



Finding Joy in Green Bags

As I sit in my office trying to think of another article to write I am surrounded by lots of big green bags. These green bags serve as homes for gifts that boys and girls all over Lafayette will soon enjoy. It is exciting to think about all of the moms and dads that will be able to provide their children with a Christmas that at one time they thought was impossible. But what is even more exciting about the presence of these green bags in my office is that they represent giving hearts. Not just any giving hearts. They represent the giving hearts of my Elmwood family.

If I gave you a list of all I want for Christmas it wouldn't fit in this bulletin. As a child I remember not even being able to sleep the night of Christmas Eve because I was so excited to see what I would get from Santa, my parents, my grandparents, and anyone else who was willing to give me a gift. I would get in bed at 6:30pm just because I thought the quicker I went to bed the quicker Christmas would come. I never thought about giving anything, but I sure thought about getting a lot of things!

After getting married and having a child, that feeling changed. I don't really care what I get. OK, I should not tell a lie. I do still enjoying getting stuff on Christmas, but I get more excited when I see the look on Kate's face as she sees what I got her. I love to surprise her with things. And even though Cole is not old enough to understand, I get super excited about buying things for him to play with. I now see why my parents loved giving me so much.

Jesus said it long ago and I'm starting to get the point. "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35). Jesus knew about giving. That is what his life was all about. He himself was a gift. He himself was **the** gift!

I hope this holiday season is full of giving. I hope that you find more joy in what you give than in what you receive. I hope that it excites you as much as it excites me to know that these green bags will soon bring joy to some homes in the area. Let us continue to remember the words of the Gift, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

-Gilbert

I Wonder

The following is from "Dear Church" by Sarah Cunningham, in reference to an informal survey she conducted while studying urban ministry:

"The comments from a woman working in connection with the local justice department summarized the feelings of many. 'What do you think churches could do to improve their relationship with the local community?' I asked... 'I don't see anything that churches could do.' She wasn't being mean, but rather to-the-point. 'We've already got tons of churches. ...And nothing has changed, has it? Did you know that three or four of these churches have been here since the town was on the map? But some of the social issues just keep getting worse and worse... People don't have enough job training or employment opportunities. Drunks wander the streets. The same homeless people have been circling in and out of the shelters for the last fifteen years. Kids don't have anything to do to keep them out of trouble. Meanwhile, the churches keep right on existing, holding their services every Sunday. And it never changes anything. It seems pretty obvious to me that churches are not the answer.'"

What a convicting answer! This text caused me to think, and I wonder what the people in our community might say about churches in the area. We have several missions that reach out to the community, one of our most active being the food bank, but I wonder if we can do more. I wonder if we just simply exist, or if we are agents of positive change in people's lives. I know Elmwood, and I think we can.

-Phil

Cookin' Up Christmas

December 16, 6 PM



This year's children's musical, "Cookin' Up Christmas," is this **Sunday, December 16, at 6 PM**, with refreshments to follow in A-2. Practice is this Wednesday from 6:30-8:00 PM, with a **dress rehearsal on Saturday at 9 AM**. Invite family and friends to see our children participate in this annual event.

Prayer Concerns....

Lynae Stafford's surgery on her shoulder went well. She is recovering at home....**Herb King** had successful surgery to remove an aneurysm on Friday. He is now recuperating at a nursing home....**Henrietta Frampton** was transferred Monday to IU Medical Center in Indianapolis for surgery on Wednesday to remove a brain tumor....**Mandy Anderson** will have surgery on her shoulder this Friday, Dec. 14. She also suffers from a torn disc in her lower back that will require surgery at a later date....**Barbara Scott** (*Don Vice's mother*), has two tumors in her lungs. She'll have more tests after the first of the year....Continue praying for **Bob Stafford, Max Houlton** (*has begun chemo treatments*), **Delores Nolan** (*now at home*), **Chris Crable** (*temporary soft cast*), **Ginger Maxwell-Spenard, Terry Spenard, Scott Baker, Mickey Rigdon, Rick Sims** (*now at home*), **Clifford DePriest** (*Carol Bell's uncle who has lung cancer*), **Matt Rigdon, Willie & Calvin Batts** (*ongoing health concerns*), **Ellen Raguette, Marie DeWoody, Beth Holt, Sue Sill, Hattie Coffel, Kaden Koebecke, Irene Sims, Mary Tavana, Dick Waterstraat, Paul & Argie Verett, Delpha Allen, Ivan Ellis, Valley Stockton, Eagle Bailey, Minnie Scott, Anna Dale, Irene Fox, and Burnell Gulden.**

Expecting families: **Joshua & Linnet Chia, Sarah & Mark Bird, and Dana & Amos Miller.**

Serving in our military: **Jeremy Crable, Michael Farris, & Michael Bryenton** in Afghanistan; **Ti Draughn** in Iraq; and **Chris Martin**, in South Korea.

CHRISTMAS CARDS



It's not too late to send a check or money to Elmwood for the Christmas card fund. Next week (December 18 issue) we will list all those who have contributed to this fund.

This year Christmas card money will go toward Elmwood's two *Let's Start Talking* teams. In summer 2008, Elmwood will send out its largest group of mission workers for *Let's Start Talking* ever, so the teams can use the help. LST offers free English practice using the Bible as the text. There are more missionary invitations around the world than there are teams to fill them, so the teams' destinations are still being matched up with the invitations that fit best. Here are the Elmwood team members: *6-week team*: Josh, Gina, Kinley, and Knox Boyd, Mandy Anderson, Farrell Simmerman; *2-week team*: Jimmy and Susan Huff, Jason Cochran, Amy Berkshire.



Snow Servants



Elmwood is in need of some volunteers for light snow removal this winter. You may be asked to assist a senior servant or someone just home from the hospital. All you need is a snow shovel, a loving spirit, and some time to volunteer. Sign up on the back of your yellow attendance card this Sunday with a telephone number where you can be reached.



The food pantry is in need of personal items: **soap, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, and toilet paper.**

—John Stafford

NO NEWSLETTER THE WEEK OF CHRISTMAS.

December 9, 2007

Class: 163 Worship: 232

Contribution: \$7,491

Budget: \$10,000/week

Final check to Shults-Lewis for milk money: \$5,492



Peace on Earth?

In The Message, Luke 2:9-20 reads like this, *“Suddenly, God’s angel stood among them and God’s glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, ‘Don’t be afraid. I’m here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David’s town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you’re to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.’ At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God’s praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please him. As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. ‘Let’s get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us.’ They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed. Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they’d been told!”*

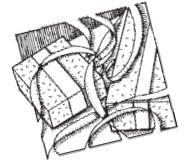
I love that passage...we read it a lot at this time of year. What a sweet sentiment, “Peace to all...” So what on earth is happening this year? Honestly, this year isn’t all that different, we are just more aware of the craziness going on. I am sure all of you have heard of the shootings in the mall in Nebraska and this week we have learned of the shootings in the missionary training center and the church in Colorado. If you will think back to the history surrounding the birth of Christ, this kind of thing happened then, too. Remember? When Herod learned of the birth of Jesus and that his power might be challenged, he sent his soldiers out with orders to have all the boys two years old and younger to be killed.

Did God know what He was doing when He set all of this in motion? I assure you He did. Did he plan for Herod to go crazy then and for these disturbed young men to do the same in our time? Of course not! God gave man free will and we have chosen over and over to misuse it. Instead of following Him, we have chosen to follow our own wishes and desires. We want to be in control and as long as that is the case, we will continue to make the messes...with the help of the Enemy.

Last week Gilbert challenged us to consider what “treasures” we might be holding on to that could be keeping us from the “Treasure.” I know one of mine and many in our world is that need to be in control. Let’s **surrender** that control to the One who knows what to do with it. Let’s truly **follow** Him. Let’s really **be the church** He has called us to be. Let’s **help** this world to truly know Peace On Earth!

– Lee

Christmas for Everyone



Distribution Day for “*Christmas for Everyone*” at Elmwood is this **Saturday, December 15, between 9 AM and 12:00 noon**. Have the purchased gifts in the green bags here by that time. You are welcome (and encouraged) to be here on distribution day to meet the families picking up the gifts.

Also, on that day we plan to provide free wrapping for those who request it. If you have extra rolls of Christmas wrapping paper, tissue paper, Christmas bows, labels for packages, and boxes you will not be using, please bring them to the kitchen area by **this Wednesday, December 12**. Thanks for all your help.

No Newsletter the week of Christmas



Holiday Gift Lift



The **Holiday Gift Lift Program** of Mental Health America who distributes new essential items to adults who might not otherwise receive a gift over the holiday season. Suggested gifts (leave them unwrapped) include: sweatshirts, sweaters, warm socks, nightwear, hats, gloves, sweatpants, flannel shirts (all in xl-xxl adults sizes, please). **Gifts may be placed in the collection box located in the Farris foyer. Let’s fill it to overflowing!! These items may be given right up to Christmas.**



Dec. 12, 6:30-8:00 PM....Christmas musical rehearsal

Dec. 12, 7 PM....Bible classes for all

Dec. 15, 9 AM....“*Cookin’ Up Christmas*” dress rehearsal

Dec. 15, 9 AM-noon....Christmas for Everyone distribution of gifts at Elmwood

Dec. 16, 6 PM....Elmwood’s children’s musical, *Cooking’ Up Christmas*, refreshments afterward

