

LIMEY PASTOR

Three of hearts



COLIN BROWN
Faith

Last week I told the tale of my recent heart attacks, a tale that grew further legs this week with a continuing descent into the medical maelstrom and a deeper analysis of my broken system. You may ask: Where is God in this? This indeed was what I was asking, too.

We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made. And our bodies, like cars, need regular inspection, care and maintenance, which I have been so poor at. These events of the latter years of life are reminders of the blessing that has traveled with me that now needs a new consideration of their needs.

My first heart attack was after the Christmas Eve service in Boardman, which I thought was just a chronic attack of indigestion. My second attack was the following Tuesday in the morning, which drove me to the urgent care, and there the angels among the humans drew blood and discovered the chemical relics of two heart attacks. I got a call from the lab later on that afternoon, inviting me to get to the local hospital immediately.

I stayed over at the hospital, which took more blood and got more similar results. The game, it appeared, was up. I was out of true in the plumb line of healthy living.

On Thursday I met my latest life teacher, Dr. C., a young, profoundly knowledgeable cardiologist who would escort me to new beginnings, or would at least assist in the closing down sale. (It is of course up to me.)

In my first meeting I gave him the sequence of events, the history of the trouble. Of course, I hoped he would tell me a different story, but the story got a little bleaker, more and more real. I was a diabetic; this did not bode well. I had liked to think that I was just a little diabetic, but this isn't correct.

This Monday I had another electrocardiogram, where I spent a lot of time roaming around the inside of my own heart on a video screen with a knowledgeable technician. He liked the heart, in fact. He said that it was a little better than his. I puffed up.

He said that there were only minor leaks, small things, nothing worth worrying about — and I felt un-puffed. On screen, my heart, with its wiggling valves, looked like a bloated goldfish with its mouth opening for air.

On Tuesday came the rough one. Well, the roughest one so far. This was the invasion into God's territory, plunging into the biomechanics of my own body. The angiogram is a

study of the arteries, the tangled forest of twigs that carries my body's fluids. I was taken into a room that looked like the interior of the International Space Station. With a team dressed in flashy radiation-proof garb it felt like being on the deck of the Enterprise. The doctor went into my body

through a probe inserted in my wrist and navigated the probe through the snakes of arteries in my body through the video screen. I had chosen not to have a sedative as I wanted to experience this fully, just as an astronaut wants to space walk, not just watch. Not so much the science, just an intense curiosity of wanting to know about the complex universe of my innards — directly. This was an E-Ticket ride. It feels very odd to have someone thread a probe through one's being. The dye when injected felt like a blast of warm coffee, and another chemical felt zingy, like a cold blast of soda.

Traveling though my body toward my heart, the probe squirted a dye that brought the squiggly mass of arteries into dark relief. It looked like a pool of jelly filled with algebraic symbols. Very mysterious.

Then Dr. C. broke open a bottle of reality. "Wow, you do have heart disease after all. Look at that. And that — and that." We all marveled at the visible evidence of a life lived badly by a diabetic in denial.

There were three main arteries that led into my heart that had curious constrictions. Their narrow constrictions spoke of plaque, the tortured goop that gummed up the sinuous beauty of my blood vessels. The artery in the middle was known by the gang as "The Widomaker" and apparently my most significant artery named thus was similarly strangled by plaque. This, as you may guess, is bad. Very bad.

So I will be talking with a surgeon next week. The choices of stents or surgery (triple bypass) for sure, lifestyle changes for sure. Life or death, for sure!

God gives us life, and its precious equipment, so that we may live lives of service and love. Brothers and sisters, don't wait — bring yourself and your equipment to healing, bring yourselves to the vision that God has for you. Look after your bodies and be well! Choose life! Do what I say, not what I did.

Colin Brown is pastor of Boardman's Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on Locust Road.

MLK Jr. site added to Park Service

By JAY REEVES
Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — President Barack Obama signed an order Thursday designating an historic civil rights district in Alabama as a national monument, placing several blocks of a city once rocked by racial violence on par with landmarks including the Grand Canyon.

The National Park Service will now have oversight of a downtown section of Birmingham, Alabama — a focal point of civil rights struggles in 1963 against harsh enforcement of laws mandating racial segregation.

Obama, who leaves office next week after serving eight years as the nation's first African-American president, acted after Congress failed to approve legislation proposed to bring the several-block area into the federal park system.

"It is such a great tribute to the people of the city of Birmingham that President Obama would make this designation as one of his last actions before leaving the White House," said Rep. Terri Sewell, D-Birmingham, who sponsored the legislation.

Agency employees will now be based in the district, which also becomes eligible for federal funding. The Park Service separately announced grants totaling more than \$500,000 benefit the area, part of \$7.5 million in funding for civil rights sites nationwide.

The Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument will include the now-abandoned A.G. Gaston Motel, where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. planned weeks of demonstrations against segregation in the spring of 1963; the park where black protesters were met by police dogs and fire hoses; the 16th Street Baptist Church, where four black girls died in a Ku Klux Klan bombing that year; and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.



AP Photo/JT, File

In this April 30, 1966 photo, The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses a crowd of some 3,000 persons in Birmingham, Ala., in Kelly Ingram Park on the last day of his three-day whistle-stop tour of Alabama, encouraging black voters to vote as a bloc in the primary election. President Barack Obama signed an order Thursday designating an historic civil rights district in Birmingham as a national monument, placing several blocks of a city once rocked by racial violence on par with landmarks including the Grand Canyon.

It also includes a business district that was a hub of black commerce for generations.

Obama also designated two other new national monuments linked to equal rights.

The new Freedom Riders National Monument in the east Alabama city of Anniston will include the Greyhound bus station where a racially integrated bus of activists was attacked in 1961. The Reconstruction Era National Monument in Beaufort County, South Carolina, will tell the story of a community built by freed slaves after the Civil War.

Stephanie K. Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, said the proclamation means Birmingham's civil rights district will "join the ranks of national monuments and parks across the country that reflect seminal turning points in our history."

"These new national monuments provide a place for reflection on how

far we've come and how far we still have to go to achieve true equality for all," she said in a statement.

The city-owned Civil Rights Institute and park already draw thousands of visitors annually, and 16th Street Baptist is both a civil rights landmark and the home of an active congregation.

Local leaders and tourism officials hope that even more visitors will show up once the site has National Park Service employees to greet visitors and explain the sites.

The most visible changes will occur at the now-ramshackle motel where King met with aides in an upstairs suite called the "war room" during pivotal demonstrations that resulted in Birmingham police and firefighters trying to stop marchers with dogs and high-pressure water hoses. King himself was arrested and wrote his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail" while in the city in April 1963.

BRIEFLY

GriefShare support at Boardman Baptist

BOARDMAN — A support group to encourage healing for people that are grieving is starting in Boardman.

A GriefShare meet-and-greet is set for Thursday, Jan. 19 at 6 p.m. at the First Baptist Church, 200 Willow Fork Drive, Boardman. The regular support group begins Jan. 26 from 6-8 p.m. It runs weekly through April 20.

For more about GriefShare, visit www.griefshare.org. For additional information about the Boardman group, call 541-481-9437.

After Shock sparks youth fun

PENDLETON — Snacks, games, worship, lessons and small group discussions are featured in a youth program at Pendleton Free Methodist Church.

After Shock Youth Ministry is Wednesdays from 6:30-8 p.m. at 1711 SW 44th St., Pendleton. The group strives to have fun in a safe environment and learn about what it means to follow Jesus in today's world.

For more information, call 541-276-6015 or visit www.pendfmc.org.

Potluck gathering invites older adults

HERMISTON — People who are 55 and older are invited to a special event at the Hermiston Church of the Nazarene.

The 55+ Potluck is Sunday, Jan. 22 at 4 p.m. in the church's ministry center, 1520 W. Orchard Ave., Hermiston. People are invited to bring a dish to share and enjoy a time of visitation with others.

The special ministry is planing activities throughout the year. For more information, contact 541-567-

3677, hermistonnaz@gmail.com or visit www.hermistonnazarene.org.

Choirs present Christmas cantata

MILTON-FREEWATER — A Christmas cantata celebrating the birth of Jesus has been rescheduled.

"The First Noel" had been postponed due to inclement weather in December. Choirs from the Milton-Freewater First Christian Church, Ingle Chapel Congregational Church and members from other area churches will present the musical event Sunday at 6 p.m. at the First Christian Church, 518 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater.

Valet parking is available with entrance to the ramp on the south side of the building. An elevator is located just inside the north entrance to the church.

For more information, call 541-938-3854.

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To share your worship times call Terri Briggs 541-278-2678