

April 2026

Dear friends
of Vital Signs
Ministries,



Claire and I are blessed -- blessed beyond measure -- because we have so many friends. And, as others can readily attest, our friendships provide the foundation for Vital Signs Ministries even as they reveal its character. For though there are aspects of our work through the years that seem singular (my speaking and writing, Claire's behind-the-scenes organization and ministry maintenance), so much of what Vital Signs has been (and still is) is the steadfast, skilled witness of a team of friends.



Moreover, even in the seemingly singular aspects of Vital Signs, a heavenly perspective would reveal that even these have an invaluable team element. Let me give you an example. The many years of "Vital Signs" on the radio began with Eunice Arant's voice saying "And now, here's Denny Hartford." However, those radio programs were not done all on my own. I needed friends: KGBI, Marty Stacey, Gary Matter, Tom Sharman, all the guests I interviewed on the Saturday broadcasts, the listeners who tuned in, the LifeSharers who generously donated to Vital Signs Ministries allowing me the opportunity to do this part of our ministry, all the saints who prayed for the outreach, and, not to be dismissed, all of the friends and family and teachers and

authors who contributed to the content that I put into those radio commentaries. "My" radio thing worked because of the investments of many, many others.

No, there's no doubt about it, even when a Christian seems to be ministering on their own, they are still part of a team -- a team assembled, directed, and empowered by none other than the Holy Spirit. For the faithful Christian, the "doer of the Word," the obedient saint who diligently bears the light of the Savior -- godly friendships are always in play. No man is an island; certainly no Christian anyhow. Indeed, every sinner who trusts in Jesus' sacrifice to pay the penalty of his sins is, at the moment of being born again, indwelt with the Holy Spirit, adopted into a forever family, and baptized as a beloved, invaluable member into one Body. The child of God is never, ever alone again.

To be sure, the dire importance of godly friendship is a basic, common teaching in the Bible. Here's just a few specifics. Friendships are a great help in times of trouble (Proverbs 17:17); they stimulate and sharpen (Proverbs 27:17): they makes us stronger and more steadfast (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12); they are a striking testimony of God to others (John 13:15); they keep you from being a friend of the world (James 4:4); they make you wiser and more alert (Proverbs 13:20); they offer perspective and forgiveness (I Peter 4:8-10); they keep your morality orthodox (1 Corinthians 15:33); and on and on.

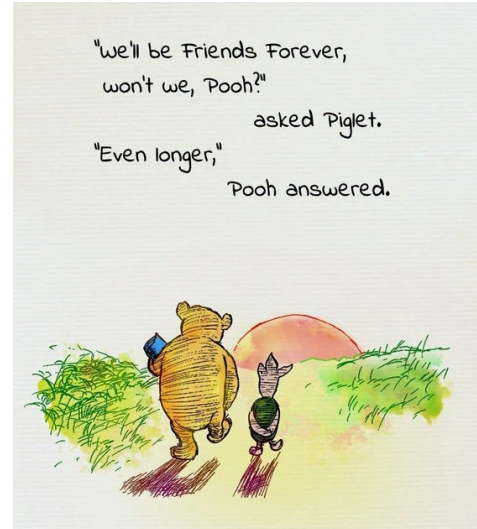
Claire and I thus treasure the motivating reality that spiritual currents of godly friendship run through our attitudes, convictions, and activity. And so, it's no surprise that friendships of the quality I'm speaking were again front and center for Vital Signs in the month of March. We experienced it in the faithful who gathered to pray and witness in front of Planned Parenthood -- the group assembled for a Vital Signs brunch discussion of heaven -- the 11 diligent letter writers (besides us) at both of Vital Signs' quarterly letter writing parties who produced nearly 120 letters and cards -- and the servant-oriented team which is a key part of our Aksarben Village Sunday afternoon church services. In all of these, the interlocking investments of Christians who are serving God in a common ministry are lovely and powerful. God is truly pleased when His children love one another, when they serve others together, when their unity testifies to a watching world of His glorious salvation.

But of course, the stimulation, encouragement, and "sanity check" that comes from godly fellowship appears in many other ways and March gave us several instances of His blessing. A delightfully impromptu breakfast up in Blair with Perly and Sandy Schoville... Visiting with Harold and Mary Dee Berry in a Lincoln hospital... A lunch out with dear friends from our Christian brotherhood days, Dan Hauge and Dennis and Jeanette Frahm... A breakfast with Keith and Carol Moran... Taking our new neighbor Shan with us to one of our Sunday afternoon church services as well as a "When Swing Was King" show. (As a woman raised in Communist China, Shan doesn't have a background in this music, but she loved it nevertheless, along with the photos and especially the chance to visit with members of our audience.)

There was also an important hour at the Roast Coffee Shop with Jim and Jean Lawson, Pat Osborne, Deb Harrold, and Mary Wenninghoff... A celebratory conversation with Aldo de la Cruz who has just recently received his green card!... Many delightful gatherings before and after our "When Swing Was King" presentations with fans of the show who have become dear friends... And such treasured slots in our regular schedule as my meetings with John Malek early

every Thursday morning and “Barb’s Bistro” where the Maleks invite those involved in our Saturday morning pro-life witness to enjoy coffee, tea, and engaging fellowship afterward.

But also in March (and the first week of April) there were some particularly intense and tender moments of friendship: **1)** Our visits with Linda Osborne before she passed into glory and then time spent with Pat and the family in preparation for her memorial service. And **2)** There was the sudden death of another good friend which brought us to George, Iowa when I was asked by Ruth Heyer to be a part of John’s homecoming service. What remarkable friends John and Ruth have been to us.



So how do I sum up? Let me simply underscore the biblical truth that friendships among believers are a miraculous yet eminently practical blessing. They make all the difference in the world in one’s quality of life, one’s steadfastness in growth and holy living, and one’s effectiveness in ministry. So, by all means, be careful to cultivate and treasure godly friendships and do so all the more as you see the darkness descending with greater depth and rapidity.

“Let’s hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He Who promised is faithful; and let’s consider how to encourage one another in love and good deeds, not abandoning our own meeting together, as is the habit of some people, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrew 10: 23-25)

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denny".

P.S. Here’s an update on Claire’s health. The month started off kinda’ rough for her but the healing has progressed well and for most of March she was free of pain and discomfort. Thank you, Father God. She will undergo a colonoscopy on April 23 and then, as the doctor plans for now, he will perform a “laparoscopic robotic assisted sigmoid colectomy” surgery the next day. (For those of us who studied things other than medicine, that means they’ll be taking out a section of her colon.) Prayers are, of course, coveted and deeply appreciated.

A second **P.S.** Another striking example of Claire and I being remarkably blessed by outstanding friends is that we received a prestigious thank-you at the Assure Women’s Center banquet on April 2. They were celebrating their 40th year of continuous, life-saving ministry that night and kindly honored us as their founders. Thank you, Assure. And thank you to all of our teammates from those adventurous days that got the AAA Crisis Pregnancy Center off the ground, not to mention all the heroes over the years that have made Assure the incredible ministry it is today. And, in both eras of the work, we give our most special thanks to Chris Schlesiger and Barb Malek.