

# 4 H.I.S. MINISTRY NEW YEARS NEWS LETTER

## THE BRANDSMA FAMILY



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## FALL FLEW BY

I can't believe how quickly the last 4 months flew by. When I looked back to see where our last news letter left off I was ashamed of myself...leaving you all hanging for so long!!

The fall kick off was amazing as people responded tremendously to the new programs and activities. Casey our intern worked diligently and pulled off a phenomenal fundraising concert. She pulled in an up and coming worship artist Levi denBok from Stayner with his fabulous group as well as 2 female soloists, Stephanie and Amanda. Local talent included our

"I've got a bit more bounce to my step these days."

very own and brand new youth band "Land of the Living", Tim Janess – guitarist and worship leader along with his band as well as Casey singing accompanied by Clara on piano. The response was overwhelming; with approximately 80 guests in attendance the concert raised \$600 towards instruments and band equipment for the church! Great job and special thanks to everyone who helped and a warm and special thank you to those who came from out of town to mentor the kids and play at the concert – you are the best!

September also brought the beginning of the Cleansing Stream Ministry Seminar to Evangel.

As most of you know this ministry is near and dear to our hearts and part of the very foundation of what we do. This ministry is a tool that enables Christians to grow much deeper in their walk and be set free from past struggles and woundings that hold them back from the life Christ has for them. We were thrilled in our small church to see 7 new people take the course including the Pastor! As the seminar progressed we saw God doing many miracles, breaking down many barriers and lives being transformed. Later in the newsletter we will be highlighting the story on one ladies journey to freedom. The retreat was a huge blessing. We threw in a little extra fun as we played some jokes and laughed so much that the ladies (from our own church) thought the kids next door were awfully noisy. The next morning we got in quite a laugh as we told them it was us! Through the weekend we saw many shoulders lightened and feet set to dancing! Praise God for His mercy! Pastor Rob told the congregation Sunday morning "that it was exactly what this old Pastor needed, I've got a bit more bounce to my step these days."



A great deal of prayer and preparation went into the launch of Evangel's new Youth Group. We began our first meeting with a game called the Mad Scientist which was an instant hit. The point of the night was to make the kids think about who they wanted in control of their lives. That night started with 10 kids and as we headed into the next week we knew the real test would be to see how many came back and how many friends they would bring. Facebook kept us informed that the kids who had come that night were thrilled with it saying "it was the coolest night ever". Since that time our group has grown to include 22 kids and on any given night we have at least 15 out! Every Friday night when we eventually get home we rush to turn the computer on for the highlights on Facebook! The reviews from the kids have been a hoot to read and watching God move in these young lives has blessed us immensely. We have seen several new salvations and several kids get things straightened out as they rededicated their lives to God. The majority of the group comes from unchurched families and the outreach the kids are doing in their schools. Way to go youth!



Topping off the last few months was an amazing weekend workshop for the youth band as an old friend of ours volunteered to give up his weekend and come give his time to mentoring the band. Damian Spaulding who runs his own school of music and is a very gifted worship leader spent the weekend teaching every instrument, vocals, timing and band unity as well as inspiring, encouraging and making the whole gang laugh a lot! What a huge blessing and huge thank you we owe to Damian! The kids still talk about him and all they learned. Damian also blessed the congregation by partnering with Casey to lead worship Sunday morning which was a real treat for our small town church!

Christmas at the church brought several gatherings, Christmas dinners, youth parties and a whole lot of fun. The season was highlighted by the children and youth performing a Christmas play called "The Not So Silent Night". Our own Eric who leads the Children's ministries dove into heading this up. It was his first shot at a production like this and though his hair is a little thinner after the production he is already looking forward to next year! They do say that what does not kill you makes you stronger! They did a fabulous job performing and had a lot of fun doing it!

A beautiful Candlelight service was a real treat on Christmas Eve as many members of the congregation shared their talents as gifts for Jesus on His Birthday. The stage was designed beautifully for a skit the Pastor performed and the whole evening seemed to stir something very special in all of our hearts.

The fall brought with it great anticipation and as God faithfully changed lives and began a great work in this little church the Christmas season gave way to a feeling of new hope and new beginnings. Evangel has grown not only in numbers of the last year but more so in heart and faith. This new year no longer brings anticipation but instead it brings expectation, the knowledge of great things yet to come.

## KIDS CORNER

The biggest news in the kids lives is that they simply keep getting bigger, if you thought they were giants before let me tell you they have added many inches over the last 6 months to their height. Keanna had a friend over just last night who said "boy I sure do feel short when I am in this house"

We are happy to report grades are good and the kids are enjoying their friends, youth group and band here.

While Noah has turned in guitar for playing drums, Keanna has picked up the guitar and continues with keyboard and violin as well. Where they get it from is beyond me! They are doing great and love being in the band.



## THE EVERCHANGING LIVES OF THE BRANDSMA'S...

When we first had this mission set in our hearts we committed to doing whatever God called us to do both in ministry and in order to be in ministry. Though we continue to work on fundraising to enable us to work full time in the church the reality is that we are not succeeding greatly in this area. For the most part we work in rural churches with average to low income people and though lives are changing and have been touched along the way few people have the means to sponsor us monthly. Last year in Brantford Eric worked full time outside of the church to support both our family and the ministry needs. **This time around it was I who found work first!** I have taken a job at none other than Pennington's/ Additionelle in Chatham. Though I only have a few shifts a week it has drastically changed our lives here. Eric who as most of you know does not work well in the kitchen has really pulled up his socks on this one! When I come home from "work" the team has usually pulled together a great meal and topped it off with house cleaning and laundry! Eric has had to pick up the slack at the church as well as home, helping to get things set up for me for youth on Fridays and for band as well as anything else I haven't been able to accomplish in the week. He has done a great job. For the most part my shifts are during the day so the kids have not missed me too much and have handled the transition well, pitching in wherever they can.

The new job meant working Boxing Day so our Christmas holidays were put on hold for a bit. We did get to venture out the week before and visit with the folks at Life Quest Church in Brantford as we went to see their Christmas Play – which by the way was wonderful!! We followed that with a quick visit to Eric's mom before heading home for my next shift. Christmas saw us at home and then having dinner with friends from church here. New Years brought the Nolan's for a visit as we all camped out at the church – what a hoot! Those of you who know Wendy should really ask her about doing the Boogie for Dweebs. She is great at it!

With the New Year upon us Eric is diligently seeking work outside of the church to help lighten the financial load but boy it sure makes things crazy when we are running between the ministry work and the outside work, with family and all it can be quite the balancing act.



This week we had the pleasure of spending a few days with my mom for our Christmas with her. She is doing well and we had a lot of fun with her. She really enjoyed playing bowling on the Wii and believe it or not she kicked all our butts! Way to go mom! She is such a blessing and joy to us! On the way back we also stopped and had lunch with my Dad. He is also doing well and though his eye sight is an issue he managed to paint pictures for both Keanna and Noah which is such a gift to have after so many years apart. We are looking forward to some summer holiday time with him catching up on things!

We continue to enjoy housing with the Pilecki's from the church, having the upstairs of their home and sharing the kitchen and shower downstairs. It has been a great blessing to live here. Our biggest struggle is allergies in the older home, especially for Keanna and Noah. Please keep this in your prayers.

## GOOD BYE SWEET CASEY

We had the pleasure of having our first intern join the ministry this past year. Casey Beauchamp joined us from our home town Stayner. Casey had been in my youth group for a few years and has kept in touch with both our family and our ministry work. She



**Thank you Casey!**

visited in Brantford and her friendship is very dear to us. She came to us at the beginning of the summer as our intern not really knowing what we or God had in store for her! Casey supported herself by working while here and enjoyed learning about the lifestyle of living with others in donated housing. Her eyes were opened to the many challenges we face and heart was opened to the lives and people here in Dresden. She connected with several families and touched many lives while she was here. Casey took on large fundraising projects, learned about planning events and regular activities as well as how to minister to people in a tangible way. She blesses us immensely by filling in a lot of gaps in the church from nursery and Sunday school to worship and band practise. She learned what it was like to be a gopher and serve humbly as well as being a part of transforming lives. God has now guided Casey in a new direction as she heads out west to stay with her dad. She plans to help the family there by caring for her brother and mentoring her sister. We are praying that her family will see God through Casey's life and love.

We will miss Casey greatly here but know that God will be using her to stir hearts wherever she goes. Thank you Casey for following God's heart and loving with your own!

Upon our arrival at a new church we set out to get to know the people in the church, who they are, where they are spiritually, what makes them tick and what their story is. We pray for God to direct us to key people that He needs us to work with immediately as He sets the church on a course to freedom and growth. Our very first Sunday in the church I took note of a woman who sat near the back on the right side of the church who had little children with her. During the greeting time she never moved, very few people approached her and when they did she glared at them. Naturally I wondered what had happened that morning to make her so upset. I marched over and said "Hi, I'm Maren" and stretched out my hand. Without any exaggeration she looked at my hand, looked at me and grunted then turned towards the child beside her and said something to him. I was shocked and as I walked away I said a little prayer about this woman. To my surprise the following week was no different except that God stirred in my heart a compassion for this woman. She seemed unfriendly to everyone, she barely sang, she never smiled and she left faster than I could turn around at the end of the service! I started praying for this woman and for God to show me how to love her and help her. I asked about her and was told that she only spoke to the Pastors wife and it had been that way for 10 years. I later found out that this woman with all the walls built up around her who always brought different children to church with her each week also had a teenage daughter at home who was pregnant. My heart went out to them and I knew that God had a mission for me. Over the next month I set out to be very nice to her, to compliment her, to smile always to ask her questions and show her love even when she grunted at me. One night after Bible study God really put it in my heart to go and talk to her and ask her about her daughter, that was the beginning of chipping away years worth of walls. I began to share things with her about my own pain and how I could relate to some of their struggles. Over the following few months Clara started coming by and we would go for walks together and talk through things. She began to trust me and allow God to start healing areas of her life. We had fun together and Clara began to smile more and more. The changes in Clara were seen by everyone as she began shaking hands with people, visiting people and even singing in church.

During this process I found out that Clara used to sing and play piano as a worship leader, she also used to be a children's Pastor. Clara was a prime example of how this ugly world, people's anger and the pains of circumstance can strangle out the good in our lives and cause us to build barriers between ourselves and God. As those walls came down and layers of Clara's pain was peeled back God began to heal and restore. Watching Clara get involved in church again, start reaching out to others and eventually even play the piano again brought us great joy and yes I shed many a tear. As we headed into the Cleansing Stream program in the fall I told Clara that God was going to set her feet to dancing. That her joy would be restored and her burdens would become light as she allowed God to work in her. There were many hard days throughout these months, days when God was teaching and shaping and molding Clara but I would always end my encouragement with a reminder that we had a date to dance! The weekend of retreat came with both fear and anticipation but I knew that Clara had worked hard as did the others in the program and that God was going to do a mighty work!

We have been doing this for many years and seen God change many lives in ways we could not even fathom but never before had we seen such immense change in such a short time as we did with our dear Clara. The joy I felt in the last hour of retreat as we headed to the altar and did our victory dance was unsurpassable. We knew in that moment there was great rejoicing going on in Heaven.

Two days after retreat I received an email from Clara with this excerpt in it "I am changed ... so much... Maren, and I need to share it, I need to say it to whoever will listen... it is in me. I hear the passion when I walk the floor talking out loud. or I am talking to my friend . I feel the smile in my heart and the joy that consumes my soul... **I am free**... I can see now, how you are thrilled to watch God move in a life to bring it to that place where God heals and they move towards all that God intended them to be.. to give the tools to stay free... thank you , my beloved sister ...and Eric my spiritual brother in law .. thank-you... and I am very proud of you both for listening to God's call and in doing that I am able to have the tools to stay Free.... so you are family today and

always ... in my home... in my heart and for all eternity."

Clara's dance has not stopped there, she gave a beautiful testimony at the front of the church 2 weeks after retreat, sharing with everyone what God has done in her life. She is reaching out to friends in the community and showing them the freedom God has for everyone, she is sharing it with her daughter and new Grandbaby, with her family and with other members of the church.

You see when God sets your feet to dancing and you choose His joy it is truly contagious. It is our own

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personal journey that God has given us, that he wants us to share with others. We all too often think that we should bury our stories, hide them with shame from sight. But the truth is God gave us our stories, to teach us, to shape us and most of all to reach others with.

Clara is a very gifted writer, musician and youth worker who was stifled by walls of pain, resentment and anger. Clara today is beautiful butterfly who is free to minister with her gifts and free to dance.

A special thank you to Clara for allowing me to share a piece of your story with our readers and most especially for allowing me a place in your journey!

## UP AND COMING...

Now that some of the main initiatives are in place at the church such as youth and Cleansing Streams it is time to involve the congregation in an outreach project that will get everyone involved and grow the church. There is nothing more exciting when you are doing this type of ministry than to see the people whose paths you've crossed along the way that God has raised up stepping out into their own ministries. We were very excited to hear from Jamie and Jen Hockley before Christmas. They are from the church in Brantford that we served in last year and one of the things they began to do while we were there was write plays and direct them. This was a huge step for both of them and was wonderful to watch as God shaped them and moulded them through the process. Following their second successful Christmas play at their own church they have now offered to assist our current church in doing an Easter outreach play!

We were thrilled at the offer and the Pastor thought it would be the perfect outreach event for the spring. The Hockley's will be joining us every week to do the rehearsals and help us prepare for the play.

Please keep this in your prayers.

We are also looking forward to the spring session of Cleansing Streams with both returning participants and God willing several new ones!

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- Church family and growth
- Funding for youth equipment
- Raise up leaders within church
- Eric – employment
- Sponsorship to enable us to work fulltime within the church and community
- Vehicle – looking for new truck/van that will pull trailer and seat 7 or more passengers
- Housing – allergies, either healing or another housing opportunity

Benefits for prescriptions or finances for

### Personal Mailing:

240 Queen St.

P.O. Box 459

Dresden, ON

N0P 1M0

Phone:

519-401-9563

705-241-1686

E-Mail:

[Kangax2@hotmail.com](mailto:Kangax2@hotmail.com)



### Ministry – Donations:

4 H.I.S. Ministry

7 Langevin Dr.

Wasaga Beach, ON

L9Z 1C6

E-Mail:

[Brandsma@4hisministry.org](mailto:Brandsma@4hisministry.org)

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