

Member Profile: Brett and Shirley Bretthauer...Not Worrying About *Anything!*

Brett Bretthauer's face lights up with excitement as he leans in to say it again, "I am so blessed." It's a phrase he uses frequently in conversation, and you know he means it! Brett is certainly not a guy who is looking for sympathy. Although he walks with a walker due to weakness in his legs, he is thankful every day that he can walk.

At the age of 16, Brett was struck with polio. His parents were told that he would never walk again. Immobilized flat on his back in a hospital bed for more than nine weeks, Brett, the grandson of a Lutheran pastor, had nowhere to look but up, and he began to pray in earnest. As he asked God for healing, his faith grew, and he recognized the Source of his healing. After that he wore a back brace and a leg brace, but by the time he graduated from high school, he was able to walk across a stage with his class and get his diploma. He says, "I have never been down a day since! I can get up and walk and praise God!"

Shirley had grown up in a family that didn't attend church, but when a Lutheran pastor stopped at the gas station where her dad worked and invited him to church, the family went. Shirley and her siblings were eventually baptized and confirmed there (St. Paul's, Marion). Brett and Shirley met in the early 1960s and married in 1965. Ascension Lutheran was a mission congregation at the time, just getting established and in need of an organist. Shirley could play, and she took the position. She eventually took a job at St. Mark's working for Pastor Larson so the family joined the church, but she realizes now that she was just "going through the motions" when it came to worship and living out her faith.

That all changed for her when she and Brett participated in "The Purpose Driven Life" sermon series and small group study at St. Mark's. "It changed me," Shirley says. "It made me think about prayer and about reading God's Word. God was directing everything." Her faith grew, and both she and Brett now simply and genuinely trust God to take care of them. They are regular worshippers at the 9:45 Celebration service, and Shirley plays the organ for our midday Lenten services. They co-lead the Friday morning Bible study group that "stuffs" hundreds of our worship bulletins every week, and they help prepare our print newsletters for mailing too. Their faith, lived out in service, study, song, and prayer, takes a central place in their lives.

In early 2008, with heavy snow on their roof, Brett and Shirley awoke one day to find water from an ice dam had destroyed the ceiling in their living room. Instead of being angry or frustrated, Brett calmly told Shirley, "We're going to thank God." He says, "God says to thank Him for *everything*. The biggest thing is to trust Him in *everything!*" So in the middle of the mess and inconvenience, they thanked God. As it turned out, the damage from the

ice dam resulted in a blessing: new carpet of their choosing.

Brett worked in the printing industry for many years but was let go when management changed. His new job required the self-described homebody to be gone all week on business.

"Everything turned out better than before, though," he says. "God was there all the way through" and they were blessed financially in unexpected ways as a result of the job change.

Shirley spent 21 years at Rockwell in administrative roles, so about eight years ago they joined the fitness center. They scheduled an appointment with a trainer but decided to go early and check out the center on their own. After walking on the treadmill for a while, Brett sat down to relax while Shirley headed off to walk the track. She returned to find Brett slumped in his chair, unable to respond. No one else was around. "We need you, Jesus!" she cried out as she ran for help.

Rockwell employees came with a defibrillator and shocked Brett's heart. When he regained consciousness and heard someone talking about an ambulance, he asked, "Why is that necessary? I'm okay!" The paramedic responded, "Okay?! You just died!" Tests showed that Brett had three arteries that were 90 percent blocked, and surgery shortly after resulted in five bypasses. He recalls Pastor Kaupins visiting him prior to the surgery and asking if he was afraid. Brett says, "I told him, 'I can't lose! If I don't make it, I'll be in heaven!'"

After going through "The Purpose Driven Life," Brett and Shirley decided to commit to tithing. Now they are enthusiastic proponents of the concept of giving ten percent of their income to the Lord. Brett says, "God tells us in Malachi 3:10 to test him." The verse says, "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. **Test me** in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.'" The two agree that God has richly blessed them, and they enjoy sharing their blessings with their family and the church. Both cite John 3:16 as their favorite Bible verse and take comfort in the promise of eternal life through Jesus' death and resurrection. Having experienced life's ups and downs, but recognizing God's amazing blessings throughout, Brett adds, "I don't worry about *anything* anymore. I *know* it's going to be okay!" Praise be to God!

