This was the Sunday before Easter. I remember praying at Gracey’s bedside for an Easter miracle.

Out of nowhere this man came up to us in the ICU and introduced himself as a Critical Care Respiratory Therapist. He wanted to change the respirator to one that worked differently than the current one. He got approval from the medical team and changed it. We never saw this man again. (An angel?)

Within 36 hours Mary Grace began to make

some progress. Tracey and I both had a deep sense of peace and a feeling that things were going to be okay, much to the astonishment of the doctor on duty. He didn’t think our upbeat attitude was realistic.

That same week a friend of mine went to a healing service at her church. Before she could say anything about Mary Grace to the pastor, he was speaking in tongues with someone interpreting. He said a baby girl with a hole in her heart is being healed, right now! They record all their services and she gave me a copy of the tape so I could hear it for myself.

By the end of the week Mary Grace, to the astonishment of the medical team, was weaned off of the respirator and discharged to a regular floor. There, she spent five days on the nursing unit where she was weaned off of supplemental oxygen altogether! The rest is history.

Children’s Hospital is now part of the UPMC network and has moved to Lawrenceville and therefore is no longer located on DeSoto Street in Oakland. We owe a debt of gratitude to all the professionals that gave Mary Grace such expert care along with doses of kindness and compassion. Everyone we encountered in the hospital, from housekeeping to the heart surgeon who did her surgery, were kind and caring.

We wouldn’t have survived this ordeal without our church family’s help. We could feel the prayer support in a visceral way. It’s hard to explain it unless you have been the recipient of such a blessing.

God heard all of our prayers and his mercy and grace was poured out upon Mary Grace and that is why she is here today, a living testimony to “The Miracle on DeSoto Street.”

Mary Grace
holding the blanket
volunteers made for
all the babies in the
Children’s ICU. Hers
just happened to be
a heart pattern. ♥



more than my share

BY BOB THOMSON



Bob and Bette Thomson's dozen grandkids (minus the two in California).

I was born in 1941 in Watson's Nursing Home in Collingswood, N.J., near Philadelphia, about a mile from our house in Oaklyn.

Nursing homes were places usually run by mid-wives who cared for women during their delivery and for a long period of convalesce afterwards, no less than 10 days. In Europe they were usually called "lying-in homes."

Cooper Hospital, a perfectly fine institution that had been in operation since 1887, was only eight miles away. In fact, all three of my younger siblings were born there. I never did learn the reason why they chose to have me at Watson's.

Immediately there was a big problem. I arrived six weeks before my due date. In those days, few preemies survived.

I weighed three pounds and nine ounces and Watson's had no oxygen or incubators. The latter were just becoming common in hospitals. I was six weeks early either because I was just so anxious to get out into the great big world or because my mother had jumped over the neighbor's hedge several times the day before. Take your pick.

My parents were strong Christians so I am sure they prayed to God for a miracle. God granted them their request but He made sure it was not going to be easy for them. I was not strong enough to suck, so I had to be fed with an eyedropper every hour every day.

The doctor did not want me to lose strength by getting cold or wet, so I was bathed in olive oil. My care must have been exhausting to my parents. I'm surprised they had three more children after me.

I think most of you already know about the second time God miraculously saved my life some 60 years after the first.

I won't repeat all the details of my story of lymphoma; chemotherapy; mutation to a more aggressive type of cancer; more chemotherapy; the search for an unrelated stem cell donor; full body radiation; more chemotherapy; stem cell transplant with low chance for success; most of the year after transplant spent in and out of hospitals; ended up in ICU with unknown condition; down to 113 pounds; to amazement of doctors began miraculous gradual recovery; learned to walk again; and eventually almost as good as new.

In fact, I'm in better shape than when I was brand new.

waiting on God hour by hour

BY LAURITA KUZKO

My nephew Michael is a teddy bear of a man. Big and burly with a full beard and bright smile, he is 38 years old.

Mike is kindhearted and always laughing or making other people laugh. He has a 10-year-old son, Colton, and he was recently married to Katlyn.

A veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, he returned with health issues. His lungs were damaged during his service. In early November, he got Covid and had to go to the hospital. Because of his preexisting condition, he became critical and he needed to be on a ventilator.

He was in a coma struggling to maintain oxygen levels. We asked for prayer, and many were praying. We were asking for God to intervene. We needed a miracle.

Three weeks before Christmas my mother called me early. The doctors were saying that Michael would not make it through the day. They called my sister Annamaria and her husband to come in to say their goodbyes. Oh, their anguish and pain having to walk out of that room.

As Mike was struggling to live, Annamaria struggled to breathe. All hope seemed to

be lost. We cried and we prayed.

Sometimes we go through trials that we bare one day at a time. Some we wait on God hour by hour. There are tests we experience minute by minute.

And then there is the test that brings you face down, struggling to breathe. That's when faith is the rock under you. That's when you know He is real.



Then, a half-hour after having said goodbye, they received a call. A new doctor had been doing his rounds and checked on Mike. And now he was being rushed into emergency surgery to put in a lung stent to repair a collapsed lung.

He made it through and was stabilizing. He was still in a coma, but he was alive. The hope was that his oxygen increased enough for him to be able to get a tracheotomy to bypass the worst damage to his respiratory system. It took another few days of praying and hoping.

The tracheotomy was successful, and he came through alive.

Saturday, Dec. 18, my sister contacted us with the good news that Mike had woken up. He had been in the ICU on a ventilator and in a coma for eight weeks.

But God was merciful and woke him up. He is now in Montefiore for his rehabilitation. Having lost his ability to walk, he has a long road of recovery ahead. But he is still with us.

Mike and Katlyn, on their wedding day.

curing body & soul

BY CAROL & BRENT MOCK

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 1: 8-9

The power of these verses can be seen in the story of Carol's great-grandmother, Flora.

Even though it occurred nearly a half century ago, we still ponder the miracle we witnessed that summer. It became a defining moment in the development of our own faith.

Flora had fallen and broken her hip. It was June of 1974 and we had just arrived in Phoenix for the summer, staying with Carol's family. The heat was overwhelming.

We quickly went to visit Flora in the hospital and she was recovering nicely. A week later she became completely detached from reality, for which the doctors concluded there was no medical reason.

She would only agitatedly wring her hands and repeat, "Oh no – oh Jesus."

Not able to help her, the doctors sent her home.

Carol felt compelled to pray for Flora, asking the Holy Spirit how to pray. Those prayers changed from prayers for physical healing to praying for her salvation. This seemed counter-intuitive, as Flora always went to church and knew her Bible.

But while facing the prospect of death, it became clear to us that Flora, a stern Indiana farm woman, seemed confused as to how to seek forgiveness for her sins.



Grandma Flora
Singleton, at age 90,
in 1974.

— “ —
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SPIRIT.
— ” —

Because she had such a strong personality, Carol was apprehensive about talking to her. Still, she became convinced we needed to talk to Flora.

We went to see her assuming she would be in her right mind and prayed for that. She wasn't. Recognizing no one that day, she just moaned and repeated her mantra: "Oh no – oh Jesus."

This really threw us and we were not sure what to do. Carol prayed, asking for a sign that the Spirit was in charge. Immediately, Flora looked up across the room and said, "Hi, Brent."

Brent had only met her for 20 minutes two weeks earlier. We sat next to her. Brent began to read Psalm 23 to her and she became extremely agitated.

Carol prayed, "Tell me what to do and I will do it." The Holy Spirit said, "She never asked me to forgive her sins. Ask her if she wants me to forgive her sins."

Four generations of
Hinkle women; Carol
Mock is on the left.

Carol asked her, "Grandma, do you want Jesus to forgive your sins?"

Flora looked up and said in a little girl's voice, "Yes, yes I do, but I don't know how."

Carol said, "Grandma, pray after me."

They prayed, "Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner. Please forgive all of my sins."

Then Carol thanked the Lord that He did.

Flora let out a big sigh and settled back in her chair and fell asleep. The agitation was completely gone.

The room was thick with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

You could literally see the peace of God enfold her. We stayed awhile and as we passed her to leave, she awoke and grabbed Carol's hand.

She told Carol how much she loved her. She thanked her. For the first time ever, Flora gave Carol a big hug.

The next day she went to her doctor. She gushed all over him and told him how much she and Jesus loved him. Then she went out and for the first time bought what a farm woman would never buy – a red pants suit!

From that point forward, her transformation was remarkable.

She lived in perfect health three more years and told everyone she met how much Jesus loved them and how He would forgive them of their sins. We are reminded of Jesus' healings where he cured infirmities and also forgave them for their sins (Mark 2:1-12).

Carol's father was with Flora when she passed away.

Resting in her hospital bed, she opened her eyes, looked up, stretched out her hands and said, "Jesus!" And He took her home.

While this experience taught us many things, our biggest takeaway was what we learned about the Holy Spirit. It is vitally important to permit the Spirit to lead you in how to specifically pray when circumstances seem perplexing.



a miracle in my life

BY BRIAN WHITECAP



Jill and Brian, on their wedding day.

Several times over the course of my life the Lord has blessed me with events so extraordinary that I consider them miracles. That’s not due to any spiritual maturity or great works on my part. God probably intervened in this way, because I am sometimes spiritually “dense.”

Instead of discovering God’s will for my life, I will not see it or instead make an unwise decision. I hope that by reading my story, you will have a greater awareness that God cares about you immensely and wants to bless you, with or without miracles.

As Jeremiah 29:11 states, “For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

My story begins in 2007, a particularly low point in my life. I was unhappily divorced, laid off from my job, and mourning the loss of my mother.

The divorce had left me wondering: Would I live alone the rest of my life? One day I prayed: “Lord, I don’t know if You want me to be single from now on or not. But let’s agree on one thing: if you want me to marry again, then You pick the right woman for me and please drop her in my lap so I know she is the one.”

God did not defy the laws of nature, but instead orchestrated the following series of critically interrelated events, beginning a few years before I had even uttered that prayer.

Here is the answer God provided:

Event No. 1. December 2005: In Pittsburgh’s North Hills, Lisa talked a reluctant female friend into accompanying her to the annual Christmas Christian singles dinner/dance at Christ Church at Grove Farm (hereafter known as “the dinner/dance”). This event was uneventful.

Event No. 2. December 2006: In Pittsburgh’s South Hills, David (Caldwell) talked me into going to the dinner/dance. Lisa was by this time dating someone and was not interested in attending, much to her friend’s relief. This event was uneventful.

Event No. 3. Early December 2007: Having noticed a vaguely familiar object on a chair in David’s living room, I asked him if it was the “white elephant” gift which he’d gotten in 2006 at the dinner/dance.

David said “yes,” then remembered it was coming up soon. When he asked if I thought we should attend, I was noncommittal. “Maybe,” I said.

Event No. 4. Dec. 15, 2007: It was a dark and snowy night.

Lisa, having broken up with the aforementioned boyfriend from 2006, again pressured her friend to attend the dinner/dance.

Despite the bad weather; the fact that she was not appropriately dressed 30 minutes before it started; and that she really did not want to go, her friend hurriedly dressed and went anyway. David and I had decided to attend the dinner/dance just because it seemed like the right thing to do.

Event No. 5. Same evening: When we entered the hall, I immediately noticed a beautiful blonde woman who was laughing about something.

“Hmm,” I thought, “maybe she is someone I will meet tonight.” Most of the evening passed by and our paths had not crossed.

Event No. 6. Same evening: Now comes the intricate “timing is everything” part. A church friend introduced me to a lovely friend of hers. I sat down and had a nice conversation with the woman for several minutes when suddenly she stood up and walked away without saying anything.

I quickly decided to take my bewildered and embarrassed facial expression with me to the punch bowl, where I poured myself a drink, and started walking back toward my dinner table. Because the quickest route was across a corner of the dance floor, and my way was blocked by a bevy of dancers, I waited until the music stopped to proceed.

As I stepped forward, a woman who had been dancing with her back to me spun around and ran right into me, baptizing my hand and the floor with the punch.

After profusely apologizing, she told me her name. It was ... Jill.

When she asked what I did for a living, I told her I was a laid-off architect. Instead of walking away (see No. 6 above), she told me not to worry, that God had something special planned for me.

Wow! Did He ever!

Event No. 7. Fast forward to June 12, 2009: While the Pittsburgh Penguins were winning their third Stanley Cup, the woman named Jill became my wife in the presence of Matron of Honor, Lisa Fox, and Best Man, David Caldwell, God’s primary “instruments” for bringing us together.

I consider Jill a constant reminder of God’s grace and His unmerited favor in my life.

Sometime, ask me about the day that I got hit by a truck while sled riding ...

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a healing miracle

BY SENIOR PASTOR NATE DEVLIN

Many of you know that I was raised in the charismatic tradition, and while I may have witnessed any number of unusual incidents in the church as I grew up, I cannot say that I really ever witnessed any miracles.

By the time I was a teenager, I had become pretty well desensitized to the sensational. In fact, I started to find the miraculous distasteful. I grew suspicious of anything even reminiscent of the supernatural. That's why I was somewhat unprepared for the "power encounter" I witnessed at a high-school youth retreat.

In 1991, our family moved to Cranberry Township where I was introduced to some friends at school who attended youth group at Northway Christian Community Church. At that time, Northway was not the large, mega-church it is today. It was much smaller and intimate, a great place for a youthful high school transplant like me to reconnect with the church and faith.

I quickly fell in love with the youth program. I made friends and started attending events. Eventually our youth group participated in a weekend discipleship retreat at Geneva College. Little did I know at the time that Geneva would later become my alma mater.



It was the typical youth retreat that included Bible teaching, music, testimonies and plenty of time for recreation, so several of us made ample use of the fieldhouse and its basketball courts.

Dave was a pretty decent basketball player. He was talented but not overly aggressive. We all liked Dave. He was nice kid. And that's why we were heartbroken when Dave rolled his ankle during one of the pick-up games. I've heard it said that sprained ankles are worse than broken ankles.

I'm not sure if that's true, but what I did know was that Dave's injury was bad. He could hardly walk. Dave was eventually helped off the court where he received medical attention. I didn't see Dave until later that evening as he hobbled around on crutches with his ankle wrapped up with ice and bandages.

The next day was our last at Geneva, and our youth group decided to rally around Dave to pray for him and his busted ankle.

While I remember being happy to pray for Dave, when the prayers turned toward

Our Captain, back in his sporting days. Looks like he could swat a curve ball.

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the miraculous with requests to God for healing, I confess I grew cynical. I found myself drifting toward the back of the cluster of kids that surrounded Dave as I started to mentally and spiritually check-out.

Then I suddenly heard shouts of joy and the clapping of hands! I remember turning around to see what all the fuss was about.

That's when I saw Dave with his hands in the air, walking and leaping and praising

God. It was undeniable: something miraculous had just happened to his ankle. Dave hobbled into that meeting with crutches and now he was walking out.

Perhaps in the grand scale of heavenly miracles, Dave's busted ankle ranks among the more modest. But it's something I have never forgotten, and I never will.

I remember it because I believe it was a genuine miracle, but more importantly it was a moment when God showed up to powerfully move among his people, and I was decidedly not there.

I had made myself an outsider through unbelief – so when God showed up, I missed Him.

For a variety of reasons, many Christians today have put themselves on the outside, yet God has promised to show up in powerful ways, through the miracle of his word, the sacraments and the body gathered.

The greatest miracle is that God shows up, every Sunday. I don't ever want to miss Him again.

the life of Amos McLeod Webster

BY LOUISE O'BOYLE

Our family was so happy to learn that Charlie was soon to have a sister or a brother – due date Oct. 8, 2018.

Cara, our daughter, experienced more morning sickness in this pregnancy, but she and husband Ben heard a strong heartbeat right on schedule. Plans were made.

However, beginning at the end of week 15 of her pregnancy, Cara experienced abdominal pain. She was given an antibiotic for a UTI, but two weeks later, within days of a normal ultrasound, Cara went back to urgent care.

She was told the baby was fine, although the amniotic fluid was low. A special ultrasound was scheduled for Thursday, May 17.

The **blessing** was that up until the test, Cara and Ben thought all was well. They knew Cara was losing fluid, but several doctors assured them that everything was “still OK.”

After seeing a perinatal specialist for the ultrasound on that day, the results showed the baby was not healthy. There was a brain abnormality and Cara’s body was probably beginning to end the pregnancy. But there was a chance the baby would survive. They were asked if they wanted to schedule an abortion. They answered with an emphatic no! Ben and Cara always felt HOPE for Amos – a **blessing** .

Over the weekend, Cara’s college friends were visiting from Rhode Island. It was a bit overwhelming, but a **blessing** as Cara and Ben would focus on something besides the health of their baby.

To understand the next **blessing** , one has to know that Cara doesn’t feel early contractions while technically in labor. (Now, that’s a miracle!) Strangely, on Saturday, May 19, Cara felt pressure all day as the family went sightseeing with their friends around Pittsburgh.

That night, when everyone had gathered at our house for dinner, Cara started timing her contractions – something she had not done before when delivering Charlie until she was in the hospital room. This was a **blessing** . She knew what was happening.

When Cara did go to the hospital later that night, she knew to say

she was 20 weeks pregnant even though she was a few days shy – placing her in the family birth center rather than the ER. A **blessing** .

Omi and PapPap were available to meet Ben and Cara at the hospital and take 2-year-old Charlie so he would be comfortable and safe. A **blessing** . Preschool had just finished for the year – a **blessing** .

Cara and Ben’s favorite doctor, a Christian, was on duty and prayed with them – a **blessing** . The placenta had difficulty separating from the uterine wall. Their doctor prayed with them and the placenta passed. A **blessing** .

Cara held Amos as his little heart beat for a few minutes. But she didn’t understand that his heart was beating – a **blessing** . Ben cut the cord – a **blessing** .

The amazing delivery nurses (a **blessing**) urged them to name the baby and they did. Cremation was suggested as well to help in the healing process. Another **blessing** .

Nate Devlin was called on Sunday, May 20, at 7:15 a.m. Days earlier, he had Cara and Ben on his heart without knowing why. He had learned about the baby’s condition on Friday when he saw me upset and sad. On Sunday, he was able to comfort Ben and Cara, and pray with them, before church. A **blessing** .

All four grandparents were able to visit Amos in the hospital and we prayed together – a **blessing** .

Charlie stayed with both sets of grandparents and was calm and happy. He had some questions about where “Mama” and “Dada” were. He was so happy to see Mommy and Daddy on Monday morning – a **blessing** !

On Tuesday, Ben had jury duty. While there, he saw a former work colleague. The man related that he had gone back to school and received his divinity degree after his adult son had killed himself. He and Ben concluded that this chance meeting was not a coincidence – they both needed the support of the other! A **blessing** !

This is what I wrote later:

God’s provisions during this difficult time have covered us in His love. We are sad for our loss of Amos, but comforted by the love we feel from our Holy Father. It is not for us to question God in this, but to accept what life has given and hold onto God throughout.

This experience clearly illustrates our need for God. It shows how God does not leave us alone, but ministers to us even when we can’t feel it. We know there is a happy ending for this situation. Amos is already with Jesus and we WILL see him soon, another **blessing** . (Indeed, Amos means “borne or carried by God.”)

A month later, on June 24, our family was **blessed** again when our pastors Nate and Rick Wolling held a service for Amos. To be surrounded by such a community of believers! My favorite memory of the

service is Holly’s singing and Charlie saying, “All done! All done!” before going to the RunAbouts room with Hannah Devlin!

The last **blessing** is that Amos’ passing was the event that propelled Tom to apply for the job he has held for more than three years now as director of communications.

Reader, you may be asking: Isn’t this supposed to be about miracles? Phenomena that cannot be explained by coincidence or fortune?

My answer to that is an emphatic yes! These **blessings** taken one by one are possibly simple answered prayers, but altogether, a **miracle** occurred.

The **miracle** is that God has given us the eyes and the hearts to comprehend all these **blessings** as His work. The **miracle** is our understanding and acceptance of this excruciating and sorrowful life experience while we can still know His **blessings** . A true **miracle** ! May God be praised!

Louise, with her three grandchildren (now four), holding grandson Charlie Webster (center). She’s flanked by daughters Cara Webster (left), holding daughter Mae; and Erin Westgate, holding daughter Sommer.

— “ —
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lost shoes

BY JEN TAN

I was 16 years old when my sister fell off the Grand Canyon.

Two years older than I, Kathy was the pinnacle of cool. She wore Birkenstocks and went to art school, and I adored her.

One of her college summers, she headed out West to work as a camp counselor at Arizona's mile-deep chasm. Near the end of the summer, she must have been too familiar with the terrain, to the point where her risk aversion had been compromised.

According to the message she left on my parents' answering machine at that hour when "no news is good news," while taking a picture of a particularly beautiful sunset, she backed right off the edge of the South Canyon.

When she told this story later, she said the only thing she had time to think was, "This is how I am going to die."

But she didn't.

Miraculously, this was not the end of her story.

She fell 40 feet, and landed into a bush growing out of the side of the canyon.

Wrapping her legs and arms around the bush, she hung there for three hours, amid darkness, until the helicopter rescue crew could rappel down to her.

She suffered no lasting injuries, only a scraped up back, a mild sprain – and a little embarrassment.

Then again, how many people can say they fell off the Grand Canyon and lived to talk about it?

My mom, to this day, maintains Kathy was saved by a miracle. I do, too.

My sister later told me, laughingly, that her biggest concern at the time was for her beloved Birks, which she asked her rescuers to retrieve. (They declined.)

Even today, those lost shoes, at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, remind me of what might have been, but for God's Mighty Hand.

do you believe in miracles?

We close with a tip of the cap to perhaps the two most famous sports "miracles" in modern history.

Who (then alive) can forget the closing seconds of the "Miracle on Ice" when, on Feb. 22, 1980, sportscaster Al Michaels uttered the words above? The Soviet Union had won five of the prior six gold medals for ice hockey at the Winter Olympics, and their team was the overwhelming favorite to win it once more in Lake Placid, N.Y.

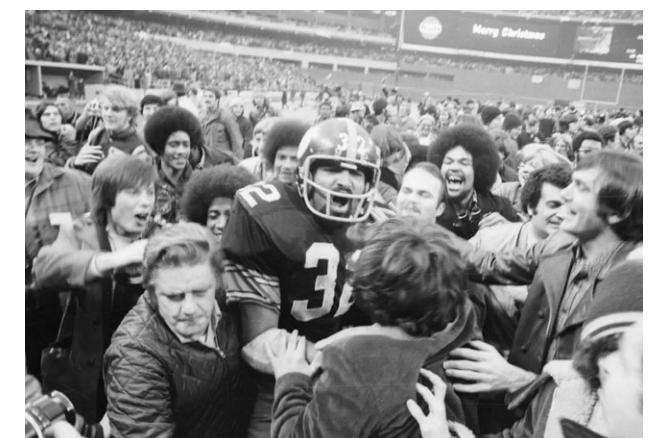
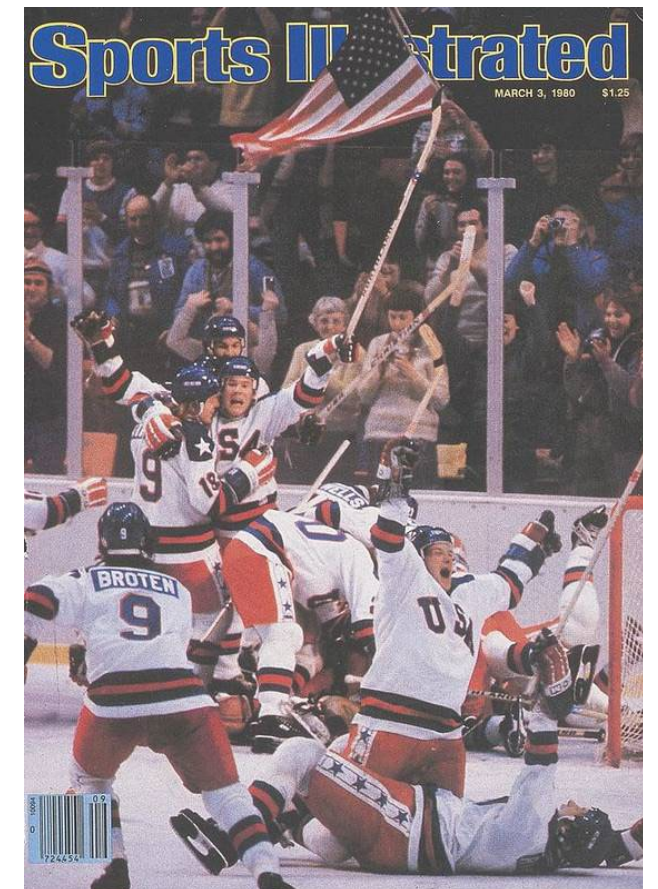
The gold that year instead went to the scrappy U.S.A. team, made up of collegiate and amateur players, which beat the mighty Soviets, 4-3 (and no, it wasn't the gold-medal game).

The second miracle is, of course, one known to all Steelers fans.

On Dec. 23, 1972, the Steelers won the first playoff game in franchise history when rookie running back Franco Harris hauled in the "Immaculate Reception," beating the Oakland Raiders as time expired.

With the Steelers behind 7-6 and 22 seconds remaining, Terry Bradshaw threw a desperation pass, which miraculously ricocheted off of two other players and back into Franco's capable hands. Harris caught the ball just before it hit the turf and ran down the sideline for a 60-yard touchdown.

Pittsburgh won, 13-7. The crowd went crazy. And a dynasty was born.



what exactly is a miracle?

As promised by all the TV meteorologists for the past three days, the snow arrived on Sunday afternoon, right on schedule. And, as predicted, it snowed all night and now, on Monday morning as I write this, it's still snowing.

At one point last night, Mary looked out our kitchen window and while watching the snow come down in great sheets, she exclaimed, "We've got a real blizzard out there!"

And so we did – or did we? Refraining from my typical obnoxious knee-jerk response, I held my tongue because, in fact, we did not have a real blizzard out there, strictly speaking.

A blizzard, according to the National Weather Service, is defined as "a period of heavy snow of at least three hours in duration accompanied by sustained wind of at least 35 m.p.h. with visibility reduced to under ½ mile."

According to those metrics, we were not in the midst of a blizzard.

However, Mary was not speaking as a "certified" meteorologist and, for my part, I last studied weather as a ninth-grade earth science student who received an unimpressive "C" on my final New York State Regents exam.

Nevertheless, I knew exactly what she meant and I agreed – we had a real blizzard out there.

This edition of *Scattered Seeds* is comprised of stories of "miracles" as experienced by members of our congregation. It seems good, therefore, without casting doubt or being obnoxious about it, to clarify how the word "miracle" is typically understood, by "certified" theologians, that is.

Generally, a miracle is defined as an extraordinary work of God in the observable, physical world, which is against the laws of nature, that only God can do AND that serves to lend credibility to the one who is revealing a message from God.

The author of Hebrews advises as much when he warns against ignoring God's revelation in Jesus Christ: *"It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will."* (Hebrews 2. 3b-4)

This biblical explanation of a miracle certifies as miracles the virgin birth, water turned to wine, the feeding of the 5,000 and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. These were extraordinary works of God, which only God could do, contrary to the laws of nature with the purpose of verifying God's Gospel of redemption made known in and through His Son.

This is the very narrow, theological understanding of a miracle. However, if these types of miracles do not occur today it is not to suggest that God does not work powerfully, sovereignly and providentially in our own time, quite unexpectedly and beyond all comprehension of human agency or natural causes. I believe that He does and such occurrences are often referred to as "miracles."

Given that use of the term, I can confidently add my own story to those on the pages which preceded mine. Having been diagnosed with cancer, not once but twice, having gone through two 14-hour surgeries, grueling radiation treatments and sickening chemotherapy, my son Jason is now eight years cancer-free.

Pastor Rick shovels snow after the recent "blizzard," which sure seemed like one while he was shoveling away the remains.



When I saw him in the ICU after his surgeries, face bloated and totally obscured by tubes, wires, bandages and my uncontrollable tears, his leg devoid of skin where a bone was removed to form him a new jaw, when I consider all he suffered, and compare his outcome to a neighbor of mine in Oklahoma who fought the same battle but without nearly as successful an outcome – and now I see Jason happy and healthy – I say, "It's a miracle!"

That's not the statement of a pastor or a certified theologian. That's the declaration of a grateful father. And the people writing in this edition understand exactly what I am saying and know exactly what I mean. And we join together in saying, *"Thanks be to God – soli deo gloria!"*

Rick Wolling is pastor emeritus of Beverly Heights Church.