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### **Here's to Looking Back...and Looking Forward - by Nate Simons (photo by Fred Wooley)**

Some of us can still remember the 1970's phenomenon that was all the controversial rage..."back-masking." Remember folks finding creative ways to play their tapes (reel-to-reel and cassette) and vinyl records backwards in search of subliminal messages that recording artists intentionally or unintentionally located within their songs?

And you may have heard the joke about playing Country music backwards and getting your wife and your dog and your pickup truck back.

Looking back to the way things were can be an invigorating and refreshing experience especially if memories of those times, relationships, and places were good. As followers of Jesus and the Story that points to him, we look back to the original creation when everything was good and right and in right relationship. And we can long for those times again...the wonder of a perfect creation and perfect relationships between our Father, humankind, and the rest of creation.

And then we mourn because we lost it. And that longing and that mourning can prompt us to look forward to the rest of the Story. And the rest of the Story is told of Jesus breaking through into our world, not once, but twice to rescue us and rescue creation and to make things right again.

In Matthew 19 when Peter speaks up for the other disciples and inquires about giving up relationships and material things to follow Jesus, Jesus says to them:

*Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:28-29, NIV)*

In Revelation 21, the Apostle John records words revealed to him about the new heavens and new earth:

*Then I saw a new heaven and a*



*new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" (Revelation 21: 1-5a, NLT)*



In Acts 3 following Peter's healing of a man born crippled (an act in itself looking forward to the final restoration) and his subsequent speech to the Jewish crowd, Peter says:

*Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah. For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets. (Acts 3:19-21, NLT)*

Restoring prairies and fens and oak woodlands is still rather imperfect. In fact the word "restoration" as we use it is a misnomer. We can never really move today's landscape back to its original design. Too much has changed. Too much has been lost. But in a small way the very act of restoration as we perform it does begin to restore relationships. Plants and animals are reconnected. People are reconnected to creation. And when we stop to think about it, the very act of ecological restoration reminds us of the One in whose image we were made. And we are reconnected to him. For our good, good Father is all about restoration.

Restoration of native landscapes looks back to Eden...to the original creation and looks forward to the new heavens and new earth...to the new creation. It is a witness to what once was and what will be again someday. It is a testimony to Paradise made, Paradise lost and Paradise regained. It is a reflection of the Story of creation, fall, and recreation.

We have so much to which to look forward (even though it is really beyond our knowledge, comprehension, and imagination). In the Story to be continued, we get relationships back. We get the earth back...both remade and renewed...and so much better than we could ever imagine. And we get Jesus back!

So, here's a toast to all new things and to Jesus who will make it happen!

### **Thank You! - by Nate Simons**

I try to make it a practice to thank our good, good Father when I experience his dear children imitating him in faithfulness and generosity. Many folks have expressed those characteristics in their manners toward Blue Heron Ministries in the past year. So to you:

Thank you!

**Steve Witte** and **Jim Thomson** donated time and materials to help build a cold room for seed storage at Pine Knob Park in February and April.

In March and April **Peg Zies, Paula** and **Steve Witte, Denille, Olivia,** and **Alexis Conklin, Beth, Marc,** and **Jeremy Williams, Elten** and **Carolyn Powers,** and **Susan Fisher** sowed prairie seed into seedling flats to grow prairie grass and wildflower plugs for the entry road islands at Trine State Recreation Area.

**Don Leupke, Steve** and **Paula Witte, Jim** and **Bette Thomson, Marc** and **Jeremy Williams, Dawn** and **Bill Cance, Fred Wooley, Rita Smith, Chuck Lampe, Marjorie Hershman** and **Alice Ummel** planted those prairie plugs at Trine SRA in June and July.



**Peg Zeis, Jim** and **Bette Thomson,** and **Steve** and **Paula Witte** walked pre-selected paths at Pine Knob Park and Duff Lake Fen recording butterfly species and numbers as potential indicators of landscape quality.

Seed collection started in July. **Bette** and **Jim Thomson, Peg Zeis,** and **Mary Durand** collected wild blue lupine seed and scattered it at our own Badger Barrens.

**Jess Crofoot** donated pressure treated posts for boundary markers on the Mirror Lake portion of Badger Barrens and also mowed the Badger Barrens trail throughout the spring and summer.

Dog days of August seed collectors included **Lynn Simons, Gary Baus, John Wilson** and **Alex Brown.**

**Lynn Simons** (gotta' honor our eldest and most experienced seed gatherer...my Mom), **Denille, Olivia** and **Alexis Conklin, Peg Zeis, Jim** and **Bette Thomson, Beth, Marc** and **Jeremy Williams, Don Luepke, Steve** and **Paula Witte, Kathy Brittenham, Susan Fisher, Ben** and **Laura Aberle, Mark** and **Janet Aberle, Kate Sanders,** and **Fred Wooley** collected seed in September, October, and even November. These 285 volunteer hours counted as "in-kind match" for the pledge Blue Heron Ministries made to help secure grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to restore LaGrange County Park's Duff Lake Fen.

**Kate Sanders, Deanna Vazquez, Peg Zeis, Jim** and **Bette Thomson, Lynn Simons, Beth, Marc** and **Jeremy Williams, Fred Wooley, Zach Holsinger,** and **Phil Bieberich** sowed prairie seed at our annual December Prairie Planting. More hours were recorded for the Restoration of Duff Lake Fen project.

**Susan Fisher, Don Luepke, Jim** and **Bette Thomson,** and **Nate** and **Aimee Simons** directed Thrivent Financial's Choice Dollars





to Blue Heron Ministries.

**Byron and Abby Getz, Jim and Lynn Simons, Dee and Ken Wolf, Roger and Mary Hawks, Ed and Nancy Wilson, Fred Duschl, Joanne McKeag, Lee Casebere, Patty Fulton, Bob and Janet Barge, Maynard and Nancy Stafford, Mike Clock, and Peg Zeis** gave financially to support Blue Heron Ministries' efforts to take care of our Father's wonderful creation in our corner of the world.

### **A Pictorial Year in Review - photos by Beth Williams**



Maple Sap Collection at LaTierra Sanctuary



Prescribed Fire at Cedar Swamp Wetland Conservation Area



Seed Sowing in the Greenhouse at Baker's Acres





Exploration and Explanation at Duff Lake



Prescribed Fire at Powers' Prairie



October Seed Collection at Patty's Prairie

## Mission Statement

The mission of Blue Heron Ministries, Inc. is to build communities where creation is kept and to keep creation so that community may be restored.

Blue Heron Ministries, Inc. is a nonprofit organization and a ministry of the Presbyterian Chapel of the Lakes, a 501(c)(3) organization.

Because the Presbyterian Chapel of the Lakes is located in the heart of lake country, environmental stewardship, education, and advocacy is a significant part of our Christian witness. Acting upon our faith that relationships may be restored and experience substantial healing in an imperfect world, we offer the following four initiatives as tools of reconciliation:

Land Trust • Conservation Design • Education • Natural Lands Restoration

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