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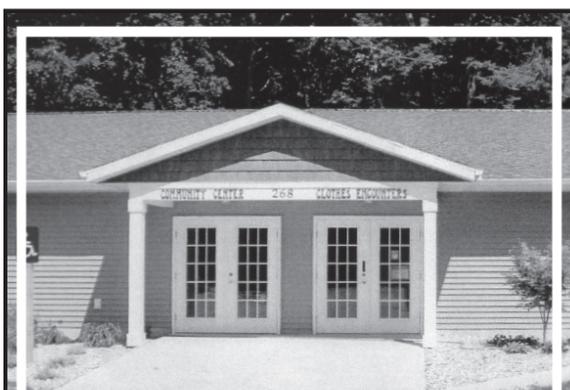
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268 N. 3rd Ave. Fruitport Village
Next to Word of Hope Church

Tranquility and tragedy
 by Rev. R.A. Shackles

I sit looking through a wide expanse of windows overlooking a beautiful planting of pine trees and ornamental grasses. There is a lovely waterfall at one end, a touch that never fails to draw the sense of tranquillity only well-planted gardens give. Beyond that, a steady stream of traffic passes, including a large number of ambulances.

I'm sitting in the infusion room of the Johnson Family Cancer Center on the campus of a major medical center. I am, much to my sense of continuing surprise, not a visitor, but a patient. The infusion room is where I (and as many as fifteen or more others) receive chemotherapy. The identifying "infusion room" has a rather somber, even defeatist sound.

I am now part of a tremendously fascinating fellowship — cancer patients hoping for their turn to say, "I'm a survivor!" Actually, I am one of the luckier ones. My cancer — lymphoma — I am told, is one of the easier to cure. Still it demands much — like sitting for three hours one day to receive my healing "cocktail;" an hour again the next day; and two days later, an injection to control the effects of the first two days.

As I said, "infusion" has a depressingly clinical, technical ring to it — a mystic process endured because it is the way cancer has to be treated. But I am anything but depressed or threatened. The cancer is tragedy, indeed. But the mood, the atmosphere in this busy treatment room is one of tranquillity akin to the quiet beauty I observe through the windows. For I discovered in this cancer center there is no depression. We all know why we are there. But in this facility there is a difference because the mood is joy, the conscious awareness that for all of us, there is a new hope, fostered by a settled spiritual depth of confident faith.

It feeds the strength of a very competent staff, all of whom confidently expect that healing of cancer for all of us. There is a gentle, happy attitude in every staff member. The realization comes that this is genuine. It is not a "good face" of hope against hope. Literally every staff member believes in their work and each brings to it a joy — often verbally expressed — that, as they say, it is so good to help us patients through rather daunting challenges to our competent cure.

So, halfway through my scheduled treatments, I sit — anchored to a drip stand — looking out into a world seeming cruel to many, for falling victim to cancer, but now seeing a new community for me in which again and again caring health professionals at many levels show me clearly that I *am* their special concern. And out of this, a time and place thought, expected to be depressing, has come a fresh, new assurance that I know — as the others perceive — a blessed tranquillity I had not expected. The cancer center — integrated by this strong influence of faith practiced — is a comfortably happy community where everyone is known and respected by name — just as the witness of our Lord teaches us the way things ought to be. The world I look out on from that infusion room is a precious gift, not a threat. And I thank God for being brought here where hope is certainly fulfilled. I am grateful — and I'm getting better! Who can say there are no miracles? •

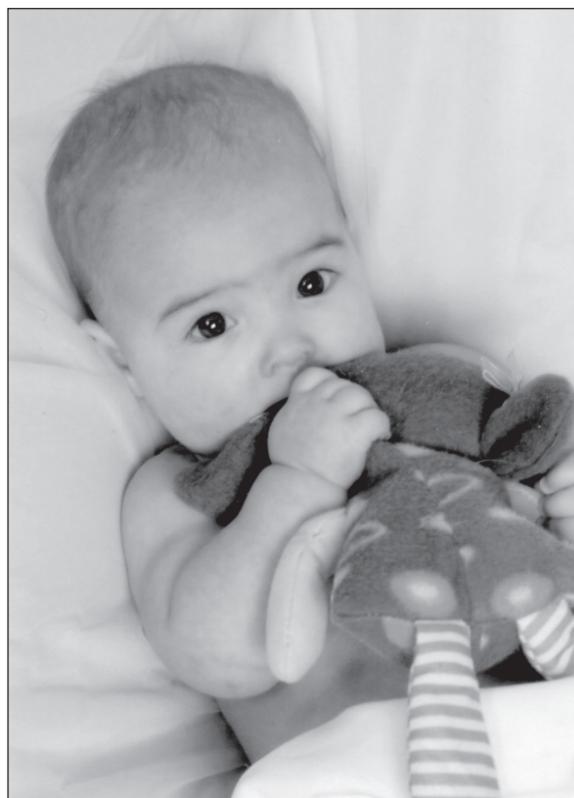
Not a secular purpose

by Char Lozicki

Who would think a picnic table along an old highway would evoke such happy memories? In the early 1950s, on US 16, a picnic table was placed along the side of the highway in Ionia County. Its use was so successful, picnic tables showed up in other areas. The county road crew returned empty pop bottles and used the money to attend a Tigers baseball game in Detroit. US 16 ran from Detroit through Lansing and on to Muskegon, passing through Fruitport on the way.

As I drive past Pomona Park in Fruitport, in the winter children are sliding down its hill; and in the summer, picnic tables are out. Many times groups of people are gathering for special events. Some of them are yearly events, with children running and playing, grandmothers holding newborn babies and smiling, telling tales of when they were younger. Some of these stories have been shared time and again. When the storyteller is no longer here, the smiles and stories will not be forgotten with wishes they could be seen and heard one more time.

Socializing and being with others is important. We need each other. Gathering for food, coffee, conversation and prayer gives us hope and love. It is something we all look forward to. The Wounded Warrior Project is aware of the effects of having human contact and reaching out to one another. One of those reaching out for help explained that a person helping another person worked better than most medicines. Let us not forget our veterans and include them in our prayers and activities. Moms and dads, we love you, too. •



Kaylee Loraine Sidock arrived on October 11, 2013 to Jeremy and Danielle Sidock. Jeremy and Danielle met at The Culinary Institute of Michigan and haven't stopped "cooking" yet! Jeremy is a supervisor at the US Post Office and Danielle is a Conventions Administrative Assistant at Amway. Her grandparents are Jack and Suzi Sidock and Kevin and Betty Douglas.

Thoughts about winter
 by Rev. William Randall

(Submitted January 27, 2014)

Early this winter, I wrote the following lines about winter's subtle approach.

Winter Wins

The chill of winter moves in to conquer.

The takeover is definite, but with subtle beginnings. The progression is barely discernible at winter's inception.

At first slightly chilling winds bring discomfort. The sun again shines bringing bright and bearable days,

The season progresses as does the number of dark freezing days.

All at once the Arctic blasts permeate and chill one's bones.

The winter winds howl and say, "Again, I've won." Warmth is just a memory as blowing snow fills the air. It's time to capitulate and longingly wait for spring's advent.

Now I'll add a post script. Should it be in the form of a complaint with some questions to extremists who, with messages of doom, warn about global warming? Most of us would welcome some warmth right now. Even winter sports enthusiasts find whipping winds and sub-zero weather unbearable for any length of time. Pages could be filled to report on inconveniences, costs and losses people have experienced this winter season. Few are singing "Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow."

If you are warm and comfortable, thank God for your blessings as you look out and enjoy scenes that would be perfect for Christmas cards. The cleanness of snow and beautiful shadows can lead to meaningful meditation.

Let's remember to pray for those who have to work out of doors, especially policemen, fire fighters and other first responders and truck drivers. don't forget the homeless and those who have no means of transportation. Winter has its beauty, but can be extremely dangerous

Maranatha's 2014 concert series

(Submitted by Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference)

Every Saturday night during the summer, Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference, hosts a concert at 4759 Lake Harbor Road in Muskegon beginning at 7 p.m. Although admission to the concert is free, a free will offering will be accepted. The 2014 concert lineup features:

June 21	Point of Grace
June 28	Matthew Smith
July 5	Theater for the Thirsty
July 12	Wintley Phips
July 19	Finding Favour
July 26	Robert and Pam Adams
August 2	Jan Mulder
August 9	Phil Keaggy
August 16	Lenny LeBlanc
August 23	Dave the Horn Guy
August 30	Marty Goetz