

A (Real) Christmas Story

“Imagine the future of a country in which 1 out of every 21 of the inhabitants is currently a child who is an orphan. This is the situation in Russia, where recent Russian media have reported the estimated orphan population at 2 million and the street children at 4 million.” (Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicines, May 2006)

To put a personal face on those statistics, consider Dasha, five years old. When found by the authorities, she was living with her alcoholic parents, doing all the cooking and whatever cleaning was done in the house because they were too wasted to do anything. Because of the alcoholism, her parents lost their comfortable home and thought they were moving into a rundown house that would be adequate for them. On arriving, they discovered that house was already occupied by another family who subsequently beat them and left them on the streets, homeless and penniless.

Not a suitable topic for discussion during the Christmas season? Au contraire, this is precisely the correct topic for a Christmas newsletter issue. Eugene H. Peterson, in *Five Smooth Stones*, reminds us of what the season is all about:

Though there were auspicious signs that preceded and accompanied his birth, preparing the world for the majestic and kingly, the birth of Jesus itself was of the humblest peasant parentage, in an unimportant town, and in the roughest of buildings. He made a career of rejecting the marks of privilege: He loved lepers, washed the feet of his disciples, befriended little children, encouraged women to join his entourage, and, finally, submitted to crucifixion by a foreign power.

Dasha needed a savior like that—one whose disciples would take her in, care for her, love her, bring God-in-the-flesh to her to give her a new life . . . which is exactly what happened In Khaborovsk, Russia. That, Virginia, is what Christmas is about! G. Crowe

*Our vision:
Knowing Christ, Making Christ Known*

Divine Laughter

I am a fan of laughter. It is quite therapeutic actually. No matter how down I am or how bad of a day I might be having, laughter lifts my spirits and releases any anxiety or frustration I might be feeling. That is yet another reason why it is so great working with college students. They love to laugh too! In his book, *Natural Church Development*, Christian Schwarz notes that laughter is a key factor in healthy, growing churches (p.37). Laughter is indeed one of the best medications for a number of different ailments.

I am certain that you have all experienced laughter before, but have you experienced *Divine* laughter. It is as crucial for the soul as human laughter is for the mood. Divine Laughter is simply when God puts his hand on your shoulder and laughs and says, “Of course I love you, silly!”

The need for Divine laughter is nothing to scoff at. It is needed more than you know. Scores of people turn away from the Lord everyday and continue to walk away from Him simply because they are afraid that the Lord does not love them anymore due to their sin.

The questions facing us are twofold: Have you experienced Divine Laughter? If so, have you helped someone else experience it?

A world in desperate need of healing awaits us outside the Elmwood building (and inside as well), and they need to hear this message! I encourage you to spread the news! Who knew that ministry could be such a barrel of laughs?
~Dan

Pray for the elders as they give prayerful thought as to what type of minister would best help us keep our vision alive...*Knowing Christ, Making Christ Known.*



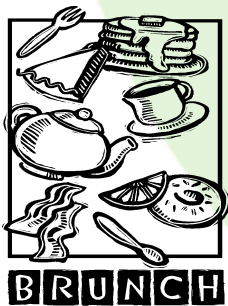
Cash Contributions

Internal Revenue Service has created a rule change that impacts the deductibility of cash contributions to charitable organizations for personal income tax purposes. If you wish to take an income tax deduction for your cash contributions to Elmwood in 2007, you will need a receipt.

In order to accommodate this IRS change, we will place envelopes in the pew racks. After January 1, 2007, if you make a cash donation to Elmwood and if you wish to deduct the contribution on your income taxes, you will need to place your donation in one of the envelopes and write your name on the envelope before placing it in a collection plate. We will use the envelopes to record your cash contributions. In January of 2008 we will provide you with a letter of acknowledgment to serve as your receipt for your 2007 cash contributions.

This rule change does not impact contributions made by check and you do not need to be concerned with the envelopes if you do not take a tax deduction for your cash contributions. See Bill Hodges if you have questions about this change.

Christmas Eve Schedule



We hope you have made plans to come to the "brunch" **this Sunday morning, December 24**, during our regular Bible class time. We'll have lots of goodies to choose from so you can eat and leisurely enjoy some fellowship with others.

Then at **4:00 in the afternoon** we will come together for a special service in which you will hear the story of Jesus' birth from the Gospel of Luke as you have never heard it.

New Year's Eve we will have our regular schedule of worship times.

Attention Parents

There will be no Children's Church for grades 1-5 on December 24 and December 31. We will resume Children's Church on January 7.

-Joe Ruhl



Anna Mary Shrum, Mandy Anderson's grandmother, died in Latrobe, PA. She was in her mid-80's. Mandy has gone to be with the family.



Nathan Sides, a former student at Purdue who was active at the Christian Student Center, died earlier this month. His mother wrote to Elmwood, *Dear family at Elmwood Church: Thank you so much for the lovely flowers and kind expressions of sympathy. We would appreciate your continued prayer.*

Love in Christ, Susan Sides

Congratulations!

Michelle Woody Lewis has graduated from Doweling College in New York. Congratulations, Michelle! We know your parents are very proud.

December 17, 2006
Class: 191 Worship: 296
Contribution: \$6,723
Budget: \$8,550

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The morning DJ told a story too good not to pass along: The DJ was in a store doing some Christmas shopping and as he got closer to the toy aisle, he heard a conversation in which a woman was obviously upset. She was staring at an empty space in a shelf where the toy she wanted to purchase would have been. The clerk had checked in the back and the store was completely out of the item. Even though the clerk probably had no control over the stock in that department, the lady was venting her anger on him. The DJ was uncomfortable, but listened in for a few moments nonetheless. Just as the DJ was turning to go down another aisle, the little boy in the lady's shopping cart said, "Mommy you are ruining Christmas." The rebuke brought the lady back to reality and she immediately agreed with her son and apologized to the clerk. The DJ was thankful he had stayed to hear the end of the conversation. Wow – out of the mouths of babes, again! Adults, let's do our best not to ruin Christmas as we all remember the real reason for the season. The best gift of all has already been given! When we give good gifts, we are being like the ultimate Gift Giver.

Speaking of out of the mouths of babes (okay, kids), wasn't the children's Christmas program wonderful? It was so sweet to hear the younger children sing the carols and then the musical by the first through eighth graders was really neat. They put a new "spin" on the King coming to town. Be sure to thank Lynae, Rose, Marihelen and Christi for all of their hours of work with the children. Yes, of course, Sharon did the backdrops and they were wonderful as always...the only credit I can take there is having married her and I helped her put the back drops in place.

I pray that all of you will have a safe and happy Christmas and New Year holiday. Treat each other like the King's children we are and count all the blessings our Father has blessed us with.

Concerning the New Year, what will it bring? What are your plans? We are entering a new phase here at Elmwood and it is our choice as to how we will approach it. I am like most of you and am sad the Crowes will be leaving us. On the other hand, I am thankful they are open to the Lord's direction in their lives and firmly believe He will be glorified through their ministries in Nashville...and thus around the world. For us, I believe the same. If all of us will be open to the Lord's leading, I believe He has prepared a family to come work with us to help us experience some exciting times. One thing I know for sure is that many would like for our church family to be more evangelistic....May the Lord bring that to fruition in 2007 like never before. Blessings to all. -Lee



Seth Mullen broke his right arm in a fall at Harrison High School on Thursday. After a quick trip to Chicago, where they put his arm in a cast, he is now at home recuperating....**Tommy Bartlett** had two stents inserted for blockage to arteries on Thursday....**Gary Verett**, son of Paul & Argie, and brother of Pauletta Smith, had experimental laser surgery on Friday....**Pat Turner**, Fay Wolf's mother, is in St. Frances Hospital in Indianapolis.... Continue praying for **Irene Sims, Bob Stafford, Jim Willison, Willard Farmer, Kaden Koebecke, Sue Durham, Annie & Elaine Crowder, Beth Holt, Ella McBride, Linda Smith, Marcia Swails, Mark Eddy, Lynn Robinson, Delpha Allen, Anna Dale, Minnie Scott** (*Lane House Nursing Home*), **Carrie High** (*Regency Place*), **Irene Fox** (*George Davis Manor Nursing Home*), and in *Rosewalk Village*: **Ruth Marks, & Burnell Gulden.**

Serving in our military: **Jeremy Crable** (*Afghanistan*); **Philip Devine & Robbie Mullinax** receiving further training stateside; **Jon Kiefner** (*Iraq*); and **Amanda Martin** (*South Korea*).



A big thank you and round of applause is due **Lynae Stafford, Rose Hunt, Marihelen Johnson,** and **Christi Branstetter** for their direction and hard work on this year's children's Christmas musicals. Thank you also to **Sharon Porter** for her many hours of artwork on the backdrops. Many others helped as well and of course much appreciation to the children for their superb presentation this year!



- Dec. 20, 7 PM**....Bible Classes for all
- Dec. 24, 9:30 AM**....Brunch for everyone in place of our regular Bible class time
- Dec. 24, 4 PM**....Afternoon devotional; no 6 PM worship
- Dec. 31**....Regular worship schedule

There will be no newsletter next week, the week of Christmas. Have a Merry Christmas and safe traveling for all!

Read:
Genesis 1-19; Luke 1-4

2007 Spiritual Adventure

Week 1: January 1-7

And God Created

On Christmas Day, 1968, the astronauts on Apollo 8 were the first human beings to orbit the moon, and the first people to send back to Earth pictures of the Earth as seen from outer space. To commemorate this occasion, they read the first 10 verses of Genesis, which begin "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

In recent days several books have been published by Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett basically asserting that belief in God is a delusion or a superstition. There is no God. This idea is not new. The Psalmist wrote perhaps 3,000 years ago: "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." (Psalm 14.1) But their arguments hold no water. To know that there is no God you would have to know everything there is to know, and nowhere was God to be found. Obviously these writers do not know everything there is to know. One of their books is titled *The End of Faith*. They exhibit a great deal of faith to assert that there is no God in the absence of definitive proof. They assert that evolution eliminates the need for a concept of God. This ignores biologists such as Francis Collins, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Charles Darwin himself who asserted that evolution was God's method for producing his creation. They also fail to explain how evolution explains why there is something instead of nothing, and where the process of evolution itself came from. Finally, they oppose science to faith, but ignore the fact that science itself is based on assuming certain things are true, in the absence of definitive proof (for example, that human beings are capable of understanding, that laws that hold here today hold everywhere in the universe all the time, that reality is ultimately mathematical, that phenomena occur because of an ongoing process rather than because of any plan or purpose)(see E.A. Burt's *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science*).

Everything is based on faith in something. On what is your faith based?

-Rick Swensen

 Weekly Schedule	 Elders	 World Missions	
Sunday Worship 8:00 a.m. Bible Study 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:45 a.m. Life Groups 6:00 p.m. Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 p.m.	Bill Bell 463-1139 Joe Matthews 474-8369 Rick Swensen 463-6822 Don Vice 471-8653	Kevin Chambers World Christian Broadcasting Anchor Point, Alaska 99556 Loren and Penny Hollingsworth Phuket, Thailand 83000 City of Children Ensenada, Mexico Bren and Cheryl White P.O. Box 245 New Market, MD 21774	
Elmwood Nursery School & Pre-K Preschool: Tues-Thurs 9-11:30 am Pre-K: Mon-Thurs 9-11:30 am Director, Susan McClain 447-2874	<th> Staff</th> <td></td>	 Staff	
	Ministers Gayle Crowe 447-6940 Lee Porter 463-6993 Dan Cooke 543-7469 Office Manager Sherry Marks 447-2874		

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Christmas Greetings!

Each year the elders have suggested that we contribute money to a special fund in lieu of sending greeting cards to one another in the congregation. This year this money has been designated for two places: the CSC building fund and the mission work in Fiji for Mike and Timbra Wiist. A BIG thank you to the following individuals for their contributions totaling \$3,009. God's richest blessings to all this Christmas season.



Perry & Janet Achor
Bill & Sue Adams
Scott & Lori Baker
Tommy & Ramona Bartlett
Bill & Carol Bell
Mark & Sarah Bird
Janet Boston
Josh & Gina Boyd
Brent & Christi Branstetter
Hattie Coffel
Elaine & Annie Crowder
Gayle & Lisa Crowe
Bud & Mary Darby
Hedi Devine
Yssa & Andrew DeWoody
Gene & Jeannie Dilling
Diann Doty & family
Shirley Farmer
Bill Farris
Bernie & Armilda Follick
Mike & Scheryl Gaylor
Phyllis Gray

Margaret Gustafson
David & Vicki Henke
Gene & Nancy High
Ted & Gloria Holderfield
Max & Pam Houlton
Jimmy & Susan Huff
Jim & Marihelen Johnson
Cecil & Carol Koons
Lori Kuchta
Betty LaMunyon
Camilla Lawson
Jan Lucas
Jim Markle
John & Sherry Marks
Paul & Ruth Marks
Joe & Joyce Mathews
Dan & Vicky Martin
Ann McConnell
Jack & Sue McCoy
Oscar & Dorothy Miller
Tom & Beth Miller
Lori & Terry Miller

Jim & Marsha Moore
Earl & Janet Nelson
Ken & Connie Nicholson
Delores Nolan
Miranda & Rashelle Parson
John Pippins
Lee & Sharon Porter
Sam & Sara Postlethwait
Mickey & Carolyn Rigdon
Joe & Gail Ruhl
Rob & Pauletta Smith
John & Lynae Stafford
Greg & Chris Sutherlin
Rick & Doris Swensen
Cheri Vaughn
Ann Vaught
Don & Patty Vice
Ron & Ruthann Wagoner
Joy Walker
Dick & Janice Waterstraat
David & Lorraine Weckerly
Joe & Cheryl Woody

Hallelujah!



And he will
be called...
Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6

*Oh Lord my God
How great thou art*

*To me thy love
Thou dost impart*

*You sent to me
your son so strong*

*He brought to me a
special song*

*A song of freedom in one life
to break the chains of sin and strife*

*No more power does Satan hold
As when he ruled in days of old*

-Jim Markle