



# One Body

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD COMMUNITY

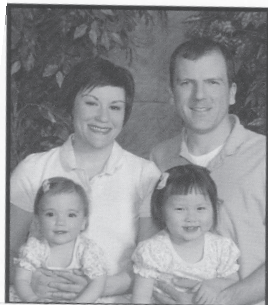
*The Lord replied, My son, my precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering when you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.*

—Footprints in the Sand

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## A Letter from the Editor



Beth and Phil Faulkner with Daughters Claire and Annie.

*"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."*

Luke 12:15

October 10, 2006, it happened to be my thirty-first birthday. Hot. Sweat dripping, shirt clinging, feel like passing out hot. It had to be around

150 degrees, or so my four month pregnant body felt. My eyes were wide and doe-like as I nervously scanned my surroundings. There was knee-deep trash heaps piled along the narrow dirt paths. Children ran pointing and laughing out of the thatch house windows. A lone, scruffy dog roamed about sniffing at the trash and yipping at the children's bare feet. Sun blinded my eyes and dust filled my nostrils and lungs. Quietly, and trying not to cry, I rocked a twenty pound toddler in my arms. Her wide, almond-shaped eyes mirrored my own scared and helpless feelings. My husband, our unborn baby and I were her "all." She looked like a small perfect doll. She had beautiful porcelain skin and the cutest round cheeks. I tried to imagine what her smile must look like, as she had yet to share this precious gift. It was difficult to focus on what our translator was saying, for in my mind I kept pondering a question that has troubled me throughout my life. "Why me, why was I so blessed to be born in a free society rich with hopes and dreams to be realized? Though I felt like I was "suffering," I kept thinking about all the people who TRULY suffered. Famine, disease, war, religious persecution... In the mist of all my thoughts, I saw her. "Her" was a kind and humble Chinese woman who lived in the poverty stricken village. She had a petite frame and short dark hair peppered with the first signs of grey. Although she walked with small half

steps and her eyes cast to the ground, I couldn't help but to notice the illuminating glow coming from her eyes. It was as if the glow of the Holy Spirit shone from them. They sparkled with excitement and sheer joy. The deep etched smile lines spoke of a great life. How, I thought could she look so peaceful and content? I could only imagine the hardships she had faced throughout her life. Even through her shyness, I could see the great pride she felt while showing our group her home. The woman pulled out four small hand carved wooden benches, dusted them off and begged us to sit. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw an object that bonded our two hearts. It was a simple wooden cross. I asked our translator if she could speak for me. I asked her if she, too, was Catholic. She quietly nodded yes. My husband inquired if there was a Catholic church nearby. At this, her eyes lit up and she began to speak about the privilege of going to mass once a week. The woman excitedly told him how she was able to walk to church—three hours up and three hours back. The look on her face said it all. She was just happy to love and serve our Lord. Tears formed in my eyes as I remembered a quote by Bill Gates, "The happiest people DO NOT necessarily have the 'best' things. They simply appreciate the things they have." She did not care about what she did not have, but was blessed by the freedom from the confines of empty pleasures.

Her apparent faith brought to light the error in my questioning. Instead of asking, "Why am I so blessed?" I realized that this woman, too, felt blessed. Although she and my family lived two completely different lives, we shared one common blessing. The gift of faith. I now better understood her outlook on life. She taught me that comfort comes when we embrace God's promises and surrender to His love. After all, there is no blessing greater than that.

Beth Faulkner

# A Tie That Binds: A Red Thread to China

## The Completed Journey

By Julie Law

For most of my life, I felt this powerful calling to be a mother. It wasn't just that I knew; I felt that I had been called to that vocation. Hokey or not, I knew with a heartfelt certainty that God had designed me for this and I had answered, "Ready."

So it was with utter surprise that my husband and I found ourselves confronted with the unexpected. In September 1998, I went in for a doctor's visit expecting a clean bill of health. Instead we were told that I would have a difficult time conceiving a child. Undiagnosed endometriosis was the culprit that would dictate our future. Continued physical pain, surgery, difficult fertility options, and sheer heartache resulted in the final realization that we would not be having biological children. The regret, the questions, my shaken faith flooded my over engaged guilt-laden mind. Had I truly heard that call from God? I even dared ask God Himself, "How could you set this in my heart and then allow my body to turn against itself and never allow it to happen?"

Even as I struggled with my faith, God

was faithful to us. He set people in our path whose sole purpose was to guide us to our two precious daughters in China. During our infertility phase, we were connected to a couple in New York, Cary and Cindy, as they were going through an adoption in China. Our hearts weren't ready. When our hearts finally



turned toward adoption, we met acquaintances for dinner one night who told us, "You should really go to the presentation at Chinese Children Adoption International." It was an agency we had never heard of, but we went. We met Josh and Lily and we were enthralled with their story. We wandered their offices. In the parade of

family pictures were the Lansings, a family from our parish. Pete was the chairman of the board. We walked away from that visit convinced, "They answered a call from God to unite Chinese orphans with waiting families. This is their mission and we could be part of it." And then it came full circle in a Redwood Forest in California. I sat next to our friend Diane and said to her, "Why can't I keep my eyes off of that Chinese girl three cars ahead?" She said, "Because you are going to adopt from China. Don't you know who that is?" "No." "That's Che Che, Cary and Cindy's daughter from China." It still gives me goose bumps. We got off the train and met Che Che and her squeaky shoes for the first time in person. The deal was sealed. God had set our path and it was to China.

We started the paperwork in September of 2000. We were told it would take 12-14 months to have a baby in our arms. The wait began, but so did a few other international crises that threatened our hopes: 9/11, a US bombing of a Chinese embassy, and the capture of a US spy plane off of the Chinese coast.

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## A Journey in Progress

By Ann Pohs



Today seems the most fitting day to write about my ongoing journey to become an adoptive single parent. Today is the first day of Advent, which marks the waiting period until the baby Christ child arrives. I too am in a waiting period of sorts, one that began nearly three Thanksgivings ago when I first started to contemplate adopting a child from China. Officially, I completed my application in June of 2006. Needless to say, I thought I would have my daughter by now; however, the process of adopting from China has slowed significantly to a near standstill. I have gone through multiple waiting periods, revisions of paperwork, etc., so waiting through Advent this year

is just a short mark of time when looking at the wider picture. However, the season does bring its gifts of anticipation and yearning for the precious gift to come.

Putting this entire experience into perspective I realize that my time frame apparently really isn't my time frame at all. I have no control in this somewhat complicated process of international adoption, other than keeping my paperwork current and keeping a hopeful heart. God is in charge and has complete control. I have been given the fruitful lesson of understanding patience more completely. It's just one of those virtues that crops up every now and then when we humans go through our varied life lessons.

Fortunately I have met some very special friends through this process and have received many positive signs that make me feel it is the right choice, but

not yet the right time. One of my dear friends told me, "Your child just hasn't been born yet." This has helped me deal with the long waiting period. There is also a unique Chinese belief that gives me comfort and hope as well. The Chinese believe that "an invisible red thread connects those who are destined to meet, regardless of time, place or circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle, but it will never break." My thread has definitely gone through some stretching and tangling but I believe that it is still strong and pulling me toward my Chinese child. That thread happens to be synonymous with the colors we see all throughout the Christmas season...the red ribbons, lights, ornaments, poinsettias and even Santa's suit. These Christmas symbols will all continue to patiently remind me of the anticipation to come...becoming a parent in God's perfect time.

# Not to Worry

## A Son's Journey Through War

By Jan and Neil Dvorak

He called on a Saturday afternoon, just after lunch. "Mom, Dad, I'm going to Iraq and don't worry. Everything is going to be fine." "How can you?" came our apprehensive reply. "You're in the Navy and Baghdad isn't exactly a port city when it come to carriers." "I won't be on a carrier, and we're leaving in two weeks." That was a year ago.

Our son, Douglas Dvorak, has been in the Navy since 1991 and deployed many times since on the carriers Nimitz, Roosevelt, and Enterprise, but this time the peril seemed much more pronounced. He would be on the ground, where sectarian violence erupts easily and explosive devices are a daily occurrence.

He asked us NOT to worry. How could we not worry? He delayed telling us of the deployment, aware of what our response might be, and we would honor his request, consciously choosing NOT to let this deployment deplete our energy and spirit while he was gone. This would be difficult...

There were parties and good-byes, military training and gear to assemble, and finally a coach seat in a CH-47 Chinook helicopter, that took him to his new residence, "Camp Bucca," the largest Iraq prison camp maintained by the US military in the vicinity of Umn Qasr, Iraq. There are 20,000 detainees to guard, and what better place to practice elementary Arabic and gain another "life experience."

There are stories to tell, some scary, some really funny, and some that should never be told. Yet most people will ask Douglas, "What did you learn and what did you think about in Iraq?"

His response was he learned to guard well and that moderation and RESPECT are key. In many cases when the guards changed their attitudes, so would the detainees. He feels RESPECT is what many Americans lacked. Previously, Americans were taught how to become



the adversary with our failure to understand Iraqi customs and practices, culture, and language. Any attempt to speak their language would bring cooperation, most of the time, even if it came as an order at gunpoint. The prisoners were being detained for various reasons. Many Iraqi detainees arrived at Camp Bucca with no vocational skills and little hope of obtaining any. The moderate detainees were

encouraged to take civics classes in democracy (Iraqi style), English and art classes, along with religion courses where imams preached a temperate interpretation of Islam. If we could recognize in time the value of adapting, the "threat" to American soldiers greatly decreased. The moderates were separated from the extremists by sand dunes and brims.

Most of those detained were not dangerous criminals or extremists, but young, poorly educated men without jobs who accepted money from al-Qaida to serve as lookouts or to build or plant roadside bombs. With little hope in their future and

unemployment rampant, becoming an insurgent would be the alternative career for many Iraqis. How these men are treated determines how many insurgents we create in the future, a lesson for military personnel and guards. It did not take much time to learn all this...only a year.

Douglas returned to Norfolk, VA in

November 2008, continuing his Navy career.

Again, there were parties and family gatherings at which all enjoyed his safe return. But what if things had turned out differently? Would respect take care of all that pain? We'll worry about that another time.

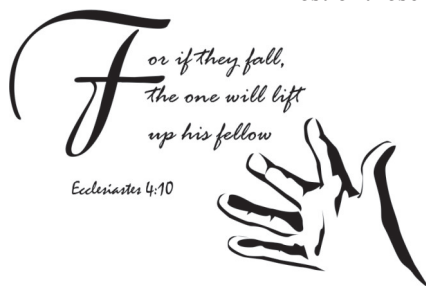
## The Completed Journey Continued from page 2

Was this really going to happen or would political interferences dash our hopes again? The wait was difficult. I thought that I would spontaneously combust because I couldn't take it anymore. But I stayed intact and God again stood by our sides.

On April 5, 2002, we got a call from CCAI. We had been matched with a beautiful baby daughter from Feng Cheng, Jiangxi Province. We flew to Nanchang and on Mother's Day 2002, our ten-month old daughter was placed in our arms. We named her Grace because it was only by the grace of God that we were able to have a child. Within an hour after getting her, she said, "Mama," she laughed, she giggled, and she played. All of our fears about every horrible story imaginable, melted away. We had vaulted that first hurdle: we were parents.

In August, 2003 we asked Grace if she wanted a sister. Without hesitation she said, "Yes." We asked her if she knew what a sister was and she said, "A good friend." We filled out our second application that week and 15 months later our second daughter was placed in our arms. We named her Hannah because it means "favor" or "grace." She was much more stoic when we met her that day, but meet her today and her personality can fill the church.

We feel blessed to have the daughters that we do. We are thankful for the people along our path that guided us in the right direction. We are humbled before God that He would find a way to redeem what seemed like a broken promise, and in the midst of my doubt, create healing.



# MPB Alumni Putting Faith Into Action

## Teaching Comes Full Circle

By Lauren Lansing



A peppy five-year-old with long pigtails and pink glasses with Smurfs on the sides walked into the chalk and crayon smelling classroom at the far end of a long hallway. Bright

colors and big pictures filled her wide eyes. A kind teacher's voice told them to find their names on the tables. A little nervous and a little excited, this perky girl met her first kindred spirit, her first true friend of her life, sitting next to her in the Most Precious Blood kindergarten room.

After that day, this little girl would have many wonderful friends and many wise teachers at MPB. Mrs. McDonald taught her to love poems with her daily Shel Silverstein recitals. Mrs. Sienkiewicz showed her how to write her *Œ* in cursive. Mrs. Cushing separated her from her new best friend by seating Geoff Budzius in between them. Mrs. Schwindt finally understood that this confused girl needed a different kind of

help in math. A family death and a new baby sister brought her close to an Indian family. Mrs. Stolper opened her creative side with leaf paintings, M&M masks, and painting under the table like Michelangelo. Secret codes and lunch time chats sealed a group of friends forever. Ms. Boyle instilled in her a love of the performing arts. Mrs. Evans made sure her commas and prepositions were correct and inspired her with a love of literature.

Each Sunday this small girl sat in the church with olive green shag carpet and long wooden pews, first using her *Children's Mass* book to guide her through the prayers and sitting and standing. She completed her first communion on the same day as her father converted to Catholicism; her first reconciliation in Observatory Park with Fr. Milton and some friends; and her Confirmation with her eighth grade class in the gym, while the church was being remodeled. As this little girl grew, she had a community around her that helped her question and strengthen her faith, who encouraged her to go away to college and later to travel to Honduras for a year of service.



When she returned from Honduras, she returned with a man she loved, who would become her husband. He wasn't a practicing Catholic, but he supported her in her spirituality. When she went to church, she

returned home to tell him about the homily and about all the news of the community. Through her and through their marriage preparation classes, her new husband began to understand what was behind his new wife's desire to help others. This desire was contagious, and he soon joined her in his own way.

This young woman knew that her faith community expected her to go out and serve the wider community as they had shown her through their examples. She wanted to use all those things that her wise teachers had taught her, that her community had encouraged her to do, and all the lessons that small children and poor families had helped her understand. So she decided that she

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## Teaching to a Different Beat

By Joe Mailander



Throughout my youth, the Most Precious Blood community was my second home. If I wasn't in classes, I was either roaming the halls early in the morning as my mom prepared her teaching lessons,

playing sports after school, serving at masses on Sundays, running around the playground, working for the maintenance garage, or rehearsing for school performances. I was a student at MPB from preschool through eighth grade and continued as a parishioner until the year I moved to Minnesota to study Spanish and Latin American Studies at St. John's University.

I currently live and work in Minneapolis and come back to visit MPB two or three times a year. I am a children's

musician who is employed at two non-profit organizations that work with youth in interactive settings. I write and record children's music and perform in schools, libraries, bookstores, after school programs, and neighborhood houses. How does an MPB preschooler end up as a children's musician living in Minneapolis? It was the experiences and people of the MPB community that shaped me into who I am today.

Music was always a key aspect in my education and spirituality at MPB. My first grade teacher, Ms. Cella, was my first music mentor. She would play guitar and sing with us every day in order to ignite our creative spirits. At mass, I would always sing from the pews along with the talented musicians. As I got older, I even joined the Youth Group choir as a singer and guitar player. These experiences, along with school music classes, after



school music lesson programs, Christmas concerts, school musicals, and talent shows were all part of my musical exposure in my early years at MPB.

Not only did the MPB community provide a wonderful music background for me, but they also instilled values of social justice and service. At MPB I was exposed to homilies that focused on the common good, the Interfaith Hospitality Network, service trips to soup kitchens, fundraisers for the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers, community members who lived simple lives, leaders who stood up for social change, and speakers who would present radical views of God at Sunday morning gatherings. These aspects of social justice inspired me to live a life committed to the service of others. From MPB, I attended Regis Jesuit High

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# Turning Life Into Story—Mine, Yours, Ours

By Carol Sullivan



The other day I told my 25-year-old son Michael that his claim to be the best driver on the road was braggadocio. He retorted, “Use a real word!”

I tried to tell my son that I prefer muscular, Anglo-Saxon words if they nestle into meaning—*cave* rather than *chamber*, *halt* rather than *terminate*, *gut* rather than *eviscerate*. He scoffed. So why, he asked, didn’t you say *pride* instead of *braggadocio*??

When Michael was about 4 years old, he would form words into nascent stories. “I got out of bed and THEN I went to the bathroom by myself and THEN I ate

breakfast and THEN I went to preschool!”

His sister Kathleen, two years older if not wiser, would pounce as he finished his story: “That’s IT???” she’d ask as if he’d told a whopper. Her high voice would lift an octave. “That’s IT? THAT’S YOUR STORY?????”

I confess, at times I’ve minimized my own stories: *That’s it?* The question I’m really asking is this: *Who cares about MY story?*

After teaching *Turning Your Life into Story* with Sister Macrina Scott through MPB’s Wisdom Center last fall, I can now proclaim: *I care! I care about stories—your story, my story, our stories!*

As writers in this class for elders began to tell their stories, I was riveted. The more stories they spun, the more

mesmerized I became. Stories of childhood, adolescence, middle age, old age, stories of play, work, triumph, defeat, joy and sorrow. Stories of love.

Christ instructed, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” I found that I was able to love my neighbors’ stories—and my own.

In one of our class sessions, each elder wrote a Letter to My Younger Self about a significant time in youth; in the letter, the elder self gave counsel and comfort to the younger self. Meanwhile at MPB school, English teacher Paulette Evans assigned her eighth graders to pen a Letter to My Younger Self. A week later the elders and eighth graders paired up to share their letters. As one of the elders said of that intergenerational experience, “The room was electric!”

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## Meet the Staff

### Mary Martin, M.A., LPC - Parish Counselor

By Annette Shope



There are certain times in life when we need a compassionate shoulder to lean on. The Most Precious Blood community, as well as countless others, are fortunate in being able to turn

to our mental health counselor of 28 years, Mary Martin.

Mary’s approach is comprehensive as well as interactive. She utilizes her extraordinary empathy skills and extensive educational training to best help her clients. Mary’s collective education includes Master’s degrees in both Theology and Mental Health with specialized training in Trauma Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), and Development Needs Meeting Strategy (DNMS). In addition, she is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Colorado (LPC), and a credentialed Pastoral Counselor in which she holds the honor and distinction of being a Fellow in the

American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

Mary has put her array of talents and education to work with couples and individuals at the MPB Counseling Center. She uses a therapeutic approach which integrates spirituality, psychology, and pastoral care. A method she implements is goal setting, allowing one to accomplish as much as desired. She states, “Pastoral counseling is not only healing what is wounded in us, but also allows us to move forward with God’s grace in a more whole and holy way.” Mary believes healing from past wounds increases one’s ability to function among family, at work, and within the community while experiencing God’s love more fully. “My work feels to me like bringing my lawn chair up to the edge of the Red Sea and watching a miracle happen every day.”

In addition to Mary’s pastoral duties, she oversees the Pastoral Care ministries, which include Health, Lazarus, the Marthas, Homebound, and the Share the Care Program. Outside of work, Mary travels, hikes, snowshoes, and reads. Her current non-fiction choice is: *Jesus in*

*the New Universe Story* by Cletus Wessels.

Wondering if counseling could benefit you? Counseling may be helpful if:

- You find yourself depressed, anxious, or grieving.
- You want to enrich your relationship(s) personally and professionally.
- You have reactions to events/people that are more critical, fearful, and/or angry than you want them to be.
- You are wondering how your faith fits in with the rest of your life.
- You have low self-esteem.

*NOTE: Our parish offers counseling services and referrals through the Counseling Center for those who want to explore ways to enrich their lives. Hours are: Monday through Thursday - 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Friday - 9 a.m. until noon. Fees are on a sliding scale basis. To contact the Center to explore counseling options, call 303-266-7991.*

## Turning Life Into Story Continued from page 5

In another class session, each elder brought a cherished memento, and wrote about the memories evoked by that object—a painting, a photo, a knitted blanket. Themes of these stories included loss of a spouse, a friend, a dog, loss of health, loss of home, and the love that abided.

My mother, who took the class, wrote about her first doll. She told of herself as a young girl loving that doll, rehearsing the care that she would one day bestow on her four children.

“Hush,” my mother would croon to her babies. Vaulting over dictionary definitions of words, *hush* cocooned us in her love.

Nearly eight years after my dad died, I go swimming twice a week with mom. She’s writing stories. So am I. Whenever I see her, whenever I talk to

her, she tells me stories and listens to mine.

*Hush!*

I hear an old lady whispering *hush*.

In a mirror darkly, the old lady’s mouth moves, shaping itself into a crooked crescent moon:

*Hush!*

In silence I read the stories of those elders in our class *Turning Life into Story*. We created and published an anthology. I hear in our stories this refrain:

*Love one another as I have loved you.*

### Writing Your Story A Wisdom Center Course

*“Turning Your Life Into Story” offers elders an opportunity to write stories of their lives. The course meets*

*from 10:30am to noon at MPB on Tuesdays, Jan. 27, Feb. 3, 10, 17, and on March 10. Students are given various writing prompts and come away with polished stories about aspects of their lives.*

*Teachers are Carol Sullivan, an MPB parishioner, author, and teacher; and Sister Macrina Scott, director of the MPB Wisdom Center. The course, offered through the Wisdom Center for the first time last fall, is \$45. Scholarships are available.*

*Registration forms are in the gathering space at the back of the church. Enrollment is limited to the first 20 registrants. More information is available from Carol Sullivan at 303-332-9858, or from Sister Macrina at 303-756-3083.*

## Teaching to a Different Beat Continued from page 4

School where I traveled to Indian Reservations, third world countries, and inner-city communities in order to learn about underserved populations. On the recommendation of MPB liturgist Tony Haas, I attended St. John’s University. During my years at St. John’s, I was able to spend three semesters working with underserved communities through study abroad programs and an internship in inner-city Minneapolis.

As a college sophomore, I co-founded a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization called The Medicinal Strings Foundation with a mission to share, promote, and inspire the arts within the lives of those most in need. We traveled through the Midwest as a bluegrass/folk band providing over sixty free concerts each summer at homeless shelters, nursing homes, soup kitchens, and low-income daycare centers. The idea for this organization was inspired and fostered by community members at MPB. Justin

Lansing, my best friend and another lifelong MPB member, was a co-founder and band member of The Medicinal Strings. Then, as a program of the Medicinal Strings, Justin and I started a children’s band called The “Okee Dokee Brothers.” We are currently providing interactive and educational musical performances for children in the low-income neighborhoods of Minneapolis and St. Paul. We just released our first children’s album which won an Honorable Mention Award for the best kid’s music of 2008! Check out our website at [www.okeedoquee.org](http://www.okeedoquee.org). Along with The Okee Dokee Brothers, I work for a non-profit organization called Youth Frontiers. We provide interactive programs that create positive school communities and help kids realize the importance of treating each other with respect.

Without the social justice and musical aspects of the Most Precious Blood

community, I would not be where I am today. I often think of the role models in the MPB community for inspiration when life gets difficult. We have a strong parish and even though I am far away in Minneapolis, the powerful energy of the MPB songs, people, and prayers still have a drastic effect on my life. Thank you for all your support throughout the years.

## Teaching Comes Full Circle Continued from page 4

would serve her community by being a bilingual teacher at Escuela de Guadalupe. She knows each day that the MPB School, Church, and community are the strength behind her work, her faith, her service, her family, and her new marriage.

*The mission of One Body is to provide a forum for members of the MPB Community to share their lives and personally connect.*

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*If you wish to submit an article, please contact Beth Faulkner at [faulknerpb@aol.com](mailto:faulknerpb@aol.com).*