

The Spirit at Bethel

February 2011

Sherwood Park, Alberta

Sharing the love of Jesus with a hurting world

What LAMP's Ministry Means to Me.....

Kathy Ansell

I've been asking myself this question quite a bit lately. I've travelled to Wollaston on a LAMP mission trip for the last three years now, and I'm not sure if I'll be able to go this summer. This has made me think a great deal about all I've experienced so far. What does it mean to me??? It's so hard to put into words, but let me try.

LAMP's ministry means being able to see God at work in spite of my weaknesses and lack of faith! By seeing how He takes care of the details and provides again and again, my faith has been strengthened again and again...but I'm still working on this one.

It means stepping out of my comfort zone and allowing God to stretch me farther than I thought I could be stretched and mold me into a person who I didn't think I could be.

It means being changed forever as I come face-to-face with suffering – on a personal level, rather than simply on the news or through a story. A piece of my heart will always be in Wollaston, thinking and praying for the kids who have such a hard life, but trusting in a God who can give hope, life and salvation. We're only in Wollaston for a short time each year, but I know that the Holy Spirit can use our meager efforts to make a difference...a difference that hopefully I will be able to see in heaven some day.

That's a little bit of what LAMP's ministry means to me.



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

March Spirit—YOUR NAME.

If possible, also include pictures, preferably as separate attachments. The deadline for the March issue is **Monday, February 21, 2011.**

51 Weeks

Roxanne Theroux

It's only 1 week a year! How can seven days out of 365 really make a difference? It is easier to stay at home and not get out of my comfort zone. Be safe and cozy. Be the homebody that I am. That may be the way out that *I* want, but it is not what God wants. I can make a difference, and He wants me to make that difference.

Last summer, we had over 150 children at the VBS and 35 youth and young adults in the Youth Program for our week serving with LAMP at Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan. I spent hours and hours playing and talking with many people in the community before and after the two programs we put on. This was not done by my own power; it was God working in and through me. On my own, I would never have the strength and courage to do what I do there! He is my Source and my Sustainer. He grants me strength, courage, discernment and the words to speak. He held me in the palm of His hand.

One week goes so quickly. Can we really have an impact on this community? God knows. I will trust Him and listen to Him when He puts the people I now know and love on my heart. During the other 51 weeks of the year, through God's prompting, I lift up Fayden, Paulie, Taylor, Kammy.....(and the list goes on). I pray for them. I stand at my sink with tears streaming down my cheeks as I think of the cherished memories and the stories of pain and suffering that they have shared with me. My heart aches as I pray for God's children of Wollaston. My purpose for the other 51 weeks is to talk to God about our shared loved ones. I am learning discipline as I take the time and make the time to pray.

As someone who is weak, not eloquent and frightened of so many things, I ask you to think about putting yourself out there. Don't be comfortable. God has amazing plans and purposes for your life and the people around you. All you have to do is believe in Him and go....



LAMP is Bethel's Mission of the Month for February. Your prayers and financial gifts will support LAMP's overall ministry needs and will serve to reach out to hurting communities with the love of Jesus.

Baptismal Ministry

Pastor Marv

God is at work in baptism. Through the water and God's Word in baptism, we are given a new birth – we are born again – and God makes us a “new creation.” The baptismal life is one which we daily celebrate as we die to our old self-centeredness and daily rise to live our new life in Jesus...a life of loving service to others.

We are attempting to grow and strengthen our baptismal ministry. We have baptismal resources available, and we regularly schedule pre-baptismal classes for parents. Just as parents take pre-natal classes to prepare for the gift of life God is giving in this child, so too should parents prepare for the gift of new life that their child will receive in baptism.

The next pre-baptism classes are scheduled for:
Sundays, March 20 and 27 (9:45 – 10:45 AM)
Sundays, May 29 and June 5 (9:45 – 10:45 AM)

Note: Parents are encouraged to attend these sessions before the birth of their child. Attending both sessions will help parents prepare for the baptism and will also help them focus on raising their children in a God-honoring home environment.

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(...Continued from page 2): *Baptismal Ministry*

In addition, special Baptismal Worship Services are being scheduled for Saturday afternoons at 4:00 p.m. We are designing these worship services so that:

- greater focus and attention might be placed on the baptism;
- parents can have greater involvement in the service by having a blessing for their child;
- special musical selections can be included to celebrate this special day.



Baptismal services are planned for:

Saturday, April 2 at 4:00 p.m.
Saturday, June 11 at 4:00 p.m.

As well, as a way to help connect baptismal families to the body of Christ at Bethel (since

when a person is baptized, he/she is baptized into the family of Christ), sponsor families will be available. Sponsor families will come alongside the baptismal family to support, encourage and pray for the baptismal family.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact one of the pastors.



*[Jesus] said to them,
"Let the little children
come to me, and do not
hinder them, for the
kingdom of God belongs
to such as these.*

~ **Mark 10:14** ~

Youth Servant Event Information Night

Are you between Grades 7 and 12, and if so, are you interested in serving on one of our Youth Servant Events this summer? Our Junior High-aged group will be heading to La Ronge in northern Saskatchewan in July to organize and run a couple of Vacation Bible Schools, while our Senior High-aged group is planning to once again travel to Texas and Mexico in August to do some light construction work for some people in need there.

For more information, please attend the Youth Servant Event Information Night on Sunday, February 17 at 7:00 PM at Bethel.



Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: Colonizing the North American Christian Church?

Michael Gillingham
Director of Youth Ministry

Dr. Christian Smith, in his book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, notes a disturbing trend in the conversations on faith that he and his researchers had with American teenagers. While many of these young people would claim to be Christians, a deeper analysis of their understandings and comments indicated that most of them actually believe in what Dr. Smith calls “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” (MTD). Dr. Smith summarizes the main beliefs of MTD as follows:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

Dr. Smith noted that many of the teens, Christian and otherwise, when they spoke of their faith, framed their thoughts and comments to reflect the above ideas. As researchers unpacked these comments, teens told them that religion is important *but not necessary* for morality. It’s important to be a “good” person, and religion can help people to do that. Happiness and feeling good is the central goal for many teens. God exists to help people feel better when they’re sad. While God has created the world, many of these teens claimed that he prefers to stay in the back-

ground, uninvolved in daily life unless a problem arises. Dr. Smith wonders if this isn’t also the faith of many adults in North America today. He wonders how it is that so many young people have learned this “other” faith and missed the powerful truths of Christian faith, teaching and practice. He wonders if many Christian churches, on purpose or by accident, aren’t also modeling and teaching MTD in worship and Christian education programs. At worst, he wonders if this sub-Christian belief system of MTD isn’t actively colonizing the Christian church in North America, replacing the rich truths and realities of Christian faith with these shallow ideas.

At the conference I attended, Dr. Smith issued a challenge to the youth workers to teach, live and model a robust and vibrant Christian faith as expressed in the life of Jesus, in the Bible and in the best parts of the Christian church in history. He encouraged us to attack moralism at every point and to remind young people that they are formed and called into faith and life by a God who loves them deeply. This God is living, active and involved in the world and in our lives in very personal ways. This God sent His Son Jesus to be a man, to live, to die and to rise again that we might have lives of purpose and direction beyond our own focus on being happy. This God helps us to face evil with His love and to face suffering with joy and grace. Our lives are ultimately about God, His Kingdom and His purposes, and we live our best lives in Him when we lay them down to follow Jesus.



Investing Opportunities

Cliff Huculak

We hear so much these days about investing for the future: investing in the stock market, mutual funds, gold, real estate, etc. The future is most certainly unknown and unpredictable. At times, we rely upon others to help us make these investing decisions. Scripture tells us that we are to be good managers of the gifts that God has

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provided to us. Investing of monetary gifts entrusted to us is but one way to do this. Some planning for the future is required. Whether it is for retirement, education, a down payment for a house or car, or a vacation, saving is part of good stewardship.

Church Extension Fund (CEF) — and don't let the full name distract you — is one of those places where you can invest and earn a rate of return comparable to the major financial institutions. Investments in CEF may be made into savings accounts, term deposit accounts, and tax-free savings accounts, and may be withdrawn any time a need arises. In addition, RRSP and RRIF accounts are available for retirement savings. As with any financial institution, CEF makes loans from your invested money and earns a rate of return, which in turn pays you for the rate of return on your investment. However, the difference in the loans made by CEF is that they are to schools and churches of the A-BC District of Lutheran Church-Canada. Bethel is a recipient of these loans, which were used to finance the building of the facilities in which we give praise and thanks to God...the building in which we reach out to the community through the various programs carried out within—and outside of—its walls. Remarkable how these invested monetary gifts from God are returned to God through the carrying out of our mission: to bring the good news of a God, full of love and grace, to those around us. To share the love of Jesus with a hurting world.

Interest rates on savings accounts and term accounts range from 1.75% to 3.00%, effective January 1, 2010. Tax-free savings accounts earn 2.00%. RRSP and RRIF accounts are projected to earn 5.00% for 2010. Please talk with Cliff Huculak, Bethel's CEF representative, at 780-478-1372 for information about investing. You may also talk with CEF directly at 780-474-0063 to discuss your investing opportunities.

The gifts of God for the people of God.
WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY!



Thank You, Snow Angels!

Bethel Staff

Thank you to everyone who has so willingly picked up a shovel and helped to keep the walkways clear around the church. It has been a real challenge to stay ahead of the snow and drifting. Thank you also to the brave souls who ventured onto the roof to clear the snowdrifts away from the HVAC units and the upstairs window wells. You are all truly "snow angels" and we appreciate you!

On That Note...

There is still room to sign up on our snow shoveling list! We have a snow blower in the shed that you can use, as well as a couple of shovels in the entry way if you prefer the manual approach. Because of the preschool children and parents arriving daily, the snow needs to be removed before 8:30 in the morning to provide for their safety. Please sign up on the list on the bulletin board for a week at a time. Questions? Contact Ann in the office at 780-417-7775.



THANK YOU!

Pastor Marv



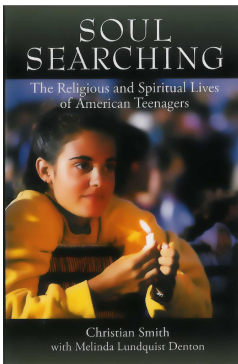
We have had such a great response and support for materials in the sea container that we will be shipping to Kenya. Thank you for your generosity! Lord willing, the materials in the sea container will be unloaded at church

in early February – repacked and reloaded. The remaining space will be filled at ADRA-ASI's warehouse, and the sea container will be shipped out mid to late February.



Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers

Michael Gillingham



I recently had the opportunity to attend a conference which featured noted researcher and writer Dr. Christian Smith. Dr. Smith is a professor of sociology currently teaching at the University of Notre Dame. He spearheaded a massive research project on American teenage spirituality in the United States. The initial find-

ings were published in the book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford UP, 2005). His research team has done some follow-up work with the original teenagers five years later, as they've transitioned into being young adults. He's published their findings in the 2009 book *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. In both books, Dr. Smith presents some challenging data about the spiritual lives of teenagers in America.

Before I present some basic summaries of his research, I want to note that this is not data about Canadian teens and these are trends seen in a larger group. The teenagers that you know and love may or may not believe or act in the same ways as these teens studied by Dr. Smith. For me, the studies present a chance to see some overall trends and review our current situation in light of these findings.

Dr. Smith and his team surveyed over 3500 teens of various ages, religious traditions, social and economic backgrounds and parts of the country with phone surveys. His team also conducted in-depth personal, face-to-face interviews with 267 teens. Here are a few of his findings:

1. About 1/3 of teens surveyed were very involved, 1/3 of teens were moderately involved

and 1/3 of teens were not involved in religious groups and practices.

2. On measures like reading the Bible, talking about faith, praying, attending worship services and seeking to serve God by serving others, the young people who were most active and articulate about faith were the youth from the Mormon church. Youth from white conservative protestant, black conservative protestant, mainline, Catholic and Jewish homes were found to be, from more to less, active in their faiths. (Bethel would be considered a white conservative protestant congregation according to the study.)

3. Religious faith is not considered to be an important part of being a teenager for these teens. They focus most on having fun and trying not to fail at school, sports and jobs. Teens felt that it was okay to be religious as long as one isn't "too religious".

4. The vast majority of the teens interviewed were incredibly inarticulate about their faith. They could talk in great depth about music, TV, movies, video games, and subjects at school but struggled to speak clearly and confidently about faith.

5. Strong religious commitment makes a clear, significant and positive difference across all standard measurable outcomes (e.g. school grades, avoiding drugs, avoiding alcohol, avoiding premarital sex, work performance, family relationships) for committed religious teenagers. We don't serve God so that He will do these good things for us, but it is a neat benefit that researchers noted. Moderate or no religious commitment did not result in the same positive outcomes.

6. Teens are eminently teachable. They are always learning whatever they have opportunity to be exposed to. This can be good or bad.

7. Teens' faith lives are most powerfully shaped by the faith lives of their parents.

8. Teens' faith lives provide us with an interesting reflection of the faith lives of adults in our

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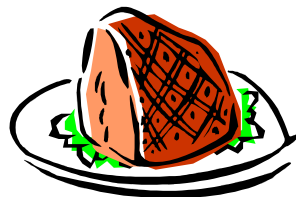
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culture.

As I reflected on this research, I was struck by several things. First, two-thirds of young people are actively or moderately involved in religious faith and life. That number is higher than I would have guessed. The one-third of youth that are not involved are generally not hostile to religion and might be open to invitations to becoming more involved. This is a great opportunity for us. We also might learn some things from our Mormon neighbours as they successfully encourage and empower their young people to learn and model faith. We can grieve the lack of importance that religion and faith has for so many young people. We can be challenged to help our young people speak more clearly and more often about their faith even as we learn to do so ourselves. Teens are willing to learn and are willing to be taught. We need to be willing to do this. Parents are very important in teaching and modeling faith, and young people are watching the ways that we live our faith. As we continue to build and develop the youth ministry here at Bethel, Dr. Smith's research challenges us to look more closely at how we live, share, teach and model the faith.

Ham Dinner, Anyone?

Laila Klaszus



Because of stormy weather, the January Dinner planned by the Recycled Teens was called off but not cancelled. It was postponed until Monday, February 7 at 12 noon. We have invited the seniors from Concordia Lutheran Church and Redeemer Lutheran Church to join us.

Besides good food, you will be treated to a video presentation by Dr. Paul Meier — *Persecution and Bishops* — followed by entertainment led by our master entertainer, Mel Lenz.

We'd love to have you join us!



Shapes

Pastor Marv



God's people come in all shapes and sizes. So what is your SHAPE? Do you realize that God has given YOU a specific and unique SHAPE? Plan now to attend one of Bethel's four Stewardship Meals:



Sunday, March 6 at 12:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 6 at 4:00 p.m.
Monday, March 7 at 11:30 a.m.
Monday, March 7 at 6:00 p.m.

Since these are catered meals, reservations will be required. If you have any questions please contact Pastor Marv.



Welcomed into the Kingdom

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

Lincoln Michael Roma -
 son of Michael & Lindsay Roma
 Kara Danielle Warner -
 daughter of Kevin & Tara Warner
 Samuel Garry Gibson & Spencer Arnold Gibson -
 sons of Trent & Sarah Gibson
 Morgan Kathleen Spencer -
 daughter of Chad & Tina Spencer

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

Tyler William Dryden
 Thorey Johnston
 Stella Bromley



Offerings for Goats and Mosquito Nets

Deloyce Elle
Director of Children's Ministry



Did you know that there was a herd of goats at Bethel this fall? The children of Grace Land and Quest 56 were gathering their offerings to purchase goats for families through Canadian

Lutheran World Relief. For every \$30.00 gathered, another goat was added to the herd on the bulletin board between Rooms 5 and 6. It was very exciting for the children to count the herd each Sunday, looking for new additions. In all, 32 goats will be given to families in need, providing much-needed food and income.

The children's offering for January to May will be used to purchase mosquito nets, which cost about \$10.00 each, through the Lutheran Malaria Initiative of Canadian Lutheran World Relief. Mosquitoes are a minor nuisance in Canada: they buzz in our ears and cause us to itch when they bite us, but we are fortunate enough that they do not cause any major illnesses. This isn't the case in other parts of the world, though. A little mosquito bite elsewhere can lead to malaria, which is one of the most common infectious diseases...and it can be deadly. Each year, one million people die of malaria – that's one

death every 30 seconds. The good news is that malaria is preventable and treatable, and we can be a part of the solution. It is the goal of the Lutheran Malaria Initiative to provide nets for people in African nations in order to bring an end to malaria deaths by 2015. For more information, visit: www.lutheranmalaria.org. For a weekly update at Bethel, be sure to check the bulletin board between Rooms 5 and 6. Every "No Mosquito" sign represents one net for a family.

This mission project hits close to home, especially for the members of the 2011 Kenya team. Kisumu, where we will be spending the majority of our time, is in a malaria-prone area. We will have the luxury of taking medication to avoid contracting the disease, as well as the ability to use a mosquito net around our beds each night. This isn't the case for so many children and their families. What a gift it would be for them to receive a simple mosquito net!

If your family needs more offering envelopes, stop by the office or check with your child's Grace Land or Quest 56 teacher. For more information, please speak with Deloyce Elle.



The Contemporary Choir Sings Again!

Normay Wiebe
Worship Coordinator



Come out and join us this spring in our Contemporary Choir. We will be singing a collection of songs originally recorded by artists such as Chris Tomlin, Aaron Shust, Third Day, Casting Crowns, Phillips, Craig & Dean, Bebo Norman, Mark Hall, and Mandisa. With selections such as *Only the World*, *How Can I Keep from Singing?*, *Praise You in this Storm*, *Voice of Truth*, *This is How It Feels to Be Free*, and *Give Me Words to Speak*, these powerful songs deliver a message of truth and the incredible promises of God.

Practices run Tuesday nights at 7:00 from March 2 through April 12 (omitting March 29). Performances will be Sunday, March 20 and Sunday, April 17. Please contact Normay for more information or to receive a copy of the music and a CD. (780-417-7757 or normay.wiebe@bethelchurch.com)

