

The Servants  
of the Word

Easter & Pentecost 2009



## Mike Shaughnessy: Faithfully Serving the Word

In the early hours of the morning, the light at the Kairos office in North America can sometimes be seen burning. Neighbors may occasionally wonder if someone accidentally left the office light on. Those who know Mike Shaughnessy can tell them otherwise. There is a high degree of probability that Mike is “burning the midnight oil” in the Kairos office, the next conference plans unfolding as he meticulously creates yet another “that was the best one yet” kind of retreat or conference weekend for the young people he serves.

Mike grew up a native of Orono, Minnesota, the son of the owner of the nation’s largest Ford tractor dealership. He worked in the repair shop, tended the family apple orchard, worked (briefly) for ABC television, and caddied at a local golf course. Little did he know that

all these experiences would, along with many other things, prepare him for the life God has called him to live as a Servant of the Word. And Mike learned well from his parents and his various jobs, the value of hard, honest work and the need to rise to the occasion in order to respond to a high call.

During Mike’s high school and university days in Minnesota, many men and women were built up and encouraged by his godly and inspirational insights. In more recent years, whether as a youth leader or community coordinator, Mike has continued to serve the word. And as an elder in The Servants of the Word over the past few decades, he’s given brotherly counsel to those under his care while living in Minnesota, London, Germany, and Belfast — and continues to do so now in Michigan.

Figuratively speaking, Mike wears many hats. These hats enable him to speak the word in many places and seasons. One of the hats, which fits him rather well, is being the Kairos Director for North America. Through his years of tireless youth work in The Sword of the Spirit, Mike has trained countless young people to be effective college and high school campus outreach workers and put on retreats and conferences that target their unique needs and serve the truth of God’s word to them through worship and prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Mike wears yet another hat as he helps develop covenant communities throughout The Sword of the Spirit. The Lord has equipped him with extensive experience that enables him to give vision and words of practical wisdom to these communities and their leaders through both troubling and peaceful times. Many are the people who are grateful for God’s word spoken through Mike.

Not only does Mike enjoy an active life of speaking the word – he loves to *pray* the word night and day, and he *writes* it, too. Wearing his author’s hat, he has written *A Concise Catholic Catechism*, a valuable resource for teachers and students alike), as well as a creative and inspiring novel, *The Archangel of Westminster*. In addition,

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Beloved family and friends,

We in The Servants of the Word wish you joy and peace in the celebration of Christ's Resurrection! In a special way at this time, we remember with gratitude the Father's amazing and unconditional love for us in sending his only Son to die that we might live, and in raising him from the dead so that we might share in his life for all eternity. We pray that in this Easter season you may know more fully the immeasurable riches of the love of the Father, and of his Son, Jesus Christ.

As we rejoice in and celebrate our Lord's great work of salvation for us, we also remember before him with gratitude the countless blessings that he continually showers upon us. We number you among the priceless gifts that God has given to us, and we are immensely grateful for all of the love and support that we receive from you. May our loving Father bless you abundantly, and fill your lives with every good thing. 🌱

With love and affection, in Christ our risen Lord,

John Keating

**In this Easter season may you know more fully the immeasurable riches of the love of the Father, and of his Son, Jesus Christ.**

**Mike Shaughnessy, continued from page 1**



**A smile sometimes says it all.**

he currently writes the *Kairos Youth Culture Newsletter*, a monthly brief on the current trends in the world of youth.

Mike joyfully *lives* the word because he *knows* Christ the Word. He also has a zest for games of all sorts – word games, number games, contests, and sports – which helps him relate to people young and old. On a sunny day he may be found on the golf course taking a break together with his close community friends and brothers. Not many people can say they have hit two holes in one!

Many and varied are Mike's gifts and talents. What Mike is best at, however, is serving wherever and whenever he is called upon. So tireless are his efforts that it seems he's always able and willing to make time for anyone seeking a word of counsel, a bit of practical wisdom, or just a bit of brotherly fellowship.

Mike always has the light on, as if he's waiting just for you! 🌱



**This boy was a proud owner of a new sweater.**

## Every Step Counts in Fulfilling God's Plan

Opening the door of the storage unit, I gasped and thought, "Oh my! What have I gotten myself into this time?" Before me rested a mountain of cardboard boxes, stacked from floor to ceiling. Standing in the doorway as the bright, southern Arizona sun streamed across my shoulders, I immediately began calculating how many trips would be necessary to transport these sweaters south across the U.S.-Mexican border. My thoughts quickly ran to the all-too-familiar realization that I may well have bitten off more than I could chew.

I had arrived in Douglas, Arizona, several days before a team of university-aged volunteers from Ann Arbor, Michigan, was to assemble there. I had offered to assist my good friend Alejandro Laureano in moving approximately 600-700 hand-knitted sweaters across the border for distribution to disadvantaged families and orphans. Alejandro, the coordinator of the Rancho Feliz Volunteers program, oversees annual construction projects for nearly 1,000 short-term volunteers who stay in a missionary dormitory in the Mexican border town of Agua Prieta. I was now honestly wondering if I would be able to do transport all the sweaters in the next 24 hours without being questioned by Mexican border officials. These and other perplexed thoughts ran through my mind right up to the point when I leaned over and opened one of the boxes from the pile.

Alejandro had told me that the two dozen boxes contained hand-knitted sweaters skillfully made by another group of large-hearted volunteers; *GUIDEPOSTS' Knit for Kids*. As I ran my hand through a boxful of brightly colored sweaters, I had no idea how many untold hours had been invested to keep families of children warm in the cold, high, mountain desert Sonoran towns of northern Mexico. Each beautiful sweater had been carefully knitted and neatly folded, ready for distribution. There was no end of colors, each bright as an early Arizona desert morning. And each sweater was waiting to fulfill its destiny to keep a little red-nosed, freezing Mexican child just a little bit warmer. When I stopped to consider the extravagant care that had gone into each sweater and the countless hours of clicking needles, the pending logistical efforts that awaited me seemed all the less significant. When all things were factored in, I realized I was about to play a very minor but important role in bringing the hopes and dreams of many dedicated knitters to fruition.

Knowing that space in my small rental car was limited, and having been forewarned by my friend Alejandro about not transporting the sweaters across the border in their original cardboard boxes, I devised a plan: I would transport the boxes to a local hotel where I would then transfer their contents to pieces of personal luggage, thus arousing far less suspicion from sometimes officious Mexican border agents. With this plan in mind, I shuttled the boxes to the hotel.

The next morning with each carload of repackaged sweaters, I prayed a simple yet specific prayer asking God to favor me with a "green" light at the border crossing. I was greeted by "green" lights each time I crossed the border. As the morning sun peaked over the Sonoran hills at daybreak, the sweaters had all been successfully moved to a second staging area at our Mexican missionary dormitory. With the aid of the university students, we were nearly ready to begin distribution.

When the team of students arrived, we developed a plan to dispense the sweaters to the many families we've served over the years, as well as those yet unknown to us. Delivering sweaters to individual homes in the area as well as to a local elementary school, we saw our precious cargo gleefully received by needy children in Agua Prieta. The university students experienced many "Santa Claus" moments as they proudly handed each waiting child his or her own hand-knitted sweater.

Although our part was very small, the role we played guaranteed that the many hours invested in the making of each sweater and the logistics it took to successfully send each sweater to that storage unit in Douglas, were not in vain. The few remaining steps it took to see each sweater into the hands of the numerous, excited Mexican children emphatically answered the question that I had asked when I opened that storage unit door. Indeed, this stealthily-staged act of service was well worth getting myself into! 🏔️

– Mike Kramer



**School children in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico**

# Stretching Out the Tent Pegs

*“Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cord and strengthen your stakes.” (Isaiah 54:2)*

Those familiar with daily life in The Servants of the Word know that there is one value that is prized almost above all others in our daily household life: order. A house of men of different ages, countries, cultures, and church denominations just will not work without some overall pattern and schedule to keep us pulling together. Thus it is very important that the chores are done in a strict pattern, that meals are made with reference to the right cookbook, and that the correct can is placed in the correct trash receptacle and that said trash receptacle is emptied on the 4<sup>th</sup> night of the new moon. Well – perhaps not exactly like that, but you get the idea. . . .

In Michigan this past fall, the brothers had the blessing of stretching out the tent pegs of our houses, and throwing some of the “order” of our life out the window to accommodate a rush of visitors. Guests from Tentmakers (Minnesota), Huntington University (Indiana), National Student Leadership Forum (Washington, DC), and young men from Sword of the Spirit university outreaches all over the United States came in a steady stream to experience life with The Servants of the Word in Lansing, Detroit, and Washtenaw County. The guests’ arrival meant we no longer had extra mattresses; we had no extra food, our schedules experienced additional strain, and “order” was a challenge as well as a blessing. We loved it.



**Guests with brothers at a recent event.**

Order is important only as long as you have something to order. A brotherhood of one requires no order – you just do what you want! Although our guests came from many different places across the country and the church, the order of our life as well as our rhythms of prayer, meals, and fellowship proved adept at accommodating visitors and keeping our houses running well. Many of our guests appreciated and benefited from our lifestyle and experienced the peace to be found within its rhythm.

Although it has meant some practical changes in our lives these past few months, all the brothers are grateful to the Lord. This season has been a chance to share our life with these young men and to further connections with Protestant groupings which we hope to see develop into lasting friendships. Meanwhile, we’ll eagerly stretch the tent pegs and wait for the next rush . . . . ▲

*–Tadhg Lynch*

## **WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP**

The Servants of the Word gets its support through the financial earnings of the brothers as well as by donations from our benefactors. Many of our brothers work for sacrificial wages or for no pay at all. Please consider if you can become a financial sponsor of The Servants of the Word. Your prayers and support are appreciated in our work with young people and our community development work.

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