



Pastor's Perspective — The Untold Story

By Ron D. Lindholm, Senior Pastor

Every year at this time the battle lines are drawn between the Merry Christmas Crowd and the Happy Holidays Crowd. That such would be the case is not surprising—for there are those in these United States of America who would have us believe that religion has no place in the public square so we should keep our opinions to ourselves and they to theirs. Interestingly, it never quite works out that way. The opponents are decidedly anti-Christian in their bias and they are vocal.

For the most part I appreciate those who are on the frontlines of the battle making the argument for the protection of our First Amendment rights and the liberty principles contained therein. What troubles me, however, especially at this time of year, is what so many of the rest of us do with that freedom in actually telling others about Jesus and why He came and why it matters, which is the real Christmas story.

Somewhere in the midst of the glitter and the lights and the merriment, it would seem that we've been blinded and have lost our way. Think about it. Have we really said anything meaningful about Christ (are we really keeping Christ in Christmas) if all that we pres-

ent is a slogan (Jesus is the Reason for the Season) or offer is a greeting (Merry Christmas)?

In the final analysis it should not matter to us whether the nativity is allowed on the city lawn or the cashier at Walmart can reciprocate our Christmas greeting. What should matter to us is that the people around us are actually hearing the gospel—a story that can't be reduced slogans or season's greetings.

When the gospel is told it explains the reason for the season and why from the Bible's perspective Christmas is cause for such celebration—a *Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord!* When the message was first announced, it was said to be *good news of great joy that will be for all the people*. The people around you who don't know the Lord don't know that. They need to hear the story. It needs to be explained to them. They need to understand how that *good news* announced so long ago relates to them and then what it means to trust Jesus as Savior. They need to be encouraged to believe. The fulfilling of these needs is in the telling of the story—and that telling is your responsibility and mine. By themselves, the slogans and greetings mean nothing to anyone but the initiated.

This Christmas, don't let the story be untold.

Christmas Celebrations

Please invite unsaved friends and neighbors to our regular worship services and special celebrations this Christmas season, praying God will open their hearts to the wonderful truths of the gospel. The following special gatherings are planned:

A Celebration of Christmas: The evening worship service on Sunday, December 20 will feature a Christ-

mas choir concert as well as Scripture reading and special music from several individuals and groups.

Candlelight Service: A candlelight service will be held on Christmas Eve at 6:00 PM to celebrate our Savior's birth with songs, hymns and Scripture reading.



A Gift for Our Missionaries

Fellowship's annual Christmas missionary offering is received throughout the month of December for the purpose of providing each missionary family a gift equal to their monthly support provided by our church. This year our goal is \$3,900.



In giving generously to this offering we show our love

and support for our missionary families. The needs of these servants of the gospel are especially great this year in these trying economic times.

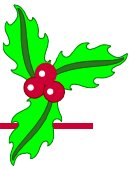
Please plan to help us encourage our missionary families through this Christmas gift. And please pray for the Lord's provision for them in 2010.



New Year's Eve Fellowship

A Progressive Dinner is planned for New Year's Eve beginning at 6:00 PM. If you would like to participate, please sign up in the church foyer and also indicate if you would be willing to host a group in your home for the appetizer, main course or dessert. Don't miss this opportunity to encourage one another as we reflect on the Lord's goodness in 2009 and anticipate His work in the coming year.

Money Matters

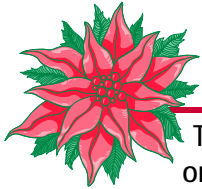


November Giving Per Week (General Fund)	\$5,996
Weekly Need	\$5,689
Year-to-Date General Fund Giving	\$255,347
Year-to-Date General Fund Need	\$273,085

Mortgage Eliminated: We continue to rejoice in the Lord's provision of \$30,630 in special giving during 2009 that enabled Fellowship to make our final mortgage payment in November! We also rejoice in the Lord's provision throughout the duration of our 50@1 mortgage paydown effort, which enabled us to

see a mortgage indebtedness of over \$475,000 at the end of 2000 completely eliminated over a nine-year period. By making significant prepayments toward our mortgage principal, the church reduced the total interest paid by over \$200,000. Our God is good!

Regular Giving: Aided by a large one-time gift, our weekly General Fund giving for November exceeded the budgeted need for the first time this year. As a result, the year-to-date deficit was reduced from \$19,270 at the end of October to \$17,738 at the end of November. Please continue to pray that this shortfall might be further reduced in December.



Preparing for the New Year

The December Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 9 at 7:30 PM. The purpose of this meeting is to approve a church budget and elect deacons for 2010. The Finance Committee and Pastors and Deacons have carefully prepared a proposed budget which recognizes the need to reduce the total budget due to the lower-than-anticipated giving in 2009. Though unable to reallocate all of the monies previously devoted to the mortgage, we are nevertheless excited about our ability to do the following in 2010:

- (1) Increase our involvement in world missions. Specifically, we would like to provide six of our missionary families with significant increases in support, thereby helping to address their current shortfalls.
- (2) Replenish the Building Fund. Costly air conditioning repairs in 2008 largely depleted our Building Fund. We would like to build that back up in order to be prepared for future emergencies.
- (3) Provide our Pastors with a one-time retirement catch-up. Due to financial constraints, the church has been limited in its ability to help our Pastors prepare for retirement.

In light of the church's current financial condition, items (2) and (3) above will be subject to quarterly review by the Finance Committee and the Pastors and Deacons, ensuring that payouts will only be made when funds are available.

Though additional church members were approached for service, the Clearing Committee has identified two

men, Pete English and Doug Mount, who meet the biblical qualifications and have consented to serve in the office of deacon. Assuming Pete and Doug are elected, our Deacon body will shrink from five to four members in 2010. Please pray for the important ministry of our Deacons.



Calendar

The **ESL Christmas Party** will be held on Thursday, December 17 in Fellowship Hall. The entire church family is invited to participate. Our **Awana Christmas Party** will be held on Saturday, December 19. Please pray that both of these gatherings will be used to open doors for the gospel among the families we are seeking to reach through these ministries.

You won't want to miss the **White Elephant Gift Exchange** on Friday, December 18, as it is certain to be a wonderful time of fellowship.

Dec. 8	Nursing Home Ministry (2:00 PM)
Dec. 9	December Annual Meeting (7:30 PM)
Dec. 17	ESL Christmas Party (7:00 PM)
Dec. 18	White Elephant Gift Exchange (7:30 PM)
Dec. 19	Awana Christmas Party (10:00 AM)
Dec. 20	Christmas Music Program (PM Service)
Dec. 24	Candlelight Service (6:00 PM)
Dec. 31	Church-wide Progressive Dinner (6:00 PM)