

President's Report to the Ruggles B.O.D. Thursday 5/22/25 (3rd Meeting of 2025)
A Personal Word and John 21:11

First, I wish to give an *update* on my health and a heartfelt note of *thanks*! To recap: Just about two months ago I was preparing for our 2nd B.O.D. meeting (3/27/25) at Camp. All of a sudden I suffered my *third*, heart-related black out in the kitchen area of the Retreat Center. The first *two* fainting spells were exercise-induced in October and November of 2024...but this time I was simply walking and getting a drink of water. The first two episodes led to numerous tests, evaluations, etc., and culminated in the implantation of a defibrillator/pacemaker on March 25, 2025 at Baptist Health in Lexington. I have been blessed with good health all my life so all of this is uncharted waters. I had prayed and hoped that I was *now* on the road to recovery.....but it seemed like a major setback having the third blackout just two days after the defibrillator procedure. I *almost* dismissed the blackout---thinking "*My heart is just adjusting to the new defibrillator—I'm feeling fine*". Logic and God's grace got the best of me as I realized how foolish that would have been. I called my wife to come and get me and back to the hospital I went. This time the word in the ER indicated that this was the worst of my black-outs as the term "*lethal arrhythmia*" was spoken. It was a sobering experience.

I knew that the Board at Ruggles could carry on without me but I knew even more that they and others were *praying* for me. In Acts 12 there is a story where Peter was in big trouble—even facing death at the hands of Herod. "*Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the Church.*" (Acts 12:5) God delivered Peter that evening and I believe God answered prayer for me as well. I stayed overnight in the hospital. After a restless night of tests and evaluations a lady doctor came to my bedside. Her opening words carried a Bible metaphor. She said something like: "*Eric, I know you have been through a lot ---but now there is a RAINBOW that we can see.*" My heart and ears perked at the word "RAINBOW". I thought, "*Well, at least I know what that means—I've preached on it ...but right now I don't see one.*" Her use of the Bible picture became medicine to my ears but in my "heart storm" what could she possibly mean?

She said "*The RAINBOW is this---because of the defibrillator we now know WHY you have been blacking out---AND we have a specific medicine for your heart issue.*" Those simple words brought light out of my darkness and peace to my soul. I'm grateful and pleased to say I have been on the medicine for about two months and it seems to be working. I still have health concerns but I am able to do most "normal" things. On the whole, however, I have to be in slow gear for a while. Thanks again to the Ruggles family, the Wallingford Global Methodist family and many others for the prayers and acts of kindness.

The second message I wish to share is one of "*Proclamation*" and it is from John 21:11. I recently preached on this passage as a post Easter story. The disciples fished all night and caught nothing. In the morning Jesus lifted His voice from the shore line: "*Cast your nets on the right side of the boat!*" They did and now their nets were full of large fish and their nets were not breaking. The oddity in the verse is the number of fish is recorded—**153!** Scholars have debated over the reason for the number. One main thought is that there were 153 known nations at that time and the Lord is wanting us to go out and "catch" them with the Gospel. Others have suggested that it has to do with the adding up of numbers (1+2+3...+17=153) and that the number 17 is code language for God's Name. You know what I think? I think it is a divine coincidence that Ruggles Camp is having its **153rd** Camp Meeting July 16-27! God *has always called* the Church to catch fish. His Word is the Key. Friends, through every storm, through all of life's highs and lows---catch fish for the Kingdom! *Brother Eric*