

The Spirit at Bethel

December 2011/January 2012

Sherwood Park, Alberta

Sharing the love of Jesus with a hurting world



Operation Christmas Child Update

Deloyce Elle

Waking up Christmas morning to find presents under the Christmas tree is an exciting moment for so many children. Now, imagine not having any presents. Imagine not even having a Christmas tree! That's the way it is for so many children around the world. "Operation Christmas Child" is a way for us to share the love of God with children whose world has been changed through war, famine, poverty and natural disasters.

This year, approximately 170 shoeboxes were filled by the Bethel family! Thank you for taking the time to pack these presents! Imagine the smiles on the faces of the children who will receive these gifts of love. In addition to the shoeboxes, children will also receive a booklet in their own language, "*The Greatest Gift of All*," and hear about the Good News of Christ.

When your family sits down at the Christmas tree to open presents this year, take a moment to say a prayer for the children who will be receiving these shoeboxes – that they may be blessed with the peace, joy, love and hope only found through the great gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.



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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 a copy of your submission with Ann in the office or email it to bucbunch@telus.net with the following SUBJECT LINE:

December/January Spirit—YOUR NAME.

If possible, also include pictures, preferably as separate attachments. **The deadline for the February issue is Monday, January 23, 2011.**



Worship in December

Normay Wiebe

We invite you to join us for worship services with a special Advent/Christmas focus in December.

The Contemporary Christmas Choir will be presenting music from "Let Heaven and Nature Swing" on Sunday, December 11. The choir will also be at the Sherwood Park Mall on Wednesday, December 14 at 7:00 PM.

As well, the Christmas Orchestra will be playing during worship services on Sunday, December 18.

We look forward to singing and worshipping together with you during this special season!



Christmas Services

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

Saturday, December 24

10:00 a.m.
3:00 p.m.
4:30 p.m.
6:00 p.m.
7:30 p.m.
9:00 p.m.



Christmas Day Worship

Sunday, December 25

Worship with Holy Communion, 10:00 a.m.

You Are Never Alone

Greg Schoepp

Feelings of loneliness from grief are often magnified during the holidays. Loneliness is an emotion you must first recognize, accept that is part of your life right now and then discover ways to help ease the lonely times.

"The overwhelming feeling I had my first holiday season was feeling very much alone," shares Mardie. "I didn't feel that I was connected to anything or anybody. I just felt very, very alone."

While feelings of loneliness may seem overpowering at times during the holiday season, you are never actually alone. The Bible says that God is an ever-present help in times of trouble.



(From *Surviving the Holidays*, 2003)

If you are experiencing grief, please consider participating in the **Remembering Our Losses Service** on Tuesday, December 6 from 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the church sanctuary. The evening includes ideas for coping with grief, a candle lighting ritual, prayer, and a brief message of hope to help you emotionally prepare for the Christmas season. Stay for refreshments and snacks after the service. There is no cost or registration, and family and friends are welcome. Please contact Greg Schoepp at 780-436-6108 for further information.

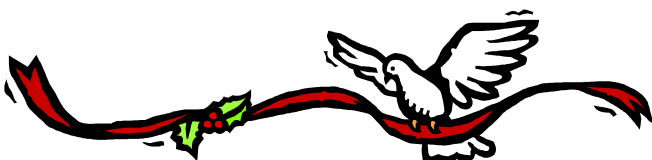


Christmas Orchestra

Normay Wiebe



The orchestra will be presenting Christmas music in the services on December 18. Practice is Saturday, December 17 at 3:00 PM, and music will be handed out ahead of time. Please contact Normay at normay.wiebe@bethelchurch.com or 780-417-7775 if you'd like to be a part of it.





You are invited to a

FAMILY ADVENT AFTERNOON

At Bethel Lutheran Church
Saturday, December 3rd
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, November 30 to
the church office (780-417-7775) or
Deloyce (deloyce.elle@bethelchurch.com).



Welcomed into the Kingdom

Welcomed into God's Kingdom here on earth by the rite of Baptism were the following saints:

- ◆ Nathaniel Banman
(son of Joel and Rebekah Banman)
- ◆ Wyatt Moar
(son of Joshua and Brianne Moar)

Welcomed into God's eternal Kingdom to partake of the heavenly feast were the following saints:

- ◆ Michael Ference
- ◆ Irene Zdrill

Monday Night Kids Christmas Party

Krysta Davis

On December 19 at 6:00 pm, Monday Night Kids and their families will be gathering at the Rock to have a Christmas dinner and party. We will be cooking a full turkey dinner, singing Christmas carols, reading the Christmas story, and sharing presents with the kids. There is a lot to do in preparation, as well as on the actual day itself. If you wish to help out with the meal, please contact Corinne Underwood (780-474-9361). If you would be willing to help out with wrapping, music or being an extra hand during the evening, please contact Krysta Davis (780-417-7775).



McCauley Christmas Celebration

Krysta Davis



On December 17, we will be hosting a Family Christmas Afternoon at the Rock from 1:00-3:00 pm for McCauley kids and their families. We will be doing crafts, decorating the hall for all who use it, and decorating cookies. It will be a chance for us to share the Christmas story with everyone who comes and to spend some time with the families. We will need volunteers to help with the craft, to chat with parents, and to reach the top of the tree! If you wish to be involved with the afternoon, please contact Krysta Davis at Krysta.davis@bethelchurch.com or 780-417-7775.





How Are Your Heart, Head and Hands?

Arlen Salte

I was interviewed by a national paper last week. The reporter asked me, “What role do you see Break Forth Ministries filling in the Christian community?” My answer was simply, “We are here to support the church and to help strengthen it in the mission God has called it to accomplish. We’re nothing more than a conduit to encourage people within the local church to access some of the finest training and renewal experiences in the world.”

That’s why Break Forth Canada focuses on the **heart** through main assemblies with some of the best-known speakers in the world, such as Anne Graham Lotz (Billy Graham called his daughter the best preacher in the Graham family), Erwin McManus, Tony Campolo, Nick Vujicic, Wess Stafford and Josh McDowell.



As well, we bring together some of the best-known worship songwriters today, such as Paul Baloche, Robin Mark and Brenton Brown. Hearts are also refreshed

with concerts by artists such as Third Day, Jars of Clay, Jeremy Camp, Starfield and Downhere. At Break Forth, there are an abundance of renewal opportunities for your **heart**.



However, we don’t want to simply focus on the heart and neglect the **head**. That’s why we have the most extensive line-up of classes and workshops of any conference in the world. We want to see the

local church equipped for effective ministry rather than ineffective activity. So whether you’re learning to grow in your marriage, your parenting, your prayer life, your leadership, your apologetics, your finances, your small groups or another area of your life, our 170 classes and workshops will be offer you something for your **head**.



Finally, we focus on your **hands**. People can be as equipped as possible and their hearts soaring like eagles...but unless they are putting their faith into action, we have simply helped to overfeed the saints. This is why we encourage people—not out of legalistic duty but out of a heart of gratitude and praise—to serve in their local church, in their community and in their world. We want to see their **hands** of service in action. This thread runs throughout Break Forth Canada.

So, if you feel as though you need a little tune-up of your heart, head or hands (or maybe all three), I’d like to encourage you to consider attending Break Forth Canada 2012. Only a few hundred spaces remain for the main conference, and there is still some space in the Friday All-Day Intensive Learning Workshops.



If you are looking for a great night out, you can also consider attending one of our many concerts on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

Feel free to visit our website at www.BreakForthCanada.com for more information. You can also purchase concert tickets through Break Forth Ministries at 780-417-5082, at Inspirations in Sherwood Park, or at other Christian bookstores in Edmonton.



If you attend Break Forth Canada 2012 and your heart, head and hands have been blessed, then we have served the simple purpose to which God called this ministry 35 years ago – simply to be a conduit to bless the local church...nothing more and nothing less.



No Arms, No Legs... No Limits

Arlen Salte

There is not a single person alive who hasn't faced limitations, whether they are physical, emotional, mental, financial or environmental.

So, what is it like to be a person who – from birth – has mainly a torso, but no legs or arms?

All you need to do is to hear Nick Vujicic speak or read his book to know the depth of his pain, and to see how the grace of God has enabled him to overcome these limitations to follow the call of God.



Nick at 6 years old

Upon seeing his son at birth, his father became so sick that he left the hospital room to vomit. His mother wouldn't hold him until he was four months old.

At ten years of age Nick's depression had grown so deep that he tried to kill himself.

What sustained him?

The love of family, friends and a growing understanding that the God who creates each one of us is the same God who has imbued every man, woman, young person and child with a divine purpose and eternal value.

Ephesians 2:9 (NLT) says, *"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."*

This means that the hands of the Creator were involved in crafting a unique purpose for Nick so important that God planned it "long ago."

Nick had a choice. He could have determined that he was a mistake...or he could stand on God's Word that proclaimed in 1 Peter 1:9 (NLT), *"But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you*

can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light."

Some choose despair. Nick chose hope.

For millions around the world who have heard him speak, the fact that Nick chose hope has forever changed their outlook on their divine purpose, no matter what discouragement the world would like to set upon them.

Even though Nick only has one little partial foot, he has gone on to swim, surf, golf, earn a degree in Financial Planning and Real Estate, author a bestselling book, travel around the world, speak to audiences of over 100,000 people and win the Australian Young Citizen of the Year award for his bravery and perseverance.

Although Nick lives in chronic pain and faces what many would consider to be impossible odds, he is so motivated by his desire to see everyone realize their God-given potential and divine calling that he continues to travel the world, sharing the Gospel wherever and whenever he can. Sometimes this is the stage at a major event; at other times it may be in the darkest prisons of a developing nation. To Nick, it is always worth the cost.

Nick rarely speaks in Canada and is currently turning down 100 speaking requests per week. If you have an opportunity to hear him

speak at Break Forth Canada 2012 in January, you too may realize like never before that, *"...we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago."*



Nick taking a leap into the pool

You have been carefully crafted. You have been divinely chosen. You have been supernaturally called. Just ask Nick.



Kenya Sea Container Update

Pastor Marv

As part of the agreement, Rev. Dennis & Lorna Meeker are required to fill out a brief Cargo Distribution Report. One of the areas they needed to fill in is:

Name the main categories of people who benefited from the cargo (i.e., orphans, elderly, invalids, etc.) and approximate number in each category as well as social institutions, hospitals, churches, etc. with approximate number of recipients in each institution.

Category	Number
Widows/widowers	186
Rescue Center	2
Schools	4
Congregations	18
Health Centers	3
Support groups	3
Orphans	370
Elderly	53
VBS	600
Pastors	20
Evangelists	24
Deaconesses	30

In addition they were asked to “tell one or more personal stories of how this cargo benefited the lives of the recipients.” These are the two stories they included:

“Deaconesses were overwhelmed with joy to receive a bicycle to replace all the walking from one place to another. Deaconess Pamela mentioned the fact that she had never ridden a bicycle before but she would learn quickly. ELCK Deaconesses are Parish Workers who take care of 5 to 8 congregations. The distance covered by the Deaconesses between these congregations on foot was hard to believe – 10 or more kilometers even in the rain to reach out to the needy. What a blessing it is to own a speed bike. We rejoice in the Lord for the gift to these women of faith. It was very moving to

watch the women learn to ride their bikes. This was a truly life-changing experience.”

“The playground at Point of Grace Academy is one that many people of Ogal community had never seen before. While its construction took place, many stood by and wondered what the outcome would be. Children waited eagerly. On the day it was opened to the children, hundreds of children sprung like eagles to get a chance on the slide and swing sets. Today children at Point of Grace Academy enjoy the playground daily. Words cannot express our joy. This is God’s work and we continue to thank him for hands of mercy extended to us by you all. May the Lord richly bless you all.”



Missions of the Month

Each month Bethel designates a special mission which we invite our worship community to prayerfully support with their prayers and their financial gifts (gifts above and beyond their offerings to Bethel).

Mission of the Month for December: At this time of the year, we all are inundated with special requests that are indeed worthy of consideration. The needs are great and many. I encourage you to consider making a Christmas gift to any one of the monthly missions Bethel has supported in 2011. For example:

- Lutheran Hour in Kenya
- LAMP (Lutheran Association of Missionaries and Pilots)
- Kenya (school)
- Youth Mission to El Paso
- The Rock
- McCauley ministries

For those who make a financial contribution in December and merely earmark it “*Mission of the Month (December)*”, we will use it for the McCauley ministries.

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Mission of the Month for January: Lutheran Hour Ministries in Kenya. They have a vibrant ministry to:

- Prisoners
- Women
- Youth and children

To financially support this mission in January, make the check out to Bethel and earmark it "Mission of Month – Kenya Lutheran Hour."

Thank you for all of your support. In 2011, your offerings to all of the missions totaled over \$120,000. I thank God for your mission hearts.

Pastor Marv



Financial Peace University

Paul Schoepp

This fall at Bethel, over thirty people from sixteen families in our church and in our community have been "attending" Financial Peace University (FPU) at Bethel. We're starting a new class on Mondays beginning January 9 and we'd love for you to take part. Come as a single; come as a couple; bring your junior and senior high children along! Have some questions about it? Come to one of the preview sessions on December 5 or 12 at 7 pm, or on January 8 at 9:45 am. Want another option to check out the class? Then come and sit in on one of the sessions this fall on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm. Here are a few more details to get you thinking about it:

What is Financial Peace University?

FPU is an important step to changing your financial future. It is your Total Money Makeover Program. It takes the knowledge from God and turns it into real action in our lives through a step-by-step process taught by best-selling author and financial counselor Dave Ramsey.

FPU is a 13-week life-changing program that empowers and teaches you how to make good money decisions to achieve your financial goals and God's plan for your life. The course includes

practical lessons on eliminating debt, building wealth, giving like never before, and much, much more!

Who is Financial Peace University for?

It's for EVERYONE!...from the financially secure to the financially distressed. Over 1 million families and individuals have attended *Financial Peace University*.

Applying God's Word radically changes your life. On average, FPU graduates have paid off over \$5,300 in debt and saved \$2,700 during the 91-day program!

What Will I Learn?

In this life-changing program you will learn:

1. Step-by-Step Cash Flow Planning

Luke 14:28: *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it."*

2. Debt Snowball Plan Technique to Eliminating Debt

Proverbs 22:7: *"The borrower is slave to the lender."*

3. How to Invest Wisely

Ecclesiastes 11:2: *"Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land."*

Testimonials

Here's what people just like you are saying about FPU:

"We've actually relieved ourselves of over \$50,000 worth of debt in two years just from using these principles." - Russ and Mary Lee

"It made us sit down as a couple and communicate... and it gave us an instant pay raise!" - Paul and Lynesa Benson

Dave Ramsey's

Financial Peace
UNIVERSITY



Strathcona County Ecumenical Mission 2011

Gladys Teske



Rev Craig Tufts, LC-C pastor from Parksville BC, was our keynote speaker for the 2011 Ecumenical Mission in Sherwood Park and area. This was the 22nd Annual Ecumenical Mission, held each fall with a different speaker (and Mission Leader) from the different denominations. It's a rather vigorous four days, especially for the speaker, who has nine or ten presentations to make in as many churches in the County!

This year's event began with a potluck supper and the Opening Service at Bethel, on the evening of Sunday, October 23, and ended with an Evening Service at the OLPH Catholic Church. *(These two services were honored with the wonderfully large Ecumenical Choir singing a few notable pieces, and was directed by Heather Rodgers from Sherwood Park United Church.)*

Pastor Craig's theme this year was *"Live It Up in the Abundant Life Jesus Gives!"* Each of his nine presentations expanded on this theme. Through the Parables and through his own personal stories, Pastor Craig brought the Living Christ into our lives

in very meaningful ways. His own relationship with, and his love for, Jesus shone through every word. His every word, every idea and every action freely demonstrated how it feels to truly love Jesus!

He did this with humour, with questions, with proddings and with an engaging personality! He brought some great treasures to us...he made us feel good as Christians. He made us feel that we can be more than we are now...that we can reach for the stars in God's Kingdom. That's pretty amazing, in my opinion.

Pastor Craig also created a Website (*liveitupwithjesus.com*) where we could find reviews of the previous session and even the resources he used. This was a new idea, and one many of us enjoyed. Now we look forward to the next Ecumenical Mission in 2012, when the Catholic Church will be hosting the Mission and choosing a speaker.

Personally, I'd like to thank the many people who helped set up, serve and clean up after the potluck supper at Bethel, as well as those who were greeters, ushers, readers, operated the PowerPoint and sound. And a very special thanks goes out to Normay and her group for the fantastic musical offerings! We couldn't have done any of these things without such wonderful and willing hearts and hands!

HELP & HOPE FOR SINGLE PARENTS

There aren't many people who truly understand the unique challenges single parents face. You deeply desire to do what's best for your kids, but sometimes it's all you can do to survive from one day to the next. *Single & Parenting* is a special weekly group that will bring hope to your life. We'd love for you to join us.

7:00 PM Wednesdays
January 11—April 4, 2011

Bethel Lutheran Church
780-417-7775

298 Bethel Drive, Sherwood Park
paul.schoepp@bethelchurch.com

**SINGLE &
PARENTING**
HARD WORK. REAL HOPE



Faith Legacy

Deloyce Elle

Every New Year, people begin talking about their resolutions...things they want to change in their lives for the positive. Quite often, resolutions revolve around physical or emotional well-being. Have you considered making a resolution regarding your spiritual well-being? Your child's well-being? There are a number of Faith Legacy classes being offered in 2012 to help families grow spiritually.

Baptism/Faith Chest: Sunday, January 15 & 22, or April 15 & 22 from 9:45 – 10:45 am. You are welcome to attend the session even before your child is born. It's never too early to begin planning for their faith future.

For parents with children ages 5 - 7 (Towel & Basin): Sunday, January 29, February 5 & 12. We will be discussing how to teach your child to serve and to give, as well as having family devotions.

For parents with children ages 1 – 3 (Picture Bible): Sunday, March 4, 11, & 18 from 9:45 – 10:45 am. Topics include how to share your faith with your child and spiritual parenting

For parents with children ages 3 – 5 (Worship Kit): Sunday, April 29, May 6, & 13 from 9:45 – 10:45 am. We will be discussing different ways we can worship God, worship and media, and the importance of blessing your child with a life of worship.

For girls in Grades 5-7 and their moms (or female mentors): May 2012. An overnight retreat of pampering and chatter as we focus on *God's Design for His Daughters*. We will learn what it means to be a woman of God – to be cherished, to be pure, and to be faithful to the end.

If you have a child in one of these age groups, consider making it your new year's resolution to attend. Calendars will begin to fill up quickly with events and activities. Be sure to set aside these dates and make this a priority for your family.

For more information on the Faith Legacy series, please speak with Deloyce or Pastor James.



December Junior High Girls' Night

Krysta Davis

Join us for Junior High Girls' Night on Friday, December 2 from 7:00 - 9:30 PM! We'll meet here at the church for card-making with Judith Burns. We'll also take some time to enjoy some hot chocolate and snacks. Feel free to bring a friend and a snack to share. There is no charge, but please do let Krysta Davis know if you plan on coming (780-417-7775), or if you have any questions.

Also mark Friday, January 6 on your calendar, which will be our first Junior High Girls' Night of 2012. We'll be meeting for this one at the Wiebe's home at 7:00 PM!

Upcoming Youth Events

Club Quest (Grades 5-6):

Friday, December 9: Christmas Party

Meet at Bethel at 7 PM. Cost: \$4/person.

RSVP by December 7

Junior High Youth:

Friday, December 9: Bigger & Better

Meet at the church at 7:00 PM.

We'll need some parents to drive if you can.

Friday, January 13: Planning Meeting

We'll meet at the church at 7:00 PM.

Senior High Youth:

Friday, December 2: Geocaching

Meet at the church at 7:00 PM.

Drivers and GGPS's needed.

Friday, January 20: Planning Meeting

We'll meet at the church at 7:00 PM.

The True Meaning of Christmas

Bill Easum

I still remember the thrill of Christmas I had as a child. The expectation was awesome; the waiting for the tree was brutal. Then it happened: time to tear everything to shreds to see what goodies lay beneath all the wrapping. Some years Santa was right on track; other years Santa must not have been listening.

Then I grew up and I learned that Christmas wasn't for kids and Santa didn't exist. I took it in stride on the outside; on the inside, some of the magic of life vanished.

The real problem with my childhood was I never heard a Bible story related to Christmas. All Christmas was to me was receiving gifts...and the right gifts for that matter.

When I was about ten or twelve, we spent Christmas with a weird Aunt and Uncle and their two boys (who are now retired missionaries). I thought my Uncle was weird because he always wore a white napkin on his head while sitting in his favorite chair. But his kids were really weird. Each night they read the Bible and prayed for what seemed like hours. At the dinner table, they held hands and each one prayed until I was starving (I had never seen people do that before). I know my mom and dad were uncomfortable. I wondered why we were there in the first place.

The day before Christmas my two cousins and I went to town on the pretext of buying Christmas presents (little did I know they didn't exchange gifts on Christmas). We were in front of a department store when it happened. We were passing one of the Salvation Army's Santas and the large black pot into which people dropped money. As we passed the pot, my two cousins grabbed me, reached into my pocket, got all of the money I had earned with which to buy Christmas presents and threw it into the big, black, kettle.

Well, I was livid. I called them every name in the book. When we got home I told my parents. And then God did his magic.

My Uncle sat me down and told me the story of Christmas. I had never heard it like that before – God sending his Son on my behalf. It was really weird.

The next morning was Christmas and we gathered around the fireplace (there wasn't a tree) and sang Christmas carols; I knew some of them, but not many. Then my parents and I opened our gifts while my Aunt and Uncle and two cousins looked on. When we were finished, my Uncle told everyone that this year their Christmas gift was going to some well needed project in some far corner of the world - I really can't remember where. But the point is, they didn't give each other gifts; they sent it all away.

Within a few months I forgot all about this incident and went on with my life. Years later, when God got hold of me and I began this awesome journey which I'm still trying to figure out, I began to understand what my two cousins were trying to tell me – Christmas is a time of giving rather than receiving since we have already received enough in the Son.

Several years later my wife and I decided to stop giving gifts to ourselves and our families. It was one of the most liberating things we ever did. No more pushing and shoving, trying to get through the Christmas crowds. No more trying to buy something for someone who has everything. Now we could simply enjoy the season and its founder.

Well, it didn't set well with our families that we no longer gave or received gifts. That first Christmas of no gifts, we had to return some gifts with an explanation. But the explanation explained the real reason for Christmas (neither of our families were very religious - some would say they were non-Christians). Later in life some of them saw the light. Those were great days.

Later, our decision not to give or receive gifts at Christmas became known in the church I was pastoring and other people began following our lead. Soon it developed into a program called the Christ Child Tree in which people gave a gift to our mission equal to what they would do for themselves. Over the years the gifts equaled a thirteenth month of income for the church's mission.

The moral of this tale? Put Christmas in its proper perspective - even for your kids. Don't let Wall Street dictate how you spend your money or the season. Make a gift to your favorite missionary endeavor or your church.

