

sbc family news

• www.spencerportbiblechurch.org • volume 2 • issue 9 • dec 2008 • pastor tom balentine •

Tommy's Christmas

The year was nineteen fifty-eight, and Mom had cleaned us up so that we would be somewhat presentable. She told us that someone important was coming, and we had to get ready for some news. I don't remember if she gave any clues as to whether it was good or bad news, but it was obviously serious.

I remember being in the living room watching for company. A gray car drove out front and had some writing on the side that looked official. Mom sent us out to the back yard and told us to wait until she called. We sat together under the peach tree waiting and talking about what was going on. My older brother figured out that it was something to do with Dad. It must be bad news.

I saw for the first time what Christian giving was all about.

Mom finally called us in and sat us on the floor in front of a naval officer. I don't remember even seeing his face, but just stared at those shoes with an unbelievable shine. He told us that our dad had died and wasn't coming home. That now it was up to us to be the men of the house and take care of Mom. I had no clue what he meant and felt the saddest feeling I had ever felt. I had no idea what it was going to mean either. If an eight-year-old kid can be in shock, I was in shock.

Thanksgiving came and went and I don't remember anything out of the ordinary. I don't recall any happiness or sadness, but just numbness.

Then Christmas was coming. What would Christmas look like without a dad? Would there be any presents? Would there be any joy? Mom was broke. The social security checks had not started to arrive and we were in a desperate situation.

Something happened that Christmas that changed my life forever. I saw for the first time what Christian giving was all about.

As God would have it, we had just started to attend a small little church in Norwalk. When that Christmas came and we had very little in the way of gifts, a knock came to the door. When Mom opened it we were surprised to see a group of men holding boxes of gifts for all six of us kids. It was the best pair of six-shooters you've ever seen. They were pearl handled and had a leather holster.

It may not have seemed like much to do for those who had brought those gifts, but it was overwhelming to an 8-year-old boy whose heart had been filled with such sadness. I was touched by the love that had been



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The Deacons' Fund: What does it do?

As we enter the holiday season and take time to give thanks for what we have been blessed with and to give from those blessings to help others, I would like to take a moment to inform the readers about our church's Deacons' Fund. Each month after our communion service we take an offering to help this fund, and I am sure many of you wonder what happens with this money.

The money is set aside in this special fund to help people in need. The Deacons receive requests in many ways, for example:

1. People who have a need request help.
 2. We hear a need through the prayer chain.
 3. A friend of someone in need requests help.
- The Deacons then follow up and find out more about the

need and address it as best we can. Sometimes the need is met with money, sometimes labor, and sometimes a phone number.

Our goal is to use the funds from the offering to be a blessing to others and to help those in need see that the body of Christ is there to help them. Last year, because of the faithfulness of those who give to the offering, we were able to:

1. Help a neighbor of a member who had lost their job with some necessities for winter.
2. Help a member with the repair of a vehicle.
3. Help a friend of a member to pay a heating bill.

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Thanks ... for giving!

Editors' Note:

This issue is devoted to looking back in thanksgiving to the past year, and looking forward to Christmas and its reminder of God's great gift of His Son.

We asked you to share with us your thanks to God and to His people through whom He has helped you, and you responded! Many more examples could have been shared, but these messages of thanks show clearly how

many little things (and sometimes big things) are done among us by and for God, and how great their effects can be.

We hope that these reminders will encourage you to continue giving of your time, talents, and treasure, both to those within God's family, and to those around us whom we are in a position to bless.

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

2 Cor 9:12

I cannot thank God enough that He has made me His own in Christ; that **He gave; He gives; He is.**

I'm overwhelmed by the people God has put in my life to **encourage, support, and admonish** me. That He would let us share in the joy of **friendship and fellowship** blesses me beyond measure. Thank you to all whom God uses in my life...you who **share** your hearts, your homes, your prayers and your time. You have **encouraged** me in trials; blessed me at all times and **herded me back** when I wander. You are precious gifts from my loving Father.

Praise to God!

Jude 24-25

Janet Simpson

1)I am thankful for the water container **Char & Curt Rossow** gave me this past year

2)I am thankful for the **work** that Mark Bernreuther did **at my Mom's house**

3)I am thankful for my **body life group**

4)I am thankful for **Sandy Boe's beautiful work in my kitchen**

5)I am thankful for **Roie & Rod's generosity**

I hope this isn't too many, I could keep on going and going. Praise the Lord

Blessings,

Marilyn Hipp

Chris Werth invited me over to help him cut down a few trees on his property. Not only did he give me all the **wood** but delivered it and **helped me split** it too. As I heat the house this winter, I will thank God for generous brothers!

Janet Collins has given more than excellent **child-care** to our son. She is a living witness to God's love and a selfless role model too. As we watch our son grow, we thank God for Godly women!

Billy Cook

Colossians 3:17 says, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Last year during spring break I decided to try out my very first week of **Flower City Work Camp**. To be honest, I had no idea what I was walking into. I figured I'd be filling my week with painting and praying, and although that is a great combination, it turned out to be so much more.

From day one I realized that it was going to be a very **eye-opening experience** for me, from the condition of houses that were only fifteen minutes from my own home, to the lack of knowledge that people had of Christ. I realized how naïve I was of the world around me. Being able to wake up every morning and know that I was about to go into the city of Rochester and openly declare my faith was an incredibly amazing feeling, but also a scary one. It really taught me a **new sense of courage** in witnessing that I never experienced before.

Thankfulness had a completely new meaning to me that week. At first it was being thankful for the **home** I had, then the **family** I had been brought up in, who always shared with me about the salvation of Christ. But the main thing I found myself being thankful for during (and after) Flower City Work Camp was the **opportunity** in itself. So often God presents me with the chance to serve Him and for whatever reason, I don't always take advantage of the opportunity. But this event really pushed me to grasp those chances! It was a great blessing, and an amazing chance to glorify God.

I realized that there are so many places to look for God's blessings through opportunities, and that it's my job and duty to act on them. Flower City Work Camp is, and always will be, something I'm extremely thankful for. It taught me to really be thankful that I'm capable of sharing the news of Jesus Christ.

Kayleigh McAuliff

*Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be **generous and willing to share**. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

1 Tim 6:18-19

*I was young and now I am old,
yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken
or their children begging bread.
They are always generous and lend freely;
their children will be blessed.*

Ps 37:25-26

To Everyone at SBC,

The year 2008 has been a year Mary Jane and I certainly praise the Lord for! He has always been gracious to us and **provided us with more than just our needs**; He has blessed us abundantly. The year has also come along with some challenges and opportunities to grow in "faith-rest" toward God. 2008 began with a time of Mary's healing from extensive **foot surgery** and ended with another time of healing from her serious **abdominal surgery** that carried the threat of cancer with it.

Psalm 94:19 says "When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Thy consolations delight my soul". **We found the Lord faithful every time!** So, the admonition of Psalm 95:2 to "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving . . ." is a joy we will not be short on during this season of the year.

Not only has the Lord personally blessed us as a family, but His people - our SBC brethren - have been a constant **encouragement** throughout the year as demonstrated love has been shown in all the various ways of sharing (**prayers, phone calls, visits, mercy meals, cards, letters, etc.**).

We give praise and thanks to our Lord and to our church family!

Sharing together in His service,
Tom Clement

I am thankful for **God's loving care**. I Peter 5:6,7 tell me that I can't lose by casting my cares upon God because He cares for me. "Casting" is an appropriate action on my part and should be immediate. Perhaps it is not, because casting is an appropriate response as I humble myself under God's mighty hand. No matter what the burdens and no matter how long it may take me to cast my cares upon Him, I am thankful that He cares!

I am also thankful for this **church family**. You have been there for me throughout the last year in many ways: **servng together** and supporting **VBS** and **Pioneer Girls**, **praying** and giving such **kind, caring attention** through 2 operations.

The truth is there for us all. "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you...." Ps. 55:22a

Mary Jane Clement

I'm grateful for (and to) those that exemplify Hebrews 3:13 -

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Bob Page

Recently, I have been blessed with a note telling me that I am being **prayed for** by a woman whom I have yet to meet at SBC, when she read an email about a medical test I was having. That was so uplifting. And **phone calls** from a fellow parishioner who had missed me at church for a couple of weeks. That is what 'church family' is all about and the Love of God being exhibited in our community. Thank you for the opportunity to share my blessings.

Peggy Anna Hodgson

*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to **lay down our lives** for our brothers.*

*If anyone has **material possessions** and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?*

1 John 3:16-17

Monica and I are forever thankful to our Lord and Savior for the success He provided in her recent spinal fusion **surgery**. As she continues to recover, we also want to thank those who **prayed for her** through the SBC prayer chain, and for the love of those who provided **meals** or sent **get-well wishes**. What an awesome God!

Frank and Monica Cardon

*And do not forget to **do good** and to **share** with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

Heb 13:16

I am so very thankful for the faithful **prayer warriors** at SBC. I have called on the saints many, many times throughout the year and years gone by either on my behalf or for someone else near or far. I have often seen the evidence of this ministry and I am moved to tears giving God the glory. What a wonder to know that we serve our awesome God by ministering prayer. Thank you, I DO see God's grace through and in you!

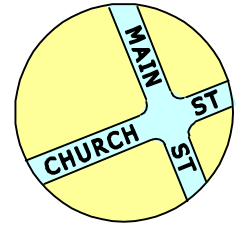
Another praise that I can't overlook. I just looked at my email and I see that I have received the next set of notes from one of the adult **Sunday school classes**. I have expressed over and over again to many my thanksgiving for the teaching and the instruction that I receive at SBC. I have been able to attend one class and reap the benefits from that material while receiving the notes from another class. We are so blessed to have many with the gift of **teaching sound doctrine** among us.

Galatians 6:9-10 "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

Thank you!
Sue Garrett

Christmas: The Great Intersection

INTERSECTIONS



Dave Peterson

It is common today to be told that facts and faith, or science and religion, are separate spheres that should not overlap or interfere with one another. “Believe what you want about God, but don’t let that affect your intellectual, or professional, or political life.” For Christians, however, everything we do should be affected by what we believe. There is no separation between the “secular” and the “religious”.

As Christmas approaches, we are reminded of the greatest instance in which God entered the physical world He had created, making it impossible for Christians to see faith as separate from the “real world”. The birth of Christ irrevocably ties our faith to historical fact; it is not just an abstract belief in a God that can’t be seen, but personal trust in a God who *has* been seen, at a specific time and place, and in what He has done in history.

Moreover, the fact that God became man demonstrates that He wants to be involved in this very imperfect world, and gives us some hints as to how we are to live in a world that often contradicts all that we believe. Consider some of the ways in which God brought seemingly incompatible things together in the incarnation of His Son:

The Eternal Intersects with History

Luke introduces his gospel not as a revelation from God (though it *is* inspired by God), but as a historical document based on eyewitness accounts of history:

Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you... .

He then carefully dates events such as the birth of Christ and ties them to secular history, to make it clear that we are believing in something that really happened.

One implication of this appeal to witnesses and evidence is that, unlike other religions, ours is “falsifiable”. Scientists and historians are understandably impatient with claims that can never be tested or disproved; our faith is not like that. If it could be shown that these historical claims are wrong – that Jesus never lived, or never died, or never rose – then our faith would be false and we could not continue in it. (See 1 Cor. 15:14-15.) Of course, it *will not* be shown to be wrong, because it *did* really happen; but God has put Himself in the position of hypothetically being disprovable, by not hiding in an abstract philosophical heaven but tying His truth to what we can see and hear.

This is not a *weakness* of our faith, as if a faith that depends on facts in the real world were less pure than one that was based only on visions or speculations. It is its greatest *strength*, showing that what we believe is just as real as the world around us, only more so!

Since God deliberately connects Himself to history and

the physical world, “secular” studies can provide testimony to the truth of the gospel, even though they can’t *prove* its spiritual claims. Like Luke, we can research history and science for evidence to share with those who, though tired of materialism, recognize the emptiness of much modern “spirituality” and want something *real* to believe.

The Spiritual Intersects with the Material

Some of the religions with which the gospel competed believed that the “spiritual” was totally separate from the “material”. That idea is still common today. The Bible emphasizes that Jesus not only is God (and therefore “spirit”), but also came “in the flesh”:

1 John 4:2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

Having come among us physically, Jesus didn’t pay attention only to the “spiritual”, but cared for whole people. He showed compassion on crowds both by teaching them and by feeding or healing them— helping them physically not merely as an “object lesson” teaching something spiritual, as if that was all that really mattered, but truly caring about both soul and body.

As He came into our physical world and met people’s real needs regardless of what they were, He also calls us to care about whole people:

James 2:15-16 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

God brought seemingly incompatible things together in the incarnation of His Son.

Our love for those around us must include awareness of their ultimate spiritual needs; it must also be a genuine love for them *as people*, including *all* that they are, made by God as both body and soul. In our pursuit of spiritual truth, we must not forget the power of material things as a testimony to the reality of Jesus’ love.

The Pure Intersects with the Messy

God is holy, and we are to be holy. But what does holiness mean? It is easy for us to identify holiness and purity with isolation, keeping ourselves pure by refusing to participate in anything “dirty”. That is not how Jesus lived. Certainly He was holy, and did not participate in sin. But far from avoiding sinners who might complicate His life, He was known as a companion of sinners — and even did things that left the Pharisees wondering how anyone who claimed to be holy could possibly do them.

Jesus came into our messy world, touched the un-

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New in the library

LIBRARY



Ginnie Peterson

Here are some synopses of recently added books in the library.

- **Broken on the Back Row**, by Sandy Patty
This biography of the well-known Christian singer shows that fame can lead to disastrous consequences in one's personal life, and that what a person appears like on the outside may hide a troubled spirit. Sandy deals honestly with her sin and the restoration process of her family.

- **There is no Time**, by J. Paul Nyquist
A gift to the church from Cathy Schwab, this book tells in fictional form the strategy of Avant Ministries for short-cycle church planting. It proposes a different strategy than has been used in the past for mission church

(Tommy ... continued from page 1)

poured out through their kindness. Joy was brought to my life again because someone practiced Christian giving.

That small act of caring moved my heart and life toward God more than anything I've ever experienced. That act of kindness turned my heart toward God and his church, because someone had taken the time to lift the hurt and pain off of my heart with a small little gift.

Christmas isn't about getting presents but about lifting the fallen, encouraging the fainthearted, and comforting the hurting. Please find a soul to help this Christmas. You never know how your act of love may affect a soul for this life and eternity.

(Intersections ... continued from page 4)

touchable, and lived a life not only of holiness but of love and compassion, of involvement rather than isolation. Can we do the same? It may in a sense be harder for us than for Him to maintain purity, while in contact with those whose sin may resonate with the sin within ourselves; yet He calls us to do just that, with His help: to be "in the world, yet not of it":

John 17:18-19 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

In our world, Jesus experienced its reality and temptations, yet did not sin. He lived as a child, and presumably as a carpenter, doing ordinary things in extraordinary ways. And so should we. Whatever activities our lives lead us into, we should consistently show both righteousness and compassion (and when we fail, we can show God's grace). Whatever comes up in conversation, we should discuss with understanding and godly insight. We need to live thoughtfully godly lives that show what it means to love God, and actively serve Him, in every area – family, business, intellectual, political, social – in our actions and in our thoughts. Then we can be a testimony to the relevance of God's Word, and the rightness of God's way, in all of life, and of His love for all kinds of people.

planting, one that concentrates on identifying and training leaders to do the work, as opposed to building up numbers of converts first.

- **Margin**, by Richard Swenson
This book, by a medical doctor, talks about handling the stress and distractions of our lives, and the necessity of "margin", or "restful spaces", to keep ourselves in good shape mentally and physically in order to serve God effectively.

In addition, recent donations to the library have included some classic commentaries:

- **Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible**, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown
- **Notes on the New Testament**, volumes 1-6, by Albert Barnes.

To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting. ~ Edmund Burke

(Deacons' Fund ... continued from page 1)

4. Provide labor to help a member with some repairs to their home.








This list can go on and on. The main thrust of our aid is not "just" to meet the expressed need but to also share the love of Christ with the people we help. We have received cards and letters from people whom we have helped, expressing how their faith had been strengthened through the receipt of the request.

The Deacons do not take lightly our responsibility to handle and minister with the funds the members provide to the fund. While it is a blessing for us to disburse the funds, we believe you will be blessed as well for your faithfulness in giving to the fund. Please feel free to inform the Deacons of any needs you may know of.

Thank you.

– Gary Collins, Chairman of Deacons

Our elders and pastoral staff:

Tom Balentine		Pastor
Dennis Burdette		Communication <i>(newsletter supervising editor)</i>
Tom Clement		Adult Christian Education
Larry DeWolfe		Membership
Dave Peterson		Children's Christian Education <i>(newsletter production editor)</i>
Jim Read		Missions and Evangelism
Lee Balentine		Youth Pastor

December 2008

Spencerport Bible Church Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 6:30-8:00 PM Bible Institute	2	3 9:30 AM Ladies' Bible Study brunch 6:30 PM Ladies' Ensemble	4 7:00 PM Smith Body Life Group 7:00 PM Fellowship Com- mittee meeting	5 7:00-9:00 PM Youth Group 7:30 PM Read Body Life Group	6
7 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:45 AM Morning Service 5:00 PM Budget Q&A 5:45 PM Clubs 6:00 PM Evening Service	8 6:30-8:00 PM Bible Institute	9 7:00 PM Elders/Deacons meeting	10 6:30 PM Ladies' Ensemble 7:00 PM Missions Committee meeting	11	12 6:30 PM Adult Christmas Dinner	13 1:30-4:00 PM Pioneer Girls & Boys Brigade Christmas Party
14 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:45 AM Morning Service No Clubs 6:00 PM Annual Meeting	15 6:30-8:00 PM Bible Institute	16	17	18 7:00 PM Smith Body Life Group	19 7:00-9:00 PM Youth Group 7:00 PM Morgigno Body Life Group 7:30 PM Read Body Life Group	20
21 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:45 AM Morning Service No Clubs 6:00 PM Christmas Program	22	23	24	25 Christmas 	26 No youth group	27
28 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:45 AM Morning Service No Clubs No Evening Service	29	30	31 New Year's Eve			