

# Covenant Life Link

FEBRUARY 2009

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

## Message from Pastor Steve

Phillip Yancey, in his book titled What's So Amazing about Grace?, begins with a conversation he once had with a prostitute who has done terrible things both to her children and herself to support her drug habit. After listening to her story, he asked whether she had ever considered going to a church for help. "I will never forget the look of pure, naïve shock that crossed her face. 'Church!' she cried. 'Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse.'" What is the church saying in our society if this is the message people are hearing?!

There is another story about an adulterous woman that touches on this same theme. It comes from the Bible (Jn. 8); you probably know it. Caught in adultery, a crime punishable by death, a woman is brought to Jesus. As usual, the people who brought her weren't really interested in Jesus' decision, only in His answer. They hoped to lure this 'preacher of grace' into breaking the law so they would have some ammunition to use against Him. This girl was merely a pawn.

"Well, Teacher, what shall we do with this woman? The Law says that we should stone her to death? What do you say?" Can't you just see them looking smugly back and forth at each other? Little did they know that they had just brought the woman to the exact place she needed to be; at the feet of Jesus. There she heard the Answer that she could never hear anywhere else...

"Let the one who is without sin throw the first stone."

"Let the one who is without sin start the first gossip."

"Let the one who is without sin be the first to condemn her."

You see, Jesus was far more interested in the girl, the pawn, than in the crime. He was more interested in her restoration than in her punishment. His later reply to the girl came in two sentences. "Neither do I condemn you. Go and leave your life of sin." There is as much of a message in the order of these phrases as there is in the words. Forgiveness, then a call to commitment. Grace, then discipleship. This is the complete Gospel in a nutshell

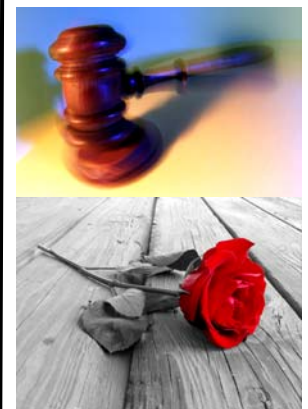
And this is a huge growing edge for many of us who are trying to follow the dual call of Discipleship: "Come and follow me," and "Go and make disciples." Far too often, our actions if not our words convey a different message than Jesus gives this woman. Too often we act as if these sentences should be reversed, as if Jesus got it backwards. First, give up your sin and then we'll forgive you. First become "good enough" and then we'll talk about grace. No wonder Yancey found that of the countless people he's interviewed, none of them initially linked "Christian" with "grace", "forgiveness" or "love" but rather with "anti...", "guilt" and "law". The Church, which exists because of God's grace, which exists solely to dispense that grace to our broken and hurting world, has lost its voice in the world because it has forgotten the Message.

Hillcrest Covenant Church is in a position right now to continue the work of restating the Church's message to our community. While many churches continue to preach a backwards Gospel, ("Go and leave your life of sin and then I won't condemn you.") and many churches continue to preach only half of a gospel ("Neither do we condemn you... so go and do whatever you want."), we are trying hard to preach the complete Gospel, the Good News that God does not condemn you but loves you, and in response to that love, we can be free to go and leave our lives of sin. This is the message that the world needs to hear, and this is the message that we desperately need to tell them.

Do you know anyone who may feel like the woman Philip Yancey met or the girl in John 8? Someone who feels that they have been condemned by the Church and brought before God for punishment? I challenge you this month to share the complete Gospel with them. Tell them of a God of grace who does not condemn (John 3:17) but loves and can set them free from their slavery to sin. This is Discipleship 101. Having followed Jesus, now go with the Gospel and make disciples.

Pastor Steve

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**MESSAGE FROM THE CHURCH CHAIR**

We had a very productive congregational meeting this past Sunday. A special thanks to those that were able to attend and participate. Below is a summary of the highlights of the meeting.

As has been previously discussed, the "engine" that we are going to have a special focus on in 2009 is Discipleship. We had two very useful breakout sessions to discuss discipleship both from a personal and a church perspective. You will be hearing more about the results of these discussions over the next few months.

We will be increasing our focus on Stewardship in 2009. To get this process started, we have formed a special stewardship committee. This group will meet over the next couple of months to help define what specific areas need to be addressed, propose how these areas should best be addressed and recommend specific ongoing roles and responsibilities. The members of this committee are Robert Ferguson, Sue Klopfenstein, Lucile Reynen, Scott Sisler, Howard Swan, and Jerry Wahlstrom. If you have any thoughts or ideas, please share them with the members of this committee.

A follow-up issue from last year is Fellowship Time year-round. Below is a summary of what plans are moving forward;

- The goal is to better welcome visitors & new attendees
- Fellowship Time will be after the service from 12:00 – 12:30
- The location will be upstairs in order to attract more new people
- The menu will be coffee, juice and simple snack item

In conjunction with doing this, Pastor Steve would not greet people as they leave the sanctuary, but immediately join the fellowship time. We will have other people assigned to greet people as they leave

The hospitality committee is working to finalize these plans and we will provide more details in the next couple weeks

The 2009 budget was approved as presented. A copy of the budget is in the 2008 annual report. Special thanks to Larry Schultz and the budget committee for all their work on this.

The delegates to the Evangelical Covenant Church Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon on June 25-28 will be Mark Cordes, Victoria Young and Pastor Steve Larson.

The delegates to the Central Conference Annual Meeting in Lake Geneva will be Robert Kauffman and Pastor Steve Larson. This meeting is in Lake Geneva and others are welcome to attend.

The members at large for the nominating committee will be Lucile Reynen and Robert Ferguson. Each board will also have a delegate on this committee. Boards will be asked to have their delegates selected by the February Executive Committee meeting as we would like to have this committee start meeting in late February or early March.

There were two proposed by-law changes that were posted at the meeting and will be voted on at the next meeting. One is to change the name of Christian Education to Christian Formation, and the other is to update the by-laws with the current workings of the Mutual Ministries Committee. There will be copies of these proposed changes available at church.

We are blessed to have such a talented and committed congregation, and blessed to have the leadership of Pastor Steve as we continue to challenge ourselves personally and as a congregation to better serve our Lord and Savior.

To God be the Glory,

Joe Bothe

Church Chair

**February Birthdays**

Ed Peterson  
 Joseph Geidel  
 Sherri Larson  
 Andrew Hallgren  
 Gary Larson  
 Zachary Lazowski  
 Aaron Holly  
 Mary Lou Larson  
 Shelbie Lazowski  
 Diane Kevin  
 Arvel Davis  
 Mark Rasmussen



Rich Born will be exhibiting his beautiful photography at The Next Picture Show Gallery in Dixon. Feb 1-14.



**THANK YOU NOTE**

A special thank you to all the fabulous dessert makers. People who attended our Comedy Café were in awe, once again, at the vast, tasty selection.

Thanks again!  
 Becky Sisler



**February Anniversaries**

Bob & Dianne Donaldson  
 Ron & Belinda Grimm  
 Jim &Cheri Auman

Ivan and I would like to express our appreciation for uplifting us throughout my surgeries and recovery, Your many calls, visits, cards, flowers, gifts, and meals have encouraged and reminded us that we are part of a loving, caring family at Hillcrest Covenant Church. Thank you for your continued prayer and care! Praise the Lord for His grace and goodness!  
 Noni Jones



**FUNDRAISER BREAKFAST**

We will be having a fund raising breakfast for those campers going to Covenant Harbor or Covenant Point this summer. It will be Sunday, Feb. 22 at 8:30 (before Sunday School). All proceeds from the breakfast will be divided among those helping out!!



**Registration has started for the 2009 summer.**

Register early for those hard to get camps & skills! Remember when signing up for camps: Covenant Harbor goes by the age you are right now and Covenant Point goes by the grade you will be entering next fall. If you have any questions about the camps or registering, please contact Susan Kauffman.

There are scholarships available through the Julie Grimm Scholarship Fund and also through each camp. The camps and our church do not want a camper to miss out on camp due to financial reasons! Contact Pastor Steve or Susan Kauffman for more info. on scholarships.

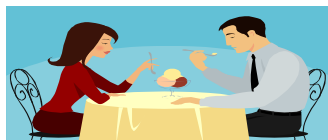
**Greet and Eat!**

A wonderful opportunity for fellowship!

**Greet and Eat Times and Locations**

Tuesday February 10th, 6:30pm @ China House (by Arby's)

Thursday February 26th, 6:30pm @Muggzies (corner of Peace Rd. & Rt. 23)



**WINTERFEST**

Please turn in forms and money by Feb. 8. Any questions, please call Susan Kauffman. Scholarships are also available.



## TRUSTEES' REPORT

The Board of Trustees thanks all members and friends for their generous support of Hillcrest Covenant Church during 2008. Your sacrificial giving enabled our congregation to expand its outreach and programs to spread the Good News. We also thank you for continuing such a level of giving in January 2009. Sometimes giving in the first couple months of a new year is down. We appreciate your recognition that our programs and expenses are ongoing each and every month.

Our primary focus as a Board is now on improvement of the outside lighting (entryways and parking lots). We are in discussion with members of the congregation who are in the industry and assisting us in evaluating our needs and preparing a proposal consistent with our financial capability. We will have a comprehensive proposal for the congregation to consider this spring; with construction planned for late spring/early summer.

### Getting to Know Valerie Smith

We are blessed to have Valerie at HCC. Valerie moved to DeKalb about three weeks ago when she accepted the position as Administrative Assistant. She is happy to be here and feels that God is working in this town, raising up an army for Him. She senses His presence at HCC. Valerie has been a member of River of Life Church in DeKalb for several years.

Valerie accepted Christ when she was seventeen. In her early twenties, she asked God to put on her heart what He loved. God gave her a heart for the Jewish people and the land of Israel. Valerie feels called to teach others about the Jewish/Hebraic roots of the faith. She has enjoyed teaching for eight years.

When Valerie was younger, the plight of the victims of human trafficking was put on her heart, along with those who had been through any sort of trauma. Her life chapter from the Scriptures is Isaiah 61.

Valerie took four trips to Israel and on the third trip she saw how her love for Israel and concern for trafficking and other injustices converged.

Next fall she hopes to attend North Park Seminary to study part time. Her interests include Jewish studies, justice, and healing and restoration for the victims of trauma.

Valerie enjoys worshiping through song, Hebraic worship dance and playing her guitar. She also enjoys writing, long drives in the country, biking, and walking.

Valerie wants to get to know each one of you. Stop by the office to chat for a while, or perhaps stop by at 1:00 and treat her to lunch, or invite her to dinner in your home. I'm sure that you will enjoy your time with her.

Submitted by Chris Shaff





## Missionaries We at Hillcrest Covenant Church Help Support

### Gary & Mary Lou Sander

Apartado Aereo 55276  
Medillin, Colombia  
www.pactocol.org  
pactosand@yahoo.com

### Lisandro & Patricia Restrepo

Serving in Monterrey, Mexico  
Mailing address:  
P.M.B. 147  
1001 S. 10th St. Suite G  
McAllen, TX 78501  
lisrestrepo@yahoo.com  
prestrepo2002@yahoo.com

### Eric & Kristi Peterson

(InterVarsity Christian Fellowship)  
1048 Reasor Ave.  
Louisville, KY 40217  
peterson97@peoplepc.com



### Sander Family Missionary Letter

January 2009

Dear Covenant Church Family,

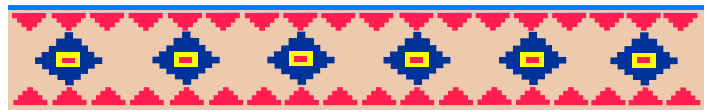
Over the years our children have all told us that they thoroughly feel blessed to have grown up in Colombia as missionary kids. Because of this we have known that it would be important for them to be able to share and communicate with their husbands, wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, and other special friends, what their childhood and experience was like. Seeing it first hand always enhances anything that words try to explain.

So it was that this past Christmas holiday season we hosted two new sons-in-law and one girlfriend with us in Medellin. Our task was a simple one—show the new people why we talk so positively about our life and ministry in Colombia. Here is some of what we wanted to experience together. 1) Just be together as a family. Our children shared bedrooms for sleeping for most of their growing up years so that meant that we wanted to have everyone stay in one place, in one house, under one roof and squeeze into the rooms that we have. 2) Part of our ministry with the Covenant of Colombia involved being together in ministry as a family, participating in events as a family, and being seen together interacting as a family. This allows us credibility as we minister to pastors and leaders and their families. So we made sure that all of our family was present for our annual Christmas Open House. That way our Colombian friends met the new members of our family and our new family members got to see and put names with faces that they had previously only heard about. 3) We showed everyone around Medellin, went to see the famous Christmas lights along the river, and took long walks as a family. That meant taking a ride on the Metrocable system—the Medellin

public Gondola which takes you into the upper neighborhoods where normal car traffic doesn't get to. This allowed the visitors to see the kinds of neighborhoods that we daily work in with our Colombian Covenant companions. 4) That meant squeezing into a couple of vehicles and taking a family trip outside of Medellin for a few days to explore the Santa Fe de Antioquia pueblo, the main plaza, and interact with other Colombians on holiday. 5) We celebrated the special fact that we were all together. We went to favorite restaurants. We prepared our favorite meals at our home. We played ping pong, cards, table games, croquet, and just sat and talked together. 6) It also meant that we gave each person the opportunity to share their challenges and praises from 2008 and their dreams, visions and goals for 2009. Everyone shared what they appreciate, enjoy, or love about that person and then we took the time to pray for each one individually.

As our children came and went during this Christmas season, we were able to spend six wonderful days together as a family. God blessed us as we blessed each other and got ourselves ready for the year that lies ahead of us.

Love, The Sander Family



## Missions and Stewardship Committee

The **2009 Mexico mission trip** is scheduled for Saturday June 13<sup>th</sup> thru Saturday June 20<sup>th</sup>. If you're interested in this opportunity to experience the joy of serving others, please contact Manny Diaz (758-2356 or racquetballnut@verizon.net).

Unless you've gone on one of the previous trips, you might not realize that our team members are as much the benefactors of this trip as the poor and needy in Monterrey. Our members gain satisfaction in assisting our missionaries and contributing to tangible construction projects and also share in the delight of the children during community and outreach programs. Our members are continuously refreshed and renewed by the warmth and love displayed by our hosts and the extended Christian family. But more than anything else, this trip builds deep and lasting relationships with others who are dedicated to spreading the word of Christ. This is truly a life altering experience which you will find meaningful and rewarding in ways you would never expect.

The **2009 Mission Fair** will be held on Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup>. President Obama has urged all Americans to become more involved in their communities and this is a great way to get started. Representatives from various local community organizations will be at our church to educate and promote the services they perform. This fair is a great way to learn about the various needs in our community and presents an opportunity to support various worthwhile causes. Hope Haven, Habitat for Humanity, We Care Pregnancy Center, Salvation Army, Opportunity House, Safe Passage, and the Voluntary Action Center (Meals on Wheels) are some of the local organizations Hillcrest Covenant has supported in the past. Oh, and as Pastor Steve would be sure to point out... there will be FOOD!



## Outreach Board Thanks YOU!

A huge thanks to ALL who helped with our 7th annual Comedy Café. Herb and Wendy Kuryliw continue to put in countless hours for this outreach ministry. We also want to thank the Saturday morning Men's Bible Study group for their help setting up tables. A special thanks also to Mary Kuryliw, Amy Wessel, Lucile Reynen, Kathy Hallgren, Rob Ferguson, Larry and Danielle Shultz, Becky Sisler, Diane Kevin, Terri and Mary Adams, Lois Miller, and our kid sitters, Elliot Ihm, and Ashley Klopfenstein. The X4J kids helped with set up, clean up and serving during the shows. Once again the desserts were amazing! Thanks to everyone who contributed to providing them..This event is a wonderful opportunity to share Hillcrest Covenant Church during an afternoon and evening of fun, laughter and fellowship! We hope and pray that the time shared in fellowship continues to be a blessing to those giving and those receiving.

God bless you and again, many thanks!

In His Flock, Carol VanderWeide and Brian Egerman Co-chairs, Mitch Hallgren, and Jeff Smith

## “Operation Cookie Drop”

The purpose of “Operation Cookie Drop” is to allow visitors to Hillcrest Covenant Church the opportunity to experience a little bit of God’s grace and to provide our members the opportunity to let God use them to show that grace.

When someone visits our church on a Sunday, we want to deliver homemade cookies to them no later than the following Wednesday with a simple greeting to show that they were noticed and that we care about them.

We need to recruit some volunteers to help in this mission in the following capacities:

**1 Coordinator**—to supervise the weekly operation and coordinate other volunteers.

**8 Attendance Volunteers** (2 per week)—to look at the weekly attendance sheets and identify visitors, reporting them directly to the Coordinator.

**6-12 Bakers**—to take turns baking fresh, hot and delicious homemade cookies for our guests.

**6-12 Runners**—to pick up the cookies and deliver them to our visitors.

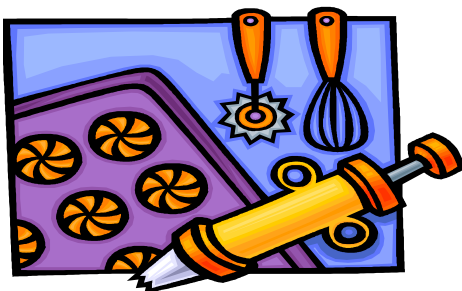
The Operation will work something like this:

Immediately after worship service, the Attendance Volunteers will scan the weekly attendance sheets and identify visitors for that Sunday. They then contact the Coordinator, who promptly calls or e-mails the Bakers with the specific number of cookies to be delivered that week, as well as the name of the Runner who will pick up the cookies from them. The Coordinator then contacts the Runners giving them the name of the Baker they will pick up the cookies from, and the names and addresses of the visitors to whom they will deliver the cookies. The Bakers then bake the cookies and contact the Runners when the order is completed. The Runners pick up the cookies from the Bakers and then deliver them to the visitors no later than Wednesday evening with a simple message of, “*We noticed that you were at church last Sunday, this is for you and your family and we hope to see you back in church with us again.*”

This will let our visitors know that they were noticed and that we care enough to do something for them. Instead of pressing them into conversation or attempting to “evangelize” them, we will simply be doing a kind act without expecting any response from them in return.

If you are willing to serve as a Coordinator, Attendance Volunteer, Baker, or Runner, please contact the church office at 815 756-5508 and a member of the Outreach Committee will be in contact with you. God Bless.

The Outreach Committee



## Hillcrest Awana Clubs

For those of you who are interested in what goes on in our Awana clubs just visit our church website. Each month Rich Born places our Awana Clubs' monthly newsletter on that site. Thanks Rich!

One clarification..., if writing a check out for our Awana clubs, please make sure that you write the check to Hillcrest Covenant Church **with Awana on the memo line**. Thank you!

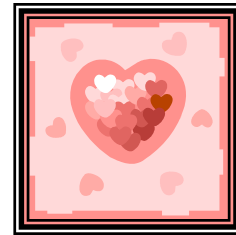
Heather Larson  
Awana Ministry Director



## Craft Day, Valentines for Jesus

It is time! Whether you like to do crafts or not, we'd like to invite you to our first 2009 Craft Day. Join us on Saturday, Feb. 28th from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you would like to order a lunch from Sweet Dreams, please pay & sign up by Feb. 21st. More details about the Craft Day will be announced in church or written in the church bulletin.

Wendy Kuryliw  
Heather Larson



*“Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone: therefore, we are saved by love.”*

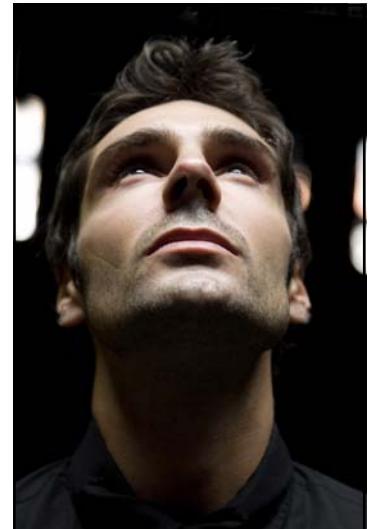
*Reinhold Niebuhr*

## CHALLENGES MEN FACE

On January 24 the Saturday morning Men's Breakfast and Bible Study started a new eight-week series titled "Challenges Men Face." Drawing on a variety of resources, including Christianity Today's Men of Integrity series and the book "The Man in the Mirror," the study seeks to bring a Biblical view to a variety of issues with which almost all men struggle. The studies are discussion based, providing an opportunity for men to share and learn from each other.

All men of the church are invited. If you have not been attending the Saturday morning studies so far this year, this would be a great time to join. Breakfast (prepared by Rob Ferguson and Steve Larson) begins at 7:30 and the study at 8:00, with a promise to finish by 9:00.

- February 7: Our Marriages: A Commitment to Love
- February 14: Our Children: Living Without Regrets
- February 21: Our Work: Seeking Balance and Meaning
- February 28: Handling Sexual Temptation
- March 7: The Problem of Possessions: What is Enough?
- March 14: Living a Life of Integrity



## Upcoming Sermons

- Feb 1 "You Feed Them" (2 Kings 4:42-44; Mark 6:30-44)
- Feb 8 "How to be the Greatest" (Micah 6:6-8; Mark 10:35-45)
- Feb 15 "Carrying the Cross" (Isaiah 53; Mark 13:5-13)
- Feb 22 Guest Speaker - Ray Warren

## Daily Bible Reading Schedule

Have you always wanted to read through the Bible? Have you tried, but given up? Is it a regular practice and you'll do it again this year? I invite you to join a group of us to read the whole Bible together during 2009. So far we are 38 members strong. We'll be reading the Bible in chronological order, meaning we'll read it as it happened in history. This means while you read the book of 2 Kings, you'll also be reading the writings of the prophets mentioned there. While you read Acts, you'll read Paul's letters to those churches. It is a new way to put the history of the Bible together.

If you would like to join us, just send an email to [Pastor-Steve@comcast.net](mailto:Pastor-Steve@comcast.net) and let us know. We'll have monthly encouragement letters, parties at certain points throughout the year, and possibly other opportunities to share together in the experience. As you join us, feel free to just pick up with today's reading rather than trying to catch up.

The readings for Feb. are below. May the Lord bless your reading of His mighty word.

Feb. 1	Exodus 7-9	Feb. 11	Exodus 36-38	Feb. 21	Leviticus 24-25
Feb. 2	Exodus 10-12	Feb. 12	Exodus 39-40	Feb. 22	Leviticus 26-27
Feb. 3	Exodus 13-15	Feb. 13	Leviticus 1-4	Feb. 23	Numbers 1-2
Feb. 4	Exodus 16-18	Feb. 14	Leviticus 5-7	Feb. 24	Numbers 3-4
Feb. 5	Exodus 19-21	Feb. 15	Leviticus 8-10	Feb. 25	Numbers 5-6
Feb. 6	Exodus 22-24	Feb. 16	Leviticus 11-13	Feb. 26	Numbers 7
Feb. 7	Exodus 25-27	Feb. 17	Leviticus 14-15	Feb. 27	Numbers 8-10
Feb. 8	Exodus 28-29	Feb. 18	Leviticus 16-18	Feb. 28	Numbers 11-13

(For the whole year's reading plan, go to <http://www.bibleplan.org/ch/niv/>.)



Hillcrest Covenant church

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E-mail: [hillcrestcov@comcast.net](mailto:hillcrestcov@comcast.net)

Website: [www.hillcovch.org](http://www.hillcovch.org)

**Our Staff**

Pastor: Steve Larson

Minister of Music: Victoria Young

Administrative Assistant: Valerie Smith

Church Office Hours: 9 am - 1:00 pm

Mon - Fri

**We're on the Web!**  
**[www.hillcovch.org](http://www.hillcovch.org)**



*Praise*

*Share*

*Grow*

*Care*

*Serve*

**Upcoming Events for Covenant Harbor Bible Camp  
Lake Geneva**

**Winter Fest (for 4th—6th grades)**

February 27—March 1, 2009

**Maple Fest**

March 29, 2009 (tentative)

**Moms & Daughters Weekend**

May 1-3, 2009

**Summer Wind-Up (for K-6th grades)**

May 23, 2009

If you need more information or have any questions, please contact Susan Kauffman at 815-264-7905 or call Covenant Harbor at 262-248-3600.