



A CROSS

ON A SIGN

NEWS FROM A MI DISTRICT MISSION CONGREGATION

BY MARK BOWDITCH

Ken and Judy drove past the church signs every Sunday morning on the way to their favorite breakfast spot for many months. Family of Christ Lutheran Church met in a high school cafeteria less than a mile from their home and set out temporary, A-frame signs every weekend, pointing the way to church. On Easter morning of 2007, Ken and Judy were inspired to follow the signs with the big LCMS cross-in-motion on them.

While following up with these new visitors, I learned about the battles Ken had faced and was facing. Ken was a decorated Army paratrooper who experienced gruesome combat in Vietnam and was now in the middle of a new battle with throat cancer. Ken believed in God but really hadn't ever received the Good News of a forgiving Savior. Like many, he thought that heaven was just for good people and as he looked at all of his earlier failures in life, he figured he would never get in. Especially burdened by his memories of the war, Ken opened up saying: "I don't think I can be forgiven because I've just committed too many sins." Soon, however, he and Judy were in a New Beginnings class and on their way to becoming members. Jesus was breaking through to Ken's heart and doing a new thing in his life.

The Holy Spirit gave the gift of faith to Ken and carried him through so many bleak days. Over the past year and a half, Ken loved to read

his Bible every day, watch Bible movies, and read Luther's Catechism and devotional books. Two days before he left this earth, on October 10, during a conversation with Pastor Mark about heaven, Ken listened again to the precious promises of Jesus. There in John 11, while at a funeral, Jesus proclaimed, "he who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Hearing this powerful word, Ken smiled and even though he couldn't speak, he gave an amazing testimony: Ken slowly pointed to Pastor then to himself and then to Jesus to indicate they would indeed be together forever. Ken discovered real peace and joy in Jesus and in His life-giving words . . . and now he is with His Savior face to face! And while Judy mourns

Continued on page 18



Judy and Ken

CROSS ON A SIGN
Continued from page 14

his loss, she has a deep inner peace as she knows and trusts in the same Savior. Now she has a new Family to help bear her burdens and see her through.

Before cancer took him, Ken's goal was to see the church grow and he knew the part he wanted to play: he wanted to be the one to put out the signs every week. He never got to do that job, but he has been an inspiration to family, friends, and the members of Family of Christ about the goodness and forgiveness of God!

Rev. Mark Bowditch is the pastor of Family of Christ Lutheran Church which is bringing the Gospel to people on the northwest side of Grand Rapids in Alpine Township and Comstock Park.