

THE CIRCUIT RIDER

A Publication of Centenary United Methodist Church

December 2009



In his Christmas newsletter, Steve Brown, of KeyLife Ministries, tells the story of a king whose greatest loves in life were his son and his people.

He loved being king, not because of the advantages that the position afforded him but because as king, he could do things for his people, he could demonstrate his love, showering his affection onto his people.

The king loved his son. There was no greater joy for him than to go for long walks with his son at the end of every day. It was a wonderful life, until... one fateful day the king was running late. He was supposed to meet his young son for their evening walk, but meetings and activities prevented him from leaving on time, and by the time he arrived at the appointed place the boy was not there. The king would later discover that the boy started to walk alone, hoping that his father would soon arrive and would catch up with him. Unfortunately the boy got lost, hopelessly lost. Fear turned to panic and soon the boy was running, searching for his father and for his home. Because he was running and not watching where he was going, the boy fell again and again and soon was covered in mud, his clothing torn and dirty.

The young boy made his way from city to city, telling everyone that he was the prince, the son of the king, but his appearance did not match with his words and no one believed him. The boy found himself all alone.

During this time, his father was feeling the same sense of panic the boy was experiencing. The father called out his entire army to search for the son. After days, weeks, and months, the boy was not found and finally the search was called off.

The boy was forced to beg for pennies so that he could buy food to eat. When begging did not bring enough money, the boy resorted to stealing. Soon he fell into the hands of the wrong crowd who taught him the finer art of theft. As the boy grew into a man, his exploits as a thief became legendary. With each new theft there was more and more risk, and eventually the son killed someone. He was captured, tried, and sentenced to die. The news of this young man came to the king and the king realized this thief was none other than his lost son.

The king made his way to the jail cell that held his son. He

opened the door and identified himself as the king, the boy's father. Too much time had passed and the young man did not remember the long walks he had taken with his father. In fact, he had no memory left of his early days with his father at all.

The son exclaimed if indeed his father was the king, then surely his father could commute his sentence. Surely if this man was the king and was his father, then surely the son could be set free.

That put the king in a bit of a dilemma, for if he set the boy free, just because the boy was his son, then what of justice. Yet how could he, after all these years, when he finally found his son again, allow him to die on the gallows? How could he finally find his son only to lose him all over again? The king made his decision that the son would be set free, but to satisfy justice, the king would take his place in the jail cell and on the gallows.

As the young man left the jail cell he smiled to himself. "What a fool that old man is," he thought. "If he thinks I am coming back to save him...if he thinks I am even going straight...then that old man is the biggest fool of all time." With that, the son left the area.

Some time later he read that the king had kept his word and taken the young man's place in the jail cell and on the gallows. The king had satisfied justice and demonstrated his love for his son. This meant that the son was free and the king of the land.

So what would he do, this new king of the land? Would he return and claim his rightful place as king? Would he see the love of his father and change his life? Unfortunately, we do not know for that is where the story ends.


You see the meaning in this story is the true story of Christmas. God is the King of kings, who loves us His sons and daughters. He loves us so very much that in the fullness of time He became one of us. That is what the incarnation is all about. The reason the child was born in Bethlehem was not so He could remain a child forever but so that one day when the time was right, He could pay the penalty for our sin.

In light of that much love, new king of the land, how will you end the story?

Shalom,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Bob". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Pastor Bob



Rick Warren

The Purpose of Christmas

Led by Betty Hevrin



Sundays: November 29 ~ December 6 ~ December 20
(December 13 Christmas Cantata ~ no class)

9:00 AM ~ Room 15/16

“If you stop to think about it, it is astounding that the simple, unassuming birth of a peasant baby boy more than two thousand years ago in the middle East can today cause traffic jams every December in places like New York City, Tokyo, and Rio de Janeiro.

The night Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, a small group of poor shepherds was quietly tending their flocks of sheep in a nearby field, looking up at the stars. Nothing seemed any different from a thousand of other nights. What was about to happen would transform not only their lives but billions of other lives as well. The world would never be the same again.

Bestselling author and pastor Rick Warren will lead us through a video-based study on the true purpose of Christmas. Teaching from the Gospel of Luke in three sessions, he will help us understand three purposes of Christmas announced by the angel at the birth of Jesus.”

This class is open to everyone and lasts just through the Advent season. Consider joining us and refocus your Christmas on its true purpose.

A New Voice and Heart for Missions

By: John Anderson



My name is John Anderson, and I'm excited to be involved with the Missions Team at Centenary. I'm the son of Bud and Jo-ETTA Anderson, and we have been a part of the Centenary family for many years. I am married to my wife of 24 years, Dianna, and we have two sons Lars, age 21 and Peter, age 18. I am self-employed as a Land Use Planner and my wife

teaches third grade with Ceres Unified School District.

This past summer, our Church was given an opportunity and a challenge to open our hearts to reaching out to those in our community who are in need as well as those around the world that need to experience the love of God. We heard from a number of local and international



organizations on how we could get involved. I shared about my experiences with Habitat for Humanity. Serving in any mission work, local or international, gives us the opportunity to share with others the blessings that we have been given by God. "A man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor." (Proverbs 22:9 NIV)



I decided after the challenges given by Pastor Bob this past summer, to share my experiences with missions with my Church Family, and to continue to serve the Lord as He places opportunities in my path. I feel that God has put a love and an interest for missions on my heart. I am not an expert, but I have been blessed to be involved with several missions trips in the past, including missions trips to Guatemala and Romania. I am blessed to have had the opportunity to see first hand the impact mission work has on those in need or those without the resources to help themselves.

In today's economic climate the need could not be any greater. Any successful mission requires partners, one of which I have grown to respect through my work with them. Assist International (AI) is a humanitarian organization dedicated to relieving human suffering around the world. AI provides assistance and relief supplies such as food and medical equipment to the poor and needy in developing nations. They also support the care for orphaned and

abandoned children, the building of family homes, and help to establish small business enterprises to break the cycle of poverty.

AI is a locally based organization with warehouse and administrative facilities in Ripon. AI employs a highly effective small staff who deliver humanitarian need to some 42 countries, working through key partnerships with other organizations. (I.e. GE, Felix International, Rotary International and Soles4Souls.)



It is through these partnerships that AI is able to deliver needed supplies, medical equipment, and the capacity to produce reliable power and water to remote locations and disadvantaged areas. AI believes in partnerships as a means to deliver humanitarian aid where it is needed the most. I encourage you to visit Assist International's web site

for more information about AI leadership and projects with which they are currently involved. (www.assistinternational.org)

In the January Circuit Rider, I will share more about how AI helped us to reach out to Romanian children and young adults who had been abandoned and ignored by their society. Until then, please pray that God would continue to open our hearts to those around us and around the world who need His love, His hope, and the help that we Christians can provide.

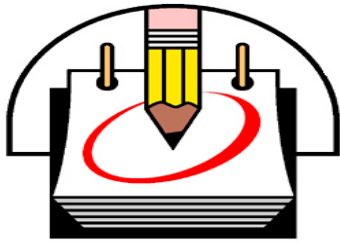


Fall Canned Food Drive



Thank you to Woodrow School's Student Council for organizing a canned food drive in October. They collected about fifteen bags and boxes of food items in just three days! These items were then donated to our Food Pantry at Centenary.

This food will help to feed hungry individuals and families in our community who come to the Church office for assistance during the holiday season. Thank God for the children's eagerness to help others, and this valuable lesson about loving and serving others that this type of giving teaches them.



12/13	MARION STABERG
12/15	NICOLE PARISH
12/16	CAROL CRETZER
12/16	LYNNE THOMPSON
12/17	GARLAND WHETZLER
12/17	JULIE FORBES
12/20	NATALIE HELLMAN
12/20	JOHN HERR
12/20	APRIL McCLANAHAN
12/21	ROXANN HAYS
12/21	TY COLE
12/21	JULIE ECKLES
12/23	DUANE STEWARD
12/25	DAVIN PEOU
12/26	KIM MEY
12/26	BOB STREET
12/27	DENNIS CUMMINS
12/27	MERRI BEHRENS
12/27	LINDA VOORHEES
12/27	LESLIE TORRANCE
12/28	ROBERT SCHWENDIMAN
12/28	GEORGE TE VELDE
12/28	MICHAEL HAYNE
12/28	DIENA STREET
12/29	LINDA BEAMER
12/30	BURT VASCHE
12/31	MALCOLM WYCKOFF
12/31	GEORGE CATRAMIS
12/31	DIANE STEWARD

12/1	STEPHANIE DIX
12/1	JEVON SWANSON
12/2	TED BRACHT
12/2	JOHNASEN SATH
12/3	KATIE STUERMER
12/4	JENNIFER JONES
12/4	CHENDA KLOAK-KHEK
12/5	TED MEYER
12/6	LES LIGHTHALL
12/7	BONNIE GANSEL
12/8	DARRELL SEVER
12/8	JACK STABERG
12/9	KAY RAYMOND
12/9	RUSS HAYS
12/9	SCOTT WEBSTER
12/10	JEAN PARTAIN
12/11	JUDY ROBINSON
12/12	NANCY LEE
12/12	FRANKLYN VINCENT

SUNDAY

MEN'S FRATERNITY RM. 1 - 7:00 A.M.
 CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP SERVICE - 9:00 A.M.
 ADULT SUNDAY CLASS RM. 15/16 - 9:00 A.M.
 TRADITIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE - 10:30 A.M.
 CAMBODIAN WORSHIP SERVICE - 10:30 A.M.
 YOUNG ADULTS GROUP RM. 20 - 6:30 P.M.

TUESDAY

THRIFT SHOP - 9:30 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.
 OPEN 12/1 & 12/8

WEDNESDAY

SPIRIT SALON FALL SESSION RM. 6 - 9:00 A.M.
 JR. & SR. HIGH YOUTH GROUP - 6:00 P.M.

THURSDAY

PASTOR'S BIBLE STUDY RM. 15/16 - 9:00 A.M.

SATURDAY

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP SERVICE - 6:30 P.M.



It is not our intention to overlook your birthday. If your birthday was not listed, please call the church office @ 527-5441 and let us know, so that we can update our records. Thank You!

Meaningful Gift Giving

This Christmas Centenary's Missions Team presents "Meaningful Gift Giving" and other gifts for sale from missionaries around the world. Meaningful Gift Giving is an opportunity to purchase needed items for people living in poverty, in honor of someone else. What a wonderful Christmas gift to give someone who "has everything." Let them know you gave someone the gift of hope this Christmas in their honor!



Items made by missionaries will also be available for purchase, with the proceeds going back to these missionaries. Items for purchase will be available at our own Christmas Celebration on Sunday, December 13th.

- December 6 Communion/Food Bank Sunday
- December 7 Ad Council Meeting
- December 9 Final Fall Spirit Salon Session
- December 10 Staff/Parish Relations Committee
- December 11 Less Stress Cooking Class
- December 13 Christmas Cantata/Christmas Celebration
- December 14 Board of Trustees Meeting
- December 15 Thrift Shop Closed
- December 21 Finance Committee Meeting
- December 22 Thrift Shop Closed
- December 24 Church Office Closes at Noon
- December 24 Christmas Eve Services;
5:30, 7:00, 9:00 & 11:00
- December 25 Merry Christmas Church Office Closed
- December 31 Church Office Closes at Noon

Travels, Transition and Teaching

It's been a long time since we've sent out a prayer letter, but fortunately, we've been able to see a lot of you in person this summer! All told, we spoke at eight churches and had over 50 meetings with friends and supporters. We drove over 11,000 miles and visited 29 states. We were able to visit relatives, take a vacation with John's parents in Michigan and the Adirondack Mountains and go to "Family Camp" for a week in California with friends from Centenary Church.



Thank you for your prayers for us during our travels. We were glad to "introduce" Stella to so many of you and are very thankful for God raising up the support needed to continue our ministry in Ukraine.



Near the end of our trip this summer, we found out that a significant change has occurred in the leadership of DCU. President Sergey Rybikov will be taking a sabbatical this year to begin his doctoral studies in a part-time program in Moscow. He very much needed the break and we are praying that God will bless his studies and refresh his spirit.

In addition, a "Consortium" has been established to lead DCU in the future, overseeing both its theological programs and new government accredited Christian liberal arts programs that are planned to be started in the future. This new Consortium is being headed by former DCU President Oleksii Melnychuk. These changes took us and many others by surprise, and we would appreciate your prayers for both the new leadership of DCU and for us as we consider what role God wants us to play in the future. Teaching, Teaching, and a Little PR.

One of the changes that John has made this year is focusing more on teaching and less on public relations work. Oleksii Melnychuk is fluent in English and doesn't need John's help like Sergey did, so John now has more time to teach. John is currently teaching four classes, two on "Introduction to Missions" and two on "Contextualization."

Meanwhile, Stella continues to work half-time in the PR department at DCU (she changed to half-time last year) and is starting to teach private English lessons.

Please pray for her as she seeks God's will as to whether to focus more on translation ministry (in the PR department) or teaching.

Praise and Prayer:

- Praise God for His provision during home assignment! God raised up all of the support we needed, most of which before we even returned to the US!

- Praise God for His healing hand! John had a second operation this summer, and is much better, and Stella's hypothyroidism has been showing significant improvement.

- Pray for DCU in the midst of the leadership changes.

- Pray for Sergey during his sabbatical year.

- Pray for us in our teaching, especially for good relationships with students.

Partnering with you in Ukraine,
John and Stella White

Modesto Gospel Mission Christmas Dinner Sunday, December 20th

Centenary Church will again be hosting a Christmas dinner at Modesto Gospel Mission on Sunday, December 20th.



This is a vital opportunity for our congregation to reach out to those in the community who are most at need physically and spiritually. These dinners typically serve approximately 150 individuals.

Here are a few ways that you can help: contributing pies and salads on 12/20, monetary donations to purchase supplies for the children's goody bags.



We are heading into the last month of 2009. I love December because we do so many fun things in the preschool. Of course, it all leads up to Christmas, which is so exciting for the children!

We were blessed with a beautiful November. We enjoyed watching the fall leaves float gently to the ground. The children went on a nature walk to collect leaves, flowers, sticks, pebbles, and whatever they could find on the ground for a nature collage. The first part of November the children also learned about the many different means of transportation. Together they colored, glued, and painted cars, trucks, trains, buses, boats, jets, and helicopter. Each child had the opportunity to share what their favorite way to travel was. Many of our children have already experienced flying in an airplane! They discussed the different ways their relatives would travel when they came to visit for Thanksgiving.

The last two weeks of November the children learned about Thanksgiving. It was touching to hear about all the things for which the children are thankful. All of them were thankful for their families and pets. The children learned that we have many things to be thankful for, and we need to thank God every day for our many blessings. They also learned about the first Thanksgiving many years ago that both the Pilgrims and Indians celebrated. The children experienced making many art projects, including thankfulness collages, turkeys with colorful feathers, Indian corn, handprint turkeys, and beautiful paintings with fall colors. We shared a delicious Thanksgivings feast on Wednesday, November 25th, with all our friends.

We are looking forward to a joyful December. Our themes will be "Our Families," and "Christmas." Our chapel themes will be *Giving* (II Cor. 9:7), *Joy* (Prov. 17:22), *Truth* (Eph. 4:25), and *Trust* (Isaiah 26:4). We are excited about performing our Christmas program on Friday, December 11, at 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary for all our families and friends. We wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

In His Love,
Janet



S.W.E.A.T. AEROBICS

Fitness THROUGH the Holidays

The closer we get to the holiday season, the more we begin to stress about food, gifts, cooking, entertaining, finances, and the list goes on. Many people begin to skip their fitness routine when the holidays approach because they feel overwhelmed. They feel there is no time to add fitness to the list. We need to remember that God has created us to convene spirit, soul, and body...not neglecting any one of the three.

May God Himself,
the God who makes everything holy and whole,
make you holy and whole, put you together
- spirit, soul and body - and keep you fit
for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ.
(1 Thessalonians 5:23 MSG)

S.W.E.A.T. Aerobics meets in the Fellowship Center:
Mon., Wed., & Fri. - 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.
and Mon. - Thurs. - 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.
(High or Low Impact)
Tues. & Thurs. - 8:00 - 8:45 a.m.
(Non-Impact/Seniors)
For More Information Call:
Sandra Hegwood @ 988-4279



To protect you, and others from disease producing germs, good hand washing is very important. Besides using soap, warm water, and the friction of rubbing your hands together, the length of time spent washing your hand is important, too. Twenty seconds is the recommended length of time, about as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song two times.



Healthy Living Tips

Faith Through the Fire

By: Heather Daniel

Last February, a fire destroyed the home of Dennis and Jeannette Chapman, long time members of our Church Family. Thankfully, the Chapmans and their two daughters were



attending our Wednesday night Bible studies at Centenary as their house burned, so no one was hurt. After coming home to such destruction, they left the scene that night with only the clothes on their backs and a strong faith that God would care for their needs.

In the following days, weeks, and months, they saw God working in their lives, through their Centenary Church Family and through friends and family in the community. They experienced incidents and “coincidences” that could only be the work of God. Jeannette’s wedding ring set was in the room that was most damaged by fire, water, and smoke, yet it was found unharmed and was restored by a thorough cleaning donated by a local jewelry store. All of their holiday decorations were stored in a shed outside and were not damaged in the fire. So this Christmas, they can look forward to the joyful décor that has become a part of their family traditions.

One of the greatest blessings to the Chapmans in the days and weeks after the fire was the amazing outpouring of love and support from Centenary. Within days of the fire, the Church family was able to provide the Chapmans with emergency help, basic life supplies, and new Bibles. Several people from Centenary met at the house and sifted through the wreckage, salvaging what little could be saved, including their daughter’s favorite stuffed animal. The Chapmans received financial help, clothes for the whole family, toys and books for their daughters, household items, furniture and appliances. Many of you gave generously and sacrificially, and demonstrated the love of God to a family who needed that comfort during a very difficult time. A large storage area (owned by a couple in our Church Family) was loaned to the Chapmans to hold the household of things given to them, as they waited for their home to be rebuilt.

It is my joy to announce that the reconstruction is complete! The Chapmans were able to move back into the house recently, and are turning it back into the home they’ve missed all these months.

In addition to the stress of losing their home to the fire, the transitions caused by moving, and the stress of living “normal life” while waiting for their house to be rebuilt, the Chapmans have experienced some other trials. Several close friends have passed away in 2009. Jeannette was involved in an accident in which her van was destroyed. She was hit by a drunk driver, and has been dealing with an injured knee.

Yet through all of this, Dennis and Jeannette remain faithful and continue looking to God for strength. They are an amazing example to me, and hopefully to all of us, of how to put all of our trust in a loving and merciful God.

Thank you to all of you who reached out to the Chapman family in 2009 with your gifts, your love and your prayers. Thank you for allowing God to work through you to encourage them in their time of need.



That most important holiday of the year will be here soon and let us remember Robert Louis Stevenson’s Christmas Prayer: — “Oh, God...help us rightly to remember the birth of/ Jesus, that we may share in the songs of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be your children.”

I’m not sure we have any of Stevenson’s books in the Church Library but I know that you will find others that you will enjoy just as much, Especially interesting is a home-study guide given to us by “Guideposts,” Including a set on “Discovering I Corinthians” and a set on “Discovering Romans.” Look in the Study Guide section of the Library for these books.

Keith Neely has written two books which will help children understand the Bible. On the children’s Junior shelves are “The Acts of the Apostles” and “The Gospel of Mark.” The Bible text gives the actual Scriptures with dialogue boxes to show who is speaking. These two books help our youngsters to easily read and understand the Bible.

On the Devotional shelves is “Women of Faith”, a daily devotional that gives you a smile, an encouraging word, and insights from the Bible that relate to you each day. Patsy Clairmont, Barbara Johnson, and four other authors have written this helpful book.

— Margaret Bell



**Centenary United Methodist
Church**

1911 Toyon Avenue
Modesto, CA 95350
(209) 527-5441
www.centenarychurch.net

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Centenary's Christmas Celebration 2009

**Sunday, December 13th
10:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

Fellowship Center

A time for the whole Church Family
to come together to celebrate Christmas

**Activities Will Include:
Brunch Fundraiser to Benefit
Donetsk Christian University**

Crafts for the children to complete and take home

**Craft Faire with items to purchase, with proceeds
to benefit Centenary's Samaritans Fund**

