

Notes from TOAD HALL

Issue #2 - 2004
Summer



Untended Fallout

In a small town near Rochester, a man driving his van along a river saw a bald eagle swoop down and grab a sixteen inch sucker from the water. Larry Knight slowed to watch, "I thought it was really awesome to watch an eagle fly into the creek and pick a fish up."

The eagle struggled to gain altitude with the extra weight. You know, after an eagle grabs a fish it quickly adjusts its hold so the fish slices through the air, decreasing the drag. (I learned this from David Attenborough's "Life of Birds" video series. It's very, very cool how they grasp it along the spine with one claw in front

of the other.) It's apparently not so easy to mount up on wings of an eagle when you're trying to shift a slapping, slippery fish. This eagle lost its grip as it ascended over the top of the van. The dropped fish shattered the windshield and exploded fish eggs and guts over the entire front of the van. Larry says his van is sitting in the driveway because the insurance company claims they don't cover damage from flying fish. He also reports that the neighbor's cat ate what was left on the vehicle. He decided the next time he sees such a sight he won't be stopping. "I'm givin' her the gas," he said.



“Christian spirituality, the contemplative life, is not about us. It is about God.”

At first, I thought one might identify with the driver—you stop to admire God's creation, thinking that by it you will be getting a closer look at God, and as you draw near, his handiwork contrives to injure you. You are struck by the apparent random nature of ill fortune and God's irrational plan for your spiritual growth—like when, for the first time as an adult, you decide to give yourself completely to Christ, and the next two years are the worst of your life.

In a tiny example of how this can work, on a recent morning my husband decided he was going to be the best partner to me that day, and it wasn't even Mother's Day or my birthday. It was just a day in which he was going to demonstrate his love by taking me to dinner and a movie. And me? Even though I belong to God, body and soul, by noon I'd crossed him five times, called him a name, and sold his favorite chair.

Then I thought, perhaps the eagle is the lesson here—he gets the old “E” for effort. It didn't work out this time, but he's not going to stop fishing. So I'm the eagle, I've caught the fish, and, sure, I've dropped it, and made a mess. However. “You will soar on wings like eagles.” It's the verb that defines success here. “You will” is future tense. So what if I'm not quite making the mount-up-on-wings, and have lost the prize

fish? Tomorrow, or at least in the next life, I will be more like Jesus, so I refuse to quit longing for flight, because one day it will happen. (Is. 40:31) Okay?

In the end, it isn't the driver or the eagle I fully appreciate. It's the cat. Imagine him on the same old, same old stealth inspection. On his rounds to the back door, flower pots, roll-away trash bin. Just a routine, ordinary night out, marking his territory. Suddenly he sniffs the surprising odor of fish eggs and guts wafting off the hood of a van. (Never mind how unlikely the spot. God often reveals himself on detours. Think about Moses turning aside to investigate the burning bush.) There, amidst shards of glass is the most unexpected and exquisite of pleasures—sucker roe. He leaps up, his pink tongue and needle teeth pulling away sacs and veins—it's a dangerous feast, but so worth it—it is Christ, beckoning us from among the clay pots

and broken vessels, come dine with me.

Parsing the Prepositional Phrase

I would like to see my soul feasting on something exciting with Jesus, but I'm in a spiritual funk. As I trudge through my daily rounds, to the kitchen, to the store, to the office, I'm keeping an eye out for some word, some thing that will move me out of the desert, out of the routine and ordinary. In my search, I came across this quote from Eugene Peterson which appeared in Martin Marty's publication, *Context*. I have a sinking feeling that he knows me.

First, Christian spirituality, the contemplative life, is not about us. It is about God. The great weakness of American spirituality is that it is all about us: fulfilling our potential, getting the blessings of God, expanding our influence, finding our gifts, getting a handle on principles by which we can get an edge over the competition. The more there is of us, the less there is of God.

Christian spirituality is not a life-project for becoming a better person. It is not about developing a so-called deeper life. We are in on it, to be sure, but we are not the subject. Nor are we the action. We get included by means of a few prepositions: God with us (Matt. 1:23), Christ in

me (Gal. 2:20), God for us (Rom. 8:31). With, in, for: They are powerful, connecting, relation-forming words, but none of them makes us either the subject or the predicate. We are the tag-end of a prepositional phrase.

Sooner or later in this life we get invited or commanded to



do something. But in that doing, we never become the subject of the Christian life nor do we perform the action of the Christian life. We are invited or commanded into what I call prepositional participation. The prepositions that join us to God and God's action in us within the world—the with, the in, the for—are very important, but they are essentially a matter of the ways and means of being in on and participating in what God is doing.

It occurred to me that as much as I don't want to be influenced by American cultural details which run counter to spirituality, I am American. I'm prone to the independent cowboy attitude of I can do anything alone, and all of life is about me. I breathe American air. I process American news which shows a city employee rescuing eight baby ducklings who fell into the storm sewer beside the photo of a Palestinian father lying on the ground cradling his screaming daughter during an Israeli attack, and then I plan an American supper. I hear him. I'm dead in a spiritual desert.

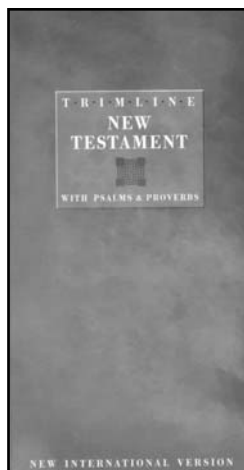
Unexpected Revelations

Have you ever tried another American remedy for the doldrums? Shopping? I thought I could purchase a little unexpected pleasure by picking up an item which was described in the following manner. I'm going to skip its identity and see if you can guess what it is:

*When you want to keep [Blank] close to your [Blank], keep it in your pocket. It's **easy** with the [Blank]. This **highly portable** [Blank] slips into your pocket or purse with **room to spare**. It's ideal for plane trips, day hikes, lunch with a friend,*

*or **anywhere** you've ever found yourself wishing you had a [Blank] conveniently at hand.*

Did you figure it out? Maybe it's a battery operated screwdriver from Menards? (I can hear that man's annoying voice: "Buy it From **MENARDS!**") Perhaps it's the latest Hi-Protein Power Bar? Or could it be a Global Positioning Device? It sounds like the person who



What I need to grasp is this: dryness is going to happen no matter where, who, or how old I am as a Christian.

needs this item is pretty mobile. Well, no surprise, none of the above. Here it is again.

*When you want to keep [God's Word] close to your [heart], keep it in your pocket. It's **easy** with the [NIV Trimline New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs]. This **highly portable** [Bible] slips into your pocket or purse with **room to spare**. It's ideal for plane trips, day hikes, lunch with a friend, or **anywhere** you've ever found yourself wishing you had a [Bible] conveniently at hand.*

I didn't even notice the shameless copy on the outside back cover until I'd owned this unique little NT for a couple of months and was thinking of sending a copy to Jeremy Huggins (try his blog: <http://junkmail.chattablogs.com> and also see some of his work on www.RansomFellowship.org).

On April first, Jeremy entered "an unscripted prayer for mercy" a reflection on what and why Bible reading is so dead hard (cannily knowing that many of us struggle with it, but few dare to say so). "Here's what it comes down to," he concludes. "I know I need my Bible. But I don't know exactly why. And deep in my heart's script, I catch myself thinking that I was doing alright before he came along, showing him with my non-Bible-reading that I don't need his approval. I'll just sit outside and play with fire. Sure, God says I need the Bible, but I don't see it—what, do you think you own this place, that you're the Boss of me? God forbid. Please. God forbid me."

This entry drew a lot of discussion and confession among his readers. It caused me to face, once again, my own habits and difficulties with reading the Bible. The reason I'd bought the New Testament in the first place was because I thought my problem was needing a change from the ugly, cheap edition of that new Bible translation I've been trying to read through. This Zondervan NT appealed to me, because it's small (three by six inches), it's a good color (creamed coffee, I'd call it), and it feels nice (smooth and glossy). It seems like such weakness to admit that when I'm suffering dry thirst and spiritual deadness, I buy a new edition of the Bible as if I'd ordered a triple espresso at Starbucks when I needed an energy jolt. After I read the back cover, I not only felt more disheartened, I could now add anger to my list of offenses. Like I'd been tricked into joining the marketing-for-jesus forces I despise. "This highly portable Trimline New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs slips into

your pocket with room to spare!" How can I get to what is real in Christianity when I have to shed such a huge load of cynicism?

God's word is my life, and my love, and I spend time with it because I know it changes me in a mysterious way. (The fact that merely reading it does something to me has been a source of irritation, and something I don't like to acknowledge. But the people who know me best because they've lived with me—my mother, my husband—say they can tell when I neglect this spiritual meditation, and it's not fun to be so categorically ill-natured.) But there are times when I despair of ever feeling God again. Nothing resonates, nothing strikes. And when I've lost the sense of the reality of God in my life, don't tell me "faith follows action like the little caboose on the train."

What I'm experiencing is spiritual dryness, a drought, a deadness. And my first instinct is to do exactly what Tim Keller describes in a sermon on Psalm 42. He says that when something goes wrong for American Christians, they look for someone to pin it on, someone to sue. We tend to be very moralistic and think that surely, spiritual dryness is the result of unconfessed sin in our life. We haven't pushed the right button, we've neglected our Christian "to-do list."

What I need to grasp is this: dryness is going to happen no matter where, who, or how old I am as a Christian. It isn't necessarily because I've done something wrong, or haven't had faith, or neglected to read through the Bible in a year. It's because I'm human and I live in a fractured, fallen world.

Keller examines Psalm 42 and describes the nature of my illness. The Psalmist asks "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why are you

so disturbed?" The question is not rhetorical, it isn't cynical or sarcastic. It's actually asking for self-examination. So the Psalmist looks for his hopes. What are they? Where are they?



That's when I understood my own hopes: I've placed them in people or things that disappoint, in things that can never be. When the big hopes fail I concentrate on the little things in life: When can Margie give herself a latte? When can she eat? Sleep? When can she sit in the sun, listen to her music, read a

Making "Self" my integrative personal center has been profoundly disappointing because these things are not able to sustain my soul.

good story, write something intense, be happy, fat, and revered? Making "Self" my integrative personal center has been profoundly disappointing, because the little things are not able to sustain my soul for very long either.

So the Psalmist declares a shift: "Hope in God," he tells himself. And he begins to think about *chesed*, God's loving-kindness and covenant-keeping. The Psalmist recounts his personal history and all the times God helped him, and since he is a professional musician, an artist, he turns the grace of God into a song (Psalm 42) he sings to himself through the night.

This Psalm was a powerful grace ministered at the just the right time. When I popped the sermon into the tape deck, I had no idea I



was going to get help.

(Perhaps this taste will convince you to order it if you share the feeling that life is sometimes dust. The tapes are available at www.redeemer.com where you'll find Redeemer Presbyterian's Sermon Store. Search the tape series for "psalms." Within the series "Psalms: Disciplines of Grace," choose T327: "Finding God.")

Enjoy Your Fish Eggs

It has occurred to me that I have some margin in my life. More than a lot of people I know. It's a grace. But just last week as I was updating the calendar and thinking nothing more would fit in my schedule, I got an early phone call. At first, all I heard was stifled sobs and sniffling. As soon as I determined it was most likely our granddaughter, I relaxed a little. (We've only had one dreaded phone call announcing someone dear was killed in a car

accident.) Manessah wanted to talk. She'd just awakened from a dream and couldn't shake it. She'd been to the zoo with her little friend Gracey, found herself on a bus to Rochester, and couldn't find our house. She felt like I was lost from her. You know that dream feeling when you seriously need to get to someone and you can't? On the phone she said, "I

need to see you because we are moving very far away and I won't see you very often anymore." (It's true, they are.)

At the time, I was in the process of writing this issue of *Notes*. It was overdue at the printer and I hadn't even gotten it to Marsena, my managing editor, so I was already late. We weigh these things, don't we? What's important? What's more important? How do we measure the deadlines which press upon us against the needs of those we love? Sometimes the person who

really needs you can't tell you. I noticed this about our children, and I continue to see it in the kids of our friends. Adult obligations, meetings, appointments appear so pressing and important, even young children know they can't say, couldn't you drop that meeting? That obligation? Quit that job? Just stay home and do nothing? Hang around with me in case I think of something important, like where's my allowance or what would you think if I got a tattoo? That sort of exclusive attention would mean: don't invite someone else over, don't answer the phone, and especially, don't do email.

This particular choice was pretty easy to make. So, the next day I left the office behind, with its unanswered letters and unfinished *Notes from Toad Hall*. I planned to drive to Minneapolis, sneak Manessah out of school, and take her to a really cool children's bookstore, The Wild Rumpus, where they have cats curled up in easy chairs, and real live chickens wandering around. I'm serious. We could look at books, have a fine lunch in an old fire station, and buy an ice cream cone. *Notes* could wait until the next day. And it did.

Sometimes when we set aside costly time to be with someone, we imagine it will be historic. Some of us think it should include the sharing of unforgettable music, food, books, and conversation so deep life will never be the same. This is how it

actually was for my spiritually dry little soul: The day was mild and sunny, and the waves on Lake



There's no completely logical explanation for where you'll find a feast or what person will become the drink you so desperately need in the desert. Nor what Scripture God may use to tell what you need to know for that day.

Calhoun were very blue, as Manessah pointed out. At The Wild Rumpus, the little white hen with feathers on her feet who allows you to pet her, laid an egg on

the floor under a bookshelf, and Manessah picked it up while it was still warm. We bought *Ramona the Pest* by Beverly Cleary, ate lunch at McDonald's, capping it off with a McFlurry, and Manessah sang the names of the continents to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." The conversation that drifted from the back seat of the car was not profound:

"I'm hungry, can we get a cheeseburger? I would love the puppy they give with Happy Meals."

And: "I wonder if people will think you're my mother?"

"Probably not. I'm a bit older than your mother."

(To herself) "That's right. She has white hair, and she's very very old."

When I left, she hugged me tight and thanked me for "stoling" her away from school. I promised that

when they moved, I would write her, call her, and we would visit them in Tennessee. We had a great, ordinary, every-day time.

In the end I'm back to the cat that discovered fish eggs on the van. There's no completely logical explanation for where you'll find a feast or what person will become the drink you so desperately need in the desert. Nor what Scripture God may use to tell what you need to know for that day. This morning I read "I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me" (Psalms 131: 1-2).

I think I can hear what David is saying since I know about this process.

A nursing baby can disturb an entire neighborhood block with her demands. Because of this, her demands are generally met as quickly as possible any time of the day or night. A weaned child has learned to wait. She knows she'll be fed eventually. She doesn't quiz her mom about organic food standards as the sweet potatoes are mashed, nor does she ask if her mom understands debit card payments at Hyvee. She just sits in her high chair patiently watching and waiting while her mother prepares her food. And when the food is finally ready she eats. ♪

Ransom Notes

Looking Back

April 21-25. Mansfield, Ohio, Alliance for Renewal Churches.

In April Denis had a wonderful time speaking at the Alliance for Renewal Churches' national conference. People were enthusiastic and discussion was lively over how to be a committed Christian and yet live in and interact with popular culture. Denis met a pastor from Poland whose church is mostly comprised of the unemployed, homeless, and ex-convict. He proudly showed everyone a photo of his dedicated assistant pastor. It was a prison head shot and side profile of a man who looked like you wouldn't want to trifle with. This small Polish church has sponsored three full-time missionaries.

He also met Mike Sares, pastor of a fairly new church in Denver comprised of young people who are culturally marginalized or socially unacceptable in many traditional churches. When they first got started, he met with his people and asked, "If you were to create a church that would be the kind of place in which you could be yourself, to which you could invite your friends, and they'd be comfortable, what would it look like...and what shall we call it?" They came up with "Scum of the Earth" for, they said, "That's who we all are, and by God's grace, it's who we want to reach." The pastor was a little surprised, but committed to keeping his word. And, indeed, they continue to draw those who, at first glance don't exactly fit in at "First Church of Our Town."

These are sharp reminders of the power of the gospel cutting across our tidy, educated expectations of what the church ought to look like. Sometimes Ransom ministers to others, but often, we receive as much as we give.

Free Coffee, Tea, and Training

We're still praying and looking for someone in the Rochester area to be a part-time employee for Ransom. It would be twenty hours a week and require managing our mailing list, overseeing the mailings, bookkeeping, filing, posting new pages on the website, and helping with email. Training would be provided. We are hoping for the right person, someone who might enjoy working with us, and who would also learn to feel at home enough to scrounge in the refrigerator for snacks and make their own tea. Contact us for more information. Katie leaves in June, but she would be happy to give insider information to interested parties.

Coming Up

June 17-19, National conference for The Society for Classical Learning, Dallas, TX. Denis will be the keynote speaker, giving sessions on "Living and Teaching in Babylon."

July 5-7, Jonathan Edwards Institute Annual Conference, Annapolis, MD. Denis will be giving plenary lectures and workshops at this weekend conference which seeks to explore various aspects of culture from the perspective of Christian faith. The Institute's stated purpose is "Fostering a God-enhanced World View." The conference theme this year is "Christology and Mission." For more information or a brochure contact JEI toll-free (888).JEI-0797) or by mail (P.O. Box 2410, Princeton, NJ, 08543-2410) or email Rebecca (rjaffe@jei.org).

August 13-15, Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church, Lecanto, FL. Denis will speak at their annual Gospel Leadership Conference. For more information contact the pastor, Rev. Adam Jones, by phone (352.746.6200). ☛

April 1, St. Paul, Border's Bookstore.

Last month when I lectured at the Border's Bookstore in St. Paul, I was deeply moved by comments during the question and answer time. Among them were thoughtful reflections from parents, confessions from adults who have assumed the worst about people with tattoos, and accounts from young people who struggle with anger from and toward the church. One young woman who "just happened by" shared that she'd grown up in a Christian family, attended a Christian college, and strayed into a bad marriage and a dark life. She cried as she showed us the tattoo on her foot, which said "Beloved daughter of the Son." It has sometimes been her only reminder of who she is when things seem so hopeless. It is a peculiar honor to be in the place of hearing such confessions and being able to give some hope and light.

Family Notes

Car Wrecks

Not so long ago, when there was still a lot of snow in the fields and ice on the roads in northern Minnesota, Micah hit a slippery patch while driving. Her Blazer went off the road and rolled into the ditch, landing upside down. Micah managed to crawl out a window and get to Anson who was hanging from his car seat in the back. We are so thankful that neither one of them was hurt. Their vehicle was totaled, but it became the reason for a special week-end visit to Rochester. Jerem and Micah bought a used van from a friend in Missouri and Micah's family drove it half-way, to our house.



The Kents brought eight of their children, enough for us to hear a musical that Micah's mom was directing for Mother's Day. (Back in Herman, MO, there were thirty kids and ten men in the line-up.) Still, it was strangely moving to see them perform together, and it made me cry. I didn't even mind hearing "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" despite the fact that if you hear just one scrap of that song, it runs on an endless loop until you knock yourself unconscious with a metal bar.

On Writing

Last year Marsena entered her unpublished novel in a national writing contest sponsored by Paraclete Press (who publishes such authors as Lauren Winner and Walter Wangerin). She claims the only reason she did it was on the outside chance that she'd get to meet the judge, Leif Enger, who is author of *Peace Like A River*. The winner was announced at the Faith & Writing Conference she and I regularly attend at Calvin College. Before the conference in April, she learned that out of 175 entries, she was one of the five finalists, and Paraclete offered her a contract to publish. We were yelling and high-fiving, until Paraclete found out Marsena had an agent. They seemed surprised, and it cooled things considerably. We're ignorant about the business end of publishing, but in the end her agent helped negotiate a little better contract. Marsena placed second in the contest.



She did get to meet Leif Enger, who is a nice, unassuming guy from rural Minnesota. He made some interesting comments during his keynote session. His goal is to write stories that delight. He wrote *Peace Like A River* for his son who had severe asthma, like Ruben, the main character in the novel. As he wrote, he read every scene to his wife and two sons, who were four and seven at the time. If they didn't like it, he rewrote. His four year old thought the book really needed a cowboy and suggested he should be named Sunny Sundown. Enger took his advice. C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, and Francis Schaeffer (!) have been the most influential writers and thinkers in his life. He writes very slowly; it took him seven years to write *Peace Like a River* and most of the people in his town think he is unemployed. (Most encouraging to me!)

Marsena and I had the best time listening to authors we enjoy and admire. Among them was Bret Lott (author of *Jewel* and *A Song I Knew By Heart*), one of Marsena's MFA instructors. Lauren Winner was unabashedly orthodox in her faith and articulate; she used words I never hear out loud, like *coterie* and *diaspora*. Poet/writer/funeral director Thomas Lynch was a great storyteller and used humor to disarm and then expose our shallow American ideas of efficiently ridding ourselves of the dead. Hearing Li Young Li read his poetry was beautiful.

Our heads got crammed with ideas and our hearts filled with the best of intentions—to write well, for writing is what God has called us to do, and it is how we reflect his glory in some small measure. (When I am feeling cynical this last bit can sound like such terrible drivel. My apologies, for that's not how I mean it.)

Moving to Tennessee

The LaRoses have surprised us again. Shaun has been accepted into Covenant College and they are moving to Chattanooga, TN, in mid-June. In April, many details suddenly fell into place to make this possible, like an art scholarship and a Pell Grant. Shaun will be finishing his undergraduate degree in the arts and is looking forward to being mentored by artist Ed Kellogg. The natural beauty of the area captured Sember's heart when they awakened in the morning after a late night arrival. She is looking forward to this move. So much to be thankful for. On the other hand, it is going to be difficult. She is expecting their fourth baby in early July and it is hard for her to even think of all that needs to be done to get them there and set up in a home after they arrive. She thinks of things like, who will we call to watch Manessah and the twins when I go into labor with this child? There are many questions. They are working on housing and may have a temporary place when they arrive, but it would be nice to move to where they could stay for awhile. They will need much strength and patience for this move. Your prayers would be appreciated. It is comforting to know there is a community of Christians there who may not know them yet, but I'm sure will welcome them. I'm no snowbird, but we may be heading south more often than we'd imagined. ¶

Final Notes

Unintended consequences flourish in the garden. Writer and gardener Michael Pollan writes that "getting a bed ready for roses is about like getting the house ready for an aristocratic old lady with persnickety tastes. I had a rose for whom I carefully prepared a bed, but who contrived to die over the winter and then resurrect itself from the dead as a fey demon with thorns cruel enough to kill a Hindu priest and enough vigor to grow a tower for Rapunzel."

I will never be an aristocrat, and some would say my tastes are wanton. Despite this, Denis "fixed my bed" by insisting we purchase our first one last month. Not the mattress and box spring, of course, but the headboard and footboard that frames it. After thirty some years of sleeping without one, perhaps it is a fitting upgrade, because I often use my bed for more than sleep; I think, read, and write in it (and you were perhaps thinking of something else?).

I like this new bed quite a lot. Maybe too much. It must sound strange to be tempted to this sort of idolatry. So, I hardly ever climb onto it without thanksgiving and thinking how many in this world live without shelter and rest, and that for me it could have been the same. I want to hold things (even loved ones who move to Tennessee) loosely, with a heart willing to let them go should God require it.

I meant to seriously exhort all of us to take time for meaningful, restorative rest this summer. We risk much by not taking proper Sabbaths. And God doesn't like it.

That's it from Toad Hall,
Warmly,

Margie



Toad Hall is the name of our home, christened by our children. It is from the book *The Wind in the Willows*, a favorite of ours. In it Mole, a shy yet daring character, and Ratty, who is much nicer and more sensible than his name would imply, have many adventures along the river. One of their friends is Toad of Toad Hall. Toad is something of an aristocrat and lives in a mansion. Otherwise, he has very little to commend him and really doesn't deserve friends since he is a callous liar, lacks common sense and, well, he lives for the pleasure of the moment—which brings him no end of trouble.

When we moved to Minnesota in 1981, our children had rarely seen such tall homes with their imposing three stories. They were used to one-story adobes which rambled along in the hot New Mexico sun. So, to our children, a midwestern Gothic four-square looked amazingly like a mansion. Possibly even as great a house as Toad Hall.

Marsena Konkle
Managing Editor

Receive *Notes from Toad Hall* (quarterly) and *Critique* (a newsletter written nine times per year by my husband, Denis) by requesting to be added to Ransom's mailing list. Donors to Ransom Fellowship, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-deductible ministry, are added to the mailing list automatically.

Ransom Fellowship
1150 West Center Street
Rochester, MN 55902

e-mail: margie@ransomfellowship.org

Order Books From:



Distinctive Books and Music

www.heartsandmindsbooks.com
read@heartsandmindsbooks.com

234 East Main Street
Dallastown, PA 17313
(717) 246-3333

All books mentioned in *Notes from Toad Hall* may be ordered directly from Hearts and Minds. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to Ransom Fellowship.