

Community Christian Center

The Word
Fellowship
Prayer

The Good Tidings Newsletter

A Report on the Revival at CCC



DECEMBER, 2009

KENNETH CLOWDUS, PASTOR

VOLUME 119

Pastor's Corner

This month featuring *Senior Pastor Ken Clowdus*

A Time for Reflection

For the past several years Sandy and I have usually made a statement one to the other something like this: "I wonder if this is our last Christmas as a family the way we have known it." Christmas has always been extra special for all of us, but with the uncertainties of life and especially the economy, that question is even more urgent today.



But, by His grace, God has seen fit to bring us through another year. So, along with you, we are ready for another Christmas season and another New Year. It is with eager anticipation we close out 2009 by celebrating His birth, and wait for 2010 with an ever increasing confidence in God.

But along with the forward look, Sandy and I sometimes look back to the years when we were small children and, instead of the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas seeming like a few days, the time passed so slowly that those 4 weeks seemed endless.

By today's standards our surprises on Christmas morning were meager indeed - perhaps a doll for Sandy; a toy cap gun for me; a better than average meal of either turkey, chicken or ham; a piece of fruit which was a novelty; and a few simple decorations in our homes. BUT, oh how we looked forward to it. We literally counted the days.

Sandy would walk down the hill from her farm house to a one room school in Cossayuna, New York. Kindergarten through 6th grade were all taught in a room about a third the size of our Fellowship Hall - by one teacher. In the middle of the room was an old pot belly stove that kept it warm in the severe cold of up state New York, as the janitor had a hot fire going when the kids arrived - a metal barrier kept the students at a safe distance from it. My school in Oklahoma had at least 3 rooms and 3 teachers.

But neither of us were deprived in any sense of the word, we learned all the basics like reading, writing, math and American history. We were taught to be proud of our country, and especially our soldiers who were even then fighting to defend the world from Nazi and Japanese aggression.

I recall as a second grader I was asked to read the Christmas story from the gospel of Luke for my part in the Christmas play we put together every year for the entire community. We sang all the old Christmas carols, prayed in school, read from the Bible, and somehow, during those days, we began to feel something that we all called, 'the Spirit of Christmas.'

I wasn't saved then but I certainly felt that certain, unexplainable something that happens when we are all looking in the same direction; back to a manger and up to a God in Heaven that gave the most sacred gift that Heaven can give to mankind.

Those who could afford it had a primitive hand crank telephone with a party line, but a cell phone was beyond anyone's

imagination. Ipods were 60 years in the future and color TV was unheard of. There were other things missing too, like being greeted by, "Happy Holidays" instead of, "Merry Christmas," and the ever-present, ever intrusive ACLU 'protecting' us from, God forbid, a manger scene!

But, because of true religious freedom, we who possessed very little of this world's goods had everything we needed to fill our hearts with great joy as we eagerly anticipated a day unlike any other day of the entire year.

Now I know that God Himself smiled down on these simple country folk in up state New York in a little village with a strange name that none but the natives can spell and a remote 3-room school house in Oklahoma, where a poor and struggling community just barely recovered from the depression and the dust bowl, found that there was something very special in the air this time of year that more than made up for material lack.

I trust that each of us will take some time and forget about "Black Friday," that latest gadget, the perfect gift to buy, or the regret that seems to settle in when we find that we can buy nothing, - and just get along with the one who needs no props to fill our life with the greatest gift ever given to man, His Son, our Lord and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

When God Speaks...

Submitted by *Dorothy Glenn Thomas*

From the internet

A young man had been to Wednesday Night Bible Study. The Pastor had shared about listening to God and obeying the Lord's voice. The young man couldn't help but wonder, "Does God still speak to people?"

After service, he went out with some friends for coffee and pie and they discussed the message. Several different ones talked about how God had led them in different ways.

It was about ten o'clock when the young man started driving home. Sitting in his car, he just began to pray, "God...If you still speak to people, speak to me. I will listen. I will do my best to obey." As he drove down the main street of his town, he had the strangest thought to stop and buy a gallon of milk. He shook his head and said out loud, "God is that you?" He didn't get a reply and started on toward home. But again, the thought, buy a gallon of milk.

The young man thought about Samuel and how he didn't recognize the voice of God, and how little Samuel ran to Eli. "Okay, God, in case that is you, I will buy the milk." It didn't seem like too hard a test of obedience. He could always use the milk. He stopped and purchased the gallon of milk and started off toward home.

As he passed Seventh Street, he again felt the urge, "Turn Down that street." This is crazy he thought, and drove on past the intersection. Again, he felt that he should turn down Seventh Street. At the next intersection, he turned back and headed down Seventh. Half jokingly, he said out loud, "Okay, God, I will."

He drove several blocks, when suddenly, he felt like he should stop. He pulled over to the curb and looked around. He was in a

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semi-commercial area of town. It wasn't the best, but it wasn't the worst of neighborhoods either. The businesses were closed and most of the houses looked dark like the people were already in bed.

Again, he sensed something, "Go and give the milk to the people in the house across the street." The young man looked at the house. It was dark and it looked like the people were either gone or they were already asleep. He started to open the door and then sat back in the car seat.

"Lord, this is insane. Those people are asleep and if I wake them up, they are going to be mad and I will look stupid." Again, he felt like he should go and give the milk.

Finally, he opened the door, "Okay God, if this is you, I will go to the door and I will give them the milk. If you want me to look like a crazy person, okay. I want to be obedient. I guess that will count for something, but if they don't answer right away, I am out of here."

He walked across the street and rang the bell. He could hear some noise inside. A man's voice yelled out, "Who is it? What do you want?" Then the door opened before the young man could get away.

The man was standing there in his jeans and T-shirt. He looked like he just got out of bed. He had a strange look on his face and he didn't seem too happy to have some stranger standing on his doorstep. "What is it?"

The young man thrust out the gallon of milk, "Here, I brought this to you." The man took the milk and rushed down a hallway. Then from down the hall came a woman carrying the milk toward the kitchen. The man was following her holding a baby. The baby was crying. The man had tears streaming down his face.

The man began speaking and half crying, "We were just praying. We had some big bills this month and we ran out of money. We didn't have any milk for our baby. I was just praying and asking God to show me how to get some milk."

His wife in the kitchen yelled out, "I asked him to send an Angel with some. Are you an Angel?"

The young man reached into his wallet and pulled out all the money he had on him and put in the man's hand. He turned and walked back toward his car and the tears were streaming down his face. He knew that God still answers prayers.

The Christmas Pageant

From the Internet

Submitted by **Barbara Parker**

My husband and I had been happily married (most of the time) for five years but hadn't been blessed with a baby. I decided to do some serious praying and promised God that if he would give us a child, I would be a perfect mother, love it with all my heart and raise it with His word as my guide.

God answered my prayers and blessed us with a son. The next year God blessed us with another son. The following year, He blessed us with yet another son. The year after that we were blessed with a daughter. My husband thought we'd been blessed right into poverty. We now had four children, and the oldest was only four years old.

I learned never to ask God for anything unless I meant it. As a minister once told me, "If you pray for rain, make sure you carry an umbrella." I began reading a few verses of the Bible to the children each day as they lay in their cribs.

I was off to a good start. God had entrusted me with four children and I didn't want to disappoint Him. I tried to be patient the day the children smashed two dozen eggs on the kitchen floor searching

for baby chicks. I tried to be understanding...when they started a hotel for homeless frogs in the spare bedroom, although it took me nearly two hours to catch all twenty-three frogs. When my daughter poured ketchup all over herself and rolled up in a blanket to see how it felt to be a hot dog, I tried to see the humor rather than the mess.

In spite of changing over twenty-five thousand diapers, never eating a hot meal and never sleeping for more than thirty minutes at a time, I still thank God daily for my children. While I couldn't keep my promise to be a perfect mother - I didn't even come close... I did keep my promise to raise them in the Word of God.

I knew I was missing the mark just a little when I told my daughter we were going to church to worship God, and she wanted to bring a bar of soap along to "wash up" Jesus, too. Something was lost in the translation when I explained that God gave us everlasting life, and my son thought it was generous of God to give us his "last wife."

My proudest moment came during the children's Christmas pageant. My daughter was playing Mary, two of my sons were shepherds and my youngest son was a wise man. This was their moment to shine. My five-year-old shepherd had practiced his line, "We found the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." But he was nervous and said, "The baby was wrapped in wrinkled clothes." My four-year-old "Mary" said, "That's not 'wrinkled clothes,' silly. That's dirty, rotten clothes." A wrestling match broke out between Mary and the shepherd and was stopped by an angel, who bent her halo and lost her left wing.

I slouched a little lower in my seat when Mary dropped the doll representing Baby Jesus, and it bounced down the aisle crying, "Mama-mama." Mary grabbed the doll, wrapped it back up and held it tightly as the wise men arrived. My other son stepped forward wearing a bathrobe and a paper crown, knelt at the manger and announced, "We are the three wise men, and we are bringing gifts of gold, common sense and fur."

The congregation dissolved into laughter, and the pageant got a standing ovation. "I've never enjoyed a Christmas program as much as this one," laughed the pastor, wiping tears from his eyes "For the rest of my life, I'll never hear the Christmas story without thinking of gold, common sense and fur."

"My children are my pride and my joy and my greatest blessing," I said as I dug through my purse for an aspirin.

WOMENS MEETING



Rev. Eva Navarro spoke at women's meeting last month; the title of her message was "Chosen for Such a Time as This."

It was a powerful and emotional message that touched us and blessed us. There was an anointed altar time following. The Lord gave meaningful words of knowledge through her at that time and we thank God for them.

The Harvest Celebration

The harvest celebration: "trunk or treat" was a success. There were decorated car trunks, jumpers, apple bobbing contests, pie eating contests, musical chairs, a barbeque, and lots of fun. We raffled off two bikes. It was a wonderful way to spend this holiday with church family and friends. Dustin and Sarah Paraspolo and the youth were in charge and they did an excellent job.

PIX OF THE HARVEST CELEBRATION - More can be seen at communitychristiancenter.org



Kitchen Korner

...from the kitchen of *Dee Paraspolo*

Isn't God good to bring us to another year's end? Another holiday season of Christmas - of peace on earth, good will to men, brought only by the love of God Himself. Peace, not as the world gives, but peace given only by accepting the gift of salvation, the gift of Christ.

As I write this, very soon at my house Heather, Jesse and I will be putting away all the autumn decorations of orange, gold and green leaves, tablecloths and wreaths and other autumn knickknacks. By the time you read this, we will have completed the excitement of putting up Christmas lights, bows, baskets, candles, a tree, and several Nativity Scenes -- all the things that have become our family's Christmas traditions.

We have many new faces in our church family, thus I am choosing to repeat something I put in the newsletter three seasons ago. What I am sharing with you today should be in our heart all year long. As our Christ-filled holiday season is coming into full-swing; think back to gifts that you still cherish. Many of those gifts, etched forever in your memory, are the simple gifts you receive from others everyday including those gifts of love, grace and time. Now think of the season ahead and be assured that the gifts you will cherish forever are the simple gifts you will receive everyday including those gifts of love, grace and time.

The below came from the internet and the author is unknown. I would like to share with you,

"A Christmas Version of 1 Corinthians 13"

If I decorate my house perfectly with red and green bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crochet snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata, but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child.

Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband.

Love is kind, though hurried and tired.

Love does not envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love does not yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love does not give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who have nothing to return.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

The Good Tidings Newsletter
Sharon Johnson, Editor & Publisher
email: sharonsue@roadrunner.com



Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust. But giving the gift of love will endure forever.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

A SOLDIER'S CHRISTMAS POEM

Submitted by *Barbara Knight*

'Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone
In a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone
I had come down the chimney with presents to give
And to see just who in this home did live.

I looked all about, a strange sight I did see,

No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree

No stocking by mantle, just boots filled with sand.

On the wall hung pictures of far distant lands.

With medals and badges, awards of all kinds,

A sober thought came through my mind

For this house was different, it was dark and dreary,
I found the home of a soldier, once I could see clearly.

The soldier lay sleeping, silent, alone,

Curled up on the floor in this one bedroom home.

The face was so gentle, the room in such disorder,

Not how I pictured a United States soldier.

Curled up on a poncho, the floor for a bed?

I realized the families that I saw this night,

Owed their lives to these soldiers who were willing to fight.

Soon round the world, the children would play

And grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas day.

They all enjoyed freedom each month of the year

Because of the soldiers, like the one lying here.

I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone,

On a cold Christmas Eve in a land far from home.

The very thought brought a tear to my eye,

I dropped to my knees and started to cry.

The soldier awakened and I heard a rough voice,

"Santa don't cry, this life is my choice,

I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more,

My life is my God, my Country, my Corps."

The soldier rolled over and drifted to sleep.

I couldn't control it, I continued to weep

I kept watch for hours, so silent and still

And we both shivered from the cold night's chill.

I didn't want to leave on that cold, dark night,

This guardian of honor so willing to fight.

Then the soldier rolled over, with a voice soft and pure
Whispered, "Carry on Santa, it's Christmas day, all is secure."

One look at my watch, and I knew he was right

"Merry Christmas my friend, and to all a good night."

Anonymous

Community Christian Center

165 West Dexter Street

Covina, California 91723

Phone No.: (626) 331-2059

www.communitychristiancenter.org

Pastor Ken & Sandy Clowdus

Assoc. Pastors: Tony Paraspolo & Mike Stephens