

Life on the Road

These days, life on the road has us thinking about home - about houses. We are making plans to build a house on the land we have in Michigan. We have actually been "homeless" during the past eight years we have toured full time. There is no place of our own - rented or purchased - we can go back to. Actually, our travel trailer is the closest thing we

have had to a "home". It now sits on the farm in Michigan and is used as a bedroom when we are back there. Mainly, we live with Becky's folks for the few weeks we are not touring. I joke about staying with long suffering friends and family. They have been great! But Becky is ready for a space of her own. We'll put a few pictures up on the web this summer as things progress on the construction of our new dome home.

A trip to Germany...

Fitz Family went to Germany this past Christmas. It was an exciting trip. We performed in Strasbourg, France for a kindergarten class; in Heidelberg, Germany for an American military base; and in Guben, Germany for Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. We hope we can go again! Check out the web site for more pictures and some stories.



(ABOVE) Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Guben, Germany.

(BELOW) The church's brass band played for us while we all sang Christmas carols at a member's home.



Homeless - but not really...

We have been welcomed by so many people over the years. And while we stay in fewer homes these days than before, the people are always very welcoming and warm to us. A great blessing!

Homeless... that can be true of all of us. 1 Peter 2:11 calls us aliens and strangers (you should really read verse 9 and 10 as well). The hymn "I Am But A Stranger Here," says: "heaven is my home". Not a bad way to live. Blessed while we are here with all the good things God gives us - family, friends, the good things of the earth - and anxious to go to our real home in heaven with Jesus! As we have been welcomed in by others, we hope we are being faithful in welcoming others with the good news of Jesus so they can be with us in the only home that will last.

The Family Builder Format (a new performance format)

Building strength in families - Building on the strengths already in families - that is the idea behind our a new performance format. If a host church chooses, we can provide this new option that uses some of the routines in our performance to help families practice talking about things they want and need to talk about at home.

Feedback about our program indicates that people talk about our performance long after we are gone. It is a pretty strange thing to see juggling and unicycles in church! But the talk is also about other things related to family: about how siblings can work together, about spending time together as a family, and about cooperation and communication.

When a church chooses the Family Builder Format there will be small but important changes in what happens on stage. There will still be a theme, the Gospel message, and encouragement to christian living. There will still be lots of juggling and unicycles and balancing. What will be different is that we will take three or four of our juggling routines and use them as a way of having families talk to/with each other right in our performances. The routines make people laugh but they also make people think about their own family.

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An Interview with Ben Freudenburg

Ben Freudenburg ministers to families at Christ Church Lutheran in Phoenix, AZ. He is the author of the book, "The Family Friendly Church."

How long have you known Fitz Family?

We have known the Schoepp Family for quite awhile. Jennifer's first encounter with Mark was on a servant event in Washington at an Indian Village. I became better acquainted with Mark at a training event. I thought it was quite strange that this DCE was always trying to juggle. In fact at that time he dropped more than juggled. But according to his kids some things just don't change.

What is so special about Fitz Family?

They are a healthy family. Do you know how they keep healthy? Ask Mother Fitz. She makes sure they eat healthy foods and get their vitamins. Father works very hard getting the family to focus on what is important. That seems to be healthy. And the kids—they usually determine what will get focused on. We love to have them in our home and listen in on their conversations. Home schooling issues, how they will approach their summer schedule or the latest book that must be read, and more recently pouring over plans for a real home someday. So, in one sense what is so special about the Fitz Family is -- they are just like any family but backwards. They like to stay home because they are on the road so much. Eating "in" is a treat, and sleeping in the same bed seven nights in a row seems to be valued and treasured.

What do you think makes their performance so effective for churches?

They are a real family in ministry who connects with all ages. They are truly intergenerational. They are very good at juggling! All ages are glued to each and every action. But most of all they can use their juggling to help the generations connect to each other and Christ. I also see great opportunities for them to use their juggling to approach parenting and family issues.

Why did you book Fitz Family at your church?

"Because we get to see the kids!" And because they provide a wonderful outreach to all ages. I know that what they have to offer is quality. It is a Gospel centered ministry that is shaped through Lutheran theology. That's unique today! I know their heart and want others to experience their love for Christ. And the kids are great role models for others. Today families struggle with so many issues so I want them to rub elbows with a family who makes a family ministry work.

How can Fitz Family be used for family events?

First they can bring families together. That's a trick in itself. Second they can help families connect with each other through their juggling. Third they can teach parents and kids how to be family. Communication issues, keeping the rules, juggling activities, obedience, how to work together, kids honoring parents and parents honoring kids. They help generations connect, modeling intergenerational ministries that work.

Meet Our Staff

Over the years, as Fitz Family Ministries has grown, we have added additional part-time staff to help with the "behind the scenes" work. Margie Schoepp has been our office manager since the spring of 1999 and handles all the bookkeeping, correspondence, mailings, and bookings, from our office in Seward, NE. Kareen Hickman joined our staff in 2001 as our web master starting with a re-design and now regular maintenance. Our web site is one of the easiest and fastest ways to find out about us and to gather information in a readable format. This past month we have also added a scheduling manager, Sandy Larsen, from East Wenatchee, WA. She will coordinate our bookings which will free up Father Fitz's time for more creative ventures. Contact us at schedule@fitzfamily.org to arrange a booking. Many of our bookings are happening one year in advance, so plan ahead if you want us to come for a particular time of the year.

Family Builder continued...

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We will have specific options available for churches to choose from so they can tailor the discussions to what might be of most interest to their church families. The format will require some extra set up by the host church. For example, families will need to sit together. It might be helpful to have a meal ahead of time and do some ice-breaker activities (we can provide that as well), and the publicity will need to indicate that something extra will be added to the performance. However, we don't want to advertise it as a "workshop" because we think that may scare some people away. But in the context of an enjoyable evening, families will have a chance to start some conversations about important things we think will continue at home.

If you are interested in this new performance option ask about it when you call to make a booking. We also hope to have a video-based curriculum ready by Christmas for use by families and churches that follows a very similar format.

Watch for it!



Fitz Family at the Circus?

Yes, that is, the Vacation Bible School Circus. If you haven't seen the video yet, Concordia Publishing House features the smiling faces and juggling hands of Fitz Family on their promotional video for their new Vacation Bible School Curriculum called **Godzwerkus Circus School**. It's great!

It gives you lots of creative possibilities for a unique VBS experience. And it's not too late to give us a call and invite us to a special VBS event being planned at your church. For bookings, contact schedule@fitzfamily.org and for more information on Godzwerkus Circus School contact vbs.cph.org.

Where in the World is Fitz Family?



Fitz Family Ministries relies on your financial gifts. A good portion of our budget comes from our many supporters across the country and we are grateful for that. We do not receive synodical or district funding. We ask that you prayerfully consider financially supporting this powerful ministry. All contributions are tax deductible.

The contest continues... Enter our contest to win a Fitz Family T-shirt by giving us the correct city and state.

To enter, go to our website www.fitzfamily.org or send us a postcard with the correct location (city and state) along with your name, address and phone number (one entry per person). We will select one winner from the correct entries. Deadline is August 31, 2002.

A Fitz Family Minute

Extra minutes are not easy to come by in family time these days. However, it is the extra minutes we take with our family that make a difference. Take a few extra minutes this month with your family (sometimes it feels like that is all you can find in a month) and try out these activities. You may be surprised by what surfaces.

1. Choose a person for an affirmation station. Everyone writes things they appreciate about that person on a piece of paper or card. Go around the circle and share the affirmations one at a time, then give the cards to that person to keep. Give each person in the family a turn.

2. Post a prayer list of family concerns on the refrigerator for constant reminding.

3. Make a jar labeled "God's Gifts to Me". On pieces of paper have each person write some of their gifts they'd be willing to share. Pick one and share it!

What's New @ www.fitzfamily.org

Several items have recently been added to the Fitz Family web site. The first item recently added seems to be popular with visitors to the site. The Fitz Family Photo Album is a place where we can put past photos of events and performances. We are currently in the process of expanding this and adding some older shots from 1999 and 2000. If you have photos of the Fitz Family that you would like to share with us, please e-mail kareen@cox.net.

The second new item to the site is the testimonials page. This is a culmination of feedback that we receive from churches and schools about the impact of our performances. Go online and check out some of the things that are being said about Fitz Family.

We are also adding capabilities for secure online purchases as we have had many mail order requests after a show. If you missed buying something at one of our shows you will now be able to buy it at our web site.

Watch for our new CD available this summer. It will contain various selections from our percussion juggling routines. Some collaboration with Jonathan Rundman, and George Baum of Lost And Found will also be included. See story and the Early Bird order form inside.

Fitz Family has a CD!

We now have a Juggling CD with songs and patterns we do on our own and in collaboration with George Baum of Lost And Found, Jonathan Rundman, and Becky Hemmingway.

The CD includes music tracks and quicktime movie tracks. Regular price is \$10 at our performances, \$12 shipped. The release date will be June 30, 2002.

Percussion juggling



Early Bird Order Form for Fitz Family CD

Early Bird Special!!

Preorder before June 30, 2002 and the total cost is \$9 including shipping.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Please make checks payable to Fitz Family or order at our secure web site.

Card: please circle one:

VISA Mastercard Discover American Express

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Name (as it appears on card): _____

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"To encourage people to discover, celebrate and use their unique gifts in the Lord's service."

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Schedule

- May 2002
- 17 Pughtown Baptist Church
Spring City, PA
 - 18 Grace Lutheran Church,
Pottstown, PA
 - 19 Five Forks Brethren in Christ Church
Waynesboro, PA
 - 20 Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Fords, NJ
- June 2002**
- 2 Harrison Church of God
Harrison, MI
 - Christ the King Lutheran, Gladwin, MI
 - 14 St. Paul Lutheran Church
Napoleon, OH
 - 20 Calvary Lutheran, Indianapolis, IN
VBS
 - 21 Zion Lutheran Church Painesville, OH
 - 22 Trinity Lutheran Church
Willoughby, OH
 - 27 Trinity Lutheran Church Toledo, OH
 - 28 Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Saginaw, MI
- July 2002**
- 7 Saginaw Valley Ch of the Nazarene
Saginaw, MI
 - 10 Salvation Army Camp Oxford, MI
 - 11 Salvation Army Camp Field Day
Oxford, MI
 - 13 Salvation Army Camp Oxford, MI
 - 17 Why at the Well? Mechanicsburg, PA
 - 15-20 Jugglers Convention Redding, PA

- 26 Trinity Lutheran Church Wabash, IN
 - 28 Zion Lutheran, Ridgeville Corners, OH
 - 30 Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Saginaw, MI
- August 2002**
- 1 Camp Arcadia Arcadia, MI
 - 6 Vicksburg United Methodist Church
Vicksburg, MI
 - 7 Trinity Lutheran Church
St. Joseph, MI
 - 8 Camp Arcadia Arcadia, MI
 - 15 Camp Arcadia Arcadia, MI
 - 21 Marcus Center for the Performing
Arts Milwaukee, WI
 - 22 Camp Arcadia Arcadia, MI
 - 25 Tallmadge Lutheran Tallmadge, OH
 - 29 Camp Arcadia Arcadia, MI
 - 31 Camp Arcadia Arcadia, MI
- September 2002**
- 8 Covenant Lutheran Church
Milwaukee WI
 - 15 St. Paul Lutheran Church
Hamburg, MI
 - 22 Redeemer Lutheran Church
Marquette, MI
 - 29 St. Mark Lutheran Church
Eureka, MO
- October 2002**
- 11-13 Board of Directors Meeting
Seward NE
 - 13 Eastridge Presbyterian Lincoln, NE

- 14-19 Colorado
 - 20-26 Kansas
 - 27-31 Oklahoma and St. Louis area
tentative schedule includes NE, CO,
KS, MO, OK
- November 2002**
- tentative schedule includes OH, TN, KY
- December 2002**
- 2-4 Churchnoise Meeting Nashville, TN
 - 4th Annual Lost and Found
Christmas Tour
- January 2003**
- tentative schedule includes TX, AZ,
San Diego, CA
- February 2003**
- 6-8 ELCA Youth Ministry Network Mtg
Atlanta, GA
 - 26-28 Youth Specialties Senior Pastor's
Conference, San Diego, CA
- March 2003**
- 3-7 Lutheran Schools Week
 - 8-10 Wheat Ridge Area Reps Meeting
Chicago, IL
 - 14-16 Youth Encounter Congress
Cincinnati, OH
 - 21-23 Youth Encounter Congress
Chicago, IL
 - 28-30 Youth Encounter Congress
Kansas City, KS
 - 30 - Apr. 1 National DCE Conference
Kansas City, KS

- April 2003**
- 4-5 Awakening 2003 Conference
Williamsburg, VA
 - United Methodist Church Gathering
- July 2003**
- 16-20 ELCA National Youth Gathering
Atlanta, GA
 - 23-27 ELCA National Youth Gathering
Atlanta, GA
 - 24-26 UMC National Youth Gathering
Nashville, TN
- August 2003**
- 24 Bethel Lutheran Church Dallas, TX

BOOKING INFO

We would really like to be at every church that contacts us but sadly we've had to turn bookings down simply because we are not in that area of the country. We try to make sweeps of the United States and to avoid disappointment we encourage you to call and book us early. We will fly and travel longer distances for larger events so you might consider organizing a larger event with other area churches. Contact us for more information regarding bookings at schedule@fitzfamily.org