



## ink spots: opinions, news, and reviews from an inkjet

...*"We should not underestimate the significance of a small group of people who have a vision of a just and gentle world. The quality of a whole culture may be changed when two percent of its people have a new vision."* Robert Blair, Princeton University.

*Carol and Dick Cover* / 701 N Lincoln St / Northfield MN 55057 / 507-645-7202

### Being thankful, blessing God and each other

It's easy to write a newsletter that's negative in focus. All I have to do is look through clippings I have saved in my "next newsletter" file and sort through articles about pollution in our environment, toxins in our food, and poisons in our pharmaceuticals. We are approaching the two different days of giving thanks that Canada and the US set apart once a year. There are cards that say "Happy Turkey Day," but I don't buy them. Dick and I are genuinely grateful, and we know Who to thank. So I have challenged myself to write only positive items in this issue, as a way of saying, *Blessed are you, O Lord God, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive and brought us to this season.*

How can we cultivate a spirit of thanksgiving in a gimme-gimme world? Consider:

**Abundance.** However much people complain about the economy, we must admit that most of us can be thankful for the abundance of food available. Yes, some of us have less than others, and less than we used to, and many of us have too

much. But compared with the dust bowl era in the 30s and other aspects of our parents' lives during the Depression, there are safety nets for the poor during this recession: unemployment insurance, food stamps, housing assistance. In our community there's *Thursday's Table*, a free weekly meal prepared and served by volunteers. Dick and I ate there a couple of times. The food was tasty, balanced, and generous.

**Community.** I read a review of *A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table* by Tim Chester in *Christianity Today*, June 2011.

"Consider for a moment what happens at the feeding of the 5,000. God gives out bread. On a massive scale. Or think about the wedding at Cana. Jesus turns perhaps 120-180 gallons of water into wine. Quality wine. At the beginning...the first thing God does for humanity is present us with a menu: 'The Lord God planted a garden in Eden...and out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.'

Gen 2:8-9. At the end of the Bible...God sets before us a perpetual feast. God likes doing the catering. He thinks food is a good thing.

"God incarnate eats. [M]ost of the time he ate barley bread eaten by the poor, along with cheese, butter, and eggs. Meat and poultry were too expensive to be eaten except on feast days. He may have had fish on the Sabbath.....

"The risen Christ eats...They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them' (Luke 24:42)..... Food is not left behind with the resurrection. References to a future feast are not metaphors.....

"The point is that food isn't just fuel. It's not just a mechanism for sustaining us for ministry. It's gift, generosity, grace. Jesus gave thanks and broke bread. In so doing, he affirms that food is to be received as a gift from God.....Food is a central ingredient in our experience of God's goodness. ....If it were a mere illustration, we could leave it behind once we had gotten the idea."

**Rest.** The harvest graphic above was

borrowed from a notecard that a dear friend sent some years ago. The verse says, *...even during the plowing season and harvest, you must rest.* Exodus 34:21. I often write about the principle of Sabbath, because I think it was one of God's best ideas. When he had finished the work of creation, he called it "very good," and rested.

**Books.** I can occasionally fast a meal or two, but I need books. When I can't afford new ones, I have plenty of old ones I can re-read, even children's books. If you have a 3- to 8-year-old child or grandchild, there's a beautiful 30-page hardcover book you will want to track down. Ask your bookstore to get Douglas Wood's *The Secret of Saying Thanks* for you, call Chinaberry, 1-800-776-2242, or visit [www.Chinaberry.com](http://www.Chinaberry.com) You need to see it to appreciate it, but here's the thesis: *"The heart that gives thanks is a happy one...The more we say thanks, the more we find to be thankful for....We don't give thanks because we are happy. We are happy because we give thanks."* May it be so. +++

# What if the doomsayers have it all wrong?

***“You might think that the most accurate and important statistics see the light of day, so we can trust what we hear. Ah, wouldn’t that be nice. In fact, if you believe this, I should probably tell you that politicians don’t always keep their promises, TV ads exaggerate their products, and investment opportunities in spam e-mails are rip-offs.”***

**Bradley Wright, PhD, author of *Upside: Surprising Good News about the State of Our World.*”**

**... from “Not dead yet,” Warren Cole Smith’s interview with Bradley R.E. Wright, *WORLD*, August 27, 2011.**

How many of us turn off the TV or put down the newspaper in discouragement, sickened by the litany of death, disaster, epidemic, and war? How many of us long to hear some good news about our nation, our world, and our fellow humans? Finally someone has stepped forward to answer that longing. Bradley R. E. Wright, PhD, has a message, and the message is that things are not as bad as the media would have us believe. Wright has imparted that message in *Upside: Surprising GOOD NEWS About the State of Our World*.

In *Upside*, Wright examines the progress human society has made since World War II and finds much to be proud of: IQs are up, buying power is up, we are living longer than ever, and so far, world production has not only kept up with the needs of its increasing population but actually has reduced famine, poverty, and pestilence. Although he acknowledges that not all is well with the world, the author chooses to focus on the positive and makes the point that, compared to the past, conditions have generally improved for everyone. In his opinion, the media, individuals in certain professions, and big business all profit from doomsaying. Without knowledge of the positive we are adrift in a sea of troubles, helpless to improve our lives because we can’t determine where to direct our attention. We need to hear more good news and less of the bad.

Wright accompanies his assertions with numerous charts and graphs based on his research. As a sociologist, he makes use of the data available from many expert sources to show us a picture of our world that is seldom seen in the media. Despite the heavy emphasis on

statistics, the book is not boring. Wright’s prose takes us effortlessly from point to point, and there are flashes of humor to further lighten one’s reading experience. True to his Christian faith, Wright has interspersed his text with boxes describing good works performed worldwide by various Christian organizations.

There are some flaws in the book. There is no index, which makes it difficult to look up references to a specific subject. Many of Wright’s sources date from the nineties or earlier, which brings into question the currency of his data. Since the book purports to compare past conditions to the present, current data regarding the present is vital. Published in 2011, the book does not include demographic data collected in the 2010 census. All too often Wright quotes from secondary sources, rather than seeking the original data in its proper context. Because of these flaws, those readers who want to assure themselves of the accuracy of Wright’s information must not only fully engage the text and read the endnotes, but also check the source of each note in the bibliography to determine the age and usefulness of the data. Finally, the author tends to abandon his academic objectivity and interjects his personal opinions and moral beliefs into his analyses of social data.

Ultimately, *Upside* is worth reading. After closing the book one feels that life is not as bleak as some would have us believe. We all have the power to focus on the positive and to work to improve the negative. We can only do this if we are able to determine which problems actually require our attention. We need to know what is going right in our

world in order to direct our energies and resources properly. Problem-solving requires us to know which problems actually need solving. That is good advice.

Wright is a good writer, which makes the book an easy read. One can glide through his prose without stopping to think about what is actually being said. Some readers will love this book., but I found myself questioning the accuracy of Wright’s data and sometimes disagreeing with the conclusions he has drawn. +++

*My guest reviewer, Joyce Roberts, was one of my students. Joyce graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor’s degree in American history and a minor in political science. Her areas of concentration were social history, political philosophy, and the history of civil liberties and civil rights. She had originally planned to go to law school but “life interfered.” Her husband died, her father went into a nursing home after a stroke, and her mother developed senile dementia. An only child, she became the sole caretaker of her mother, at the same time raising a seven-year-old son on her own. Promising herself she would go to school and earn a PhD after she retired, she picked up her responsibilities and did what she had to do, perhaps because as she said above: “We all have the power to focus on the positive...” She got back in to the job market as an assistant manager of a dollar store, and later worked at CenterPoint Energy, a public utility providing gas service to Minneapolis and many of its suburbs. She retired in 2010. She has changed her retirement plan; she has decided to try her hand at writing a book. +++*

# Q&A: some answers to questions you wonder about

**Q. I'm healthy, but our medical expenses are frightening. Is there anything I can do?**

A. Ask me for a copy of "How to haggle with your doctor," from *Consumer Reports*, October 2011. "Physicians, nurses, and other providers have a professional obligation to take your financial resources into account when recommending and delivering care....[Some] practitioners are liable to suggest the most aggressive—and usually most expensive—options first. (Reasons for that are complicated, ranging from a patient's preferences to the fear of malpractice suits to pure financial motivation.) [But] once you let your doctor know that cost matters, you might be surprised by the reasonable, more conservative options he or she comes up with..."

**Q. What's CODEX and how is it going to affect me? I'm concerned.**

A. CODEX is an international UN Food Safety body of 182 countries making global guidelines for food safety. Current debates about labeling GMOs and the safety of vitamins and minerals are key topics. To learn how these issues could affect the supplements you use, you might want to google CODEX on the National Health Freedom Coalition or its lobbying organization, National Health Freedom Action, websites. See also this link from *Natural News*: [www.naturalnews.com/032912\\_FDA\\_dietary\\_supplements.html#ixzz1RSvABTE9](http://www.naturalnews.com/032912_FDA_dietary_supplements.html#ixzz1RSvABTE9)

**Q. Why isn't CODEX about drug safety? Drug ads are frightening.**

A. I'm actually glad that drugs are advertised so heavily. Our physician took me off my meds for hypertension a year ago, so I do not take any drugs, prescription or over-the-counter, but if did, I would read every word of the two-page ads in magazines, the paperwork that comes in prescriptions, and the cautions in the Aleve box. An ad for Lipitor, e.g., that says, "Stay with Lipitor for as little as \$4 a month," *TIME*, October 14, 2011, lists as "common side effects: diarrhea, upset stomach, muscle and joint pain, and changes in some blood tests." Serious side effects include "muscle problems that can lead to kidney problems that include kidney failure," and liver problems that may require regular blood tests. The Sept 2011. Also, *VITAJournal* reports that research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* showed that in five clinical trials involving 32,752 patients, high doses of cholesterol-lowering statins, those who took high doses had a 12% higher risk of developing diabetes compared to moderate dose users. Remember: *Plant foods contain no cholesterol*. We keep our cholesterol and blood pressure healthy by careful food choices, because we value our kidneys and our livers.

**Q. Is coffee good for me, or not?**

A. Maybe. Coffee has been shown to delay the onset of Parkinson's, and a new study of 47,000 men published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* showed that men who consumed six or more cups of coffee a day were 20% less likely to develop prostate cancer. The October 14, 2011 issue of *THE WEEK* says that coffee wards off depression. "The more coffee you drink, the less likely you are to become depressed...." After surveying 51,000 women over 14 years, Harvard researchers found that those who regularly drank four or more cups of coffee per day were 20% less likely to develop depression than those who drank one cup or less. Decaf coffee, less-caffeinated teas, or soft drinks had no positive effect on mood. The study "bolsters previous research linking heavy consumption of coffee to lower rates of suicide and severe depression. Researchers know that the jolt of caffeine in coffee activates neurotransmitters that boost energy and feelings of well-being, at least right after you take a sip. Study author Alberto Ascherio says that there is reasonable evidence that the stimulant can also protect the brain from mental illness in the longer term." Try not drinking the whole cup?

On the other hand, caffeine stimulates urine production and acts as a bladder irritant, so be careful of coffee if you have what the drug ads call an "overactive bladder."

**Q. Which fruit can prevent osteoporosis?**

A. An October 16, 2011 *Parade* magazine quiz listed as options: blueberries, apples, pomegranates, and prunes. The answer was prunes. Florida State University researchers found that women who ate 6-10 prunes a day have significantly higher bone density than women who snack on the other fruits. "Prunes are rich in potassium and boron, which is known to increase bone mass," said study author Bahram Arjmandi. Good source of fiber too.

**Q. If I can't buy organic produce all the time, when should I be careful to choose organic?**

A. Environmental Working Group calls these **the dirty dozen**: apples, celery, strawberries, peaches, spinach, nectarines, grapes, sweet bell peppers, potatoes, blueberries, lettuce, kale/collard greens. These are the 12 most pesticide-laden conventionally grown fruits and vegetables. This year apples moved from *number four* to *number one*.

On the other hand, here are **the clean 15**, the least contaminated: onions, sweet corn, pineapples, avocado, asparagus, sweet peas, mangoes, eggplant, domestic cantaloupe, kiwifruit, cabbage, watermelon, sweet potatoes, grapefruit, and mushrooms. Enjoy!

## Let's Be Well, Inc

I saw a t-shirt that says "GOD RECYCLES. He made you out of dust." See Genesis 2: 7.



We'd love to hear from you! Send us your comments, or Q&A items, and other suggestions for another issue. You can reach us at 1-507-645-7202, [please leave a message] or via e-mail at [carolcover@letsbewellinc.com](mailto:carolcover@letsbewellinc.com) or [dcover@letsbewellinc.com](mailto:dcover@letsbewellinc.com)

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## Notable Quotables

- **Choose optimism.** "[W]e are prisoners of our bad mood," said Robert Samuelson in *The Washington Post*. "Rattled by continuing bad news about our economy, consumers and companies are refusing to make the very investments that could turn things around.....When everyone is super-cautious, the result is stagnation or worse. With a bit more confidence, consumers—who have already worked down a lot of debt— could spend a bit more. Businesses, which are sitting on \$2 trillion in cash, could invest in new workers and plants...Franklin Roosevelt was right: what we have to fear is fear itself." *THE WEEK*, October 14, 2011.
- **Outwit your bad genes.** "It turns out that you really can eat your way to better health. Among people whose genes put them at high risk for a heart attack those who ate more fruits and vegetables were half as likely to have a heart attack over a four-year period as those who did not eat as much produce." US Preventive Services Task Force, *TIME*, October 24, 2011.
- **Cut your energy bills.** Four or 5 states "anticipate a water shortage by 2013, which could lead to steeper rates and penalties for excessive use." Stopping drips can save about \$70 per year; a \$30 low-flow showerhead can save as much as \$265; switching to a low-flow toilet, which uses 1.28 gallons per flush compared with up to 5 gallons, can save \$90 [Carol's note: *But when our 32-year-old toilet quit, the new Kohler K3606 toilet plus installation cost \$450*]; lower your water heater temp to 120 degrees and insulate your water heater; don't pre-rinse your dishes before loading your dishwasher. *Consumer Reports*, October 2009. +++

## Shades of green: how does your household measure up?

It's obvious to those who visit us that I like the color green—and blue. I like to say that since they are God's favorite colors, I'm just agreeing with the proportions he uses in nature. There was no "beige" in my Crayola box when I was a child, and I can't think of any in our home, except the background color of the kitchen wallpaper.

*Green*, of course, has another meaning in our culture. Consumer Reports National Research Center's survey published a couple of years ago in their fall magazine listed 15 green measures that "have been

embraced and those that still have a ways to go." Here are their survey results for their "By the numbers" column:

**83%** always run a full load in the dishwasher.  
**77%** opt for tap water rather than bottled water.  
**47%** use recycled paper products.  
**40%** use a green product even when it costs more.  
**40%** buy green cleaning products.  
**36%** have a programmable thermostat.  
**32%** recycle batteries.  
**29%** properly dispose of paints and

other hazardous materials.

**29%** got food at a farmers market or co-op.

**23%** of those with lawns use compost or natural fertilizer.

**18%** always or often line-dry clothes

**16%** recycled a CFL.

**15%** installed a water-saving toilet.

**10%** don't rinse dishes before loading the dishwasher.

**3%** use an alternative energy source, such as solar, wind, or geothermal.

We do or have done 10 of the above, but not 100% of the time.

How did you do?

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If you are still working on the challenge in my spring issue to declutter, here are some double do-good opportunities to keep our excess stuff out of landfills and help those in need, from [vegetariantimes.com](http://vegetariantimes.com)

**BICYCLES:** The International Bicycle Fund (<http://www.ibike.org>) offers an extensive directory of bike recycling programs. **BOOKS.** Used book stores may give you a credit. [AdoptALibrary.org](http://AdoptALibrary.org) has a list of libraries and organizations that accept donations. **BUSINESS CLOTHING:** Started in NY, [dressforsuccess.org](http://dressforsuccess.org) has affiliates around the world that can help disadvantaged women dress for job interviews. **CELL PHONES.** Chances are there's a collection box locally. If not, [collectivegood.com](http://collectivegood.com) suggests 17 charities that will benefit from your donation. **CAMERAS.** If you have a working digital or video camera, you can bless a classroom: [kidcameraproject.org](http://kidcameraproject.org) or [classroom-connection.org](http://classroom-connection.org) The latter will send you a class photo of the children who benefited, if you include your e-mail address. **CARS.** Even non-running cars are accepted for donation by [donateusacar.com](http://donateusacar.com) **COMPUTERS.** Our county just had a free collection day. We had to wait two hours in line to be rid of our three boxes of e-waste. To see if yours can be recycled near you, visit [local.com](http://local.com) **INK CARTRIDGES.** Call a school. Many schools have recycling programs. Or, [recycleforwater.com](http://recycleforwater.com) will give the proceeds to clean water programs. **EYEGLASSES.** Our local Lions have boxes in businesses, or contact [neweyesfortheneedy.com](http://neweyesfortheneedy.com) They distribute glasses, sunglasses, hearing aids, watches to people in developing nations. So, we can make a difference. Let's let stuff go. +++

## circle of influence

fall 2011

### LET'S TALK ABOUT HOPE

It's autumn. Minnesota alternates between near-freezing nights when we have to take our containers in, and glorious 70-ish days like yesterday when a dear friend and I spent two hours on our deck drinking tea and slicing crisp local apples to munch while we chatted. Some trees are already bare; others, like the young sugar maple near our deck, are just beginning to make room for their brilliant fall wardrobe: yellow, fluorescent pink-red, and radiant orange.

What's the difference between optimism and hope? There's a book circulating in our Parkinson's support group. This morning I finished *Always Looking Up: the adventures of an incurable optimist* by Michael J. Fox. I thought I would learn a lot about Parkinson's disease. What I took away was a deep sadness that a man who began having symptoms of Parkinson's at age 29 finds his reason for optimism in believing that the only hope for dealing with his disease lies in promoting embryonic stem cell research. On the contrary, other scientists have successfully used patients' own adult stem cells to repair damaged tissue. Ask me for articles.

How can I enjoy autumn so much when I know winter will soon come with a vengeance? Perhaps I enjoy autumn because our experience says that after winter will come a pleasant spring and a happy summer and another lovely fall. The Teacher who wrote Ecclesiastes said, "Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets and hurries back to where it rises..." The rhythms of God's creation comfort me—and give me hope: There's a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven....."

There are not many reasons for optimism in our country right now. People who send e-mail forwards seem determined to remind us of all the catastrophes on the horizon. Sometimes a poignant cartoon says enough: under the heading "The New Normal," a teacher facing a class of students points at a list on the chalkboard. He says, "After graduation, you'll need to know how to fill out government forms." The list reads: "food stamps, unemployment, energy assistance, public housing, disability, health care, child care."

As I said in our winter 2011 *circle*, it's no secret that the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer. Recent grads can be looking at a bleak future. So are middle class people our age. I also said, "we are deep into the winter of our lives," and we do not know "what the future holds for our figurative *winter*."

Even though seasons change, we are called to bless and not curse. Did you notice what priests in the older scriptures blessed? Besides blessing the people of God, they blessed herds of livestock, implements used in the building of the temple, materials that were given by the people, the completed temple, the activities related to worship, and those who led worship. They even blessed situations such as when the nation had to go to war. Peter calls believers in Jesus "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God..." Why? In order "that you may *declare* the [blessings] of the One who has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." Jesus declared that his disciples were the light of the world long before they were.

Yesterday when I was blessing Dick's legs and feet which are painful and numb from spinal stenosis, I said, "What if Mrs Job had blessed Job's sores instead of telling him to "curse God and die"? Job was healed when he blessed his friends who had said all manner of negative things to him. He must have blessed his wife because God gave them more children. What if North Americans would almost as a reflex bless every situation that grieves them on TV or the internet or the newspaper? We are quick to complain, to gossip, to spread negative e-mails about our President and his administration's policies. A friend of ours has a bumper sticker that says, "America, bless God." Yes. Let's start there. The Psalmist said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name," and "Bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord."

Our hope is in God, not circumstances, but why not also bless circumstances? I commend to you *The B Word: the purpose and power of the Blessing*, by Robert Strand, who autographed our copy at a Bridges for Peace conference recently. It reminds me of Dr Mary Ruth Swope's *Bless Your Children Every Day*, which has been translated into hundreds of languages. Both are practical books for understanding the power of our words, the results of acceptance and affirmation given by parents—and the grievous results when children are cursed with cruel words by their parents, teachers, and other authority figures, rather than blessed.

I bless YOU with godly insights on how to break cycles of hopelessness that may have been perpetuated in your life through careless words spoken to you. God blessed Jeremiah with "a future and a hope." When mortals fail us, the eternal God promises blessing and hope to those who seek him. May it be so. +++



## go green, stay lean

It's thoughtful of the USPS to bring out a GO GREEN forever stamp in time for my fall issue. If I send you a mailed copy, the stamp may exhort you to buy local produce and reuse bags; fix water leaks, share rides, turn off lights not in use, choose to walk, compost, recycle more, ride a bike, plant trees, etc.

Actually, I can write about AIM's green powders anytime, for example, BarleyLife™ and LeafGreens™. This time I'd like to tell you about ProPeas™. In fact, the article in the September/October 2009 Partners that I am quoting below has as its logo, *go green, stay lean*. Here's some of what the article says:

Protein is key to a healthy body. Next to water, protein is the body's most abundant substance. Protein keeps body tissue healthy. It builds up, maintains, and replaces the tissues that comprise our muscles, organs, and immune systems.

Proteins are also essential to the body's amino acid process .....[H]umans are only able to produce naturally one-half of the necessary amino acids that are most important for sustained health. The rest must be derived from protein-rich foods.....

Our bodies can store fat and carbohydrates, but because our bodies cannot store protein, it is important that we get an adequate amount in our diets. This is difficult for vegans; in fact, I developed a protein deficiency during the 9 years we were vegans, because my body does not digest beans, and I am allergic to soy.

*Going green* is the first major distinction of ProPeas, and it refers to the vegetable protein source. Most other protein supplements are whey- or -soy-based. Not ProPeas. It gets its protein from an all-natural pea source, grown in Canada, the world's largest producer of non-genetically modified [non-GMO] pea crops. Since field peas are a self-sustaining, nitrogen-fixing plant, there are no chemical fertilizers required to spur their growth. They have naturally-occurring fiber, vitamins, and minerals, but they are low in fat. Unlike AIM's other powders, it doesn't taste green. It's off-white in color and vanilla-flavored.

*Staying lean*, the second part of the ProPeas motto, battles weight in three ways: by increasing one's feeling of fullness, increasing metabolic rate, and aiding in maintenance of lean muscle mass. These three characteristics make pea protein a powerful weight-management nutrient. I make a ProPeas drink for lunch, maybe four or five days a week. I like it mixed with Rice Dream. It blends readily with one or more of AIM's powders. It's satisfying, and it's another way to get nutrition I need from the AIM products we know and love. TRY IT—I'm convinced you'll like it. AIM's products are guaranteed. They will even send you a label to return something you don't like. How generous is that?