

BRIDGING THE GAP

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS CHURCH OF GOD
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Volume X No. 5

December 2004

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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

The late football strategist, Vince Lombardi, was a fanatic about fundamentals. Those who played under his leadership often spoke of his intensity, his drive, his endless enthusiasm for the game. Time and again he would come back to the basic techniques of blocking and tackling. On one occasion his team the Green Bay Packers lost to an inferior squad. Coach Lombardi called a special practice the very next morning. The men sat silently, looking more like whipped puppies than a team of champions. They had no idea what to expect. The coach began to speak to his team: "Ok, we go back to the basics this morning, gentlemen, this is football!"

Lombardi operated on a simple philosophy. He believed that excellence could be best achieved by perfecting the basics of the sport. Razzle-dazzle, crowd pleasing, risk-taking plays would fill a stadium for a while but in the final analysis the consistent winners would be the teams that played smart, heads-up football.

His strategy? Know your position. Learn how to do it right. Then do it with all your might

So what works in the game of football also works in the church as well. Listen to our coach. He tells us we have four major priorities if we are going to call ourselves a church: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42). To these four we are to continually devote ourselves.

As we begin to think about the New Year 2005 we have a great challenge as a church. We need to reach more people, we need more people involved in ministry, and we must grow as a church with God's help. We need to get back to the basics we need the faith phenomenon, even a little of it, mustard seed size will move a mountain, heal the sick, kill a giant or save a soul.

Do you know how elephants remain tied to a stake? The trainer takes the elephant and chains him to a tree. He simply hurts himself. He will continue to pull and tug for as long as three weeks against the chain. But finally he'll become still and give up. The elephant will never try again as long as he lives to pull against a chain. You can tie the other end of the elephant's chain to the smallest tent stake which he could pull out with little effort but will never try.

That is what Satan wants us to think, nothing is happening why even try. But the faith phenomenon enables us to look at our world differently than others do and to believe that all things are possible. We know the very best is going to happen because we are going to battle with the power of God. Christians are the most power filled people on earth. But sadly too many of us are operating on pennies when God intended that we utilize millions from his bank of power.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if our churches could draw crowds like professional sports? But we

already draw over 4.4 billion in church attendance each year. We already outdo them, 15-1 in attendance. Sports fans only spend about 2 billion dollars a year on sports. We give a combination of 14 billion dollars to all Christian causes a year. So we must never give up reaching for what God intended us to be. There are occasions when we all want to stop too soon, times when we want to give up, but the ones who learn to hang in there will have the victory. As we become more alive in 2005 we need you to help in OPERATION: LOST SHEEP! YOU WILL LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS OUTREACH NEXT MONTH.

*Enjoy the Journey,
Pastor Clayton*

SERMON OUTLINES FOR DECEMBER, 2004

**DEC. 5 THEME: “HEAR, LIVE, AND
TELL THE STORY!”**

AM SERVICE: HAVE YOU REALLY BEEN TO
BETHLEHEM?

TEXT: LUKE 2:8-18—PASTOR CLAYTON

CHILDREN'S MOMENTS: HANDBELLS!

PM SERVICE: HOLIDAY CHURCH DINNER
STARTING AT 5 PM

**DEC. 12 THEME: “HEAR, LIVE, AND
TELL THE STORY!”**

AM SERVICE: MESSAGE BY PASTOR BRIAN

CHILDREN'S MOMENTS: CHILDREN'S CHOIR

PM SERVICE: MESSAGE BY PASOR BRIAN

**DEC. 19 THEME: “HEAR, LIVE AND
TELL THE STORY!”**

AM SERVICE: THE GIFT: ONE SIZE FITS ALL!
TEXT: LUKE 2:1-20 PASTOR CLAYTON

CHILDREN'S MOMENTS: HANDBELLS!

PM SERVICE: CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS
PROGRAM!

**DEC. 24 CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
FAMILY COMMUNION 4-7 PM**

**DEC. 26 THEME: “HEAR, LIVE AND
TELL THE STORY!”**

AM SERVICE: “WISE MEN STILL SEEK HIM”
TEXT: MATT. 2:1-12, 16 PASTOR CLAYTON

CHILDREN'S MOMENTS: CHILDREN'S CHOIR

NO PM SERVICE SO OUR FAMILIES
CAN SPEND TIME TOGETHER

**DEC. 31 NEW YEARS EVE SERVICE
8-12 PM**

SENIOR ADULT BIBLE CLASS – NEWS AND VIEWS

Larry and Gwen Campbell, went with their church fellowship group to the Spaghetti Factory, in St. Louis for a great meal and a tour of the Arch and its grounds. Oh, those extra POUNDS, especially at this time of the season, Christmas and all. A good time was had by all.

Agnes Spinney hosted her church fellowship group for a time of good fellowship and viewing the movie, “China Cry”. A very thought provoking movie for sure.

DeHart's reported the loss of their giant 90 foot oak tree that has provided shade for their whole house for over 30 years. Because of certain restrictions, the replacement tree can only be 15 feet tall, but it will be a Red Maple, a fast growing tree. It will have to grow fast to provide any kind of shade for them, if you know what we mean????

Stella Sims continues to visit her mother-in-law in Cape Girardeau, MO. This lady needs much prayer. Please remember her in your private devotions and Stella as well, for driving mercies.

The DeHart's enjoyed a nice evening meal at Big Mama's restaurant in Belleville, with Mary Gillette. This fine lady misses the folks at our church and was so wanting to attend our church services, but due to time constraints, she was not able to do so. Please send her a Christmas card, she will be overjoyed. Her address is:

Mary Gillette
(Please Check At The Church)

Larry and Gwen Campbell enjoyed a Thanksgiving Dinner with Larry's son, Gary.

We ask that you continue in earnest, to pray for the complete recovery for Kenny and Jane Knowles. These fine folks have gone through some tough times physically.

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We have just completed a series of three units of studies in our Sunday School Adult Curriculum, on Created For a Purpose, God's Creativity Continues and A New Creation. We celebrated God's creation of a people separated set apart for a purpose. God's ongoing acts of re-creation within the community of faith and the new creation God offers in Jesus Christ. What a great uplifting and learning experience for us all.

Moving on to the Winter Quarter, we're going to look at God Calls a People, The Call of Jesus and His Followers and Whosoever Will-Come.

Have you ever looked at God's call on Abraham to leave his home and trust God to venture into an unknown future. Or God calling Mary and Joseph to face uncertain circumstances and play a significant role in the birth and upbringing of our Savior.

Our hope is that we will better understand the ways in which God may be calling you in your daily walk.

Come take this walk with us, you will not be disappointed.

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Remember; The Older You Get, The More Important It Is To NOT Act Your Age??.

Ivan Dehart, Teacher

D.U.C.K SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

The past four Sundays our lessons have been about Christ's coming to earth and how his ministry brought about radical changes in the way people thought and in the way they interacted with others. Lesson titles were:

A New Way of Thinking
A New Way of Believing
A New Way of Being
A New Way of Caring

Our session on "A New Way of Being" encouraged us to think about our future possibilities. Students were encouraged to write a "Press Release" describing a major accomplishment they hoped to make in the future. They are as follows:

KENNY FITZMAURICE MAKES FIRST FUSION GENERATOR IN THE U.S.

After Great Britain blew up, the U.S., realized that the secret is not to get a magnet near it, so the U.S. has been able to finish the fusion generator. It will supply enough energy to keep the U.S. running for 10 years and it has a cleaning dome to prevent pollution.

JESUS CAME BACK TO LIFE by Kierra Wicks

I saw him with my own two eyes. I am the first American to see him. It was like nothing I ever saw before. The people will be all over me. I'll be popular - they'll want to know every single detail.

PAIGE BALL FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT

If I was the first woman president all the other women would be more confident in themselves. The women would be in charge and my husband would be the "first man." I would be the owner of the USA. I would live in the White House. My children would be proud. I would kiss babies and shake people's hands. The White House would be powered by a fusion generator discovered and made by Kenny Fitzmaurice.

ANDREW POLLARD - FIRST MAN TO WALK ON PLUTO. (no story - just headlines)

VICTORIA POPE DISCOVERS A PILL FOR BREAST CANCER

It will affect the people around me because more people are being diagnosed with cancer. They have not found a cure yet, so it would be nice to have one. Also people who have breast cancer can die and it is a painful experience. Some people's bills run up when they have treatments. So if they have a pill it won't be as bad.

Ruth Pope, Teacher

MEN4HIM

A sign up sheet is in the entryway for anyone who would like to purchase a gift for a nursing home resident. Dec. 18, Men4Him will meet for coffee and then distribute the Christmas gifts to the Nursing Homes. We would welcome anyone who would like to share this experience with us. Some of these people hunger for visitors. You will be blessed.

Looking ahead:

Jan. 22, a Grand Prix race for everyone
Feb. 13, the Valentines Banquet
March 12, Men's Appreciation Breakfast
April 16, Meet for Coffee and planning
May 21, Men4Him auction

We encourage all men to come out and join us for a great time of fellowship and worthwhile projects.

"Reaching Men, Strengthening Families"

Bill White

FOOD PANTRY NEWS

Once again our shelves are full and running over with supplies for the needy. Thanks to all of you, especially the Youth of the church of God for their food drive. The food Pantry board wants to thank you all for your support. I can really say our church is on top for their help. We also want to thank Men4Him of the Church of God for their donation toward the insurance on the Pantry.

The Boy Scout drive totaled around 12,000 articles.

(This will be the last report of the year. I am going to Florida, God willing.)

Gwen Campbell, Vice President

**Excerpts from the Fairview Heights Area
Food Pantry
10334 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Heights, IL 62208
Phone: 398-0292
2003 Report**

The Fairview Heights Area Food Pantry, in existence since May 1988, has once again proven to be a community effort. Members of our board are from many of the Twenty-six participating Fairview Heights churches and rotate from year-to-year. Volunteers, food items

and money come to us from these churches and from various organizations, businesses and individuals throughout the community.

2003 STATISTICS

Volunteers-59 total of 1266 hours

Donations-\$7,637.72

Expenses-\$9,319.42

Served – 648 families comprising 2073 people.

Since the Clergy Association originally organized us, our board is derived from members you send. We meet at the Pantry, 10034 Lincoln Trail at 7:00 p.m. the third Tuesday of January, March, August, October and November. Continue to pray both for our volunteers and these we strive to serve.

Rod Hannes, Manager

PRAISE GATHERING REPORT

We had such a great time we felt like we had to share! We left Thursday morning for the four hour trip to Indianapolis. We arrived at our downtown motel about 6 blocks away, registered and then went to the Convention Center to register and obtain our itinerary for the weekend. Of course many of the artists are setting up booths and you are free to interact with whoever is available.

At 6:30 pm the first concert starts in the main hall. There is seating for about 15,000 people. Each concert had about 20 groups or individual artists but such a variety! Approximately 40 songs (Marshall kept a running list of songs and singers, speakers, etc. for each concert) were sung at each concert. A few of the artists Thursday were Voices of Lee, Buddy Greene, Kindred Soul, Lordsong and Mark Lowry, El Trio De Hoy, Gaither Vocal Band, Point of Grace, Anthony Burger, Kathy Trucoli, Darren Strelow, Jessie Dixon, Denver and the Mile High Orchestra, Christ Temple Choir, Russ Taft, Janet Paschal and Andy Andrews.

I believe Bill Gaither loves to see all forms of music, dance, humor, orchestra and singing praise our Almighty God and he gets it done. If ever there is an experience and place like Heaven here on earth, this must be it! Four solid hours later we were ready to depart for our rooms. Most of the attendees stay at one of 4 or 5 hotels that are connected to the Convention Center by way of skywalks so you don't have to enjoy the 'elements' if you desire not to. All day

parking is available for a modest \$6/day and one block away.

Friday and Saturday there are two break-out sessions available in the am and two sessions in the pm, a morning convocation at 11am each day and then a concert in the evening. The two convocations were given by Dr. Henry Blackaby and Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie. You could pick from approximately 42 different topics and speakers for the break out sessions. We attended sessions by Ken Davis - What Does God Want? Gordon MacDonald - What if Life's Second Half Could Be Wildly Better Than the First Half?, Ben Gire - Spiritual Warfare, The Bible and The Lord of The Rings, Bob Stromberg - There's Got To Be More Than This - How to Experience Abundant Life, Lori Salierno - Shining the Light of Christ in a Secular Society/Environment/World. There was something to be learned at each one of these events.

Four different university choirs offered praise: Anderson, Indiana Wesleyan, Olivet Nazarene and Taylor. This was in addition to the Christ Temple Choir from West Virginia, a nationally known choir directed by Geron Davis.

Some of the other artists were Jeff Allen (comedian), Mike Allen, Ballet Magnificat!, Randy Burns (mechanical man), Michael Card, Jeff & Sheri Easter, Cory Edwards (Comedian), Jimmy Fedd, Signature Sound Quartet, Stephen Hill, Isaacs, Taylor Mason (Comedian), Larry Wayne Morbitt (Broadway Singer), Out of Eden, David Phelps, Phillips, Craig & Dean, Point of Grace, Wesley Pritchard, Lynda Randle, Reggie & Ladye Love Smith, Ben Speer, Kevin Williams (Guitarist), Delores 'Mom' Winans and Woody Wright. Each one of these artists is very talented and wanting to serve the Lord.

There is a very informal atmosphere in the large room of artists booths. People are free to talk to any of the available speakers and artists. Of course there are books, CD's, DVD's, decorations, etc. available to purchase. We had books signed by Gloria Gaither and Dr. Ogilvie and they were most gracious in talking with us.

We left on Sunday morning with our hearts full of praise, refreshed and renewed. Praise Gathering for Believers is held annually in late fall - late October or early November. Oh, by the way, we have already made arrangements for next year's tickets!

Marshall and Phyllis Field

To THINK ABOUT

Will The Christ Child Come?

Author Unknown, Source Unknown

One Christmas we had an interesting experience that I would like to share. Halfway through December we were doing the regular evening things when there was a knock at the door. We opened it to find a small package with a beautiful ceramic lamb inside. We looked at the calendar and realized that the 12 days of Christmas were beginning! We waited excitedly for the next night's surprise and only then, with the gift of a matching shepherd, did we realize that the lamb was part of a nativity set.

Each night we grew more excited to see what piece we would receive. Each was exquisitely beautiful. The kids kept trying to catch the givers as we slowly built the scene at the manger and began to focus on Christ's birth.

On Christmas Eve, all the pieces were in place, but the baby Jesus. My 12 year-old son really wanted to catch our benefactors and began to devise all kinds of ways to trap them. He ate his dinner in the mini-van watching and waiting, but no one came.

Finally we called him in to go through our family's Christmas Eve traditions. But before the kids went to bed we checked the front step -- No Baby Jesus! We began to worry that my son had scared them off.

My husband suggested that maybe they dropped the Jesus and there wouldn't be anything coming. Somehow something was missing that Christmas Eve. There was a feeling that things weren't complete. The kids went to bed and I put out Christmas, but before I went to bed I again checked to see if the Jesus had come -- no, the doorstep was empty.

In our family the kids can open their stockings when they want to, but they have to wait to open any presents until Dad wakes up. So one by one they woke up very early and I also woke up to watch them. Even before they opened their stockings, each child checked to see if perhaps during the night the baby Jesus had come. Missing that piece of the set seemed to have an odd effect. At least it changed my focus. I knew there were presents under the tree for me and I was excited to watch the children open their gifts, but first on my mind was the feeling of waiting for the ceramic Christ Child.

We had opened just about all of the presents when one of the children found one more for me buried deep beneath the limbs of the tree. He handed me a small package from my former visiting teaching

companion. This sister was somewhat less-active in the church. I had been her visiting teacher for a couple of years and then, when she was asked to be a visiting teacher, she requested to go with me. I had learned over time they didn't have much for Christmas, so that their focus was the children. It sounded like she didn't get many gifts to open, so I had always given her a small package--new dish towels, the next year's Relief Society lesson manual--not much, but something for her to open. I was touched when at Church on the day before Christmas, she had given me this small package, saying it was just a token of her love and appreciation.

As I took off the bow, I remembered my friendship with her and was filled with gratitude for knowing her and for her kindness and sacrifice In this year giving me a gift. But as the paper fell away, I began to tremble and cry. There in the small brown box was the baby Jesus. He had come! I realized on that Christmas Day that Christ will come into our lives in ways that we don't expect. The spirit of Christ comes into our hearts as we serve one another. We had waited and watched for him to come, expecting the dramatic "knock at the door and scurrying of feet" but he came in a small, simple package that represented service friendship, gratitude, and love.

This experience taught me that the beginning of the true spirit of Christmas comes as we open our hearts and actively focus on the Savior. But we will most likely find him in the small and simple acts of love, friendship and service that we give to each other. This Christmas I want to feel again the joy of knowing that Christ is in our home. I want to focus on loving and serving. More than that I want to open my heart to him all year that I may see him again.

Keeping Christmas

There is a better thing than the observance of
 Christmas day,
 And that is, keeping Christmas.
 Are you willing...
 To forget what you have done for other people,
 And to remember what other people have done for
 you;
 To ignore what the world owes you,
 And to think what you owe the world;
 To put your rights in the background,
 And your duties in the middle distance,
 And your chances to do a little more
 Than your duty in the foreground;
 To see that men and women are just as real as you are,
 And try to look behind their faces to their hearts,
 Hungry for joy;

To own up to the fact that probably the only good
 reason
 For your existence is not what you are going to get out
 of life,
 But what you are going to give to life;
 To close your book of complaints
 Against the management of the universe,
 And look around you for a place
 Where you can sow a few seeds
 of happiness—
 Are you willing to do these things even for a day?
 Then you can keep Christmas.
 Are you willing to stoop down and consider
 The needs and desires of little children;
 To remember
 The weakness and loneliness of people growing old;
 To stop asking how much your friends love you,
 And ask yourself whether you love them enough;
 To bear in mind
 The things that other people have to bear in their
 hearts;
 To try to understand
 What those who live in the same home with you really
 want,
 Without waiting for them to tell you;
 To trim your lamp
 so that it will give more light and less smoke,
 And to carry it in front
 So that your shadow will fall behind you;
 To make a grave for your ugly thoughts,
 And a garden for your kindly feelings with the gate
 open—
 Are you willing to do these things, even for a day?
 Then you can keep Christmas.
 Are you willing to believe
 That love is the strongest thing in the world—
 Stronger than hate,
 stronger than evil,
 Stronger than death—
 And that the blessed life
 Which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years
 ago
 Is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love?
 Then you can keep Christmas.
 And if you can keep it for a day,
 Why not always?
 But you can never keep it alone.
 Henry Van Dyke

*Have a Merry Christmas
 Everyone!*