



# Saints Alive

January 2009

## The Lasting Impact of Christmas

by Richard Cole

What a wonderful Christmas my family and I just had. Kathleen's parents arrived a few days before Christmas in order to celebrate the season with us. The number of gifts under the tree began to grow slowly and on Christmas morning there were so many that they seemed to tumble out into the living room. The girls were excited as they came down the stairs and ran into our room to announce what they had seen. They wanted us to get out of bed immediately. Their excitement was palpable and their patience was non-existent. So, in order to make sure they would not be disappointed, we moved as slow as possible, made some breakfast, built a fire, started up the electric train and then we were finally ready to start the festivities. The girls loved their gifts and played with them all day long. The next day, we loaded up the van and headed down to Los Fresnos where our girls could play with their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. We watched movies in the evenings, listened to music, ate cookies, played with dogs, gathered chicken eggs, rode in canoes, launched water balloons and welcomed the new year with the Los Fresnos congregation. It was a wonderful week and everything that we could hope for in a Christmas holiday!!!

Christmas is special because it offers so many opportunities to be enriched. There are the gifts for children and the joy we see that they gain from them. There are the family gatherings to spend time with each other. There are the fantastic sweets that we are allowed to indulge in. There are the traditions that families create and carry forward from generation to generation. And then there are the stories which we recite and reflect on each and every year which continue to bring us joy and hope.

Joseph and Mary provided us a story which while it has many years to its name, never grows old. The story of a couple who loved and cared for each other. The story of an innkeeper who offered his last space available when no one else would help. The story of shepherds who were blessed to hear a chorus sing and who traveled to partake in a special evening. The story

of a baby who was born in meager settings and was a gift to the world.

Yet, this story would not have relevance if it were not for the life that Jesus chose to live. Do not be fooled. He had his agency. He had his trade. He had his opportunities. - Jesus could have chosen another path. He was tempted in the wilderness. He was frustrated with his disciples. He asked if the cup of crucifixion could be passed from him. Yes, Jesus had his opportunities and yet in spite of these alternatives he stayed true to the path which was his to follow. And the physical conclusion of that path, the crucifixion on the cross, is as much a part of the Christmas story as it is the Easter story. For without the crucifixion, there is no birth to celebrate. Without the sacrifice, there is no story to be told. Without the ending, the beginning is lost to history.

As January 2009 becomes our new reality, the talk turns to Christmas being over. We cannot let that happen. We cannot open the gifts on Christmas morning, greet friends and family for a few days, travel back to our homes and call Christmas over. If that is the case, then we will have missed the point. Just as if we celebrate the birth but do not remember the sacrificial death, we have missed the point. Take the gifts which you have received (physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually), and make sure you stay true to the path of offering your sacrifice to those around you so that you may embody the full Christmas story well beyond December 2008.

### January Greeters

4<sup>th</sup>—Pat Campbell

11<sup>th</sup>—E & L Williams

18<sup>th</sup>—Jeeta Caraballo

25<sup>th</sup>—Patty Walker

(Again, if you are a normal greeter, check the Three-month planner for January and February. Greeting duties have been assigned—if you can't greet on your Sunday, trade with someone!)

## NEWS FROM THE PEWS

On Sunday December 14<sup>th</sup>, **Katie Rose Spiekermann** participated in and worked at the Eid al-Adha carnival at the Raymond Rimkus Park in Leon Valley. This is a celebration to honor the sacrifice that Ibrahim was willing to make of his son, Ishmael, for God. It also marks the end of the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage made by Muslims worldwide to Mecca.

The carnival brought a great part of the San Antonio Muslim community together to participate in the festivities. Katie was invited to help by the Health Careers High School Muslim Students Association (MSA), of which she is a member. She helped with the face painting and the distribution of tickets throughout the duration. It was a wonderful experience, allowing her to meet people who she otherwise wouldn't have known. The experience gave her many friends whom she will cherish for life, while also bringing her closer to friends from MSA. She can't wait until next year!

**Tom Walker** (and most of our youth) return to school on January 5th. Tom will be taking four 3-hour classes at Trinity University in mid January to prepare for the SAT test on January 24th. He needs to score really well on the verbal part so a few prayers towards that would help!

Tom's upcoming 2009 drill meets are as follows:

1. February 7th, Marshall High School
2. February 14th, Clark High School
3. February 28th, Judson High School
4. March 27th, Air Force Nationals at the Alamodome

If anyone is interested in attending one of the above events, they can contact the Walkers either via phone or e-mail.

The **Talcotts** had from 4 to 11 extra people visiting over the last two weeks of December. It was an exciting, exhausting holiday. **Matt, Marcella and Lafe** are off to Okinawa, Japan in late January, and **Jonathan** returns to South Korea to continue teaching English there.

## Shenandoah Christmas Services

The Shenandoah Congregation experienced true worship as they watched the youth enter the sanctuary dressed as Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and wise men for the December services. As Heather Osterhaus read scripture relating the Christmas Story, many of our congregation's younger members participated during each of the four Sundays of Advent. Heather Osterhaus and Ruth Callier made sure everyone was in their proper costume and ready to enter on cue as the congregation took part by observing the Christmas Story being acted out.

An ensemble of our musically talented youth also added greatly to our worship during the December 14th service. Truly a joyful ministry of music reached our ears as we listened to our young men and women play bells, violins, flutes, percussion, bass, and sax and accompanied by Kathleen Cole on the keyboard. It was such a delight to hear their beautiful rendition of a Christmas favorite that was arranged by Kathleen, and we can hardly wait until next Christmas to find out what's in store for us.

During the December 21st worship service a highlight was "Mary," a drama written by Julie Webb of the Austin Congregation, who happens to be the wife of our former Coastal Bend Mission Center president, Mark Euritt. The drama told Mary's story from the mouth of Mary at three different ages. Lucy Osterhaus witnessed to us of the young Mary who learned she would give birth to a Savior. Darcia Farrell was a slightly more mature Mary who tried to explain how Jesus' birth affected her. Pat Campbell was Mary at an older age and while she spoke of her role as mother to Jesus, she also challenged us to say "Yes" to God

- Carol Burdick

### Notice to Shenandoah Congregation Members!

We'd like everyone to pay particular attention to the three month schedule in the next month or two because your name just might appear there. Until the directory information is assimilated, printed in book format, and each of you has it in your hand, the only way you will know of your responsibilities is to see it in print on the three month calendar. Thanks for your help!

## **New 2009 Ministry Assignment Process**

by Jim Burdick

It is a New Year and that is often a perfect time to introduce new things. I want to share a new change we are going to be implementing in 2009. This has to do with how we assign ministry to participate in our public worship. In the past, the Worship Commission has made suggestions about those speaking or presiding on a specific Sunday. This has worked well, but it placed a huge burden on the Worship Commission to balance our priesthood members' schedules, likes/dislikes, availability, and willingness to serve - all at the same time that they tried to maintain a very high level of worship content.

The Worship Commission always worked with the pastorate in accomplishing the worship schedule, and I am very thankful and appreciative for their efforts!

In 2009, Richard and I want to free the Worship Commission more to let them emphasize the content of our worship. To do this, we have decided to move toward a practice of making our public ministry functions, such as speaking and presiding, more of a 'ministry assignment.' This means that we will make assignments to public ministry as the pastorate and we will put an emphasis on the priesthood member's duty to fulfill their assignment.

Doctrine and Covenants Section 163 reminds us of the 'sacred covenant' of the persons that accept priesthood and of their being 'willing to extend themselves in service for others and for the well-being of the faith community.' We believe that viewing our duties as priesthood members from this perspective can bring blessings to the congregation and also allow priesthood to 'continually magnify their callings through spiritual growth, study, exemplary generosity, ethical choices, and fully accountable ministry' as Section 163 reminds.

To help accomplish this, we will be making priesthood assignments as much as three to six months in advance and we request that priesthood assigned to a responsibility get with us directly if they cannot fulfill an assignment. They should also watch for the Worship Commission leaders to notify them when their service will be reviewed so that they can be an integral part of the planning process.

We expect the priesthood to get to know the congregation better. We expect priesthood to be more involved in the daily life of the congregation.

We expect that these steps will help priesthood better understand the needs of the congregation, the gifts that God has placed in our midst, and the best ways to put our lives and efforts toward the building of the Kingdom of God on Earth.

## **Exciting New Sunday School Class**

Once again, our congregation has been very blessed with a benefit that comes from the Co-Missioned Pastor Initiative (CPI) program. This blessing is a multimedia class featuring DVD inputs from church President Steve Veazey. The title of the class is "Share The Peace of Jesus Christ" and the goal will be to introduce to the church the critical goal and mission of Christianity in the world today. The class begins January 4th and continues for 12 weeks. Teachers and substitutes will include Carol White, Dee Marquez, Heather Osterhaus, Richard Cole, and Jim Burdick

Another thing that makes this class very special is that for the first time, the same class will be taught concurrently to the Junior High, High School, and adult age groups. Part of each class session will be a joint session where all ages meet together and part of most of the sessions will also include time for each age group to meet on their own.

The classes include guided scripture readings for every week, a DVD message from President Veazey, discussion period, and guided questions on that week's emphasis or topic. Join us at 9:30 Sunday in the sanctuary beginning January 4th for this 12 week series!

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Have you ever heard a TV commercial say "But WAIT! ... There's More!" Well, that can also be said of this class. We will be excited to teach this class in other, non-traditional environments. We can offer it for weekend retreat format, evening classes in homes, or at the church at times other than 9:30AM Sunday. I am so excited about sharing the class "Share The Peace of Jesus Christ" that I hope every person will desire to find a way to participate!

- Jim Burdick

## **Calendar**

Feb. 20-22 – Congregational Leaders Retreat, Camp Sionito

Mar 27-29 – Men's Retreat, Camp Sionito

April 24-26 – Women's Retreat, Camp Sionito

May 22 – 24 – Multi-Mission Center Gathering, location to be announced

## Mission Center NEWS!

*Two youth, each from the Coastal Bend and Heart of Texas Mission Centers will be selected from applications for the Honduras International Youth Forum (IYF) 2009. The completed applications are to be sent to Terry Shelton, Coastal Bend Mission Center President, and must be received by email or regular mail by Jan. 25. Information is on the bulletin board, along with the application form.*

*Women's Retreat – "Above all . . . LOVE" is the theme for an April 24th – 26th retreat at Camp Sionito. The theme song is "They Will Know We are Christians by our Love." Apostle Stassi Cramm will be the featured guest for the weekend, which includes classes, evening devotions, communion service, sharing sessions, games and labyrinth walks. Consider taking time for yourself and nourish your spirit – attend the Women's Retreat in April.*

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

11-Heidi Workmon

13-Aliyah Marie Farrell

17-Richard Cole

18-Jerry Thomason

19-Jane McGinnis

20-Amanda Workmon

21 Audrey Cole

Addison Cole

28-Carol Ann Burdick

## Peace Unlimited

Given that our Community of Christ Church has its only temple dedicated to the "cause of peace," you would imagine we would see a steady stream of news and advice on ways of achieving that elusive goal. As a matter of fact, a lot is being done. But look for much more in the future. A Community of Christ Peace Support Network has been established on the internet urging member participation.

In our Shenandoah congregation, a unique sharing of information with youth and adult Sunday school classes started at the beginning of 2009. World Church President Stephen Veazey introduces each session with a video-taped message and the current focus is on the calling and Mission of the Community of Christ.

One recent project from the Support Network is a wide-ranging discussion of "intercessory prayer." The term may not be commonly used, but intercessory prayer simply means praying for one another. An expert in the field, Dr. Larry Dossey, calls it "non- local healing and notes that scientific studies have proven the beneficial effect of intercessory prayer in a wide range of illnesses.

I would suggest that the current outbreak of violence in the Gaza strip, the continuing economic crisis in the United States, and the upcoming swearing in of a new president with a new cabinet and a reshuffling of the legislative bodies would be excellent opportunities for intercessory prayers.

No matter what or who you view as the victim, or the aggressor, in the Middle East surely we all could commit for praying for peace and end to bloodshed. And in this great United States surely there is an urgent need for guidance and wisdom to help solve our problems that grip this nation.

In addition to the importance of intercessory prayer, Kelly Guinan of the Community of Christ Peace Support Network, says it is not suggested in place of other action you may be prompted to do. Please follow these leadings (in addition to praying for peace) and act as you deem appropriate.

You may feel called to

- Call, fax and e-mail your political representatives at all levels and express your views and requests for peace.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.
- Coordinate or participate in a local non-violence demonstration.
- Give monetary support to organizations promoting peace education.
- Remain positive---don't fall into the mindset which negates Jesus' mission and message of action in the "here and now.
- Read alternative sources of news so you understand perspectives not represented in the "mainstream" press.
- And, last but not the least, invite others to participate in a season of intercessory prayer.

As Kelly Guinan , World Church Peace Advocate points out, scientific method proves the beneficial effect of intercessory prayer, as does the witness within our hearts.

Please, pray for peace.

Co-editor, Lafe Williams