

## BABIES IN NEED

### Miracles and Blessings

*God at work in our building and lives...*

2011 was an exciting year, a year of miracles and blessings! Each event was evidence of God's grace. Taken together, they were a series of blessings that arrived just when we needed them - not in advance, and never too late. We thank God for these blessings; they built our faith as we built a building in order to serve our neighbors more effectively.

Babies In Need had moved four times since 1999 to accommodate its steady growth and finally overflowed from our room into three other areas at All Saints Church. We prayed for years for more space and investigated renting space downtown or in other church buildings, but we didn't want to divert money from our ministry to needy families.

God saw our situation. The people of Vancouver First United Methodist Church (VFUMC) had supported Babies In Need since 2005 with donations of baby clothes and bedding, essentials and extras, and money. In November 2010, they selected Babies In Need as their outreach partner for 2011, and donated \$6000 to their Christmas outreach offering for this purpose. When they learned that our greatest need was for space, they said, "We can build you a building!" That began our great adventure and was the first of many related blessings.

What evolved is a building with a 20'x30' space to store and sort donations for large layette gift bags for needy babies. It is "stick built", matches the nearby church's siding and roof, and is heated to protect donations and car seats from moisture.

God used many hands and hearts to accomplish His work. Ray Johnson of VFUMC had worked with Habitat for Humanity for years and drew on his network of friends for assistance with all phases of the building. He was seen on the top of a ladder in many of our photos. He is a hard worker and wise advisor and his optimism was infectious. Another blessing!

"Mr. T" (who insists on being anonymous) drew our building plans, contacted the best suppliers, scheduled contractors and volunteers, directed volunteers, and worked many days by himself. He spent untold hours at the site and solved all kinds of challenges on the spot. His knowledge, skill and foresight were invaluable. What a blessing!

The Rev. Elise and Joe Astleford supported the project with prayer, ideas, work, enthusiasm and encouragement. Their past building experience was crucial during the first months of gaining approvals and starting the planning. We were blessed again!

Our building committee had members from three churches: Candace Weatherby (*Chair*), John Stephenson, Ray Johnson, "Mr. T", and Kitty Ash. Each brought essential skills to the project.

They devoted hours to necessary details for drawings, approvals, permits, legal oversight, fund raising, purchasing and the actual construction. Blessings abounded.

Meyer Memorial Trust shares our values and vision and awarded us \$24,999 in June, covering the majority of our expenses. Then we knew the building would happen that year! We gave them a hearty thanks on behalf of the many needy families who would receive practical help and encouragement. They truly blessed “our” babies.

The Vancouver Rotary Foundation awarded \$5000 to Babies In Need for the building project. More thanks and rejoicing! It was a blessing to have the support of this large organization of caring fellow citizens.

When the county gave us their final approval, our excavation and concrete contractors were there within a week to get the project rolling. It was a pleasure to work with Karl Matson of KRG, Inc. (excavation), Derek Olson of Kustom Concrete and Steve Herz of River Country Construction, Inc.

When we needed to move an old shed quickly so our excavator could do the grading for a walkway, The Rev. Bob Chrisman took two photos, posted them on CraigsList, and had a deal in 20 minutes – and then had to turn down a stream of additional offers. Again, God had the right person there at the right time!

Clark County added a traffic impact fee of \$2400 to our permit at the last minute. The next day Home Depot gave us a discount of almost \$1,000, a donor gave us \$1000, and the concrete contractor cut his bid by \$600 because he didn't need to have a pump cement truck. Thank you, Lord, for these blessings!

We had large pieces of plywood to make into trays and bins for storage, and several people who would have done it, but no one had a big enough table saw. Enter *Friends of the Carpenter!* These good people not only cut the pieces, but assembled 30 trays and sanded them beautifully. Then they assembled and painted eight large bins on rollers that hold incoming donations, quilts, blankets and other bulky items. Another blessing!

Our new building is beautiful and fits right into the property and neighborhood. It enables us to expand our ministry to include new and used folding portable cribs - the kind with mesh sides. Safe cribs prevent falls, provide a flat surface free of objects that could harm a child or obstruct breathing, and create a barrier against young siblings and pets. Folding cribs are easy to move as housing conditions change for our moms. We also have space to accept used strollers to enhance the lives of the children and make their parents' lives easier.

Celebrate, give thanks and pray for this ministry to the youngest members of the community.

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