

BRIDGING THE GAP

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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Willing to Be, Serve and Change!

The holidays are here! We are standing on the threshold of one of the busiest seasons of the year, a time of shopping and decorating and cooking and entertaining. We do all of these things on a scale that is truly immense in comparison with our schedule the rest of the year. If we are not careful, the enormous spiritual impact of the season will slip right by without our notice.

Our theme for the Christmas Season is "Willing to be, serve and change. Why don't we prepare for Christmas this year the way we would prepare for a holiday guest? Sounds like a big

job but that is what Advent is for. It is a time when we can prepare our hearts to receive our King.

We have an entire month. So if we do a little each day, we should be ready to really celebrate Christmas day. What a blessing to live on this side of the great spiritual divide, where we can ground our faith in Christ's birth, death and resurrection! Thank God for the gift of Christ coming.

Ephesians 2:10 tells us "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." We are not saved to sit; we are saved to serve. Holiness is active, not passive. When we receive Christ into our lives we begin a spiritual journey. Is Christmas a holiday or holy day?

A mother went Christmas shopping with her young child. Feeling a drag on her arm, she saw that her child was stopping to look at a manger scene in a store window. Impatiently she snatched him away saying, "Will you come along, we don't have time for that."

Christmas is meant to be a joyous time, because our Savior is born. When many things in the busy rush of the Christmas season distract us we need to remember: "To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord," "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" This is the glory of Christmas, the gift of new life through the coming of a Savior, born a babe in Bethlehem. The joy of the good tidings is ours to share. Think about your Christmas this year. Are you willing to be, to serve and to change?

Not only is this a time to celebrate the birth of our Lord but also a time to prepare for the New Year. As you look into your life what will you do to help others to see Jesus more clearly?

There are great things happening at the Fairview Heights Church of God and we need

everyone to do their part. We are blessed to be called to shepherd this church and to lead a group of people that truly listen to God.

The first step toward joy is to surrender our past, present, and future to Christ. It is to be willing to serve wherever God leads. It is to be willing to change--which sometimes is the hardest. The great need of the hour is to know Jesus and then to tell our story to others that are just waiting to hear a message of hope. So as we celebrate this Christmas Season may the joy of the Lord be real in your life and in your family. As a church may we be able to reach out to our community and serve them. Everyone has an agenda. What is yours? What is your agenda for this week? What is on your lifelong agenda? Are you willing to be, to serve and to change?

*Enjoy the Journey,
Pastor Clayton*

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE

This year Christmas falls on Sunday, WOW! What a great day to celebrate Christmas together as a family. We will meet at 10am for a time of fellowship, hot chocolate, coffee, cookies. Then we will gather in the sanctuary to begin our morning worship service at 10:30 a.m. So don't miss this special time to meet together for Christmas. We will not have our evening service so that you can spend time with family and friends.

SERMON OUTLINES FOR DECEMBER 2005

THEME:

**“WILLING: TO BE, SERVE, AND
CHANGE”**

December 4

MORNING SERVICE: Pastor Clayton
“God Bearers” Text: Luke 1:26-38

CHILDREN'S MOMENTS: Hand Bells

EVENING SERVICE: Pastor Brian

December 11

MORNING SERVICE: Pastor Clayton
“EVEN US?” Text: Luke 1:46-55

CHILDREN'S MOMENTS: Pastor Brian

EVENING SERVICE: Pastor Clayton
Teaching Session

December 18 CHRIST BIRTHDAY OFFERING

MORNING SERVICE: Pastor Clayton
“Mary, the First Christian Minister”
Text: Luke 2:-20

CHILDREN'S MOMENTS: Hand Bells

EVENING SERVICE: Pastor Clayton
Teaching Lesson

December 25 CHRISTMAS DAY

MORNING SERVICE : Pastor Clayton
“It's all about Light” Text Luke 2:21-31

CHILDREN'S MOMENTS: Hand Bells

NO EVENING SERVICE

PASTOR BRIAN SHARES

God Gives Hope

As Christians the Christmas season has more meaning for us than the rest of the world. We know of the Peace of Christ and the gift of eternity in Heaven. Please take time each and every day to remember the 'reason for the season.' Be bold and direct with the message of Christ this Christmas. If someone wishes you happy holidays, tell them it is about the birth of Christ not a holiday such as memorial or labor day. If they say it's the same thing, politely let them know it isn't. If a store will not let the Salvation Army put its donation kettle in front of their store, buy your gifts someplace else. Tell everyone to celebrate Christmas every day of the year. Remember it isn't about the gifts it is about the Hope God gave to the world when He sent His Son to us. Remember to show your love, give them the gift of time. Loving the world one soul at a time.

Pastor Brian

PASTOR'S DREAM TEAM

December 3rd is the first meeting. We have a 12 member team that will meet once a quarter. The purpose of this team will be to gather information, to plan, dream and promote ministry. It will share input and evaluate everything we do as a church. The team will make sure everyone knows what each board and committee is doing to help the church grow. It will bring together every board, committee, chairman and ministry for a united effort to focus on making a difference in our community.

Please pray that we will be aware of what God's plan is for our church and move accordingly.

A PRAYER MINISTRY

“ACTS 1:14”

“They all joined together constantly in prayer.”

This prayer ministry meets twice a month. Prayer will be specifically for the Church. Meeting together, praying, waiting on the Lord was the foundation for all that was accomplished in the early church. Mon. November 28th, the meeting will be held at Pastor and Darla's home at 7:00 p.m.

A MONTH OF PRAYER WALKING

Every Saturday for one month during the month of January, we will be meeting at the church for one hour. We will walk through the church, stopping to pray for every Sunday School class, teacher, student, all church equipment, including: musical instruments, pews, doorways, etc. We will be asking God's blessings on everyone and everything so that all may be used for the glory of the Lord God.

JERICO PRAYER WALK

7 Days Walking the Perimeter of the Church

We are praying for your commitment to one or more of the above ministries. We need your prayers. We need God's power so we can effectively do the work He has given us to do. Date information will be coming soon.

TUTOR/ MENTOR MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Be A Tutor - Be A Mentor - Be A Friend

There is an opportunity waiting for you at William Holiday, your local elementary school. Just one hour a week can make a world of difference in a child's life and yours. De Harris from OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring will be here November 30th to explain this opportunity. Training will be offered January 18, 29, 30, from 9:00-1:00 p.m. This is a one hour a week commitment involving 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade children.

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE SENIOR ADULT CLASS

Congratulations to classmate Stella Simms on her retirement from the banking field after 25 years. No more, “Telling the customer they are right, when you know they are wrong.” Hoping your cash drawer balances out and we are sure it always does.

In addition, Stella visited with her son and family in Indiana. You know, she and her husband Bob, were Pastors in Indiana for sometime.

Larry and Gwen Campbell along with 26 other folk, enjoyed a Thanksgiving Dinner with Larry's son in New Athens, IL Gwen said Larry ate so much turkey, he begin to give it the old gobble gobble.

Gwen testified to the class, the blood flow to her foot is now normal. We are all praising the Lord for the healing touch, He made on her.

Our teacher enjoyed a surprise birthday party given him, by Norma, their daughter and some close friends. He's not saying how old he is, but if he was born 300 years ago, it would have been the same year the Revolutionary War started. Someone suggested they put the number of candles on the cake representing his age. Another spoke up and said we can't do that; we'll burn the house down. Always got to be one in the group eh?

Larry's sister really needs our prayers. She has had some serious surgery and facing more. Her kidneys are not functioning as they should either. Please put her on your prayer list

Sunday School lessons for this quarter-- September, October and November will end next

Sunday. We explored how the early church responded to Jesus' declaration, "You Will Be My Witnesses" What a challenge to the church today. Are we really listening to the Jesus as he tells us to "Go Make Disciples"? Your, "Go Into All The World", may be just your neighbor across the backyard fence, but Go We Must! John Wesley said, "Give me souls, else I die". Lord help us to have that same compassion.

With eager anticipation, our next quarter's lessons, December, January and February are equally as challenging. Unit 1-God's Redeeming Love, Unit 2-God's Gift of Leadership, Unit 3-Faithful Followers, Faithful Leaders.

We would like to present some building blocks that when taken altogether, lead us to the Word of God and from there to life:

1. Approach: (1) What do people hope for today? (2) What is salvation? What do people want to be saved from? To?
2. Building Block (2) Bible Study; What do the scriptures say? , What questions does it answer? What questions does it raise? How should it be interpreted? Folks we're all learners.

We want you to relax and enjoy the Christmas season as you share the good news. Remember: There are some things in life where it's better to receive than to give.

Ivan DeHart, Teacher

J.O.Y. (JUST OLDER YOUTH) SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

We have started our new study, "Thinking Like a Christian" but it is not too late to join us for this study. I urge all of those who are not currently attending Sunday School and who have children or grandchildren to come to this study for them. We live in an anti-Christian culture and as adults we need to be able to prepare our children and grandchildren to withstand the lies and deceit that exist in our world. Scripture tells us in Col. 2:6-8: So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Thank-you to Steve Brooks who planned our Fall gathering for our class and our families. We had a wonderful bon-fire, some great chili, and wonderful fellowship. Jim Niemeyer took first place in the chili cook-off, followed by Ruth/Warren Pope and David Floyd. The kids came in costume and looked great.

Thanks again to all my "substitute teachers" during this last study: Terry and Darla Clayton, Diane Taylor, Shannon Peiffer, Richard and Pam Knowles, Adam Peiffer, and Steve Brooks. I really do appreciate that for some of you, this was an adventure outside your comfort zone.

*See you in class,
Candy Niemeyer, Teacher*

WCG NEWS

What a delightful Sunday evening we had as we sampled foods from around the world. It was a beautiful sight! Thanks to all who came and contributed in any way! Would you like to do it again sometime? Thanks to Kim Brooks who put this together for us.

If someone gave you \$500 what would you buy with it? Probably not GOATS, but that's what we are going to do with \$500 of the money from the Walk-A-Thon. Five Dairy Goats will be bought for a Church of God in Tanzania. This is a project that has had much success as Tanzanian Christians are furnished a goat and taught how to use the goat for their family's daily needs. Any goat milk that is left over is sold to help meet other family needs. We will be advised the location of the five goats we are purchasing - I will keep you informed.

Another \$500 is being sent to the Linen Chest at our national office. To hear our missionaries tell it, the Linen Chest ministry of the Women of the Church of God is unparalleled in the world. The Linen Chest provides household necessities that each mission family will need while in service and upon final return from service. This ministry extends to retired missionaries, missionary children and recipients of Minister's Aid.

Something to think about.....we could save Betty Crocker coupons – these are used to purchase flatware for missionaries. We will also be disbursing funds to Nicaragua and to Mid America University. As soon as details have been finalized we will let you know.

Again thank you so much for your support of our Walk-A-Thon which enables us to support Missions.

WILLING to Be, Serve and Change is our Advent theme. As we look forward to the celebration of Christmas and of our Savior's birth, let's not forget to think about what God would have us give to the Christ Birthday Offering. The national goal is \$1,600,000 - our local goal is \$2,000. This is the single largest offering that is taken in the Church of God. We are happy to give each family a Meditation booklet for the Advent Season. This is a wonderful devotional for each day of December. Take time to reflect on these meditations.

Some of our ladies have been making lap robes. We will be taking these to nursing homes December 10 in cooperation with the Men's group who will be taking gifts. Thanks to all who have made these.

Tentative plans for a Christmas Brunch are being made for Saturday, December 17. Announcement and details will follow.

I have seen churches named "The Happy Church" and "The Anointed Church." What would you expect to find in a church named "The Willing Church?" (Meditation by Frank Ward - Dec. 22)

May God bless you this Advent Season as we think about how we are "Willing to Be, Serve, and Change."

Ruth Pope, President

MEN4 HIM

Another opportunity to serve is opening up for men. We would like to encourage those men who are available to meet Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m. This will be a time we can do some handyman things around the church or wherever needed or go with Pastor Clayton and Pastor Brian visiting following a light breakfast.

Saturday, December 10, all men and women are invited to meet at the church at 9:00 a.m. for a full breakfast followed by helping deliver gifts to Rosewood Nursing Home and Caseyville Nursing Home.

Some of the ladies are making lap robes and there is a sign up sheet on the wall across from the secretaries office for anyone who would like to sign up to purchase a gift for one of the residents. Please be sure your wrapped gift is at the church by December 10 for delivery.

Bill White

FOOD PANTRY NEWS

We are back to working as we normally did before our move. We want to thank everyone for their prayers. The Lord worked this out in His own way, because He is a good loving Lord and he knew Fairview Heights needs this Food Pantry. We are praising His name everyday for His love.

We have a nice clean place and bigger than either of the other two places previously used. We are really growing and the move has been good for us. Our phone number is the same; if you have any questions please call.

I am looking for a volunteer from the Fairview Heights church to come and be trained so when my time is up, you can do it without any trouble. It isn't a lot of work. You work when you can and see to it that groceries that come into the church are delivered to the food pantry. I am going to have to give it up, but I see it coming. Please think and pray about it.

*Vice President,
Gwen Campbell*

YOUTH CHRISTMAS FUND RAISER

The youth are taking requests for their yearly Christmas carol fund raising event. If you would like the youth to sing Christmas carols for someone special contact Richard Knowles or one of the youth for more information. What a great way to let someone know they are special and share the good news of our Savior's birth.

FAMILY LIFE MARRIAGE SEMINAR

The Family Life Marriage Seminar entitled "A Weekend to Remember" was attended by Jim and Candy Niemeyer, Bill and Karen White, Bill and Shirley Beltz, Terry and Darla Clayton, Dale and Tammy Weakly. The seminar was fantastic. It will be back next fall so keep this in mind for next fall. You can check out the web site at www.familylife.com.

PRAISE GATHERING HIGHLIGHTS

Oh My! What a Time! The 31st annual and final Praise Gathering in Indianapolis,

Indiana was awesome! Eight from our fellowship attended-Pastor and Darla Clayton, Gary and Darlene Hamilton, Debbie Porter, Jayn Willeford and Marshall and Phyllis Field. We saw each other often and attended various functions together.

One of the reasons we like the Praise Gathering is the great variety of talent by the various artists. From Larry Wayne Morbitt, accomplished opera, theatre and concert singer to The Issac's or Jeff and Sheri Easter's country bluegrass, the music was phenomenal. We believe this was a taste of what Heaven will be like! People from every walk and avenue of life giving of their talent to praise and worship our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. So much of the time we are so narrow in our thinking and God has so much more to offer!

Bill Gaither has not only spent much of his time working with accomplished artists, but has devoted a significant amount of time to developing and exposing upcoming new talent. Up to the very end, one of the last to perform was Anthem Avenue singing Holy is Your Name. Through the Homecoming videos and concerts he has revived the fading careers of many Southern Gospel singers. The list of Bill and Gloria's accomplishments is long. Yet in all of this he did not want any public thank you or acknowledgements. At great risk Ken Davis offered a gracious Thank You from all the artists, old and new, to the Gaithers. It was a touching moment and we all are in great debt to what these two people have done for the Christian music world! Some other new names to watch for are Selah, Fernando Ortega, Gordon Mote, Bart Millard, Reggie and Lady Love Smith and the Katinas. Randy Travis was a big hit and the newly formed Signature Sound Quartet is high energy Southern Gospel at its best. The Gaither Vocal Band sets the standard bar high!

The choirs from Anderson University, Indiana Wesleyan, Olivet Nazarene and Taylor University were outstanding. The Christ Church Choir with the enthusiastic Landy and Joy Gardner always gets people excited. Voices of Lee sang The King is Coming! Wow!

We like the great variety of speakers and seminar topics offered that help us understand our changing world and a church that must in some ways seek to adapt. Dave Dravecky spoke about the 'Worth of a Man' sharing how he lost his arm to cancer snapping off in mid-pitch in a game with the Montreal Expos in 1989. He

offered new insight on the things that matter most to a man. Carol Kent spoke about 'When I Lay My Isaac Down', Unshakable Faith in Unthinkable Circumstances. This is the story of what she and her husband went through with their son, a Naval Academy graduate and newly married naval officer, who had become obsessed with protecting his wife and two children and ended up killing a man. Stephen Mansfield served as a pastor for 20 years then became an author, historian and speaker. His book, The Faith of George W. Bush was a 2003 bestseller. He spoke on 'The Sixties' and 'Our Postmodern Age.' This latter subject explained so much about how our current generation thinks. Bob Russell is pastor of Southeast Christian Church, a congregation of 18,500 people. This senior pastor offered wonderful insights into 'How to Pray for America' and 'How to Pray For the Church.'

We have barely scratched the surface of what was offered during this worship event. It thoroughly enriched and refreshed us. In the words of the Gaithers-"So we are parking this vehicle (Praise Gathering)-at least for awhile- but we will keep on finding and using new transportation for this important work of delivering the Gospel." We will be looking for new and exciting things to come!

Marshall and Phyllis Field

TO THINK ABOUT

Celebrate Christ's Birth

The custom of bringing evergreen branches into the home during the dark days of winter predates Christianity and was a reminder that the sun would return, the snow would melt, and the vegetation cycle would begin again. Christians took these customs and gave them biblical significance. Evergreen reminds us of everlasting life, the circular wreath the eternity of God, the red holly berries the blood of Christ, the triangular shape (an ancient symbol of the Trinity) of the tree pointing toward heaven. Lights symbolize that Christ is the Light of the World and that the light of the Gospel shines through us to the world. The red apple reminds us that Christ came because we fell in Adam when he and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Our candy canes are always red and white -- the shepherd's crook reminds us of Christ our Shepherd, the white of his perfect sinlessness, and the red of his blood shed for us. The red heart reminds us of God's love displayed through His Son's sacrifice. The silver triangle reminds us of the trinity, the antique brass

goose of God's bountiful provisions for us in Christ, angels remind us of those who announced Christ's birth and whom God has promised us will guard us in our daily lives. The star reminds us of the star that guided the wise men to the Christ child.

*by Gretchen Passantino
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Prayer Makes a Difference

It seems prayer still upsets some people. When Minister Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate, everyone was expecting the usual generalities, but this is what they heard:

"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, 'Woe to those who call evil good,' but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery.

We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare.

We have killed our unborn and called it choice.

We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable.

We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self esteem.

We have abused power and called it politics.

We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition.

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression.

We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, Oh, God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Amen!"

The response was immediate. A number of legislators walked out during the prayer in protest. In 6 short weeks, Central Christian Church, where Rev. Wright is pastor, logged more than 5,000 phone calls with only 47 of those calls responding negatively. The church is now receiving international requests for copies of this prayer from India, Africa and Korea.

Commentator Paul Harvey aired this prayer on his radio program, "The Rest of the Story," and received a larger response to this program than any other he has ever aired.

With the Lord's help, may this prayer sweep over our nation and wholeheartedly become our desire so that we again can be called "one nation under God."

MERRY CHRISTMAS FRIENDS FAR AND NEAR

I have a list of people I know
All written in a book
And every year at Christmastime
I go and take a look
And that is when I realize
That those names are a part
Not of the book they're written in
But of my very heart
For each name stands for someone
Who has crossed my path some time
And in that meeting they've become
A treasured friend of mine
And once you've met some people
The years can not erase
The memory of a pleasant word
Or a friendly face
So when I send a Christmas card
That is addressed to you
It's because you're on that list
Of folk I'm indebted to
And you are one of many folk who
In times past I've met
And happen to be one of those
I don't want to forget
And whether I have known you for
Many years or few
In some way you have a part in
Shaping things I do
This, the spirit of Christmas, that
Forever and ever endures
May it leave it richest blessing
In the hearts of you and yours.

Editor's Note

Thank you for your contribution to this newsletter. Please submit articles by the third Sunday of the month. You may put them in the pocket on the bulletin board in the narthex, in my mailbox or email them to me at billandkaren@mail.com. Thank you!

Karen White, Editor