
Christmas & Epiphany 2007/2008

The Messenger

of St James' Church, Texarkana, Texas

From the Archbishop of Canterbury

Beloved in Christ:

One of the main things that Christmas means to me is that God actually likes the company of human beings, God starts living a human life in the middle of the world when the life of Jesus begins, and that suggests that as the Bible says - God actually loves the world, he likes to be with us, he likes us to be with him. And what flows from that for Christians, is the sense that human beings are just colossally worthwhile. God thought they were worth spending a lifetime with and all that spills over into how we see all kinds of human beings; the ones we don't like or the ones we don't reckon very much, the ones we don't take very seriously. But they are all to be taken very seriously, they are all to be loved. And so Christmas, as I see it, is the very beginning of that sense of huge human dignity in all the people around us, and that's what I think we are celebrating, that is the most important thing. I hope everyone has a very happy Christmas."

Rowan : Cantuar

From the Rector

Dear Parishioners & Friends of St James',

By now, many of us have decked the halls, baked the Christmas cookies and made the annual pilgrimage to the malls. For most of us, Christmas is our favourite time of year, a time when the daily round and common task gives way to light-heartedness and celebration. But just what are we celebrating at Christmas?

Every once in a while on television or in the newspaper, you see a king or president on a goodwill tour, surrounded by a group of coal miners with grimy faces, or in a hospital ward with victims of a disaster. The king will have his picture taken with these people, but then disappear in a big black car. The king, you see, does not *become* a coal miner or a disaster victim. The amazing thing is that Christmas is that God Omnipotent, the King of kings and Lord of lords became, just like you and me, a human being, a man. Jesus is "God in Skin," and one Sunday School student put it.

And what was the reason for the "enfleshment" or Incarnation of God? St Gregory of Nyssa reminds us that "What Christ did not assume, he could not redeem." Christ assumed our human nature in order that he might redeem us from the power of Satan, sin and death, and make us heirs of the kingdom of God.

That Jesus Christ came among us to be the Saviour and Redeemer of the world is the true gift of Christmas, of which all of our trimmings are but tokens and reminders/

My best wishes for a holy and happy Christmas!

Is Bigger Really Better?

A Shocking "Confession" from Willow Creek Community Church

By Bob Burney

If you are older than 40 the name Benjamin Spock is more than familiar. It was Spock that told an entire generation of parents to take it easy, don't discipline your children and allow them to express themselves. Discipline, he told us, would warp a child's fragile ego. Millions followed this guru of child development and he remained unchallenged among child rearing professionals. However, before his death Dr. Spock made an amazing discovery--he was wrong. In fact, he said:

We have reared a generation of brats. Parents aren't firm enough with their children for fear of losing their love or incurring their resentment. This is a cruel deprivation that we professionals have imposed on mothers and fathers. Of course, we did it with the best of intentions. We didn't realize until it was too late how our know-it-all attitude was undermining the self assurance of parents.

Oops.

Something just as momentous, in my opinion, just happened in the evangelical community. For most of a generation evangelicals have been romanced by the "seeker sensitive" movement spawned by Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago. The guru of this movement is Bill Hybels. He and others have been telling us for decades to throw out everything we have previously thought and been taught about church growth and replace it with a new paradigm, a new way to do ministry.

Perhaps inadvertently, with this "new wave" of ministry came a de-emphasis on taking personal responsibility for Bible study combined with an emphasis on felt-needs based "programs" and slick marketing.

The size of the crowd rather than the depth of the heart determined success. If the crowd was large then surely God was blessing the ministry. Churches were built by demographic studies, professional strategists, marketing research, meeting "felt needs" and sermons consistent with these techniques. We were told that preaching was out, relevance was in. Doctrine didn't matter nearly as much as innovation. If it wasn't "cutting edge" and consumer friendly it

was doomed. The mention of sin, salvation and sanctification were taboo and replaced by Starbucks, strategy and sensitivity.

Thousands of pastors hung on every word that emanated from the lips of the church growth experts. Satellite seminars were packed with hungry church leaders learning the latest way to "do church." The promise was clear: thousands of people and millions of dollars couldn't be wrong. Forget what people need, give them what they want. How can you argue with the numbers? If you dared to challenge the "experts" you were immediately labeled as a "traditionalist," a throwback to the 50s, a stubborn dinosaur unwilling to change with the times.

All that changed recently.

Willow Creek has released the results of a multi-year study on the effectiveness of their programs and philosophy of ministry. The study's findings are in a new book titled *Reveal: Where Are You?*, co-authored by Cally Parkinson and Greg Hawkins, executive pastor of Willow Creek Community Church. Hybels himself called the findings "earth shaking," "ground breaking" and "mind blowing." And no wonder: it seems that the "experts" were wrong.

The report reveals that most of what they have been doing for these many years and what they have taught millions of others to do is not producing solid disciples of Jesus Christ. Numbers yes, but not disciples. It gets worse. Hybels laments:

Some of the stuff that we have put millions of dollars into thinking it would really help our people grow and develop spiritually, when the data actually came back it wasn't helping people that much. Other things that we didn't put that much money into and didn't put much staff against is stuff our people are crying out for.

If you simply want a crowd, the "seeker sensitive" model produces results. If you want solid, sincere, mature followers of Christ, it's a bust. In a shocking confession, Hybels states:

We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own.

Incredibly, the guru of church growth now tells us that people need to be reading their bibles and taking responsibility for their spiritual growth.

Just as Spock's "mistake" was no minor error, so the error of the seeker sensitive movement is monumental in its scope. The foundation of thousands of American churches is now discovered to be mere sand. The one individual who has had perhaps the greatest influence on the American church in our generation has now admitted his philosophy of ministry, in large part, was a "mistake." The extent of this error defies measurement.

Perhaps the most shocking thing of all in this revelation coming out of Willow Creek is in a summary statement by Greg Hawkins:

Our dream is that we fundamentally change the way we do church. That we take out a clean sheet of paper and we rethink all of our old assumptions. Replace it with new insights. Insights that are informed by research and rooted in Scripture. Our dream is really to discover what God is doing and how he's asking us to transform this planet.

Isn't that what we were told when this whole seeker-sensitive thing started? The church growth gurus again want to throw away their old assumptions and "take out a clean sheet of paper" and, presumably, come up with a new paradigm for ministry.

Should this be encouraging?

Please note that "rooted in Scripture" still follows "rethink," "new insights" and "informed research." Someone, it appears, still might not get it. Unless there is a return to simple biblical (and relevant) principles, a new faulty scheme will replace the existing one and another generation will follow along as the latest piper plays.

What we should find encouraging, at least, in this "confession" coming from the highest ranks of the Willow Creek Association is that they are coming to realize that their existing "model" does not help people grow into mature followers of Jesus Christ. Given the massive influence this organization has on the American church today, let us pray that God would be pleased to put structures in place at Willow Creek that foster not mere numeric growth, but growth in grace. □

Baptisms at St James'

Parents, sponsors and Godparents of infant / child candidates should schedule a pre-baptismal orientation with the clergy. Adult candidates are required to complete appropriate instruction. Active participation in the life of the Church is expected of parents, sponsors and candidates.

Except in cases of emergency, Baptisms will be reserved for the following dates:

Jan. 13th, 2008 Baptism OLJC
Mar. 22nd, 2008 Great Vigil of Easter

Epiphany Pageant for All Ages

January 6, 2008, During the 10:00 Mass



For more information, contact Ruth Hale (Director), 903.838.3968 or Mary Nell Short or Jennifer Gould at the church.

For Children ...

Keys to the Kingdom...

We have just completed the unit on the Annunciation of Mary and Joseph's Dream in K/4 through Grade 5. A huge thanks to Penny Williams, Cyndee Cline, Lorelei Lofton, Bobbie Trimble, and Michelle Miller, our volunteer teachers for the unit. Attendance indicates what a great job our volunteers do in teaching and shepherding our young people.

Our regular Shepherds, Alice Crowder, Lisa Hendrickson, and Alan Trimble, and our substitute Shepherds, Kim Fowler and Ruby Firmin, do a wonderful job of "shepherding" our children to their classes and lending a helping hand in the workshop. We could not do it without them.

Living the Good News...

Middle and High School students have been having some great classes in this first block, thanks to their dedicated teachers, Carter Adams and Tracy Jones, Middle School, and Judie Firmin, Michelle Shores, James Elliott, and Al Williams, High School.

Sunday School and Children's Liturgy will begin again on January 13.

Faithweavers...

Our Wednesday night class for K/4 - grade 5 is full of very energetic and inquisitive students. A huge thank you to Susie Stanley, leader, and her helpers of this past block, Megan Schroeder, Diane Akin, and Austin Stanley. Faithweavers will resume when our Wednesday nights take up again, January 9.

Children's Liturgy...

A great big thank you to Alan and Bobbie Trimble, Traci Anderson, and Michelle Miller for leading Children's chapel this month. We also have some wonderful parent volunteers who lend a helping hand with the children. St. Nicholas made a special visit to the chapel Dec. 9 and had gifts for all.

Excellent Attendance Sunday...

December 16 at the 10:00 mass, those children who have been placed on the Rector's Roll for excellent attendance during Block I will be recognized. We

will also have a drawing for gift certificates for children, K/4 through grade 5, during the snack time.

Gifts of Warmth...

December 24, Christmas Eve family service, we will once again collect "gifts of warmth and love" in the form of new socks, gloves, hats, etc. Please remember to bring your gift, all of which will be donated to the shelter.

First Holy Communion...

Classes for children in first grade will begin January 13 and the children will make their communion at the Easter Vigil. Parents of those children will meet with Father Doug during the Sunday School hour on January 13.

For Adults ...

THE SACRAMENTS – RITES OF CONVERSION

Beginning Sunday, January 20th at 9am in the Great Hall

Each of the seven Sacraments celebrates, ritualizes the moments of our lives. Each is a rite of conversion in an ongoing relationship – not merely a once-for-all rite, but a high-point in a lifelong process, a celebration of change, a rite of conversion. The purpose of this course will be to help us understand the sacraments better, and revivify these symbols.

On Wednesday Evenings

EXPRESSIONS OF THE FAITH

Or, "Why do we do that?"

Beginning January 9th in the Great Hall.

This course, led by Fr Anderson, will explore the teaching and practices of the Church. Some topics to be explored include:

- The Church year as an image of Christ's life
- Saints: how you get to be one
- The architecture of churches
- Making sense out of incense
- Music in the life of the Church

November and December have been busy months! The junior high and senior high have worked together for a few activities recently! First, we turned in a total of 34 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child in November. The youth worked with the Faith weavers to stuff the shoeboxes and wrote letters to the children that would receive them! We started December with caroling! A group led by Chuck Firmin and Lisa McDermott with help from Ruth Hale went caroling to a few of our shut-ins on December 9th. On December 16th, a group participated in a progressive dinner! Thanks so much for all the support we have had with the youth program!

January should be a great month as well! Here is the Schedule for the next month:

Junior EYC (Regular meetings: Sundays 6 PM to 7:30 PM)

- Sunday, Jan. 6 Epiphany Pageant at 10 AM service
- Saturday, Jan 12-13 LOCK-IN for Jr. and Sr. High
- Sunday, Jan. 20 Regular Meeting time
- Sunday, Jan. 27 Regular Meeting time

Senior EYC (Wednesdays 7 PM to 8 PM)

- Sunday, Jan. 6 Epiphany Pageant at 10 AM service
- Wednesday, Jan. 9 Awesome Powers Opening lesson
- Saturday, Jan 12-13 LOCK-IN for Jr. and Sr. High
- Wednesday, Jan. 16 Awesome Powers lesson #2
- Saturday, Jan. 19 BISHOP'S BALL (9th through 12th Grade)
- Wednesday, Jan. 23 Awesome Powers lesson #3
- Wednesday, Jan. 30 Awesome Powers lesson #4

The Christmas Season is a very busy time in everyone's life! For adults, it is getting ready for family visits, buying presents, decorating the house and going to holiday festivities. The youth are no different. Papers and projects are due, work schedules can become hectic, and those that can't drive have to find time when someone can drive them to the mall for shopping. All of this is like the hump we have to get over to enjoy Christmas. Another way of thinking about it is the reason we celebrate Advent. We have to prepare for the coming of the baby Jesus (Not a reference to Talladega Nights). Our joy is in his coming to be our Lord and Savior! The Christmas parties are great and I know gifts are appreciated, but they are not the point! So, if you have a few minutes and you have to decide between making a list for all the things you need to get done in the next few days or taking some time and spending it with God, remember why we are doing all of this in the first place. Is it glorifying the name of God or is it just busy work?

With that said, I have some things that need doing laundry, homework, dishes...Just Kidding. I have to go check in with Jesus. Have a blessed Season and look forward to the New Year with increased faith and thanksgiving for all our blessings! ☐

Janaury Birthdays

Haleigh Silveira	1
Melayna Brown	1
Gail Crisp	2
Irene Wright	2
Diane Akin	3
Glen Wile	4
Lyn Blackmon	5
Richard Lawrence	5
Nicholas Anderson	6
Barry Russell	7
Beth Carson	9
Scott Bruner	9
Allison Burke	10
Emma Anderson	10
Madeline Anderson	10
Tom Collins	11
Shannon Sullivan	13
Corinne Hunter	14
Kate Chambers	14
Carter Adams	15
Bo Bean	18
Kaye Baxter	19
James-Michael Hubrel	19
Marcia Collins	20
Jack Hehmeyer	21
Howard Davis	22
Brad VanZandt	22
Lindsey Hackett	22
Cynthia Cowdery	22
Courtney Williams	24
Tom Coleman	26
Marissa Johnston	26
Gail Carlisle	27
Charles Cook	27
Jeremy Lawrence	27
Jessica Jones	27
Frank Hamlin	28
Megan Schroeder	29
Richard Wright	31

January Anniversaries

Joe & Peggy Kososki	2
Whit & Bobbie Holman	4
Mark & Lyn Storey	9
Basil & Janet Hoag	11
John & Susie Stanley	12
Mike & Melinda Asher	16
Alan & Bobbie Trimble	17
Chuck & Ruby Firmin	18
Richard & Debra Wright	31

Do You Know Me?

OPEN LETTER TO ST JAMES CONGREGATION

I am a mother, wife, daughter and friend to my fellow St. James parishioners. I don't have the best singing voice, but I like to sing at the top of my lungs quite frequently. I have a stocked catfish pond. I consider myself profoundly lacking in the artistic department but people frequently tell me how creative I am which leaves me quite puzzled usually. I love, love, love, children and wish I had 10 of my own but have to substitute children of the church and friends of my child instead to fill up my home. I would love to sit down long enough to learn how to crochet and knit. My mother would love to teach me. Touring wineries has become a great hobby of mine. Did you know that Texas is the seventh largest wine making state in the US? I also have on my list of things to do: visit a fellow parishioner's winery in Sonoma County. Do you know who that is? Hosting Tea Parties has also moved to the top of my favorite things list. Most recently I hosted a mother/daughter tea party to kick off my daughters birthday week. Mary Nell is one of my heroes. Her insight and thoughtfulness is something I strive to learn and imitate. I have made some truly wonderful friends here at St. James. I could go on and on about myself but what I really want is to know about you. Do you know who I am? I would like to say I know at least 10 things about you and I could if you would join Dinner With Friends. I could tell my many wonderful things I've learned about people in our parish, but it should come from them. I know everyone says they're busy or don't have the room or any number of excuses that are so easy to find but when you consider what kind of return you get from making the time the rest doesn't seem so important. Please consider sharing yourself with us.

A parishioner.

THE SPRING SESSION OF DINNER WITH FRIENDS WILL BEGIN IN FEBRUARY.

Watch your Bulletin for further information!

Did you know?

Fr Anderson sends out a weekly "knee-mail" with the latest news from St James.' If you are not getting this e-mail, you're not on our mailing list. Please send a blank message to therector@stjamestxk.org and put KNEE MAIL in the subject line.