

The Spirit at Bethel

December 2010/January 2011

Sherwood Park, Alberta

Sharing the love of Jesus with a hurting world

Stewardship: A Matter of Parental Responsibility

I believe it is true that stewardship is all about attitude. I also believe it is true regarding stewardship attitudes that they are more easily “caught” than “taught”. And that is why the following email really excited me

Our family was hoping to get together and do a meal service (or just serve together in some way) this Christmas season rather than buying gifts for each other. We'd be willing to pay for/supply the food. We really wanted the youth (the youngest would be 7) to be involved--to show them the importance of getting out and sharing what God has blessed us with. We are quite a large family--and I anticipate 20+ adults and 10+ youth would be available. Do you have any ideas for us? As some family members will be coming from out of town, ideally December 22 or later would work best for us, but as long as we could include those family members in some way --we would consider ANY suggestions you may have. I guess we are just hoping to show God's love by serving others this Christmas--whether that be a meal or other need you may be aware of.



Thanks so much for your help with this!

I believe it is also true that children learn their stewardship attitudes from their parents. And so –

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the children in the above family are very blessed by parents who are modeling God’s style of giving. Theirs will truly be a blessed Christmas.

In Christ,

Pastor Marv

The Spirit at Bethel is the monthly newsletter of Bethel Lutheran Church, Sherwood Park, Alberta. Laila Klaszus and Kris Buchholtz are co-editors.

We welcome articles (650 words or less) of people and events relevant to Bethel and the Church. Please leave your submissions with Ann at the church office or email to bucbunch@telus.net with the following in the SUBJECT line:

February Spirit— your name.

If possible, also include pictures.

The deadline for the February *Spirit at Bethel* is Monday, January 20, 2011.

The Story Behind

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Normay Wiebe

I love the haunting melody of the beautiful advent song “*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.*” It is undoubtedly one of the oldest Christmas Carols in most hymnbooks today and is one of the oldest texts still sung by the Church at any time of the year. The yearning sound of the tune makes us long for the coming of the Messiah.



In the 8th century throughout the week prior to Christmas, Benedictine monks would sing in Gregorian chant during vespers a text that would later become known as the *O Antiphons*. Each of the verses centered around a Messianic title found in the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the Messiah....*O Wisdom, O Adonai, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Morning Star, O King of the Nations, and O Emmanuel.* Beginning December 17, they would sing one verse, then add an additional verse at each evening’s service, until finally on December 23 *O Emmanuel* was added with great anticipation for Christmas Eve.

In Latin, the *O Antiphons* are a word puzzle, a reverse acrostic message. The first letters of the titles spell “*ero cras*” when spelled backwards, which means in Latin, “*I shall be with you tomorrow.*” It was a wonderful reminder of counting the days backwards to Christ’s coming.

These verses have changed over the years to become the song we sing today, as well as being translated into English in 1851 by a young Anglican minister named John Mason Neale.

With such a rich history, it amazes me to think of the millions upon millions of Christians who have uttered these words for over 1300 years. There’s something special about adding our own voices to those who have gone before as we thank our Lord for the gift of Emmanuel (“*God with us*”).

O, Come, O, Come, Emmanuel

*O, come, o, come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.*

*O, come, our Wisdom from on high,
Who ordered all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go.*

*O, come, o, come, our Lord of might,
Who to your tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times gave holy law,
In cloud and majesty and awe.*

*O, come O Rod of Jesse's stem,
From ev'ry foe deliver them
That trust your mighty pow'r to save;
Bring them in vict'ry through the grave.*

*O, come, O Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.*

*O, come, our Dayspring from on high,
And cheer us by your drawing nigh,
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.*

*O, come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Oh, bid our sad divisions cease,
And be yourself our King of Peace.*



Bethel Orchestra

Normay Wiebe

*Come join us in
making a joyful noise
unto the Lord and*

*play some beautiful Christmas music at the
same time.* The Bethel orchestra will be leading services of Christmas music on Sunday, December 19. Practice is Saturday, December 18 at 3:00 PM. If you are interested in joining us playing, please let Normay know at 780-417-7757 or normay.wiebe@bethelchurch.com. Music will be given out ahead of time.





Self-Portrait

Richard Kraemer

It never occurred to me to write
A portrait of myself
Until now.

Perhaps, it's just a passing thought,
A whim,
A flight of the imagination,
That something, whatever it is, that drives a painter
To try to plant an image of himself
On canvas.

I might as well admit
I'm much too shy to be doing this,
Much more shy than I ever would want to admit.

People expect me to perform.
I like to ham it up,
Get on stage,
Act like I'm an opera star
Or a stand-up comic.

It's because I love it when people laugh.
Life's too short,
It can be so sad,
We need to laugh
And laugh again,
Laugh until it hurts,

Because there is another kind of hurt
We've all been there
Peering over the edge
Looking down at the valley of the shadows,
With dread,
Afraid to go through the certain pain
That we know will lie ahead

Afraid to face it,
Afraid not to,
But only then
Do I remember why that fear
Can never drive me to despair
For somewhere near the core
Of ev'rything that is within me
Lies an unquenchable fire
Born of God,
Born within me,
Such a gift
It's what keeps me going on
Full of joy,
Full of hope,
Full of love,
Love for my wife
My family,
My friends,

Always ready
For all that lies ahead.

I'm really just a simple man
Not as smart as I'd like to think,
I fall off ladders,
Cry at movies,
I can be careless behind the wheel
I can be brilliant,
Forgetful,
A walking contradiction
When you get right down to it
I'm a sinner in need of grace,
And grateful to know that I have it
In Jesus Christ.

To him be the power and the glory,
To endless ages.
As I wait for that time
When I will loose myself in him,
Only to find myself again.

I dedicate this portrait
To him.

~ Richard W. Kraemer June 2010 ~

Editor's Note: On the morning of Friday, November 12, 2010, over 650 people—including approximately 40 of his fellow clergy—gathered at Bethel Lutheran Church to celebrate the life of Richard Kraemer. His daughter Cheryl shared this poem at that time. Husband, father, grandfather, friend; pastor, professor, and then president of Concordia College in Edmonton for 17 years, Richard touched many lives with his love for Christ and his love for people.

Richard left this world for Home in the arms of his beloved Savior Jesus on Saturday, November 6, 2010. He will be sorely missed by his wife Janet, by his children and grandchildren, and by all who knew and loved him.

“I’d Rather Skip the Holidays”

Greg Schoepp



“It is hard enough to get up and make it through a day when you have lost a loved one. But when the expectations and busyness of Thanks-

giving, Christmas, and New Years are added on top of that, your feelings of loneliness, anxiety, anger, and sadness can be compounded and hang over you like a dark, suffocating blanket.

For many, the holidays are a joyous time when people take a break from the monotony of day-to-day life; you long for a break from your pain, but it is not possible. Grief does not take a vacation. In fact, during the holidays, grief may intensify.

An important first step is to recognize that the holidays are going to be tough: emotionally, relationally, physically, and even spiritually. Be realistic in your expectations of yourself and others, and do not fight the added emotions and burdens. Accept them, let them come, but support yourself with prayer and dependence on God. Then keep moving forward a couple steps each day. Even on the toughest days, talking honestly with God and expressing your emotions is a step forward toward reconciliation with the grief.”

(From *Surviving the Holidays*, 2003)

If you are grieving, please join us for **Surviving the Holidays: Managing Grief at Christmas** on Monday, December 6 from 7:00-8:30 PM in the church sanctuary. This single-evening program is for adults coping with the loss of a loved one. The agenda includes a DVD presentation and discussion, coping with grief ideas, candle lighting ritual, prayer, and a brief message of hope. There is no cost or registration. Family members and friends are welcome. Please contact Greg Schoepp at 436-6108 for further information.

Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope in is in you all day long. ~Psalm 25:4-5~





You are invited to a

FAMILY ADVENT AFTERNOON

At Bethel Lutheran Church
Saturday, December 4th
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.



Come and celebrate as we prepare for Jesus' birth!

crafts
music
cookies
stories

Invite your family and friends.

To assist us in our planning,
please RSVP by Wednesday, December 1st to
the church office (780-417-7775) or
DeLoyce (deloyce.elle@bethelchurch.com)



**Bethel's
Mission of the Month
for December is local
charities: the Food Bank,
Santa's Anonymous, etc.**

**You have an opportunity
to make a difference!**

**Your financial contributions and
your prayers will be tremendous
blessings to the less fortunate
during the Christmas season.**

ABC LWML Purchases Books for Springs of Life School, Kenya

Sharon Bernhardt

On Sunday, November 22, 2010, Pastor Marv was presented with a cheque for \$3,700.00 to provide Springs of Life Lutheran School, Kibera, Kenya with Christian books for their library.

Encouraged by Marilyn Witte, VP Christian Missions LWML-C District, work started on this Grant Proposal in June, 2009. Pastor Marv provided the details and wording; we could not have done this without his help and support. With God's blessing, the ladies of our Lutheran Women Missionary League (LWML-C) have kept the ABC LWML-C ladies informed about our Kenya Mission Project by means of a Mission supper, invitations to hear about and share in this project, by prayer and by involving friends and family in the details of this Mission (i.e. donating to the Sea Container).

ABC District LWML Conventions are held every three years so it is so very important to keep the interest in your project alive. This circulating of information helped our proposal to make it onto the ballot of the Convention Mission Projects for 2010-2013. After the delegates voted, our proposal was #1—the first to be paid. Proposals are paid by mites sent in by all LWML societies in the ABC District.



Sharon Bernhardt, Marilyn Witte and Pastor Marv

May this gift to our friends in Kenya be a blessing to all. Thanks be to God.



Sea Container – Kenya 2011

Pastor Marv

Thanks to all who have been generously dropping items off at the sea container. The following are items we still need:

Educational:

School back packs
Geometry sets
Hand calculators
Pens, pencils
and note pads
English Bibles
Library books for
grades K-8
Christian children's
books

Medical:

Over-the-counter
medications
Wound care supplies
Toothbrushes and
toothpaste
Bars of soap
Baby layettes
and diapers
Eye glasses

Sports:

Soccer balls
and pumps
Sports uniforms
Sports/tennis shoes

Other:

Shoes for children
– all sizes
Rubber boots for
children – all sizes
Children's clothing
– all sizes
Men's short sleeve shirts
Work gloves
Fabric
Towels

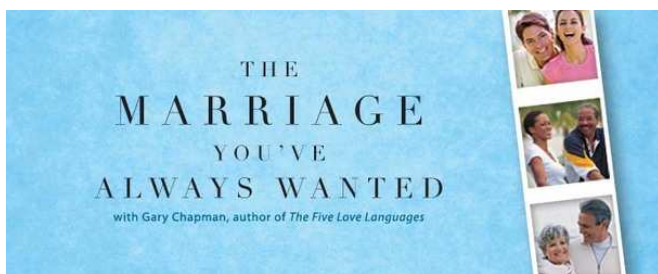


Drop-off times are Sundays from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Please note that we will only accept items until **December 26**.

**Bethel's
Mission of the Month
for January is
Lutheran Hour Ministries in
Kenya**

**You have an opportunity
to make a difference!**

**Your financial contributions and
your prayers will help to bring
Christ to the nation of Kenya.**



Experience The Marriage You've Always Wanted

Arlen Salte

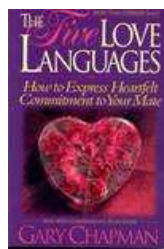
"God is the God of hope. When you put your hand in His hand, He will lead you through the valley of despair into the plane of hope. With God, no one and no situation is hopeless. Focus your eyes on Him rather than your situation."
- Dr. Gary Chapman

I was driving our Yukon a couple of weeks ago when a warning light started flashing on my dashboard. I was quick to take it in to the mechanic for service. Wouldn't it be handy if a 'tune-up needed now' light came on for our marriage dashboards?

In a few months Elsa and I will celebrate 30 years of marriage. Even though we're blessed with a great marriage, we've needed a lot of tune-ups along the way. We know that there will be many more in our future.

Aside from your relationship with God, the most important relationship for couples is their marriage. Yet, we often invest little time in "tuning-up" our marriages.

We'd like to invite you to a marriage tune-up with the world's top-selling Christian marriage author, Dr. Gary Chapman. Dr. Chapman is the author of the bestselling book (five million copies and counting!) *The Five Love Languages*.



On Friday, January 28, Break Forth Ministries is hosting Dr. Gary Chapman for an all-day workshop for couples called "The Marriage You've Always Wanted."

In his signature style, he will blend humour, honesty and practical helps to strengthen your marriage. This marriage workshop is not a dry, formal marriage seminar—it's a time of fun and discovery that can help you build the love relationship of your dreams. Whether you're getting married in six months—or have been married 60 years—you'll get solutions you can use. With biblical advice and a healthy dose of laughter, Dr. Chapman gives valuable tips on breaking unhealthy patterns and choosing to develop a God-honoring, happy marriage.

Couples both married and engaged will benefit from practical sessions addressing topics like communication differences, dealing with criticism, understanding love languages, and making intimacy mutually fulfilling. Join us for a day that will be a highlight for your marriage!

Over the years, every time we have invested in our marriage, it has paid huge dividends. An investment in a godly marriage beats the growth in any Mutual Fund or GIC!

We pray that you and many at Bethel will be able to take part in *The Marriage You've Always Wanted*. Visit www.breakforthcanada.com for more information or to register today.

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NOTE: There are a total of 24 Intensive Learning Workshops on Friday, January 28, including:

Leadership with Dr. Dan Allender, author of *Leading With a Limp* (and often quoted by Pastor Matt)

Prayer with Brad Jersak

Worldview with Joe Boot

Contemporary Evangelism with Todd Hunter

Plus: Small Groups, Church Governance, Student Ministry, Songwriting, Vocal, Praise Team Skills, Children's Ministry, Blended Family Ministry, Keyboards, Healing Transformation, Sound, Video, Lighting, Worship Leadership, Electric Guitar, Acoustic Guitar, Bass, and Drums.

Don't miss out!



An Article from Dr. Gary Chapman

I am responsible for my own attitude. My spouse may treat me unkindly, or ignore me, but I am still responsible for choosing my thoughts. The challenge is to have a loving attitude. The question is, “What is the loving way for me to look at this?” Love always seeks the well being of the other person. This does not mean that I am unconcerned about myself and meeting my needs, but my first concern must be for my spouse.

This does not imply that I am to become a doormat. That is not the loving thing to do. Accepting such behavior is not loving my spouse. When you choose the attitude of love, you are asking yourself, “What is best for my spouse in this situation?” Always that means holding your spouse accountable for unacceptable behavior.

“I love you too much to sit here and allow you to destroy yourself. What you are doing is hurting me, but it is also detrimental to your well-being and I will not be a part of it.” This is a loving attitude.

Trouble is inevitable, but misery is optional. Attitude has to do with the way I choose to think about things. It has to do with one’s focus. Two men looked through prison bars – one saw mud, the other stars. Two people were in a troubled marriage – one cursed, the other prayed. The difference always is attitude.

Negative thinking tends to beget negative thinking. Focus on how terrible the situation is, and it will get worse. Focus on one positive thing, and another will appear. In the darkest night of a troubled marriage, there is always a flickering light. Focus on that light, and it will eventually flood the room.

Maintaining a positive attitude in a troubled marriage may seem impossible, but the Christian has outside help. Lord, help me to see my marriage the way you see it. Help me to view my spouse the way you view them. Help me to think the thoughts that you have toward them. This kind of praying will lead you to a positive attitude.

A positive attitude can be the salvation of a difficult situation. A lady said to me, “My husband hasn’t had a full-time job in three years. The good part is that we can’t afford cable TV, so we spend a lot more time talking on Monday nights. She went on to say, “These three years have been tough, but we have learned a lot. Our philosophy has been “Let’s see how many things we can do without that everybody else thinks they have to have.” It’s amazing how many things you can do with-

out. It’s been a challenge, but we are going to make the most of it.”

There is a wife who has learned the power of a positive attitude. Do you think it has been easy for her? For him? Not at all. But a negative, critical, pessimistic attitude would have made things worse. Why would you want to make things worse?

We must not yield to our natural tendencies. We must seek to walk the high road of looking for God’s hand in everything. Even in a troubled marital situation, God is always at work.

The challenge of keeping a positive attitude is not a new idea. It is found clearly in the first-century writing of Paul the apostle. He wrote, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds. . . . Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, or admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” Phil. 4:4-7.

We are responsible for the way we think. Even in the worst marital situation, we choose our attitude. Maintaining a positive attitude requires prayer. Paul said, bring your requests to God. Tell him what you want. Will God always do what we ask? No, but what does happen is that “the peace of God” descends on our emotions and our thoughts. God calms our emotions and directs our thoughts. With a positive attitude, we become a part of the solution, rather than a part of the problem.

One reason my attitudes are so important is that they affect my actions—that is my behavior and words. If I have a pessimistic, defeatist, negative attitude, it will be expressed in negative words and behavior. The reality is that I may not be able to control my environment: sickness, alcoholic spouse, teenager on drugs, mother who abandoned me, father who abused me, spouse who is irresponsible, aging parents. But I am responsible for what I do within my environment. My attitude will greatly influence my behavior.

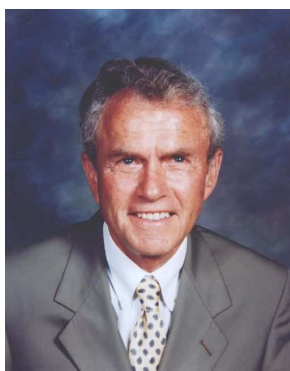
If you want to know your attitude, look at your words and behavior. If your words are critical and negative, then you have a negative attitude. If your behavior is designed to hurt or get back at your spouse, then you have a negative attitude. Guarding the attitude is the most powerful thing you can do to affect your behavior. And, your behavior greatly influences your spouse.



Seniors: Monday, January 10 - Mark Your Calendars

Bethel's Recycled Teens will have their winter festivities in January—just to be different. After all the festivities of Christmas, there is that lull and letdown. A tasty ham dinner with all the trimmings is just what is needed to fill the void. Sharon Bernhardt has planned all the details; it sounds like a great menu and the rest of the afternoon should be equally great.

We will continue viewing the video series, "*Christianity: The First Three Centuries*," featuring Dr. Paul L. Maier, the son of long-time Lutheran Hour speaker Walther A. Maier. The topic of January's session will be about the persecution of the Christians. Dr. Maier is Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University is well-qualified to speak on the subject, but he is also an engaging speaker who draws his subject matter from archeology and historians of the first few centuries, showing how these corroborate the accounts of early Christianity in the Book of Acts. He is well worth listening to.



Dr. Paul Maier

We are counting on Mel to once again come up with his brainteasers. In November he had groups of four to five people building a bridge strong enough to hold a 5-liter jug. We were given five minutes to plan the bridge but had to do the building without talking. The bridge building wasn't so bad. The not talking was hard! Who knows what he'll come with this time.

So don't just mark your calendars. Plan to come. Since this isn't a potluck but a planned meal, you don't have to bring any food. Just bring yourself and a friend and join the winter festivities. (We promise: no Christmas cookies or leftovers but lovingly prepared victuals to satisfy the most demanding gourmet among us.)



Talking About Sex

Michael Gillingham

On Friday, November 5, Dr. Roger Sonnenberg spoke to youth and parents here at Bethel about God's good gift of sex. Dr. Sonnenberg spoke passionately about the need for families to talk about sex openly, honestly and in ways that help young people to know and understand God's good gift of sex.

I heard a neat story from a father about what they did with what they heard at the presentation: The following week on a family walk, the father asked his son (a high school student) and daughter (a junior high student) who had attended the event with him and his wife to remember, describe and explain to their upper elementary-aged younger brother (who had missed it) everything they had learned from Dr. Sonnenberg. So on that walk, they reviewed and explained what they learned. Later, at a family meal, the youngest brother was asked to review and explain what he'd heard and learned from his two older siblings to his oldest sibling (a university student who had also missed the lecture).



I really appreciated several things here. First, I'm glad the parents and the teens took time to attend the event. I know we're all busy, but some things are really important and they deserve our attention. Secondly, I'm glad they took the time to review and share the information with each other on a couple of occasions. Everybody wins when good and valuable information is shared and reinforced in a family.

Let me close by encouraging all of us to continue to learn about God's gifts of life, family, sexuality and love....and let's continue to talk to one another about it in ways that honour God and each other.

