

REFLECTIONS

The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

ARGUING WITH GOD

By Pastor Brian De Jong

You should argue with God! Did you ever think you'd hear such a suggestion from your pastor? Really, I would encourage you to argue with God!

What do I mean? I am not talking about sinful complaining against God – a vocal opposition to His word or His will. You should never do that. Neither should you dispute His wisdom, nor His right to direct your steps. Don't do that either!

In what sense can (and should) we "argue" with God? In the sense that we present an argument to God for why we desire Him to do something.

We are "making the case" to Him – presenting reasons to support our requests.

King Hezekiah was among the best kings of Judah. One of the great crises of his life came when the Assyrian king Sennacherib assaulted Jerusalem. In a blasphemous communiqué, Sennacherib defied Jehovah and called upon Hezekiah to surrender Jerusalem to Assyrian control.

King Hezekiah took the letter, went to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord. Then Hezekiah prayed, asking God to see and hear what Sennacherib had said, even reproaching the living God. As Hezekiah prayed, he argued his case before God, saying, "Now, O Lord our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, O Lord, are God." In other words, here is what I'm asking you to do, and attached are strong reasons why we want you to do what we ask.

So often in prayer we stop short of making a compelling case. We present our requests, but we offer no rationale to support

our request. It's as if we think that God should just "take our word for it."

Often times at Presbytery meetings a commissioner will make a motion, and

finish by offering "to speak for the motion, if there is a second." When someone "seconds" the motion, the presbyter will state the rationale for his motion, endeavoring to convince other commissioners to vote in favor of the motion.

When we approach God in prayer, we should come with petitions, and good grounds for why those peti-

tions should be answered. In this way we should argue with God.

As we've been studying great prayers of the Bible on Wednesday nights this summer, we've seen how frequently the requests are accompanied by reasons, and how frequently those reasons have to do with the glory of God's name. It is not for our comfort or ease that we ask, but in order that the Lord may receive the honor due Him.

Is this method of prayer effective? After Hezekiah had finished arguing with God, Isaiah the prophet came and announced to Hezekiah that God would answer Sennacherib's defiant letter. That very night an angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. So Sennacherib went home in defeat – the Living God had defied the puny potentate of Assyria, and shortly afterward put him to death. God welcomed Hezekiah's argument, and glorified His own name in the answer.

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Joy, a Duty

By Charles Spurgeon

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." —Philippians 4:4.

There is a marvelous medicinal power in joy. Most medicines are distasteful; but this, which is the best of all medicines, is sweet to the taste, and comforting to the heart. We noticed, in our reading, that there had been a little tiff between two sisters in the church at Philippi;—I am glad that we do not know what the quarrel was about; I am usually thankful for ignorance on such subjects;—but, as a cure for disagreements, the apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." People who are very happy, especially those who are very happy in the Lord, are not apt either to give offence or to take offence. Their minds are so sweetly occupied with higher things, that they are not easily distracted by the little troubles which naturally arise among such imperfect creatures as we are. Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord. Should it not be so? What is this joy but the concord of the soul, the accord of the heart, with the joy of heaven? Joy in the Lord, then, drives away the discords of earth.

Further, ... notice that the apostle, after he had said, "Rejoice in the Lord always," commanded the Philippians to be careful for nothing, thus implying that joy in the Lord is one of the best preparations for the trials of this life. The cure for care is joy in the Lord. ... you will not be able to keep on with your fretfulness; ... you will not be able to weary yourself any longer with your anxieties, if the Lord will but fill you with his joy. Then, being satisfied with your God, yea, more than satisfied, overflowing with delight in him, you will say to yourself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." What is there on earth that is worth fretting for even for five minutes? If one could gain an imperial crown by a day of care, it would be too great an expense for a thing which would bring more care with it. Therefore, let us be

thankful, let us be joyful in the Lord. I count it one of the wisest things that, by rejoicing in the Lord, we commence our heaven here below. It is possible so to do, it is profitable so to do, and we are commanded so to do.

... It will be our first business at this time to consider The Grace Commanded, this grace of joy; "Rejoice in the Lord," says the apostle.

In the first place, this is a very delightful thing. What a gracious God we serve, who makes delight to be a duty, and who commands us to rejoice! Should we not at once be obedient to such a command as this? It is intended that we should be happy. That is the meaning of the precept, that we should be cheerful; more than that, that we should be thankful; more than that, that we should rejoice. I think this word "rejoice" is almost a French word; it is not only joy, but it is joy over again, re-joice. You know re usually signifies the reduplication of a thing, the taking it over again. We are to joy, and then we are to re-joy. ... God never commanded us to do a thing that would really harm us; and when he bids us rejoice, we may be sure that this is a delightful as it is safe, and as safe as it is delightful. Come, brothers and sisters, I am inviting you now to no distasteful duty when, in the name of my Master, I say to you, as Paul said to the Philippians under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice."

But, next, this is a demonstrative duty:
"Rejoice in the Lord." There may be such a thing as a dumb joy, but I hardly think that it can keep dumb long. Joy! Joy! Why, it speaks for itself! It is like a candle lighted in a dark chamber; you need not sound a trumpet, and say, "Now light has come." The candle proclaims itself by its own brilliance; and when joy comes into a man, it shines out of his eyes, it sparkles in his countenance. ... Joy—it refreshes the marrow of the bones; it quickens the flowing of the blood in the veins; it is a healthy thing in all respects. It is a speaking thing, a demonstrative thing; and I am sure that joy in the Lord ought to have a tongue. ... True joy, when it is joy in the Lord, must speak; it cannot hold its tongue, it must praise the name of the Lord...

Spurgeon Continued...

I want you to notice, dear friends, that *this* rejoicing is commanded. It is not a matter that is left to your option; it is not set before you as a desirable thing which you can do without, but it is a positive precept of the Holy Spirit to all who are in

the Lord: "Rejoice in the Lord always." We ought to obey this precept because joy in the Lord makes us like God. He is the happy God; ineffable bliss is the atmosphere in which he lives, and he would have his people to be happy. Let the devotees of Baal cut themselves with knives and lancets, and make hideous outcries if they will; but the servants of Jehovah must not even mar the corners of their beard. Even if they fast, they shall anoint their head, and wash their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, for a joyous God desires a joyous people.

You are commanded to rejoice, brethren, because this is for your profit. Holy joy will oil the wheels of your life's machinery. Holy joy will strengthen you for your daily labour. Holy joy will beautify you, and, as I have already said, give you an influence over the lives of others. It is upon this point that I would most of all insist, we are commanded to rejoice in

the Lord. If you cannot speak the gospel, live the gospel by your cheerfulness; for what is the gospel? Glad tidings of great joy; and you who believe it must show by its effect upon you that it is glad tidings of great joy to you. I do believe that a man of God—under trial and difficulty and affliction, bearing up, and patiently submitting with holy acquiescence, and still rejoicing in God—is a real preacher of the gospel, preaching with an eloquence which is mightier than words can ever be, and which will find its secret and silent way into the hearts of those who might have resisted other arguments. Oh, do, then, listen to the text, for it is

a command from God, "Rejoice in the Lord always!"
...Now we come to the second head, on which I will speak but briefly; that is, The Joy Discriminated.
...But I think that the apostle also means that God is to be the great object of your joy: "Rejoice in

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have too much

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our exceeding

joy."

the Lord." Rejoice in the Father, your Father who is in heaven, your loving, tender, unchangeable God. Rejoice, too, in the Son, your Redeemer, your Brother, the Husband of your soul, your Prophet, Priest, and King. Rejoice also in the Holy Ghost, your Quickener, your Comforter, in him who shall abide with you for ever. Rejoice in the one God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; in him delight yourselves, as it is written, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." We cannot have too much of this joy in the Lord, for the great Jehovah is our exceeding joy. Or if, by "the Lord" is meant the Lord Jesus, then let me invite, persuade, command you to delight in the Lord Jesus, incarnate in your flesh, dead for your sins, risen for your justification, gone into the glory claiming victory for you, sitting at the right hand of God interceding for you, reigning over all worlds on your behalf, and soon to come to

take you up into his glory that you may be with him for ever. Rejoice in the Lord Jesus. This is a sea of delight; blessed are they that dive into its utmost depths.

Sometimes, brethren and sisters, you cannot rejoice in anything else, but you can rejoice in the Lord; then, rejoice in him to the full. Do not rejoice in your temporal prosperity, for riches take to themselves wings, and fly away. Do not rejoice even in your great successes in the work of God. Remember how the seventy disciples came back to Jesus, and said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name," and he answered, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice,



Spurgeon Concluded...

because your names are written in heaven." Do not rejoice in your privileges; I mean, do not make the great joy of your life to be the fact that you are favoured with this and that external privilege or ordinance, but rejoice in God. He changes not. If the Lord be your joy, your joy will never dry up. All other things are but for a season; but God is for ever and ever. Make him your joy, the whole of your joy, and then let this joy absorb your every thought. Be baptized into this joy; plunge into the deeps of this unutterable bliss of joy in God.

... Let us think of The Time Appointed for this rejoicing: "Rejoice in the Lord *always*."

... When are we to be glad? "Rejoice in the Lord always;" that is, when you cannot rejoice in anything or anyone but God. When the fig-tree does not blossom, when there is no fruit on the vine and no herd in the stall, when everything withers and decays and perishes, when the worm at the root of the gourd has made it to die, then rejoice in the Lord. When the day darkens into evening, and the evening into midnight, and the midnight into a seven fold horror of great darkness, rejoice in the Lord; and when that darkness does not clear, but becomes more dense and Egyptian, when night succeedeth night, and neither sun nor moon nor stars appear, still rejoice in the Lord always. He who uttered these words had been a night and a day in the deep, he had been stoned, he had suffered from false brethren, he had been in peril of his life, and yet most fittingly do those lips cry out to us, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Ay, at the stake itself have martyrs fulfilled this word; they clapped their hands amid the fire that was consuming them. Therefore, rejoice in the Lord when you cannot rejoice in any other.

But also take care that you *rejoice in the* Lord when you have other things to rejoice in. When he loads your table with good things, and your cup is overflowing with blessings, rejoice in him more than in them. Forget not that the Lord your Shepherd is better than the green pastures and

the still waters, and rejoice not in the pastures or in the waters in comparison with your joy in the Shepherd who gives you all. Let us never make gods out of our goods; let us never allow what God gives us to supplant the Giver. Shall the wife love the jewels that her husband gave her better than she loves him who gave them to her? That were an evil love, or no love at all. So, let us love God first, and rejoice in the Lord always when the day is brightest, and multiplied are the other joys that he permits us to have.

...Be happy. If the present be dreary, it will soon be over. Oh, but a little while, and we shall be transferred from these seats below to the thrones above! We shall go from the place of aching brows to the place where they all wear crowns, from the place of weary hands to where they bear the palm branch of victory, from the place of mistake and error and sin, and consequent grief, to the place where they are without fault before the throne of God, for they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb...

A Sermon entitled "Joy, a Duty" given by C. H. Spurgeon on Sunday, March 20th, 1895.



Comments on Finance

by Joel Moody

General Fund receipts for June totaled \$14,867.35 as compared to the budget of \$13,491.42. General Fund disbursements for June totaled \$8,684.84 as compared to the budget of \$13,491.42. June year to date General Fund receipts totaled \$70,794.38 as compared to the budget of \$70,155.00 (an excess of \$639.38), while June year to date disbursements of \$69,764.07 were lower than budget by \$390.93. Through the end of June, the General Fund has decreased by \$2,394.28.

Benevolence Fund Receipts for June totaled \$1,324.00 while the budget was \$1,429.17. Year to date benevolence receipts through June totaled \$7,985.24, while the budget amount was \$8,575.00. Each month, \$450.00 is sent to Worldwide Outreach for the General Missions outreach of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In addition, approximately \$192.00 is sent each month to the Midwest Presbytery's Church

Extension Committee. For June, \$150.00 was sent to each of the following seminaries: Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia; Westminster Seminary, Escondido, CA; Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (located in South Carolina); and Mid-America Reformed Seminary (located in Dyer, IN). During August, a portion of the Benevolence Offering will be directed to the ministry of Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF). Please remember to pray for the ministries that our church helps to support.

The Vacation Bible School offerings totaled \$238.27 and were directed to AMG towards the support of their childcare centers. Grace Church also directed \$500.00 to the support of Lisa Berenschot for her summer work in California with Campus Crusade.

Gifts directed towards the Capital Fund/ Church Expansion Project totaled \$14,910.45 through the end of June. The Capital Fund balance as of the end of June stands at \$73,300.39.

Pine Haven Men's Chorus

The Pine Haven Men's Chorus is extending an open invitation to men of all ages, 12 years to whatever your age may be, to attend their "kick-off dinner" on Thursday, September 25th at 6:30 p.m. in the lower level music room at the Christian Home, to share a meal with members, enjoy fellowship, and sing a few songs, to get their voices going for the upcoming practice & concert season. Their mission is to assist Pine Haven through love

offerings accepted at their concerts. Through these, Pine Haven Christian Home has additional funds towards projects. Any questions? Contact Judy Beernink They ask that contact be made prior to the dinner so they know how many will attend.





August Birthdays



Camp Westminster

Camp Westminster will be held Mon.Fri. August 11-15. This year's speaker will be
the Rev. Albert Tricarico, OPC Foreign
Missionary to Uganda. He will be speaking on
the book of James. Topics are Settled Patience,
Divine Wisdom, Faithful Obedience, Christian
Love, Helpful Speech and Humble Submission.
Although the rooms, cabins and campsites that
were being held for our group have been
released, reservations may still be made on a
first come first served basis by phone or emailPlease do not call Green Lake to make your
reservation.



Grace OPC

August 2008

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



| Office: | Valley Ln | WI 53083 |
|---------|------------|------------|
| Church | 4930 Green | Sheboygan, |

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|-----|---|--|--|---|---|
| Sat | 2 Men's Bible Study, 7:30 a.m. | 6 | 16 | 23 | 30 |
| Fri | 1 | ∞ | 15 Camp Westminster | 22 | 29 |
| Thu | | 7 | 14 Annual Church Picnic Camp Westminster | 21 | 28 |
| Wed | | 6 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m. | 13 Camp Westminster | 20 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m. | 27 Prayer Meeting 7 p.m. |
| Tue | | 5 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m. | 12 Camp Westminster | 19 Pine Haven Study, 1:30 p.m. | 26 |
| Mon | | 4 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. | 11 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. Camp Westminster | 18 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. | 25 Women's Bible Study, 6:30 a.m. |
| Sun | | 8 | 10 Missions Sunday | 17 | 24 31 Lord's Supper (p.m.) |

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Spread God's Word Using the Small Stamp

Our OPC missionaries in China need our help in providing Bibles and the production of Reformed literature for the people. The OPC denomination is sponsoring a way for us all to help. How can you help? **SAVE STAMPS!**

Believe it or not many of the mailings we receive daily are worth something. Why let the garbage dump have such an apparently worthless item? Leaving stamps on some of the envelope paper (3/8 inch paper border) brings about \$4.50 a pound; stamps without any attached paper can be worth \$18.00 per pound. Foreign stamps on some paper can be worth four times more.

What should you save?

All foreign stamps, on or off paper (on paper preferred)
U.S. Commemoratives and large- size stamps
All air mail stamps and special rate stamps (\$1.00, \$2.00, \$4.60, \$16.25, etc.
Small-size U.S. stamps, if more than 41 cents in value
Self-adhesive stamps (trimmed, if more than 41 cents in value)
Picture postcards, new or used

Where do you put the stamps?

There are two jars next to the membership mailboxes provided for depositing the stamps.

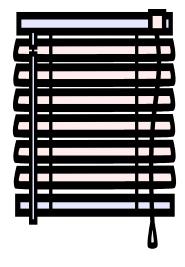
Your Church Missions Committee

Church Blinds

The Building & Grounds

Committee requests that when opening windows at church, please first fully raise the blinds so as to prevent damage.

Thank you!





<u>The Pine Haven Auxiliary</u> is made up of 2 delegates from each sponsoring church. This past year the auxiliary held Bake & Craft Sales, Pizza Ranch Night, a Fall Festival and an Italian Night. The auxiliary provides Birthday/Anniversary Parties, Bingo Parties and Tuesday night services at the home. Proceeds from the fund raisers provide many extras for activities, training for nurses' aides, a canopy for the yard, air mattresses, tables and numerous items making things more convenient & comfortable for residents. Items worth over \$14,000 were purchased this past year.

The Next Pine Haven Fall Festival is September 6. Grace Church is asked to donate five pies and one cake. There will be a bake sale along with a produce sale. If you have any excess of produce in your garden, please consider donating some for the festival. There is also a request for small houseplants. Take a clipping from your favorite plant and start a new plant this summer. Please provide a label stating the plant's name and how to care for it.

<u>The Corner Store</u> at Pine Haven sells cards, craft items, baby afghans, lap robes, cobbler aprons and numerous small items for the residents to purchase for gifts for family & friends and their own personal use. Craft item donations for the store are always welcome. A special request is made for baby afghans and cobbler aprons. There is a high demand for these items. Pastel or neutral colors are preferred for baby items. If anyone is willing to donate an item, our representatives will see that your donations get to the Corner Store.

Craft Items Needed: The auxiliary is interested in any crafts that are not too expensive to buy for the Fall Festival sale. Some craft ideas are already in the works. We could use people to assist. If you have an idea we would be happy to hear from you. Each church is asked for a particular craft, so many of that particular item would be made just for the sale. For example, last year a church made crocheted dolls; requests are still coming in for more. Examples might be a stuffed calico cat to sit on a bed or in the room, or maybe a special pillow: something suitable for men and women. Patterns are available for small counted cross stitch pictures and proverbs. Would anyone will be willing to do one or some? Not crafty? Donations of money are appreciated for frames & other supplies as well. A variety of things are needed; the auxiliary is happy to receive any donations.



ANY QUESTIONS? ANY GREAT IDEAS? Marge Halbach and Kate Nagle are your auxiliary representatives. Give them a call or see them personally.



ARE PRESBYTERIANS ALSO PRIESTS?

by Don Schlernitzauer

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine: and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the people of Israel."... "The LORD [also] said to Moses, 'God to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments."

~ Exodus 19:5-6, 10 (ESV)

Most of us have grown up associating the word "priest" with the Roman Catholic Church and thinking it has very little to do with us who are Protestants. We don't realize in such thinking we are giving evidence that the Scriptures are unfamiliar to us. We are also given to selling our salvation short thinking of it predominantly as forgiveness of sins. But God has made us so much more than just forgiven sinners. One of the greatest privileges that comes to us through the gospel is out entry into the priesthood.

In the Book of Revelations three times those ransomed by Christ are called "priests" of God and Christ (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). Perhaps the best known, though still often forgotten verse stressing the priestly calling of believers is 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of His own possession..." We should not be surprised at our priestly designation, for both the gospels and the epistles are clear

that believers are called to self sacrifice, holy living, and constant intersession. And aren't those the privileged duties of a priest?

God used the reformers like Hus, Luther, Calvin, and Knox to call the church back to the Scriptures, and one of the tenets of the Bible that they stressed was the priesthood of all believers. What they struggled and so significantly sacrificed for ought not to be so easily forgotten by us. Yes, by God's design, every one of His people, even you, even me, is a priest.

Not only are we rather unfamiliar with the N.T. Scriptures, that charge is even more accurate concerning the O.T., as the quotation from Exodus 19, cited above, makes clear. It was God's intention from the very first time He called a people out to be His people and to worship Him that they should be His "treasured possession" and "a kingdom of priest and a holy nation." The Levitical priesthood was to be a temporary priesthood until God would bring into being the means whereby all His people could become priests. Though Israel failed in its calling, we are to understand that the blood which speaks a better word than that of Abel has granted us success in ours.

You are a priest and I am a priest; Christ who washed us has also consecrated us! We need to get that settled in our minds. And once we do, should we not be about our priestly duties of being holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16), praying without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and offering our bodies as living sacrifices, which is our spiritual worship (Romans 12:1)?

Church Picnic

Mark your calendar's for the Annual Church Picnic, to be held on Thursday, August 14th!



Peanut Butter Chocolate Dessert

- ★ 20 oreo cookies, divided
- * 2 Tbsp. butter or margarine, melted
- * 18-oz. cream cheese
- ★ 1/2 cup peanut butter
- ★ 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- ★ 1 carton (16-oz.) cool whip divided
- * 15 miniature peanut butter cups, chopped
- ★ 1 cup cold milk
- * 1 pgk. (3.9 oz.) instant chocolate fudge pudding mix

Crush 16 cookies; toss with the butter. Press onto the bottom of an ungreased 9 in. square pan. In a mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese, peanut butter, and 1 cup powdered sugar until smooth. Fold in half of the cool whip. Spread over crust. Sprinkle with peanut butter cups. In another mixing bowl, beat the milk and pudding mix on low speed for 2 minutes. Fold in remaining whipped topping. Spread over peanut butter cups. Crush remaining cookies; sprinkle over the top. Cover and chill for at least 3 hours. Makes 12 -16 servings.

Note: you can use homemade whip cream for the top layer, instead of the cool whip.

Emily Boss



"There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. For who can have enjoyment without Him?"



The Monthly Newsletter of Grace OPC

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CHECK OUT THE AUDIO:

\$ERMONAUDIO.COM/ GRACESHEBOYGAN

CHECK OUT THE WEBPAGE:

OPC.ORG





- ★ Did you know that Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born June 19, 1834 in England?
- ★ That he had 17 siblings, only 8 of whom survived to adulthood?
- ★ That Spurgeon was only 6 when he read Pilgrim's Progress?
- ★ Did you know that Spurgeon had preached more than 600 times by the age of 20?
- ★ That he married Susan Thompson in 1856 and they had twin sons?
- ★ That when Susan was only 33 she became an invalid & was rarely able to attend her husband's services?
- ★ That Spurgeon's library contained over 12,000 books and he managed to read about 6 books a week?
- ★ Did you know that 25,000 copies of Spurgeon's sermons were being bought on a weekly basis in 1865 & were put into 20 different languages?
- ★ That the inside cover article of this issue is from one of his many sermons?

Information found at http://www.spurgeon.org/spurgn2.htm and in <u>Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans</u> by Ernest W. Bacon.

Church Cleaning

Have you been thinking about lending a hand & volunteering to help clean the church for a week or two? Now is a great time to sign up on the bulletin board! There are many free weeks to choose from. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Megan Boss. Many thanks to all who have helped out in this area!!

