



ECHOES

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Keeping it real – putting faith into action at Smithville Christian

"USE THE GIFTS YOU HAVE TO SERVE OTHERS."

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Does attending a Christian high school mean you are hiding from the real world? Does it mean you are not putting your faith into practice? Does it mean you have sacrificed your opportunity to obey Jesus' command to be a light in this world?

At Smithville Christian, the answer to these questions is an emphatic "NO!" We work hard to make sure that what students learn keeps them connected with their community and that they put their faith into practice. We challenge them so that both now and for their entire lifetimes, they will be joyful bearers of Christ's light in the world.

In this issue of Echoes, you will read about an innovative Grade

10 civics project that allowed students to authentically influence decision-making at the local level and allowed them to tangibly bless their community – with some surprising results. You will read about the 15 students and two leaders who are currently in Nicaragua on an exciting mission opportunity. You will see pictures and read student feedback about the impact of the Holy Spirit in their lives during Spiritual Emphasis Week. You will see pictures

and hear from some of the 47 students who travelled to Ottawa on a recent choir tour and who experienced God's hand at work in their ministry. And you will hear how God is at work in the lives and ministry of our students and alumni.

God is blessing our school and the students know it. They are in an exciting place at an exciting time in their lives. They are surrounded by peers, teachers, parents, board members and support staff who are all working together to encourage them to "use the gifts you have to serve others." (1 Peter 4:10) Praise God for Christian education!

Learn it - Live it - In community

BY DAVE GIESBRECHT, GEOGRAPHY TEACHER AND SPIRITUAL LIFE COORDINATOR



“Hola” from Central America! By the time you get this issue of Echoes, our team will have arrived in Nicaragua. After a year of anticipation and an intense month of preparation, our team of 15 grade 11 and 12 students are in Nicaragua for six weeks of learning and service. Smithville’s ‘Learning to Serve’ program gives these students the opportunity to gain high school credits while studying and serving with a cross-cultural mission.

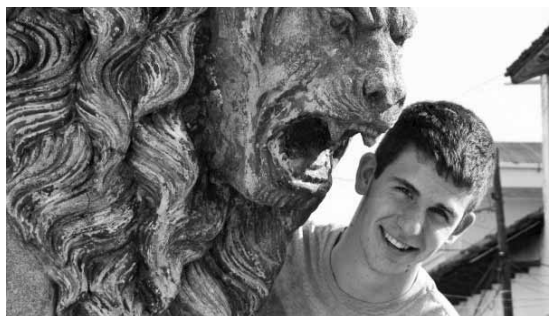
Our team is a small learning community with a desire to serve, but we are so thankful to be a part of the larger community that has made this possible. We’re thankful to Smithville’s staff, who have had to make several adjustments on our behalf. We’re thankful to family, friends, and fellow students who have supported us in a variety of ways. And it’s been so great to have a Smithville grad, Alicia Hamming, working at the Nehemiah Center in Nicaragua, helping develop this program and working out many of the details.

For six weeks we will be joining with another community, the Nehemiah Center and the Association of Christian Schools in Nicaragua, in the promotion of quality Christian education in Nicaragua. In our Geography studies we have learned that Nicaragua’s history this century has included a brutal dictatorship, a revolution, a civil war, major natural disasters, and political scandal and corruption, leaving it the second poorest nation in our hemisphere. Nicaragua is in need of sustainable development, and

education is an important part of making that happen. But what can 15 kids from Smithville do? Well, on their own, not much. That’s where it’s important to be part of a larger community. The team has been reading the book, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, which discusses several of the limitations of short-term missions and how these projects can be carried out more effectively. Good preparation is one thing. Our team has been studying Spanish, and will continue to do so in Nicaragua. We’ve been learning about Latin American history and geography, and the dynamics of cross-cultural interaction. But more significantly, it is important for us to contribute to an organization that is having a long-term positive effect in its community.

I am sure that this experience will have a long-term impact on the students involved. Pray with us that we will grow in faith and love for God as we interact with one another and with the people in Nicaragua; that we will broaden our perspective on the world as we experience cultural differences and see the great challenges that many people face; and that we consider our own place in responding to these challenges in the shorter and longer term.

Pray with us also that we can be of service to the people we work with as we volunteer in two schools in the town of Leon. English is a required part of the curriculum in Nicaragua. The head of these schools is eager to have our students come



and teach English. So we have been collecting and preparing materials and lesson plans. Our students are becoming teachers. We plan on donating these materials and supplies to these schools when we leave. Our prayer is that we can make a valuable contribution to the ongoing work of these Christian schools. And of course we welcome your prayers for our relationships, safety, and health over the next six weeks.

We are so excited about this opportunity. We will keep you updated through our Nicaragua blog, which you can find on the school's website at www.sdch.on.ca. Thanks for all your continued support. Que Dios les bendiga. (God bless you.)



What is a Spiritual Emphasis Week and why would a Christian school bother to have one?

BY NEALE ROBB, BIBLE TEACHER

For the past few years Smithville Christian High School has held a Spiritual Emphasis Week and what a week it is! Chapel each morning, shortened classes, small group sessions midway through the day, a prayer room plus special girls' and guys' events. This is in addition to the normal lessons, sports events and other activities. Spiritual Emphasis Week (SEW) is a lot of work. Why do it? Why disrupt class schedules? Teachers already

work hard at integrating faith with learning. Weekly devotional chapels already keep a spiritual focus before us.

Yet there is great value in giving focused time to the things of the Spirit beyond our regular routine.

Jesus did this with his disciples. From time to time, he would get away from the crowds to spend time teaching his disciples

more about kingdom life. It was on one such retreat that Peter proclaimed "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." That was an "aha" moment for him. SEW gives our students an opportunity to give focus to their walk with Christ. This spiritual focus enables students to know Christ more intimately and grow in their understanding of the freedom Christ came to give.

For many there is an "aha" moment as the Holy Spirit moves among us. That's why we do it. To God be the glory!





HOW THIS EXPERIENCE IS CHANGING THE SCHOOL

BY CHANTAL MASSELINK, GRADE 9

I could tell on Monday many of the grade 9 students (myself included) were skeptical, not sure what to expect, or anticipate. As far as they knew this was going to be just another assembly. We sing a few songs, listen to someone drone on for a while, we're let out, and we'll have shorter classes. However as the week progressed the attitude toward S.E.W. changed. We were talking about it in the halls, and during class. It was infectious. Now I just wonder, what can we, as a student body, do to not only keep this spirit going but to strive ahead and make it bigger?



IT WAS A VERY POWERFUL WEEK

BY JULIA SMIT, GRADE 11

This week has been an incredible experience for everyone at school. Every morning Mr. Park spoke to us about being Free in Christ, and his comments really hit home for several people. The girl's night was a great time to get to know, and talk to many more girls at the school, over common ground. The last chapel was very special to many people, myself included, as many students became quite emotional and you could really feel God's presence there, as everyone came together. It was a very powerful week, it was one of my favourite experiences. I am very grateful to all of those who planned this week, which God so richly blessed.



THE HOLY SPIRIT IS MAKING MEMORIES

BY VERONICAL SLAPPENDEL, GRADE 10

This week has been the most powerful experience of my whole entire life. My grade 10 class has miracles working through them and I can't wait for the memories that are to come with them. I thank God for this week, He is mighty and powerful and I know that I can always put my trust in Him.



Freedom in Christ

BY MARLENE BERGSMAN,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

The theme of Spiritual Emphasis Week 2011 was based on Galatians 5:1, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." During morning chapels each day, the school's Drama and English teacher, Gord Park, taught students about the freedom they can have in Christ, and challenged them to live as if they are truly free.

Each chapel began and ended with lively praise and worship sessions led by the school's two praise teams. During their small group discussion times later in the day, students were asked to reflect on and discuss questions such as what they can do to contribute to an attitude of positive peer pressure at the school, or how their conduct can set others free. The beautiful and meditative prayer room was open daily for group or individual prayers.

For many students, one of the most challenging chapels of the week was the one at which they were asked to consider what their freedom in Christ means for their friendships. Park told the students that the best thing they can bring to any friendship or a dating relationship is Jesus. "Too many Christians are thinking that the whole point of Christianity is to get to heaven, but it's not that at all," said Park, citing Nooma author Rob Bell.

"It's about bringing heaven to earth. It's about relationships, not religion."

Park explored Jesus' example as a friend, and urged students to put Jesus in the centre of all their relationships. "Do you have the ability to turn to your friend and say 'let's put Christ in the middle of this?' " he asked. "Girls, ask the guy you are dating to show you his Bible. The more beat up it is, the better he is."

In the final chapel of the week, during Park's dramatic and moving assurances of Jesus' love for the students, the chains that had bound the wooden cross all week were cut and fell to the floor. "It's a gift," Park said. "Accept it."

The chapel concluded with meditative music and an opportunity for prayer at the foot of the cross.

It was clear that the week had a profound impact on staff and students at the school.

WHAT DOES SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS WEEK MEAN?

MITCHELL HARRIS
(GRADE 9) + 3 OTHERS

Pray with each other

Obey God

Sexual purity

Incorporate God in all you do

Trust in God

Interact with others

Verify your relationship with God

Encourage one another

Praise God in all you do

Exclude no one

Explain God's word to others

Respect one another

Pray for each other.

Repent of your sins.

Everything's God's.

Sing for God.

Separate from evil.

Use your gifts for God.

Rebirth in Christ.

Enjoy God's creation and gifts.

= POSITIVE PEER PRESSURE

For more student comments, see the Spiritual Emphasis Week quotebook under News and Events on the school website at www.sdch.on.ca.

The ministry of sidewalks

BY MARLENE BERGSMA,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Grade 10 Civics students were recently counting cars, using a radar gun to clock vehicle speed, writing speeches and canvassing the school's neighbourhood with a petition.

It was all part of a project on municipal government, which culminated in a January presentation to the Planning/Building/Environmental Committee of the Township of West Lincoln.

The idea for the project began when two members of Student Council attended a township meeting on the benefits of walkable communities, and realized that the school could bless its neighbourhood by taking a leadership role on the issue of public safety.

Mr. Neale Robb quickly took on the challenge with his civics class, encouraging students to see how practicing civic engagement to lobby for a safe sidewalk to the Leisureplex Park would be a blessing to our neighbours.

The students researched the issue and prepared the presentation, which was called "A Sidewalk is a Safe Walk" and which was presented, along with the petition, to members of the township committee. The committee referred the issue to township staff for a follow-up report.

Not only did students learn how municipal government works, they also learned a skill they will be able to use no matter where they live," said Robb, "how they can work together to make a positive difference in their communities."

But an even more exciting benefit of the project was the reaction it prompted in the community.

A neighbour who had received the petition and who has also been active in lobbying for park improvements and park safety, called the school to thank the students for taking a leadership role on such an important issue.

And shortly after the presentation, the school was contacted by a member of township staff, who asked if we would

be willing to partner with the township on an application for a Healthy Communities Grant from the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport. If successful, the grant will mean West Lincoln will be able to hire a consultant to evaluate and make recommendations on the township's parks and trails, said Wendy Joyner, Township Recreation Program Manager.

The status of the grant is still pending and the issue of the sidewalk still has to be decided by township council, but the students know that they have influenced key decision-makers. What they learned and what they contributed will have an impact long after they graduate from high school. They "used the gifts they have to serve others."

It's amusing! It's amazing! It's all about the experience!

This year's Spring Dinner and Auction is coming with a brand new theme: it will focus on things to do, not things to buy. Your fundraising committee is hard at work, searching out exciting things to do and interesting places to visit, and hopes to deliver an action-packed list of items you'll absolutely want to bid on.

Do you have any suggestions? Do you have any contacts? Are you a season's ticket holder or the owner of a cottage or vacation destination? Can you cook a casserole or deliver donuts? Please contact any committee member with your offers or ideas. Nothing is too crazy or wild to be considered.

Everyone, mark May 21 on your calendars so you don't miss a delicious dinner and a chance to bid on fun-filled activities for family and friends.



Choir and community

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

I have been privileged to be connected to the choir this year as sort of a staff sponsor who helps smooth out wrinkles for Dawne Warkentin, our choir director, who comes in for only that one task. In addition to keeping things going smoothly, I help keep the tenor section on pitch, work on attendance issues, and help with the planning of events. So doesn't the administrator have better things to do? Perhaps. However, since I am well known to be an avid sports enthusiast, I consider it important to demonstrate strong support for the Arts as well.

There is more to it though: I love choir! Choir is one of those activities that enables community to be built among students from all grades as they learn and live together. What a treat to see students singing praise, sharing devotional times, skating the Rideau Canal, visiting Winterlude, laughing on the bus and



sleeping on floors without concern for who is in what grade. Sometimes it seems school is too much about one's age; some of the best times are when students are grouped according to common passion rather than grade.

I am glad to say that in the weeks following the choir tour the students continue to enjoy the community that was enabled during the tour. Choir is of course only one of the school activities that empower community across grades. Any student who gets involved in activities outside of class has opportunity to embrace community in a new way, whether the passion of the student be artistic, service oriented, technical, or athletic.

See pages 10 and 11 for choir tour photos and feedback from the choir members.





CHOIR TOUR – OTTAWA 2011



"These were the best three days of my life. There are a lot of memories that will last a lifetime." – Derek Wagter

*"A highlight for me was singing and seeing all the facial expressions of the people; seeing the impact we were having."
– Evelina Spyker*

"It was the best birthday ever. I felt close to so many people. Ottawa was beautiful; I loved the canal. I loved it – it was awesome." – Mariah Hoekstra.

*"I love how we can walk down the street and just sing because we know all the songs. I think the music brought us together, and God really brought us together."
– Melinda Bouwers.*

*"A highlight was us all just singing and being ourselves. I love that we can sing with a group of people and be yourself."
– Mitchell Harris*

*"The library in the Parliament Buildings had such a wonderful silence. God must have been there keeping it so peaceful."
– Matthew Muysson*

After graduating from Smithville Christian High School, Sara Stuive began work on a degree in International Development and Sociology at the University of Toronto. There she developed an interest in human trafficking and involuntary diasporas, with an emphasis on how they affect teenagers. She is currently enrolled in Justice Discipleship Training School through Youth With A Mission, and is studying in Wiler, Switzerland. In April, she will travel to Ireland on a YWAM outreach program, returning to Canada in July. She is open to God's leading but expects to work with youth.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

BY SARA STUIVE, CLASS OF 2008

I'm sitting in a room full of people I've known for three days, my 'family' for the next six months. I'm beginning to perspire; everyone else has been assigned a work duty except for me. Then I hear it, breakfast preparation – Sara. I am not a morning person, I love to sleep, in my head this is the worst thing that could possibly happen. Fast forward six weeks, community living has grown on me, and I have learned not to sweat the small things. You see, the key to making a community work is love.

What is love though? As Christians we believe that God is love, and in 1 John 4:10 it states that love is an atoning sacrifice. Simply put, atonement means to be at one with whomever it is referring to. This means that God completely emptied himself for the Holy Spirit and for Jesus, in return the Holy Spirit and Jesus did the same, essentially they emptied themselves once and are filled twice over. As Christians, we are meant to live in community. Christianity

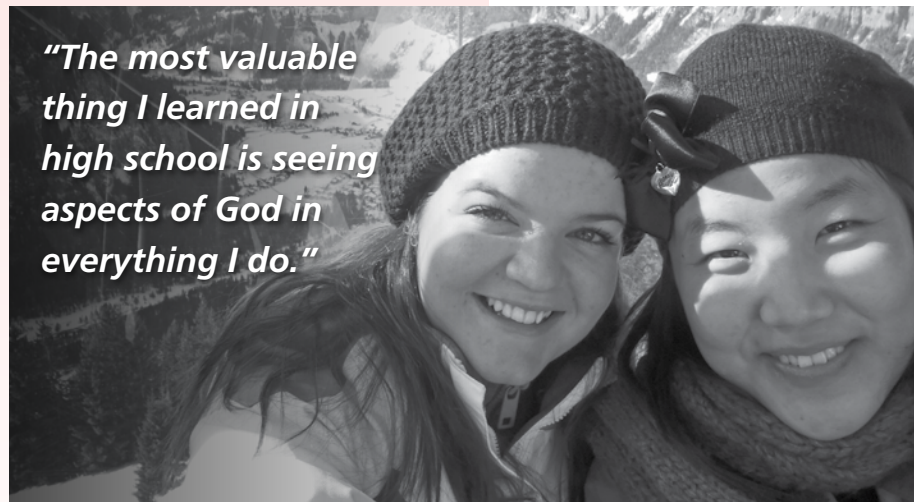
is Christ-centred and as a result we are called to be others-centred just as Christ gives so freely of Himself. In practice, what does this look like?

In our Grade 12 Challenge and Change in Society class, Mr. Park challenged us to not just 'get your toes wet' but to dive in head first. Be the change you want to see in the world and your community. How can members of the Smithville Christian High School empower the Smithville community? By first empowering themselves. Confrontation is something I tend to avoid, and in our post-modern world tolerance is expected, but as brothers and sisters in Christ, it is our responsibility to confront others in love

when we see something that is not right. This is necessary if change is going to happen in your community. Don't sweat the small stuff, but don't let it fester.

Yes, I wake up early every morning to serve breakfast, but hey, I don't have to do the laundry! Humility is a rude awakening, but once you have humbled yourself for others, and given all of yourself, you will begin to see an empowered community.

"The most valuable thing I learned in high school is seeing aspects of God in everything I do."



SARA STUIVE AND HER ROOMMATE MAIVE KIM, OF ARGENTINA, IN THE SWISS ALPS TOWN OF KANDERSTEG.

Being used by God and experiencing his blessings

BY MAKSZIM LORAND, CLASS OF 2003

Hello Everyone, I promised that I would fill you in on what has happened to me during the past 6 years, how God has blessed my life!

First of all, I have to mention that since returning from Canada God has become an essential part of my daily life and I have experienced his blessings each and every day.

Considering this, I think the most appropriate is to write about how God has influenced my life and what I have given back. After I came back, I joined our church's youth group. We basically met every week and had a discussion about a certain topic. Later on we prepared a play for Christmas, went camping and we became really good friends while each of us grew in faith every day.

With high school done, I went to university, but beside this I have joined a group of young people who organised weekly worships for students, with a group belonging to the YMCA – Transylvania organisation's student department.

At first I was just attending the weekly worship, but later on I was offered the opportunity to join the group, which I gladly took because I thought it is the best way to give something back to God for all his blessings. We not only organised weekly worship, but language courses, sport activities, guitar courses, summer camps. We had a drama club and we also organised excursions in Romania

(mainly hiking) but also European trips (to Poland and Germany). I have remained in this group for three years, becoming the leader of Student department within the YMCA – Transylvania organisation (www.ike.ro). We already had groups of young people organ-

“... GOD HAS BECOME AN ESSENTIAL PART OF MY DAILY LIFE AND I HAVE EXPERIENCED HIS BLESSINGS EACH AND EVERY DAY.”

ising activities and worships in three cities and I was responsible for their collaboration, proper functioning on all grounds.

Later on I have been asked to help out with a summer camp organised by YMCA. This camp is organised every summer for students in high school. Its purpose is to give a Christian perspective on all kinds of topics while also creating a Christian environment. We usually have a few famous people invited to talk about certain topics, to hold discussions – all this spiced with sports activities and Christian concerts in the evening. For the past four years I have been to each of these camps every year having a greater responsibility.

In 2009, with God's guidance I took the responsibility not only to organise but revitalise the camp which was on a downhill considering attendance – during the previous year there were only 150 participants.

With God's help and blessing we found a new place to hold camp, introduced a large variety of activities, more concerts and in the end we managed to double the number of participants without affecting the quality of camps main purpose. In 2010 we had 350 participants to this camp, so we managed to achieve our target with the help of God.

Secondly, after returning, I finished high school on top of my class and I also managed to win a Math contest

Continued on page 14 ...

... continued from page 13

within Christian schools. I also got accepted to the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca to study Control Engineering. I graduated last year and right now I am attending a Master's course, also in Control Engineering.

God moves in mysterious ways and after two "failed" interviews, I have been hired by the multinational company EMERSON as a project engineer as of 1st of September 2010.

Thirdly, I still play soccer two to three times a week and I try to do as many sports as possible. Unfortunately, I can't play badminton because of the lack of proper gyms – I really enjoyed it so I kind of miss it.

This is how God has blessed me and how he is using me for a greater good!

Students' Council

BY DANIEL VANDERSTEEN, STUDENTS' COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

With this past Spiritual Emphasis Week, the Students' Council theme of being Unstoppable for Christ took on a new perspective. It's not about holding the line against the world coming at us, but about pushing into the world and not letting anything slow us down. Student Council has been encouraging students to be unstoppable all this year so far.

Students' Council encouraged students to be unstoppable in a different sense in February with our annual Magazine Campaign. Though not strictly a spiritual affair, we challenged students to use what they've learned about outreach to go into the community and earn back money for the school.

Our next major plan is the 30 hour famine, an event we're hoping will not only shed some light on an important problem plaguing impoverished regions of the world, but will also allow our students to be unstoppable in trying to solve it. This year's famine is going to be better than ever, with local schools and youth groups invited, allowing us to come together to support this cause while enjoying a free concert by the talented Greg Sykes. We hope it will be successful, and as always, encourage everyone to be unstoppable for Christ in any way you can.

Belonging at Smithville Christian

BY KIKO YANG

At Smithville Christian High School, we have a slogan "Belong. Believe. Succeed." Belong means that (we have) good school spirit. We make students feel comfortable. Believe means that we believe in God. God watches over us and protects us. Succeed means that (we are) doing well in the school.

In our school, we have small study groups. Students can solve problems together. They can learn more about cooperation. We also have good staff. If students have some problems on studying or other things, teachers will help you as much as possible that they can. And everyone always has a smiling face.

In our school, we love each other; we help each other. Just looks like a big family because we have Christian education. It can help people to inspire themselves and develop character such as patience, self-control and compassion. In the Bible, we know that Jesus died for us on the cross because of people's sin. He created this world. He loves us and forgives us. He wants people to love and forgive each other. He wants a peaceful world, with no sin, no hurt and no tears.

At Smithville Christian you can learn a lot and you will succeed in the future because we know we are the best!

Kiko is from China, and she is in Grade 11. She has been a student at Smithville Christian since September 2010. She lives in Fenwick with Hans, Hilda and Lauren Dam.





Freedom

BY LINDA BOOY-KORVEMAKER, HEAD OF STUDENT SERVICES

At our recent Spiritual Emphasis Week we learned about "Freedom in Christ."

What has always amazed me about teaching at a Christian school is that we are not limited to talking about and with Jesus during a special week, but sometimes we do need to be reminded of that.

In the guidance office we often have the opportunity to pray with students. Whether it is a decision about post secondary or a personal issue that we are talking about, I am always grateful that when I ask a student or parent if we can pray over the issue they agree. I don't recall ever having someone say "no." What a privilege to be part of a school community that encourages prayer in every class room, every hall way, every office and in any circumstance.

We often talk about the integration of faith and learning in a Christian school, what a blessing it is to make Jesus part of all our decisions too. Students make some big decisions in high school: decisions about friendships, course selection, jobs, college, university and more...and here at Smithville Christian that does involve God, because we are FREE!

Ordinary? To extraordinary!

BY ARCHIE VERMEER,
BOARD CHAIR

It was a joy to read the previous edition of "Echoes" where we learned that the mortgage on our school has been paid in full! We have no debt, at least not in the financial sense (Romans 13 vs. 8).

Reflecting on this success I would like to use it as an example of what the board of Smithville Christian does. No the current board cannot claim this success. It was conceived at an ordinary meeting by ordinary people so many years ago. Perhaps it went something like this "what if we could eliminate our debt". Well why don't we? What would it take? And so on. Years later with fanfare we celebrate the extraordinary accomplishment of no debt.

There are many conversations like this at the board table, each one ordinary and simple on the face of it. Yet with the diligent efforts of the administrator, staff and volunteers extraordinary things happen. Perhaps these things are not as high in profile as paying off a mortgage, yet they are no less important to the success of our school.

In the not too distant future you might be addressed with an ordinary question; "will you serve on the board" or "our committee needs a person with your skills" or "do you have time for..." Often our response is "oh, but I'm not qualified to..." If you feel you are ordinary, join the club! You possess that thought, idea or action that with the leading of the spirit and the help of other ordinary people will reap extraordinary benefits.

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