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CELEBRATING FAITH, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN KANSAS CITY

VOLUME 25 • NUMBER 12

December 2014

FREE-TAKE ONE!

Raytown redemption

Church's sports leagues bring salt and light to a struggling community

by Andrew Branch

Two miles south of the sun-baked asphalt surrounding Kauffman Stadium sits the much smaller Zimmerman Park. The fence may be chain-link rather than padded, but with four baseball fields, batting cages, and half a dozen soccer fields painted in the outfields, it gets the job done.

The complex is more than a playground for the next-door Raytown congregation of Graceway, a non-denominational church with Baptist heritage. Gentrification and failed schools in downtown Kansas City have forced often-broken families to the old suburb, where more than half of students receive free or reduced lunch.

■ See GRACEWAY page 23

Grace-filled Christmas

Christmas Cards deliver more than warm wishes this season, they bring healing to children

Stephanie L Boothe | Metro Voice



Grace seems to have it all: she's likable, intelligent, athletic, pretty.

Yet, according to Chris Ruhnke at Show-Me Christian Youth Home, she doesn't smile much because she has a hard time seeing all of the good in her.

Like so many kids, Grace's picture of herself and her value



has been based on the words the people have used," said Ruhnke. "Unfortunately, it is hard to see your worth when all you hear is words like worthless."

This Christmas, God will be working to continue to change that view using a most unlikely tool: a simple Christmas card. For Grace, Christmas cards have a deep, personal meaning.

After her parents' incarceration, at age four Grace and her siblings were placed in two foster homes, but they never were a good fit for her. In 2010, at age 11, Grace arrived at Show-Me Christian Youth Home. After arriving, Grace took to drawing as an escape.

"When you hear most of your life that you are going

■ See CARDS page 23

Christmas Memories

Some years ago Anita and I had planned to take our kids to the local nursing home on Christmas Day, distribute goodies and carol the residents. The idea didn't go over well with my daughters but the girls helped with decorating treats on Christmas Eve day and carefully arranged mouth-watering plates piled high with cookies, chocolate-covered pretzels and homemade peanut clusters.

by Dwight Widaman

That Christmas Eve, Kansas City received as much as 12 to 20 inches of snow, depending on where you lived. The next morning, with snow still liting down, we could see that our manger scene, set among the bushes, was almost buried. All that was visible of a kneeling Mary was her forehead capped with a bouffant headdress of snow. The cow, donkey and sheep were gone, not to mention baby Jesus. Joseph had collapsed from joy—apparently blown over in the wind. He was just a hump of white. The poor wisemen looked as if they would rather have stayed home instead of lugging frankincense and myrrh through our landscaping.

■ See MEMORIES page 7

See our Christmas Memories section starting on page 7!



MINISTRY PLANNING A NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION FOR SINGLES

by Dwight Widaman

It is often said that loneliness is not an absence of people but an absence of purpose; and that once you find your purpose, you will attract the people needed to fulfill the purpose of God on your life. In a world and a church that largely caters to couples and families, where do single adults turn for fellowship, laughter, and Christian activities outside of their church community?

For many, Christmas and New Year's are the most difficult time of the year. Activities are often built around family and couple gatherings. Singles often feel like a third-wheel, or worse—alone and forgotten.

If those feelings sound familiar, it could be that you are ready for your 2015 Genesis moment to begin that will

■ See SINGLES page 23

newsbriefs

China announces new two-child policy

(WNS)—A researcher for the Chinese government announced that all couples in China will be allowed to have a second child in two years, the latest easing of the 1979 one-child policy, according to Bloomberg. “People wish to choose the number of children they want to have, and they should be given the choice, at least for two children,” said Cai Fang, a vice director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Last year, President Xi Jinping allowed

couples to have two children if one of the parents is an only child.

Ethnic minorities, rural villagers, or parents whose first child is disabled, are also allowed more than one child. Reggie Littlejohn, president of Women’s Rights Without Frontiers, said in a statement “the problem with the one-child policy is not the number of children ‘allowed.’ Rather, it is the fact that the CCP is telling women how many children they can have and then enforcing that limit through forced abortion, forced sterilization, and infanticide.”

KC Chiefs team up to fight hunger in Kansas City



by Dwight Widaman

The Kansas City Chiefs recently teamed up with Harvesters, Lift Up America and Tyson Foods to tackle one of Kansas City’s most pressing issues -- hunger. Chiefs Chairman & CEO Clark Hunt and Chiefs players were on hand in November to help unload and distribute the 30,000 pounds of protein donated by Tyson Foods.

Harvesters—The Community Food Network distributed the food to more than 60 agencies throughout the Kansas City area. Lift Up America collaborates with corporations, professional and college sports teams and local nonprofit agencies to help the nations growing number of homeless and hungry individ-



(Top) Chiefs players pose with volunteers. (Inset) A convoy of trucks tows up to Arrowhead Stadium to transport food to area food banks.

uals and families.

For the last 11 years, Lift Up America has partnered with the Chiefs and Tyson Foods to distribute food to local Kansas City area agencies.

“I’m so happy that the Lift Up America food distribution has become a Kansas City Chiefs tradition for the past decade. It’s something that I and our players have

thoroughly enjoyed participating in each and every year,” said Hunt. “Knowing that this food will find its way into the hands of those in need makes the day a blessing to be a part of.”

Eric Hannah, president of Lift Up America, says one goal is to allow athletes to step up and be an example to young people concerning the importance of community involvement.

“Through these efforts in fighting hunger, we hope that we can serve as an example for our youth and encourage the next generation to be ambassadors of compassion.”

Even while the federal government reports that unemployment is going down, the number of hungry people doesn’t lie. One reason unemployment is down is that tens of millions of individuals have left the work force, having given up hope of ever finding a job. The Department of Labor, in an effort to show decreasing unemployment, just removes those millions from the formula of the “unemployed.”

Overall, the number of the country’s employed has shrunk during the last six years and many of those people end up food insecure. Across the nation, the need for food assistance is greater today than ever before. Among Harvesters’ 26-county service area, nearly 375,000 people are food insecure. As the regional Feeding America food bank, Harvesters provides

■ See KANSAS CITY CHIEFS page 22

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Unrest takes toll on Ferguson's heart, pocketbook

by **John Jessup**

ST. LOUIS COUNTY, Mo. -- Residents in Ferguson, Mo. are praying for peace after a grand jury decision found that there was no wrongful death evidence to take Officer Darren Wilson to trial in the shooting death of Michael Brown.

Many like Susan Ankenbrand want to move beyond the violence, protests and hatred.

Love for the city of Ferguson is written across her face -- and spelled out for all to see on her "I Love Ferguson" T-shirt.



ANKENBRAND

"There's just so much heart in this community that's hard to portray," she said.

But that's not the picture most people see after this summer's protests and riots following the death of Brown, a black man shot and

killed by Wilson, a white police officer.

Former Mayor Brian Fletcher started the "I love Ferguson" campaign in part to change the city's public perception.

But it's not just the city's reputation that's taken a hit. The local economy has too.

Fletcher's campaign is also helping area businesses beaten and broken down during the riots. So far, his group has donated thousands of dollars to help them rebuild.

While some businesses are gone for good, others still show the scars -- open for business, but boarded up with plywood.

Fletcher blames those he calls "professional protesters" for stirring up trouble.

"Very few Ferguson residents have been arrested from the unrest," he said. "Not that we don't have any residents that are protesting. We do, but they're being the peaceful protesters. They're not causing the problems."

Rick Canamore is one of the peaceful. He's protested across from the police de-

"I think we can do the civil disobedience, we can protest and we can make our voices be heard without tearing down the city."

RICK CANAMORE

partment since August. He says justice doesn't demand violence.

"I think we can do the civil disobedience, we can protest and we can make our voices be heard without tearing down the city," he said.

As someone who's familiar with the city's history, Fletcher acknowledges the problems and disparities between whites and blacks, but he says others are projecting national problems onto one St. Louis suburb of 20,000 people.

"They're using this as an example of what injustice has been done to African-



Rick Canamore is one resident speaking out against violent protestors.

Americans and have been throughout history. And I certainly can understand and agree with some of those. But the back of Ferguson I don't think is large enough to handle all the problems of the

nation," Fletcher told CBN News.

Now the focus has shifted to rebuilding Ferguson after the violent element of the protests burned down a significant number of black-owned businesses.

Training center gives hope, nurtures faith

Homeless West African man finds purpose through sewing and mending clothes

By **Dwight Widaman**

Hope Faith Ministries is known for reaching into people's lives and revealing talents they never knew they had. The new skills are helping individuals lead more independent lives and learn skills they are taking back to their home countries.

One such individual is Mamadou, a native of West Africa. The young man came to the sewing training center with clothes that needed to be mended. A volunteer told him she wouldn't mend the clothes, but instead would teach Mamadou to repair his own garments, and he eagerly agreed. Mamadou took the volunteer up on her offer and quickly became a proficient tailor.

Now he joins other men and women who come to Hope Faith to learn to sew, including a Liberian family who plan to take their new skills back to their native country. Capturing his own unique culture and heritage, Mamadou sews complex and colorful suits.

"Our hands-on vocational training is a critical need for those making the challenging journey from dependence to independence," says Connie Chamber, development director.

The effort covers a wide range of opportunities. Its barbershop will soon offer apprenticeships for aspiring barbers and the culinary arts program prepares homeless men and women to receive their Missouri Food Handler's Licenses.

Hope Faith Ministries Hope Faith Ministries opened its doors in 2004 as a daytime resource center for the homeless. Over the past 10 years, Hope Faith has served thousands of men, women, and children living in abject poverty or on the streets.

With the help of hundreds of volunteers, the organization



Mamadou

serves over 18,000 hot meals and provides 850 people with seasonally appropriate clothing. In addition to fulfilling basic needs, Hope Faith also helps clients by filling prescriptions, offering free health, vision, and dental clinics, and obtaining birth certificates and IDs necessary for securing employment or housing.

i moreinformation

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FOR THE SEASON, TRIO MEDIAEVAL SPANS CENTURIES



For all those who just can't bear to hear "Jingle Bell Rock" or any of the other Yuletide earworms that will invade shopping malls and radio waves in the coming months, Norway's Trio Mediaeval has some new old music for the holiday season.

The group's new album, Aquilonis, features 15th-century English carols that member Linn Andrea Fuglseth found in a book of Old English medieval carols before Trio Mediaeval formed. In fact, "Alleluia: A New Werke," one of the carols on the album, is the

■ See MEDIAEVAL page 4

Trio Mediaeval is (from left) Berit Opheim, Anna Maria Friman and Linn Andrea Fulgseth.

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JOHN DORSEY
 General Manager
 Kansas City Chiefs

New survey: Kansans remain misinformed regarding K-12 finance

newsbriefs

While the election ads have stopped, Kansans remain deeply misinformed about the true state of the Kansas budget and K-12 finance. Kansas Policy Institute has released a public opinion survey from SurveyUSA that takes the pulse of Kansas voters. The results highlight several of the issues facing the state as the legislature looks to convene early next year.

"It is impossible for citizens to develop informed opinions on education funding and state budget issues without accurate information," said KPI president Dave Trabert.

"We continue to see that citizens who are accurately informed on K-12 funding have significantly different opinions than those who believe

school funding is much lower than reality.

"Kansans are providing record funding levels, that also exceed adjustments for enrollment and inflation over the last 10 years, but outcomes on independent national assessments are relatively unchanged. It will always cost a lot of money to provide public education but the data shows that it's how the money is spent that matters - not how much. 'Just spend more' is about funding institutions.

"The focus needs to shift to getting more of the record-setting funding into classrooms where it will best help students."

The emphasis on getting more money to classrooms is a priority for citizens; 74 percent of respondents be-

lieve outside-the-classroom functions should be provided more efficiently on a regionalized basis, with savings put into classrooms. Other key findings in the poll;

■ Only 7 percent correctly said that total per-pupil funding has increased more than 5 percent over the last four years;

■ 66 percent of the respondents who correctly identified the total per-pupil amount spent on K-12 education ARE NOT willing to personally pay higher taxes to spend more on education;

■ 68 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, "I believe the Kansas state government should pursue efficiency savings, focus on core functions, and spend unnecessary cash reserves before raising taxes and/or cutting government functions;"

■ 54 percent want to reduce spending via efficiencies to solve any

state budget problems; 14 percent would rather reduce spending even it means a reduction in service and only 26 percent want higher income or sales taxes.

■ 74 percent believe state govern percent more efficiently; 74 percent of government employees in the survey also agreed that government can operate more efficiently.

Trabert concluded with, "Legislators and citizens cannot make good decisions about the challenges facing the state without good information. This survey confirms what we've known previously - Kansans are being misinformed and that cannot lead to good decision making. We encourage legislators and others to honestly examine facts without political bias.

No finger pointing...no attempts to score political points...and no shading the facts...just civil discussion of the issues and facts."

"The focus needs to shift to getting more of the record-setting funding into classrooms where it will best help students."



THIS IS YOUR TEENAGER'S BRAIN ON SUGAR

Too much sugar could be bad for your brain and your memory, especially for teenagers.

A new study from the University of Southern California found sugar led to problems with memory and inflammation of the brain in juvenile rats.

"The brain is especially vulnerable to dietary influences during critical periods of development, like adolescence," said Scott Kanoski, corresponding author of the study and an assistant professor at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. He added a diet high in sugar could not only mean gaining weight, but could hurt your brain as well.

The study is published in the journal *Hippocampus*.



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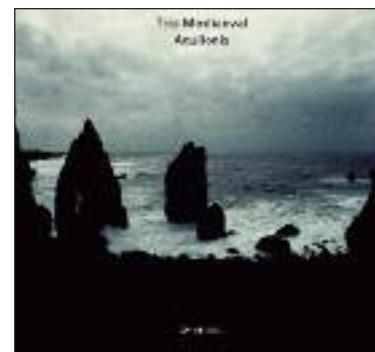
MEDIAEVAL

continued from page 3

reason she started Trio Mediaeval, she says.

"It was so spectacular when I first heard it," she told NPR's Rachel Martin.

The album is not just carols. There are also Italian songs from the 12th century, Icelandic chants from the Middle Ages, a few modern works and traditional Norwegian folk melodies. The record also marks the first time that the trio of women has recorded with accompani-



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ment from a special type of fiddle played by member Anna Maria Friman.

"It's sort of the national instrument of Norway, which is called the hardingfele fiddle," Fuglseth explained. "It's a violin that's from a place called Hardanger in the west coast of Norway. And the special thing about this fiddle is that it has sympathetic strings underneath the main strings so you can hear more than one string at a time. The actual decoration on the instrument is very, very beautiful ebony pieces that are made into beautiful artwork on the actual violin. It's a beautiful instrument."

Medieval music is, in many ways, the domain of men. Most of the music the group — Fuglseth, Friman and Berit Opheim — performs was originally written for male voices.

"That's the nice thing," Fuglseth said. "That we can actually take some music that's written for men and do it for female voices. There were a few monasteries, also, for nuns in Europe in the Middle Ages and there's some music from there too. But we haven't done as much of that. I think it's nice to do things that's not expected."

Those who want to get as far away from American Christmas as possible will want to hear the full conversation at the audio link, in which Fuglseth describes the Norwegian version of the winter holiday.

more information

To preview the album and hear the full interview of the artists, visit www.npr.org

Two more businesses win against HHS mandate

by **Dustin Siggins**

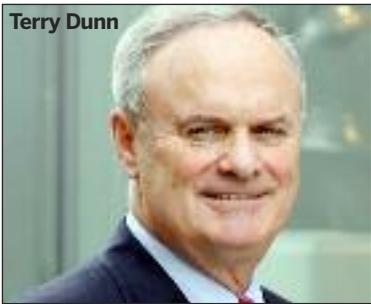
Two Kansas City-area businesses are claiming victory over the Obama administration's contraception and abortion drug mandate while a well-known third business supported their legal battle.

In a decision that has been expected since the Supreme Court ruled against the administration in *Burwell vs. Hobby Lobby*, U.S. District Judge Ortrie Smith said that Randy Reed Automotive of Kansas City, Mo., and Sioux Chief Manufacturing Co., based in Peculiar, did not have to follow the mandate's requirements.

In the Hobby Lobby case, the Supreme Court ruled that closely-held for-profit corporations may refuse to follow the mandate under the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The court noted that the mandate was a more restrictive method of accomplishing the government's goal of providing contraceptive and abortifacient access -- as well as sterilization insurance coverage -- than was necessary.

"It's always great when you can score a win for religious liberty, especially when you have an attempt to force these owners of companies that have sincere religious convictions to violate those convictions under threat of severe penalties," said Alliance Defending Freedom attorney Kevin H. Theriot, who represented the businesses.

JE Dunn Construction Co., a Kansas



City-based company owned by the Dunn family, filed a brief in support of Hobby Lobby and Conestoga.

"Our issue all along was an abortive issue," said Terry Dunn, CEO of JE Dunn. "That whole issue really surrounds the abortion issue and our belief as a family against the abortion issue."

According to the brief, the Dunn family owns 90 percent of the company's outstanding shares and operates the company according to the moral and religious teachings of the Catholic Church.

U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., also applauded the decision as "an important victory to protect Americans' fundamental right of religious freedom."

"Americans should not be forced to choose between giving up their business for their faith or giving up their faith for their business," he said in a statement.

"I applaud the Court's decision today, which simply affirms the fundamental religious freedom that Americans have enjoyed for more than 220 years."

newsbriefs



Poll: Americans don't trust scientists

(WNS)--Americans view scientists as highly competent but do not trust them, researchers at Princeton University concluded after conducting an online poll of adults.

Americans are particularly suspicious of researchers seeking grant funding or pushing particular agendas. "Rather than persuading, scientists may better serve citizens by discussing, teaching and sharing information to convey trustworthy intentions," lead author and psychology professor Susan Fiske said. Participants in the study rated the most common American jobs according to public perceptions of competence and warmth, which was used as a measure of trustworthiness. Helping professionals such as teachers, doctors, and nurses rated high on both warmth/trust and competence. Secretaries, writers, law enforcement officers, and bus drivers were among the professionals deemed neutral on both measures. Engineers, accountants, and attorneys joined scientists in ratings of high competence but low warmth/trust.

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Metro Voice © 2014, is an award-winning newspaper published monthly by Widaman Communications, Inc. MV is available primarily by mailed, bulk and subscription distribution to the congregations of 700 churches, colleges, bookstores, libraries, businesses and other locations. Complimentary distribution is available as a service to the community. Individual subscriptions are available for a donation of \$25 per year. Postage is First Class. Written materials submitted to MV become property of Widaman Communications. The content of this publication, including all stories, advertising or other graphic symbols, may not be reproduced in any way, shape or form for commercial purposes or added to any web site without the express permission of Widaman Communications. Advertising in MV is open to anyone wishing to reach the Christian community. MV reserves the right to refuse any advertising deemed unsuitable.

Metro Voice is a charter member of the Christian Newspaper Association, Fellowship of Christian Newspapers, Midwest Christian Media Association. Evangelical Press Association



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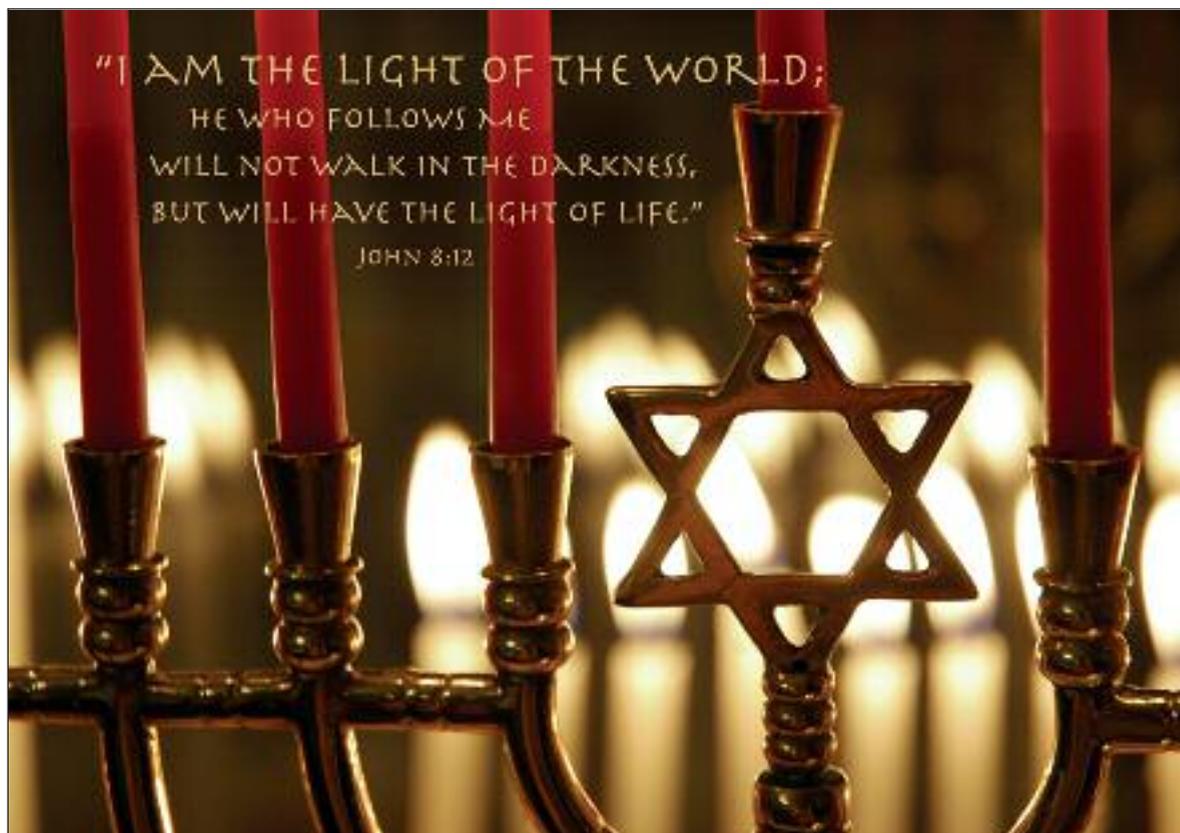
The Christian faith
owes much to
Hanukkah observance

I grew up a nice Jewish boy in Brooklyn, N.Y. When late December arrived it brought some interesting challenges. Why? My family owned a toy store! I knew little about Christmas, but what I knew was that it was “all hands on deck”!

Christmas was a celebrant and frantic time with exciting expectations for the “others,” but not for Jews. To me, whatever Christmas was, one thing I knew was that it was not Jewish. Besides, we celebrated Hanukkah. So, the fact that my father owned a toy store was a win-win for “them” and me!

Unknown to many is that gift giving on Hanukkah is an essentially American invention. So many Christians and too few Jews placed cultural pressure to accommodate the new Jewish immigrants and their kids from being left out. So, Hanukkah assimilated itself seemingly into the “Jewish” Christmas.

For too many Christians therefore, Hanukkah has as much meaning as Christmas has conversely for Jews. Yet little known by both communities is the historical connection that makes one not possi-



ble without the other.

In 168 B.C.E., a Syrian Seleucid king name Antiochus Epiphanes IV subsumed and decimated Jewish life in the land of Israel.

Most noted was the desecration of Jewish worship and the Holy Temple by replacing it with the worship of pagan idols, including the killing of a pig on the altar.

This event came to be infamously known as the “Abomination of Desola-

tion.” The story continues through the heroic efforts of Judah Macabbee resulting in the rededication of Jewish worship through military victory and ritual cleansing three years to the day, the “25th Day” (any coinci-

dence) of the Hebrew month of Kislev. Hanukkah is the Hebrew word translated “dedication.” It is remembered yearly by the lighting of the Menorah, commemorative of the original rekindling and the story of how with just enough oil for one

day it remained lit for eight days until additional oil could be prepared.

The prophet Malachi prophesied 250 years earlier that the “Lord would suddenly come to His Temple.” Did he come when under Zechariah, 150 years before him, the Temple was rebuilt as he spoke of a priest named “Joshua” (3:8-9) who would be the agency for the forgiveness of sins in a single day, speaking of the anticipated Messianic age (‘Branch’ is a reference to the seed of David) as a Day of Atonement?

■ See HANUKKAH page 22

The heart of Christmas



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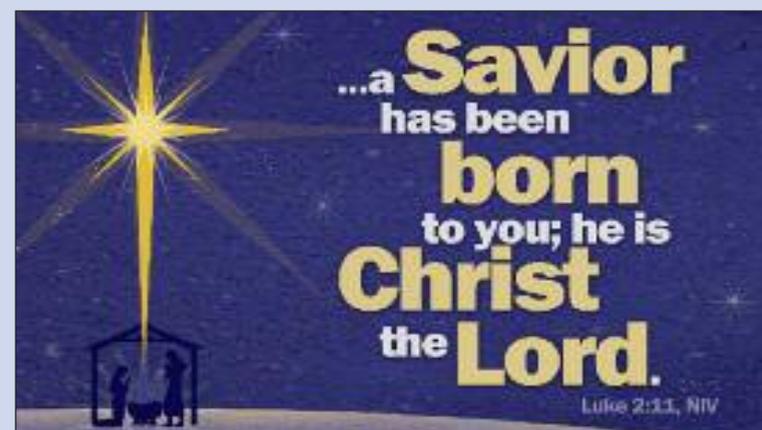
Clay Center, Kan. – What is the heart of Christmas? Is it the children, helping the less fortunate or being with family? Also, what is the significance of the baby Jesus in a manger that we observe in holiday plays and hear about in Christmas carols? Is it just a nice seasonal story or does it mean something?

Words like the Incarnation, Virgin Birth and Immaculate Conception do not show up in most Christmas cards but these words contain the heart of the season. World history uses them to describe only one person – the birth of Jesus.

The Scriptures declare Jesus existed in heaven from eternity as God the Son. Then one day, through a carefully crafted plan, God the Father sent His willing Son from heaven to earth. He took the form of a seed that was implanted by His Holy Spirit into a specially chosen young woman – Mary. She was pure, having never lain with a man.

The news of her approaching pregnancy did not come from a doctor but an angel. He said “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son” (Luke 1:30-31). Soon she conceived by the hand of God and months later, a host of angels announced the birth of this miracle baby to a lost world.

This extraordinary historical account has its share of skeptics. Some argue it is biologically impossible. Others doubt, calling it a myth equal to the stories of Greek mythology. God’s miracles have their critics because they cannot be ex-



plained in a classroom, under a microscope or on a calculator. If they could, they would not be miracles.

Why was this virgin birth necessary? First, for the forgiveness of our sins. We carry the weight of our guilt and shame every day. It is a heavy load. Yet, only one man is the vessel by which forgiveness can come – Jesus. His Deity from conception made it possible.

Second, in order to show us the way. Jesus could have descended from heaven and bypassed a birth. Instead, He chose

to enter our world as a baby becoming one of us. He took on our weaknesses and was subjected to our temptations. Then through His eventual death and resurrection He showed us we can overcome through trust in Him. He became our way to victory.

The heart of Christmas is Jesus. His miraculous virgin birth is our triumph. May Jesus be your HOPE FOR TODAY during this Christmas season.

Clint Decker is President & Evangelist with Great Awakenings, Inc.



The Christmas Story from Luke

What's Christmas without the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? He is the true meaning behind the reason we celebrate this special occasion. Now you can read the biblical account yourself.

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. Don't be frightened, Mary," the angel told her, "for God has decided to bless you! You will become pregnant and have a son, and you are to name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the

"You are blessed by God above all other women, and your child is blessed. What an honor this is, that the mother of my Lord should visit me!"

baby born to you will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's already in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true." And then the angel left.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "You are blessed by God above all other women, and your child is blessed. What an honor this is, that the mother of my Lord should visit me! When you came in and greeted me, my baby jumped for joy the instant I heard your voice! You are blessed, because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise

Mary responded, "Oh, how I praise the Lord. How I rejoice in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, And now generation after generation Will call me blessed. For he, the Mighty One, is holy, And he has done great things for me. His mercy goes on from generation to generation, To all who fear him. His mighty arm does tremendous things! How he scatters the proud and haughty ones! He has taken princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. And how he has helped his servant Israel! He has not forgotten his promise to be merciful. For he promised our ancestors — Abraham and his children — To be merciful to them forever."



Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

The Birth of Jesus

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors."

of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, his fiance, who was obviously pregnant by this time.

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped

■ See CHRISTMAS page 12

MEMORIES

continued from page 1

After our family traditions that morning (which include homemade cinnamon rolls before stockings, breakfast casserole, reading the Christmas story in Luke and then gifts), I opened the garage door and paused. "What am I doing?" I thought to myself. I really didn't want to shovel the driveway and questioned whether our little Honda CR-V could make it down our country lane and onto the road.

"Is it worth it?"

"Will anyone really care if we don't show up?"

I thought of a multitude of excuses why NOT to drive into town. I wasn't feelin' the determination of those snow-covered wisemen.

I came in and Anita immediately read my mind. Without either of us saying a word, I turned around and headed back out.

With one side of the driveway

cleared I made a test run with our old all wheel drive CR-V down our long and winding lane to the road, which was still untouched by vehicle tracks.

Returning to the garage, I loaded up the family and we made our way through Pleasant Hill. It was a virtual ghost town.

Pleasant Hill Health and Rehab was a similar story—only one or two big SUVs sat with their windows already dusted with fresh snow. Maybe we made the right decision I thought.

Inside we greeted the CNAs with a special plate of cookies and thanked them for their service to the residents on this snowy holiday.

Passing out our other goodies, the residents' faces lit up, not because of the sugary treats, but at the moment their eyes met those of Hannah and Emma. Big grins ensued and they reached out to hug or pat the girls on the cheek. The residents laughed with delight.

Later we made our way to the cafe-

teria where residents were slowly wandering in.

Anita played the piano and we sang every Christmas tune and Christmas hymn we knew. Our captive audience smiled and many joined in and didn't mind that we didn't know all the words. They did and that was all that mattered.

On the way home I asked the girls why it was important to give up part of our Christmas to visit with people we had never met before.

"Because it's Christmas Day and there were no families to see their grammas and grampas," Hannah replied. "We were their family," Emma added.

We didn't bring frankincense or myrrh and our family quartet wasn't a choir of heavenly angels announcing the birth of Christ, but our little offering of time to some lonely nursing home residents was the best—maybe only gift—we could lay at the manger that snowy Christmas morning.

FUN FOR ALL AGES

by Lynne Thompson

Regardless of age, it transports us back to our childhood: tinsel on the tree, stockings hung by the fireplace, colorful packages needing to be shaken, and traditional celebrations with faithful friends and relatives. For our children, this holiday is still being written upon their future memories.

This is why we as parents need to make sure that what they remember is packaged in precious truths about how God's love reached out to a dying world, one silent night in a town called Bethlehem. How shepherds watching their flocks received a surprise visit from heavenly creatures, showing that God is for everyone, regardless of their social stature. How angels announced peace for mankind, on whom God's favor rests, proving that our Intelligent Designer isn't the kind to create things and then walk away. How good news about



our savior spread throughout the world, explaining why we still celebrate today. So this Christmas, as you reveal the greatest love story ever told, try these fun-filled age-appropriate activities that will direct children, and adults, back to the true meaning of the holiday, when we celebrate Emmanuel, God who is with us.

Ages 0-3

■ In order to avoid making Christmas a "don't touch holiday" for little ones, give them fun things they can touch.

■ Move glass ornaments and lights

■ See TRADITIONS page 22

This year, give your family a gift without measure - the gift of time

Edited by Anita Widaman

Whether your kids are home from college, or home from elementary school, Christmas is the perfect holiday to spend extra time together as a family. Here are a few suggestions if you are at a loss for what to do.

Here are ten ideas you can do (FREE) this Christmas:

1. Free day at local museum



For the Widamans, it's the Nelson-Atkins Museum. Make it a personal trip by going online and researching your favorite exhibit. When your family visits the museum, educate each other and make it a private museum tour. Have a

scavenger hunt by looking for masterpieces showing the Christ Child and various characters from the Christmas story. End your hunt with treats in the Rozzelle Court.

2. Make a family movie

Facebook is just one of many sites where you can upload a family movie or Christmas greeting. You don't even need a fancy camera—just use your phone! This will be a step above typical online greeting cards with a great personal touch.

3. Bake Christmas cookies for the neighbors

Don't keep family recipes to yourself! Find your favorite cookie recipe and tweak it a little to make it your family's own secret recipe. Bake cookies together, where every person has a role, e.g. the measurer, the mixer, the baker, the quality-controller (usually dad) and the packer. Then take cookies to your neighbors and see them smile.

4. Make your home a fancy restaurant

Eating out can be special, but do we

have to go out to have a special meal? Why not dress up for a special night at home? Print the menu, light some candles, and make dinner special with everyone sitting around the table. Tip the chef by telling them the thing you love most about them.

5. Movie night at home

Instead of spending \$12 a ticket to take the family to the movies, plus the cost of popcorn, soda, and candy, watch your favorite holiday movie at home and start a family tradition. Our family Christmas movie is White Christmas.

Our daughters Hannah and Emma, now 20 and 17, know the song "Sisters" by heart and hilariously sing

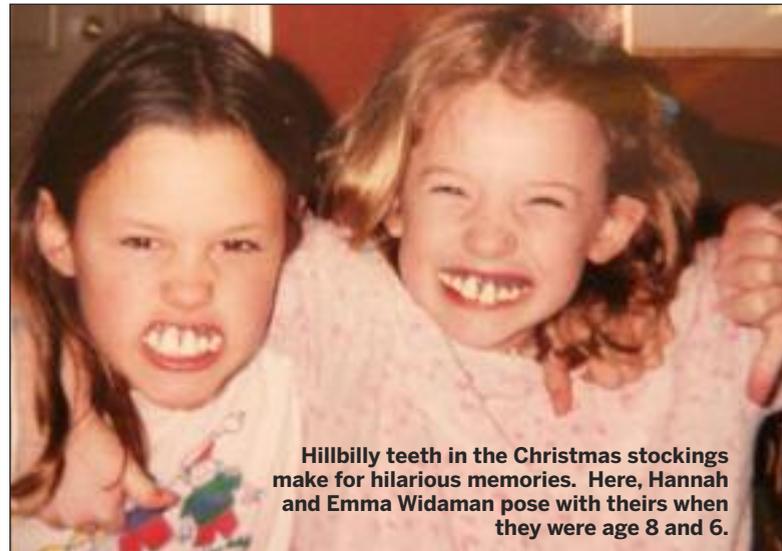


along with the movie. If your movie selection at home is deficient, try the library plus Netflix has a great selection. Have little ones? Be creative. If you are watching How the Grinch Stole Christmas, dress up as "Whoville" citizens and eat "roast beast" for dinner.

6. Board game championship



Be careful here. Dwight and Hannah are quite competitive. They should never play Risk together again! Announce your



Hillbilly teeth in the Christmas stockings make for hilarious memories. Here, Hannah and Emma Widaman pose with theirs when they were age 8 and 6.

family's annual scrabble (or other board game) or guessing game for the holidays. Make the championship real by printing rules, game brackets, certificates for winners, and play "home" and "away" games where each family member can host one in their own room.

7. Donate clothes to the local thrift store

Spend an evening helping every family members find one of two things to take to the neighborhood thrift store. Giving together as a family makes the holiday special. Take your family's secret cookie recipe and hot chocolate in a flask and sip as you drive to the thrift store. Take the long way home and enjoy the lights.

8. Take goofy photos

One year Dwight purchased "hillbilly teeth" as a gag for all of our stockings.

The photos will live in infamy. From dress-up clothes to re-enactments of historical photos, kids will enjoy letting go for the camera. Best to try this when the kids are younger. As they become teens, they're much less likely to allow for such permanent historical record of such goofiness! Hence their photo appearing here!

9. Watch old family videos

We all seem to take a lot of family videos at Christmas and other holidays but when do we really re-watch them? Get them all out for an evening of videos spanning back to when the kids were young. Everyone will roar with laughter. Sad thing is about videos, dad is usually left out unless someone else is holding the camera. Make sure to include dad in your videos this Christmas!

10. Take a day off and give the gift of time to your child

Finally, the best gift you can give is that of time. Take a day off, turn off your cell phone, put away the tablet and spend the entire day with your child. No plans, just total enjoyment. Take lots of pictures and view them before you go to bed. You're guaranteed a smile.

Whatever you do, even as patience sometimes wears thin with the kids over the long break, the time spent together at Christmas, is never wasted.

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Avoid the holiday stress



Mitch Temple | Focus on the Family

While "dashing through the snow" could be written today as "speeding down the interstate to the mall," both statements sound stressful to me.

With the arrival of the holidays, many of us experience an odd mixture of excitement and dread as we prepare to celebrate the season.

We get excited about the lights, shopping and Christmas dinner with family, but we also fear the stress that past holidays have taught us to expect.

From previous family misunderstandings and hurt feelings to scheduling conflicts, tight finances and the wear and tear on the body, holidays have a way of taking their toll on us.

I have found that the best way to lessen the stress of the holidays is to be prepared.

1. Recognize stress triggers ahead of time, and plan to minimize their impact. For example: Realize that you will get several invitations to holiday parties, events or service opportunities, and limit the number of events you will commit to before the invitations come.

2. Create a holiday budget together. Commit to sticking to the budget no matter how great the sales are!

3. Try to resolve extended family issues before holiday gatherings, if possible. Sit down and discuss the problems rather than ignore them.

4. Commit to dealing with spousal conflict after the emotion has died down: "Honey, we are both tired. Let's not try to solve this now. Let's talk in the morning over coffee." Use common sense, and be disciplined enough to handle conflict in the right way.

5. Schedule time for each other: Go to bed at a decent hour. Exercise or take a walk together. Protect your "together" time.

Most of all, remember what this time of year is all about: "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people... a savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11, NIV).

That is a great reason to slow down, be thankful and be at peace this Christmas season.

The Perfect Christmas Gift

by Barb Allen

The search for the perfect Christmas gift takes us to the fanciest of shops, has us running on empty late every December evening, and seems to elude us for that one who has everything. Maybe it's that search deep inside of ourselves of hope for some magical gem of a gift from that special someone who just knows us that well.

In a world constantly distracted by all things material - especially during the Christmas season - let's instead guide our focus to what really matters all year long.

Focusing on Jesus at Christmas may look different in your life than mine. It does not mean discarding the tree, swearing off Santa or not giving gifts at all, but it may mean arranging your schedule to spend time in worship on Christmas Eve and maybe inviting a lonely friend or relative to join you. It could be scheduling a project for your whole family to serve others, singing Christmas carols at a nursing home, or adopting a family in more need than your own. It truly is a more blessed and joyous feeling to give than to receive.



We could all save our money on gifts that no one needs and instead make a thought-filled gift especially for each person on our lists: one that will deliver real sentiment. You need not be an expert in crafting to make meaningful gifts, though there are probably handmade items that you *could* make very well if you were willing to try. A heartfelt letter could be cherished for a lifetime, especially when filled with

■ See PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT page 17

From our home to yours

by Anita Widaman

As a child my Christmases were filled with Grandma Imler's Lep Cookies and Jam Cake and Grandma Schad's peanut clusters and fudge that both women loved to make.

Grandma Imler lived on our farm in a house that my uncles built for her after Grandpa died. Her house was



right next door to ours. She had birthed 11 children on the same farm. She had television before my parents, so my brothers and I would watch endless episodes of "The Millionaire" and "Dick Van Dyke" with her. My Aunt Donna said that Mrs. Imler made 103 biscuits one morning to feed her family and the sick extended family that was staying at her home. She loved coffee and I still vividly remember her pouring coffee laced with milk and sugar into her saucer to cool. Relatives recount her interest in national and local events. I can blame her for my love of caffeine and politics!

So much of our character and personality reflect those who have passed on. Grandma Imler, Grandpa and Grandma Schad, Dwight's Grandma and Grandpa Scherer, my mother Aleta and our fathers Henry and Ellery.

Many of the traditions that Dwight and I have created for our family are woven around these people and our memories of childhood.

We have created several food and non-food Christmas family traditions. Several years ago, my mother and I made Lep Cookies. What an undertaking! This year my daughters Hannah and Emma and I will once again make Hannah Ann Jane Imler's Lep Cookies. I hope the heritage of this Godly woman will be extended to a new generation.

Please enjoy the following recipes from staff, friends and readers of Metro Voice.

■ See RECIPES page 10

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Readers share their favorite Christmas memories

A Victorian Christmas Tea

Debbie Carpenter
Tucson, Ariz.

The tea room was warm and cozy with a Victorian decor.

The ambiance invited each guest to relax and temporarily put aside thoughts of the shopping, wrapping, and baking yet to be done as Christmas rapidly approached. The essence of oranges and cinnamon from the winter blend tea steamed out the spout of our blue and white teapot.

The ladies in our family had gathered for Christmas tea. Each was allowed to pick her favorite bone china cup to use for the occasion.

An ivory lace tablecloth graced our table. On the center of the table sat a three-tiered server displaying finger sandwiches, scones, and a variety of petite cakes. Lemon curd, Devonshire cream and raspberry preserves provided tasty options for the scones.

As I looked around the table, my



Debbie's daughter Suzanne with Jannah and Hannah

gaze fell on Nana Em, the family matriarch. With a merry heart she had arranged this lovely treat for her daughters, granddaughters, and great-granddaughters as she did every year on the week before Christmas. What joy she had in giving this special gift to all of us.

Nana Em is not able to attend the Christmas tea party any more. She is celebrating in heaven now, but her family still keeps the tradition in her honor, and in honor of the Holy Child who was the greatest gift the world will ever know.

20 years of Christmas memories

By Stan Wilson
Dodge City, Kan.

I don't have a single favorite Christmas memory, but I have 20 years of Christmas memories. I don't remember a time that my parents and I did

not attend church as a family and my parents made every Christmas season a memory.

Let's see...there was the outdoor annual living nativity scene that we visited for at least 10 years. And, no Christmas was complete without two or three evenings spent driving around and looking at the beautifully decorated homes.

We always decorated the outside of our home the week after Thanksgiving. My mother was quite gifted artistically and she had at least three complete sets of hand-made Christmas tree decorations that she rotated every year. (I still use these decorations for my grandchildren.)

Daddy and I did get a bit testy when it came to decorating the Christmas tree, because mother insisted that it be perfectly balanced and it looked like a postcard from Macy's. Artificial Christmas trees became popular about that time and we had the usual plastic trees and one that I'll never forget...the Aluminum Christmas tree on a rotating stand with a rotating three color spotlight. Even though tumbleweeds were plentiful



Stan Wilson

in West Texas, mother didn't go for the Tumbleweed Christmas tree fad that swept thru West Texas in the early 60's.

My mother was a wonderful cook and she started making Christmas goodies right after Thanksgiving (no wonder that I've always had a weight problem.) My parents always held two Christmas open houses. One was for my friend's families so "us kids" got our own special open house. Then, my parents had an open house for their friends...but I was always there and always spent a little time

■ See MEMORIES page 11



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RECIPES

continued from page 9

HANNAH ANN JANE IMLER'S "LEP" COOKIES

1 1/2 quart molasses
2 pounds brown sugar
1 1/4 pounds oleo
2 pounds raisins
2 pounds dates
1 quart nuts
1 tablespoon ginger
1 tablespoon cinnamon
1 cup sour buttermilk
3 eggs beaten
1/4 cup soda dissolved in hot water
1 tablespoon baking powder
5 pounds flour

Add eggs to baking powder. Cream ingredients. Let the dough stand in refrigerator overnight or one hour. Bake for 10-12 minutes at 350 degrees. Makes many cookies.

CHOCOLATE MINT COOKIES

Sheri Goforth, friend and wife of Metro Voice contributor Alan Goforth.

I received this recipe when I was a receptionist at a glass company. Venders brought in cookies at Christmastime, and these were a favorite of anyone who



tried them.

(Recipe makes 80 cookies)

Ingredients
1/4 cup butter
1-1/2 cups brown sugar
2 tablespoons water
2 cups (12 oz.) semisweet choc. chips
2 eggs
2-1/2 cups flour
1-1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 package Andes mints

Cook butter, sugar and water in a large pan over low heat until butter is melted. Add chocolate chips and stir until partially melted. Remove from heat until completely melted. Pour into mixing bowl. Let stand 10 minutes to cool slightly. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Reduce speed to add dry ingredients. Chill dough.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line cookie sheet with foil. Roll dough into teaspoon-sized balls. Place 2 inches apart on cookie sheet. Bake for 12 to 13 minutes. Place mint and sprinkles on hot cookies and cool completely.

These are my kids' favorites Christmas cookies. I usually have to make two batches before Christmas.

AUNT MARGARAT'S FAVORITE CHRISTMAS COOKIES

Alison St John, Lee's Summit reader

My Aunt, Margarit Estep, passed away from Ovarian cancer last year. She made these Christmas Cookies every year! Christmas is not the same without her & these delightful treats! The recipe was given to her from her mother and passed it down to us.

Christmas Cookie recipe: This is the doubled version and makes about 8 doz.
2 eggs
2/3 cup sugar

■ See RECIPES page 11

walk to the
MANGER

"For unto us a child is born, Unto us a son is given."

Sunday, December 14
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RECIPES

continued from page 10

1 and 1/2 cup honey,
2/3 cup melted shortening (I use 1/3 butter and 1/3 crisco)
5 1/2 cups flour
2 tsp. soda
2 tsp. salt
2 tsp. vanilla
Beat eggs gradually adding sugar, honey, melted shortening and vanilla; mix all dry ingredients together and gradually add to egg mixture. Bake at 375 for 7 min - 10min
ICING:
4 1/2 cups powdered sugar
1/3 cup butter (melted)
1/4 cup cream
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla

GRANDMA AUGUSTA'S SALAD RECIPE

Marie Asner, Overland Park, retired Metro Voice movie reviewer

Since I was the musician in the family, when the cooks gathered to prepare Thanksgiving dinner, I was sent into the living room to play the piano and provide music while they worked. Consequently, I didn't learn how to cook. However, my grandmother devised a simple recipe I could do beforehand and thus she saved the day.



1 10 oz. carton of Cool Whip
1 3 oz. pg. strawberry Jello
1 small carton cottage cheese
One Number 2 can crushed pineapple (drained)
One Number 2 can fruit cocktail (drained)
Mix all above ingredients together and set in refrigerator to chill. Serve on lettuce.
(Note: the recipe can be modified for dieters by using Lite Cool Whip, no-sugar Jello, non-fat cottage cheese and pineapple and fruit cocktail with no added sugar.)

MEMORIES

continued from page 10

with the adults.

As an only child with no cousins, Christmas shopping was pretty short, but I always gave both of my parents a gift and they saw that I never was lacking on Christmas morning. My dad's sister lived in Alaska, and she always sent us some special Alaskan gifts. We had a family tradition of opening one present on Christmas Eve and it was always the surprise gifts from Alaska.

While in junior high school, I sang in the youth church choir, and we always had a part in the church Christmas program. The choir director always asked me to sing "solo", or was it "so low that my teenage voice didn't rattle the chandeliers."

My parents started a very special tradition that I still keep. We always attended the Christmas Eve candle-lighting service...I still get choked up at this one.

As soon as I was able to read, it was my job to pass out all of the gifts on Christmas morning. We then took turns opening one-gift-at-a-time so that we all got to "ooh and aah" over everyone's presents. Daddy usually came out with the short straw, but he was smart enough that mother usually had three or four gifts left after daddy and I had finished opening ours. Daddy always held the plastic garbage bag for our wrappings and mother boxed up every bow and ribbon for next year.

Mother always prepared the picture-perfect Christmas dinner...with enough left-overs for a week.

I think Dad's favorite part of Christmas was taking down the decorations, which he completed before the sun went down Christmas day.

Our traditional Christmas night meal was a bowl of red beans and cornbread.

All of this was done to honor our Lord and Savior...and maybe to give

me memories which I still have at the age of 66. Thank you, Mother and Daddy.

My Nine Dollar Christmas

By Paul Nichols
Overland Park

In the 1950s, my parents were not well-to-do folks. Times were tough for us so Christmas gifts were carefully chosen, and often came with a surprise gift for each of us kids.



Paul Nichols

Otherwise, we got things that we "needed." Shirts, belts, underwear and — ugh! — more socks.

When I was a junior in high school, my parents gave me a gift that came in a small, square box. Not the kind where I'd find another pair of socks. I was sitting on the floor, leaning against a wall, my few Christmas gifts and crumpled wrapping paper beside me.

"Hmmm. This is different," I thought. "Wonder what it is."

Just my luck: the box was difficult to unwrap and just as difficult to open. I picked at the stubborn tape and frantically riffled through my imagination. "What on earth?"

I finally broke open the box. I looked in, but still couldn't figure out what it was. It was bright and shiny and upside-down. I never had a bright, shiny, upside-down present before.

"A watch!" My eyes saw it, but my brain didn't. "No! It can't be!"

"We can't afford.... They don't have enough.... How could they afford this?" It was my first watch.

With unrestrained disbelief I broke into shaking and sobbing—right in front of my little sister.

"Well, Paul? What's wrong, honey?" Mom asked. She and Dad stood by the tree with hot chocolate and proud smiles. I just shook my head and kept on sobbing. I didn't want to cry. I tried to stop, but I couldn't. I never dreamed that my parents would sacrifice so much money on me.

It took me a week to take that nine dollar Timex watch out of the box, wind it up and wear it.

One of the brightest, shiniest discoveries I ever made was realizing that my parents were more well-to-do than I thought—especially at Christmas.

Adventure in trust

By Judith Vander Wege
Orange City, Iowa

No wonder the angels got so excited, I thought, as we sang, "born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth." Having recently received Jesus as Savior at age-9 1/2, the Christmas Carols seemed more meaningful than ever before.

Looking out the car window at early evening stars during our family's long drive, I pictured shepherds hearing: "Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; he is

Christ the Lord," (Luke 2:11, NIV).

Halfway to our destination, the car stalled at the only open gas station



Judith Vander Wege

around. The service station attendant "Says he can't fix it," Dad informed Mom. He handed her a bag of peanuts.



Grandma and Grandpa Mannes

They passed around the bag of peanuts to help us wait for supper at our Grandparents' house, and we waited under blankets in the car.

My parents had begun learning to trust God that fall. "Remember Romans 8:28," Dad told us. "In all things God works for the good of those who love him." We need to trust him now."

It'll be okay, I thought as we sang more carols. Grandma and Grandpa will be happy to see us whenever we get there. I felt loved and accepted by Grandpa, whose kindness made me feel valuable. His sense of humor was fun, too.

After some time, a serviceman going home on leave pulled up to the station. Thankful to find a place to get gas, he offered to "take a look."

Soon he had our car fixed and both cars were on their merry way. Now the service station attendant could go home for Christmas knowing he had been a blessing, too.

It seems fitting to me now that this was the year I received my first Bible from my grandparents. It reminds me of the beginning of my lifelong adventure of learning to trust. God really does work in everything for good.

Merry Christmas from your friends at the Metro Voice!

The Kansas City Brass & David Diebold, organist

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Christmas at Northland Cathedral

Children's Christmas Musical
Fact or Fiction: The Christmas Edition
December 14 at 10:45 am

Sounds of Christmas Concert
by the Cathedral Choir & Orchestra
December 21st at 6:00 pm

Service of Remembrance
December 14th at 6:00 pm

Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service
at 6:00 pm

Northland Cathedral
J. Lowell Harrup, Pastor
101 NW 99th St.
Kansas City, MO 64155
www.northlandcathedral.org
(New Entrance: @ Hwy 169 & Tiffany Springs Pkwy)

Getting past holidays after life change

During Christmas, we're constantly thinking of others. But if you've experienced a big move, a job loss, a divorce or a death in the family, take some time to care for yourself this season.

Loss and life change are hard at any time of year. But they can be particularly tough during the holidays.

So if you find yourself struggling to face the demands of the season, give yourself some grace. You've been through a lot. Here are four ways to ease into the holiday hustle after a big life transition.

1. Don't make any quick decisions.

If you've just married or think you've found the perfect house, it can be tempting to rush into homeownership or a new house right away. But if your old place doesn't sell quickly, you could end up juggling two mortgages for Christmas. Or, if you've suffered a financial setback after a divorce or death, you may want to dip into your 401(k) to cover gifts and travel expenses. But you could lose up to 40% of your savings in penalties by cashing out early.

When our emotions are fragile, we tend to



DAVE RAMSEY
Financial author, radio host, television personality

davesays

make impulsive decisions, and those decisions tend to cause more stress for us in the long run. So take some time to heal before you make any big moves with your money. It's better to cut back temporarily than to pay for your regrets for years to come.

2. Skip the stress, but keep a few traditions.

Seeing all those happy families at the mall can feel like torture if you've just lost a loved one. But don't let that keep you holed up in your house for months. It's important to get out and still enjoy a few of your favorite holiday traditions.

If you're not up to Christmas shopping, or if you really can't afford it right now, that's okay. No one will think any less of you. But make an effort to keep some family traditions intact. Decorate your tree or watch a movie marathon. You may not feel enthusiastic about these activities now, but they can help bring back some much-needed cheer to your life.

3. Surround yourself with people who care.

Explaining your job loss to every second, third and fourth cousin on your Dad's side is the last

thing you want to do right now. So if you've recently been laid off, forget the pressure to criss-cross the United States to visit distant relatives. Now is not the time to keep up appearances.

Instead, surround yourself with the family and friends who love you most. These are the people who can shut up and listen or step in and help. So pick your support system carefully and allow yourself to lean on them during the holidays.

4. Talk with professionals who can help.

Close friends and family members are crucial for support, but you may need to go a step further and find a counselor or pastor to help you move forward and heal. Make sure you find someone you can trust then commit to weekly or monthly sessions with them as soon as possible.

And if you have some huge financial decisions to make, get professional financial advice. Again, this is not your well-meaning aunt or friend—this is someone who knows how to guide you through the difficult twists and turns of financial transition.

There's nothing harder than an abrupt life change during the holidays. So if you're struggling to just make it through the season, don't force it.

Give yourself permission to slow down, take a break, and find the support you need. And remember, a new year is just around the corner.

Need Some Financial Peace? Join Financial Peace University this winter!

These area churches invite the community to join them for these popular financial classes using Dave Ramsey's famous Biblically-based curriculum.

Metro Voice thanks these churches for sponsoring our Dave Ramsey Christmas column this month. Support them by joining their class!

Woods Chapel United Methodist

4725 NE Lakewood Way, Lees Summit, MO
Starts: Jan 8th at 6:30pm, Childcare Available
(816) 795-8848
www.WoodsChapelChurch.org

Olathe Bible Church

3700 W 151st St, Olathe, KS
Starts: Jan 15th at 6:30pm
(913) 764-8280
www.OlatheBible.org

First Baptist Church of Olathe

2024 East 151st Street, Olathe, KS
Starts: Jan 7th at 6:00pm
Michelle Green, Coordinator
(913) 764-7088
www.FBCOlathe.org

CHRISTMAS

continued from page 7

him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn.

The Shepherds and Angels

That night some shepherds were in the

fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior — yes, the Mes-

siah, the Lord — has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! And this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!"

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others — the armies of heaven — praising God:

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on, let's go to Bethlehem!" Let's see this wonderful thing that has hap-

pened, which the Lord has told us about."

They ran to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. Then the shepherds told everyone what had happened and

what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their fields and flocks, glorifying and praising God for what the angels had told them, and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had said.

Jesus is Presented in the Temple

Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.

Then it was time for the purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord." So they offered a sacrifice according to what was required in the law of the Lord — "either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

When Jesus' parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom beyond his years, and God placed his special favor upon him.

—Taken from The Book, Luke chapters 1:26-2:40.



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Sounds of Christmas
Candlelight

A musical celebration of the joy of Advent
December 14, 2014 at 6pm
Belton New Horizons Church of the Nazarene
17200 Chestnut Dr., Belton, MO

December 21, 2014 at 6pm
Kansas City First Church of the Nazarene
11811 State Line Rd., Kansas City, MO

December 24 at 6pm
KANSAS CITY FIRST CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
11811 State Line Rd., Kansas City, MO

Kansas City's most complete guide to the events and concerts you want to see!

the events calendar

Compiled by Anita Widaman

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Lee's Summit, MO 64063
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PLEASE NOTE: Your item must be in by the 3rd Wednesday of each month for following month's issue.

Family Events, Christian Concerts, Theatre, Youth Events, Meetings, Clubs, Bible Studies, Family Fun, Speakers and More!

CHRISTMAS

REDEEMING BIRTH: A WALK THROUGH BETHLEHEM. December 5, 6, 12, and 13, 6:30-9:00 pm (last tour starts at 8:30 pm). Grace Christian Fellowship Church, 7320 Quivira Road, Shawnee, KS 66216. Free Admission. An opportunity for the whole family to experience the Christmas Story. You are invited on an interactive walk through the city of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth. See people at work in the marketplace with busy shopkeepers and vendors everywhere (you will have the opportunity to purchase fine Christmas gifts or mementos there). Smell the fragrant scents of herbs, spices, and breads. See the potters, weavers and carpenters at work. Visit a crowded inn and a humble stable where the King of Kings was born! Tours will be conducted every 20 minutes. 913-268-6300.

THE UNSEEN. December 5, 7:00 pm. December 6, 3:30 & 7:00 pm. December 7, 3:30 pm. December 12, 7:00 pm. December 13, 3:30 & 7:00 pm. and December 14, 3:30 pm. First Baptist Church Raytown, 10500 East 350 Highway, Raytown, MO 64138. Free. Travel both back into history to follow the story of Jesus and forward into the future. 816-353-1994.

WALK THROUGH BETHLEHEM. Dec 5th 6-10pm, Dec. 6th 5-10pm, Dec. 7th 5-10 pm. Church of the Open Door, 4800 South 20th Street, Leavenworth, KS 66048. This is a LIVE event for families. Experience the sights, sounds & smells of the ancient City of Bethlehem. Admission is FREE! (913)727-5006

WHAT A GLORIOUS NIGHT. December 6, 7:00 pm & December 7, 10:15-156 am. Pisgah Baptist Church, 1.5 miles east of Excelsior Springs on Highway 10. 816-630-5121.

A KANSAS CITY CHRISTMAS. December 6 & 7, 5:00 pm. Lenexa Baptist Church, 15320 W. 87th St. Pkwy, Lenexa, KS. Free to the public, dessert buffet. www.lenexabaptist.com

AMIDST THE WINTER SNOW. December 7, 7:00 pm. Word of Life Church, 3902 NE Riverside Road, St. Joseph, MO 64506. Free. This year's concert will feature music by an all-star jazz combo, captivating vocal performance by the Word of Life Christmas Choir, and heartwarming treatments of holiday favorites by the Word of Life worship band with special guest, guitarist Jason Riley. 816-233-6367.

THE CITY COME AGAIN. December 8, 12:00 pm. Grace and Holy Cathedral, 415 W. 13th St, Kansas City, MO. Free admission. Jewell's Christmas gift, in words and music, to the city, featuring the College's Handbell Choir and Concert Choir. 816-415-5223.

MARANATHA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY BAND AND CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT. December 8, 7:00 pm. Cross Points Church, 6824 Lackman Rd., Shawnee, KS.

AN EVENING OF HOLIDAY MUSIC FOR BRASS AND ORGAN. December 9, 7:30 pm. Country Club Christian Church, 6101 Ward Parkway, Kansas City, MO. 816.333-4917.

A HOMESTYLE FAMILY CHRISTMAS. December 12, 7:00 pm. First Baptist Church, 2 NE Douglas, Lee's Summit, MO 64063. Phil & Pam Morgan Family. Admission is Free so invite your family and friends. We will receive an offering to launch our ministry efforts in 2015. 816-525-0700

LIVING NATIVITY. December 12-14, 6:00-8:00 pm. Lone Jack Baptist Church, 202 S. Bynum Rd., Lone Jack, MO. 816-697-2464.

CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA 2014. December 13, Cornerstone Church, 301 SE AA Hwy, Blue Springs, MO 64014. This event will provide great opportunities for our less-fortunate families in Eastern Jackson and Lafayette counties. Parents will have the opportunity to "shop" at no charge for gifts for their children and the children will be able to pick out gifts for their parents with gift wrapping provided as well. We are expecting to assist over 350 moms, dads, and children. Donations of unwrapped gifts for both children and adults are needed for the Christmas Store. Monetary donations will go towards providing a meal for everyone and to purchase gifts or whatever is still needed. Deadline for donations is Dec. 4th. Stacie Neer 816-228-1979.



MANY CHRISTMAS EVENTS HAPPENING ALL OVER THE METRO! CHECK OUT OUR CHRISTMAS EVENTS LISTINGS

chase gifts or whatever is still needed. Deadline for donations is Dec. 4th. Stacie Neer 816-228-1979.

CHANCEL CHOIR CONCERT. December 14, 6:00 pm. First Baptist Church of Shawnee, 11400 Johnson Drive, Shawnee, KS 66203.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT WITH TOM AND SHERRY GREEN. Dec. 14, 7:00 pm Faith Ministries Community Church, 12222 Blue Ridge Ext., Grandview, MO 64030. 816.965.7141

"ANGEL DISPATCH UNIT" December 14, 10:45 during morning worship. Leawood Baptist Church, 8200 State Line Road. Leawood, KS 66206. Children's Christmas Program. 913-649-0100

CHRISTMAS MUSIC PROGRAM FEATURING CHILDREN/YOUTH/ADULTS. December 14, 9:00 am and 10:45 am. Independence First United Methodist Church, Home of Mana mei Lagi Islander Fellowship, 400 W Maple Ave., Independence, MO 64050. 816-863-4662.

THE LIVING LIGHT. December 14, 11:00 am. First Baptist Church, 1416 Main St., Grandview, MO 64030. Christmas musical by Ruth Elaine Schram. 816-763-2200.

WALK TO THE MANGER. December 14. Colonial Presbyterian Church, Wornall Campus, 9500 Wornall Rd, Kansas City, MO & Colonial Presbyterian Church, Quivira Campus, 12501 W. 137th, Overland Park, KS. 816-942-3272.

Park, KS. 816-942-3272.

A SOUND OF CHRISTMAS. December 14, Belton New Horizons Church of the Nazarene, Belton, MO. Christmas favorites performed by choir & orchestra.

HOMESTYLE FAMILY CHRISTMAS. December 15, 6:30 pm. Christ United Methodist Church, 14506 E 39th St., Independence, MO 64050. Phil & Pam Morgan Family. Admission is Free so invite your family and friends. We will receive an offering to launch our ministry efforts in 2015. 816-461-1101

EMMANUEL AT CHRISTMAS 2nd ANNUAL VARIETY SHOW. December 18 & 19, 7:00 pm. 10100 Metcalf Ave, Overland Park, KS 66212. Cookies after the show. 913-649-0900.

SOUND OF CHRISTMAS. December 21, 6:00 pm. KC First Church of the Nazarene, 11811 State Line Rd, Overland Park, KS 64114. Free. Sanctuary choir & orchestra will be presenting the program. A love offering will be taken after the concert to benefit the Kansas City Rescue Mission.

WINTER SOLSTICE SERVICE. December 21, 5:00 pm. Meadowbrook UMC, 2800 NE 64th St., Gladstone, MO 64119. A service of hope for people who struggle with the holiday season. 816-453-5733.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM. December 21, 6:00 pm. Moment of Truth Baptist Church, 310 Randolph Rd, Claycomo, MO 64119.

MUSICAL PROGRAM. Dec. 21, during 10:45 morning worship. Leawood Baptist Church, 8200 State Line Road. Leawood, KS 66206. Combined Adult Christmas program including children's choir with International Community Church members and LBC

members. 913-649-0100

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT AND COMMUNION SERVICE. December 24, 5:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m. Leawood Baptist Church, 8200 State Line Road. Leawood, KS 66206. Christmas Eve service with the International Community Church members - focus is on the children. 913-649-0100

CANDLE LIGHT SERVICE AND LORD'S SUPPER. December 24, 10:00 pm. Red Bridge Baptist Church, 4901 E. Red Bridge Rd., Kansas City, MO. 816-761-1194 www.redbridgebaptist.org.

CANDLELIGHT AND PRAISE CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES. December 24, 5:00 & 6:30 pm. Westbrooke Church, 9777 Antioch Road, Overland Park, KS 66212. www.westbrookechurch.org.

CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE. December 24, 6:30 pm. First Baptist Church of Shawnee, 11400 Johnson Drive, Shawnee, KS 66203.

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE ON CHRISTMAS EVE. December 24, 6:00 pm. Fort Osage Church of Nazarene, 19333 E. 24 Hwy., Independence, MO 64056. 816-796-5879.

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE. December 24, 6:00 pm. KC First Church of the Nazarene, 11811 State Line Road, Kansas City, MO 64114. A family-oriented community service celebrating the birth of Christ through traditional Christmas carols sung by candlelight.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES. December 24, 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm. Cornerstone Church of Blue

calendar continued on next page

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Springs, 301 SW AA Highway, Blue Springs, MO 64014. 816-228-1979.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP. December 24, 1:00 pm, 4:00 pm, and 7:00 pm. Independence First United Methodist Church, Home of Mana mei Lagi Islander Fellowship, 400 W Maple Ave., Independence, MO 64050. 816-863-4662.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE. December 24, 5:00 or 10 pm. Colonial Presbyterian Church, Wornall Campus, 9500 Wornall Campus, KCMO. 913-942-3272.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE. December 24, 3:00, 5:00 or 7 pm. Colonial Presbyterian Church, Quivera Campus, 12501 W. 137th, Overland Park, KS. 913-942-3272.

CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE. December 24, 6:00 pm. First Baptist Church, 1416 Main St., Grandview, MO 64030. Christmas carols, the Christmas story, and candle lighting. 816-763-2200.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE. December 24, 6:00 pm. Lone Jack Baptist Church, 202 Bynum Rd., Lone Jack, MO. 816-697-2464.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE. December 24, 7:00 pm. Meadow brook UMC, 2800 NE 64th St., Gladstone, MO 64119. Candlelight worship for the whole family. 816-453-5733.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICE. December 24, 11:00 am, 6:00 pm, 8:00 pm, & 11:00 pm. Faith United Methodist Church, 1950 SW Eagles Pkwy, Grain Valley, MO.

COME ONE COME ALL. December 25, 11:00 am-1:00 pm. Salvation Army, 101 W. Linwood, Kansas City, MO. Salvation Army's annual Christmas Day Community Dinner, the meal will include turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans and pie. 816-756-1455.

CONCERTS

CANADIAN BRASS: A HOLIDAY CONCERT. December 12, 7:30 pm. Lied Center of Kansas, 1600 Stewart Drive, Lawrence, KS 66045. Featuring classics from their album Christmas Time is Here, brass standards and numerous original works. 785-864-2787.

ROCK THE HALLS CHRISTMAS SHOW. December 13, 6:30 pm. First Baptist Church, NKC, 2205 Iron Street, North Kansas City, MO 64116. Featuring John Elefante (former lead singer of Kansas), John Schlitt (lead singer of Petra & formerly Head East), Dust & Daisies, Monserrat & Minor Rewind. 816-842-1175.

A BROTHER'S CHRISTMAS: FEATURING MICHAEL CARD, BUDDY GREENE AND JEFF TAYLOR. December 14, 7:00 pm, doors open at 6:30 pm. Christ Community Church, Brookside Campus, 400 W. 67th Street, Kansas City, MO 64113. \$20. 816-721-8614.

GOSPEL CONCERT. December 14, 10:30 am. Calvary Baptist Church, 900 NW 22nd St., Blue Springs, MO 64015. Chuck Crain.



DEC 14 LEELAND - LIVE AT BLUE SPRINGS ASSEMBLY, 2501 N.E. DUNCAN RD., BLUE SPRINGS, MO. FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL 816-847-0200

You will enjoy the ministers to us with God's work through music and song. A love offering will be taken, Christmas Dinner will be served following the concert. 816-228-5540.

LEELAND. December 14, 6:00 pm. Blue Spring Assembly, 2501 NE Duncan Rd, Blue Springs, MO. 816-847-0200.

MIKESCHAIR IT'S CHRISTMAS TOUR. December 15, 7:30 pm. MHS Little Theatre, 805 S. Miami St., Marshall, MO. Free concert. Sponsored by Soul Team, featuring City Harbor and OBB.

K-LOVE CHRISTMAS 2014. December 16, 7:00 pm. Lenexa Christian Center, 17500 W. 87th St., Lenexa, KS 66219. \$20-\$59. Lineup includes Jeremy Camp, Plumb, Chris August, and Love & the Outcome. 913-451-2311.

LESTER ESTELLE. December 19, 7:30-9:30 pm. Coffee House, 7126 W 80th St., Overland Park, KS.

SPIRE CHAMBER ENSEMBLE PRESENTS HANDEL'S MESSIAH. December 23, 7:00 pm. Helzberg Hall, 1601 Broadway, Kansas City, MO 64108. The Spire Chamber Ensemble and Baroque Orchestra continue its Kansas City tradition of annual performances of Handel's magnum opus. 816-994-7200.

WINTER JAM. January 25, 6:00 pm. Sprint Center, 1407 Grand Boulevard, Kansas City, MO 64106. Line up includes: Skillet, Jeremy Camp, Francesca Battistelli, Building 429, Family Force 5, Newsong, For King & Country, and more.

SOUTHERN GOSPEL (CALL FOR GROUPS)

ALPHA OMEGA CHRISTIAN MUSIC ASSOCIATION MONTHLY MEETING, PRAYER, DEVOTION, POTLUCK AND JAM. FIRST FRIDAY, 7pm. 10035 E. Westport Rd., Indep., MO 64052.

MO-KAN GOSPEL MUSIC ASSOCIATION POTLUCK AND JAM. FOURTH FRIDAY (except for Nov. & Dec. when we meet on the 3rd Fri.). Northland Christian Church, 6120 NE 48th St., KCMO. 913-432-0359.

PENTECOSTAL TABERNACLE CHURCH. SECOND SAT., 6pm. 341 S. 72nd St., Kansas City, KS 66111. Praise and Worship songs of Zion. 913-334-1009.

CGMA NW MO CHAPTER MEETING, GOSPEL MUSIC AND POTLUCK. SECOND SAT. Faith Assembly of God Church, South 13 Hwy, Polo, MO. Travel North on I-35 North, go North of Liberty to the Polo/Lathrop Exit. Turn right onto 116 Hwy. Go 12 miles to 13 Hwy. Turn left and go ¼ mile. pegcla@msn.com.

MOMENT OF TRUTH BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH. THIRD SAT. in January, May, September & October, 7pm. 310 Randolph Rd, Claycomo, MO. Gospel music sing. 816-452-4426.

RADIANT LIFE ASSEMBLY OF GOD. LAST SUN., 6:30 p.m. Hwy. 33, Kearney, MO. Open mike. Gospel sing.

GOSPEL JAMBOREE. Second Thursday, 7 p.m. Life Christian Center, 1650 E Langsford Road, Lee's Summit, MO. 816-878-4694.

PARADISE BAPTIST CHURCH. 2nd Sunday, 6 p.m. Pot luck dinner at 5 p.m. Paradise Missouri. 816-591-1020.

CLASSES, SEMINARS, CONFERENCES

PASSAGES. Through January 3, 2015. 3534 E. Sunshine St., Springfield, MO 65809. 1-888-297-8011.

"BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS" TRAINING. December 2,

calendar continued on next page

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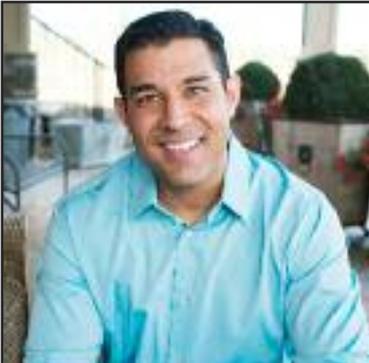
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DEC 7 ANTONIO BALDOVINOS & AMANDA COOK - CORNERSTONE CHURCH

6:30-8:30 pm. Oak Ridge Baptist Church, 9301 Parallel Pkwy, Kansas City, KS & Eastpoint Family Church, 3923 Pitman Road, Kansas City, MO. No charge—love offering. Sponsored by Child Evangelism. This Christmas season, share that Jesus is the Reason for the season with children in your neighborhood, school, or church! We will be featuring the new Christmas Party Kit.

AVOID PROBATE SEMINARS. December 4, 7:00 pm. Lewis Living Trust Center, 700 M.E. Langsford, Lee's Summit, MO 64063. Free. 816-524-3200.

GOOD NEWS CLUB TEAM ORIENTATION TRAINING. December 6, 9:00 am-4:00 pm. Midtown Baptist Temple, 3953 Walnut, Kansas City, MO. Sponsored by Child Evangelism. This basic training is required for all new or untrained volunteers—adults and teens. 816-358-1138.

AMANDA COOK AND ANTONIO BALDOVINOS. December 7, 9:00 & 11:00 am. Cornerstone Church, 301 SE AA Hwy, Blue Springs, MO 64014. 816-228-1979.

CLASSICAL EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION EVENT. December 8, 1:00-1:45 pm. Nall Avenue Baptist Church, 6701 Nall Avenue, Prairie Village, KS. Come see our Classical Homeschool Education demonstration and be amazed how it can really teach and child/ any subject. awatson@classicalconversations.com

TEFILAT SHALOM. Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. Village Shalom, 5500 W 123rd Street, Overland Park, KS 66209. A sacred and supportive time offering spiritual healing and renewal. 913-327-8250.

DEDICATED LIFE COACHING (BILL STUTZ). December 13. Levo Sports Complex, 700 Argosy Pkwy, Riverside, MO 64150. Sponsored by TGIW. 816-525-6339.

CLIFTON AND GERI COULTER. Dec. 13th - Breakfast with Clifton and Geri Coulter. Dec. 13, 9:00 am

Dec. 14th - Worship Service with Clifton and Geri Coulter. Dec. 14. 10:00 am Faith Ministries Community Church, 12222 Blue Ridge Ext., Grandview, MO 64030. 816.965.7141

AVOID PROBATE SEMINARS. December 16, 7:00 pm. Lewis Living Trust Center, 700 M.E. Langsford, Lee's Summit, MO 64063. Free. 816-524-3200.

ONE THING CONFERENCE. December 28-31. Kansas City Convention Center, 301 W. 13th Street, Kansas City, MO 64105. Registration regular from October 1 \$57, late from December 1 \$67. Speakers, Joyce Myer, Mike Bickle, Allen Hood. Worship leaders, Misty Edwards, Phil Wickham, Kari Jobe. www.ihopkc.org/one thing.

HER CHOICE TO HEAL ABORTION RECOVERY CLASS. January, 12. Sponsored by If Not For Grace Ministries. For more info or to register for this 9-week class, contact Jama at jedlund@infgr.org or call 816-847-2911.

ARISE 2015 WOMEN'S CONFERENCE. January 22, 7:00 pm-January 25, 10:00 pm. World Revival Network of Ministries, 9900 View High Drive, Kansas City, MO. Speaker-Kathy Gray. Arise to your position in the army of the Lord. 877-804-5433.

17th MIDWEST CHRISTIAN EDUCATION EXPO. February 28, 9:30 am-2:00 pm. Colonial Presbyterian Church, 9500 Wornall, Kansas City, MO. Free. 50 Christian Colleges from 15 states, 25 K-12 Schools from Metro KC area, and MO & KS Homeschool Organizations. 816-524-4522.

SPECIAL CHURCH EVENTS

IF NOT FOR GRACE MINISTRIES VOLUNTEER. Would you like to partner with us to impact God's kingdom using your time and talents? Whether you have a few hours once a month, quarter, or year, this could be a place for you to invest in the lives of the abortion-wounded. infgr.org or Jama at jedlund@infgr.org.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION BY HARVESTER'S. Every 3rd Thursday of the month at 4:00 pm. Fort Osage Church of the Nazarene, 19333 E. 24 Hwy., Independence, MO 64056. 816-796-5879.

MO-KAN GOSPEL MUSIC ASSOCIATION. December 6, 2:00-4:00 pm. Northland Christian Church, 6120 NE 48th St., Kansas City, MO. Caroling at Independence Center Mall. 913-432-0359.

MISSOURI RHYTHM VS MEMPHIS LIONS (CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NIGHT). December 6, 7:00 pm. Grandview Christian School, 12340 Grandview Road, Grandview, MO 64030. Adults \$8 and students \$4. 816.872.6622.

MULTI-CHURCH SINGLES AGES 50+: FELLOWSHIP DINNER. December 8, 6:00 pm. Bo-Lings, 90th & Metcalf. sherrarmel@gmail.com.

KANSAS CITY ISRAEL ACTION FORUM. December 9. Jewish Community Center of Greater Kansas City, The White Theatre, 5801 West 115th Street, Overland Park, KS. Featuring Avi Dichter. Sponsored by The American Israel Public Affairs Committee. 312-253-8983.

MOTHER'S REFUGE'S COOKIES & COCOA GRAND OPEN HOUSE. December 11, 4:00-8:00 pm; December 13, 1:00-5:00 pm; and December 14, 1:00-5:00 pm. Shelter Address: 3721 Del-

ridge, Independence, MO 64152. Mother's Refuge reopening after our devastating fire. 816-353-8070.

MOVIE IN THE MUG @ HARRY'S MUG. Dec. 12, 7:00 pm Faith Ministries Community Church, 12222 Blue Ridge Ext., Grandview, MO 64030. 816.965.7141.

AN UNBOUND EXPERIENCE. December 18, 5:30-9:00 pm. Unbound Headquarters, 1 Elwood Ave., Kansas City, KS 66103. Tickets are \$35, includes food, drink and performance. All proceeds will benefit our Education program which helps young adults continue their educations in secondary schools, technical schools or university programs. Live music by Kansas City's own Barclay Martin and the Snow Globes, and silent auction items from the KC area and the countries where we work. www.unbound.org 913-384-7187.

GATHERING MONTHLY POTLUCK AND JAM. December 19, 6:30 pm. Northland Christian Church, 6120 NE 48th St., Kansas City, MO. Free Christmas dinner this evening. 913-432-0359.

NEW BEGINNINGS NYE CELEBRATION. December 31-January 1, 8:00 pm-1:00 am. 2505 SW Wintercreek Dr., Lee's Summit, MO 64081. \$30 pre-registration required at newbeginningsnye.eventbrite.com. For singles in their 40's and 50's. Set in a Christian environment, singles will enjoy games, D.J., dance floor, Karaoke, photo booth, prizes, chipotle buffet and champagne toast at midnight. NYEnewbeginnings@yahoo.com.

PRAYER VIGIL FOR LIFE. January 22, Mass at 10:00 am and Vigil at 11:30 am. Catholic Center, 20 West Ninth Street, Kansas City, MO. Sponsored by MRL Western Region. 816-353-4113.

42nd ANNUAL NATIONAL MARCH FOR LIFE. January 21-23. The Annual Bus trip to Washington, DC. Missouri Life Caravan Contacts 314-434-4900

KANSANS FOR LIFE LOBBY, MARCH, PRAY & RALLY FOR LIFE. January 22, 2015. 8:30 a.m. Capitol Rotunda, Rally at Noon, South Capitol Steps, Topeka. Registration (not required) Contact: Jeanne Gawdun at kfltopeka@gmail.com

THE 42ND ANNUAL NATIONAL MARCH FOR LIFE. January 22.



THROUGH DEC 26 A CHRISTMAS CAROL AT THE SPENCER THEATRE, 4949 CHERRY ST., KCMO. FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL 816-460-2020

Washington D.C. www.marchforlife.org.

FINE ARTS

CHRISTMAS IN SONG. Through December 24, various times. Quality Hill Playhouse, 303 W. 10th Street, Kansas City, MO. 816-421-1700.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL. Through December 26. Spencer Theatre, 4949 Cherry Street, Kansas City, MO 64110. A ripping good telling of the classic story of Ebenezer Scrooge, the curmudgeonly businessman who requires the intervention of a few spectral guides to understand the true meaning of Christmas and life. 816-235-2700.

JINGLE ARRGH THE WAY! A CHRISTMAS PIRATE ADVENTURE. Through December 27. Union Station, 30 W. Pershing Rd., Kansas City, MO 64108. \$10. Another pirate adventure this one to the North Pole. The comical plot comes to life with ex-

travagantly improper characters, rollicking adventures and great songs. 816-460-2020.

RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER: THE MUSICAL. Through January 4. The Coterie Theatre, Crown Center, 2450 Grand Blvd, Kansas City, MO 64108. 816-474-6552.

SANTA CONQUERS THE MARTIANS, OR, CLAUSS ENCOUNTERS OF THE 3RD KIND! Through January 4, 2015. All matinees are at 3:30 pm, all evening performances are at 7:30 pm. There are no performances on Dec. 24, 25, or 31st. Great Plains Mall, 2700 W. 151st St, Olathe, KS. Join the galaxy goofiness in which Santa spreads Christmas joy all over the universe and finally persuades the Martians themselves to be good little boys and girls and share in the holiday hi-jinx as well. 913-642-7576.

OLIVER THE MUSICAL. December 4-21; Thursdays 7:00 pm, Fridays 8:00 pm, Saturdays 2:00 pm & 8:00 pm, and Sundays 2:00 pm. Musical Theater Heritage, Crown Center, 2450 Grand

Blvd., Kansas City, MO. \$17-\$52. 816-545-6000.

THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI. December 4, 6:00 pm; 5, 6:00 pm; 6, 1:00 pm & 6:00 pm. Emaline Ballroom, 616 SW 3rd Street, Lee's Summit, MO. \$30 (\$25 for seniors and students) including the holiday buffet. Presented by Summit Theatre Group. Holiday musical based on two of O. Henry's short stories and set in New York City in the 19th century. It's a show that speaks to the joy of giving, the true spirit of the holiday season. 816-463-2654.

HANDEL'S MESSIAH. December 5, 8:00 pm; December 6, 8:00 pm; December 7, 2:00 pm. Kauffman Center 1601 Broadway, Kansas City, MO. The Independence Messiah Choir joins with the KC Symphony and Symphony Chorus. 816-471-0400.

THE NATIVITY. December 5-7, 10:00 am-8:00 pm. Grace & Holy Trinity Cathedral, 415 W. 13th St., Kansas City, MO 64105. Come see beautiful seven-foot puppets gracefully move through the aisles of the historic cathedral with live musical and choral accompaniment. A cast of over forty puppeteers bring these larger-than-life Biblical characters to life! 816-756-3500.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS THE NUTCRACKER THAT TELLS THE TRUE STORY OF CHRISTMAS. December 5 & 7. Liberty Performing Arts Theatre, 1600 S. Withers Road, Liberty, MO. \$10-\$25. Sponsored by Dramatic Truth. www.dramatic-truth.org 816-767-9222

CHRISTMAS OLD AND NEW. December 6, 7:00 pm. Nativity of Mary Parish, 10021 E 36th Terrace S., Independence, MO. Free will offering. Presented by Jacomo Chorale.

THE WIZARD OF OZ. December 13, 20, & 27, 11:00 am & 2:00 pm. Puppetry Arts Institute, 11025 E. Winner Rd., Independence, MO 64052. \$5. 816-833-9777.

SOUNDS OF CHRISTMAS. December 21, 6:00 pm. KC First Church of the Nazarene, 11811 State Line Rd., Kansas City, MO 64114. Admission is free, and a love offering will be taken after the concert to benefit the Kansas City Rescue Mission. Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra. 816-942-9022.

■ calendar continued on next page

Ascension Lutheran Church 4900 Blue Ridge Blvd Kansas City, MO
Phone: 358-1919

Join us for worship each week.
Sunday Morning Worship 8 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Study 9:30 a.m.

The church is hosting walkers: 7:00 - 10:00 am, Monday through Friday.

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Brianna's Story of Hope

Brianna was a "good girl" from a stable, two-parent home. And yet the three men watching her saw her as an ideal candidate. She had a dream to get out of her small town ... needed to make money for college tuition. She was vulnerable and innocent. And they took advantage of her in the worst possible way. Naively, she was lured away from family and friends ... and into a strip club. She quickly realized she was required to do more than just dance. Thankfully, Brianna's family did not give up on her. They enlisted the help of a local police officer who understood sex trafficking, and who, in turn, enlisted Shared Hope's help to extract her from the situation. Brianna was rescued! Today, Brianna still has nightmares that "they" have found her again ... but she has become an outspoken activist, sharing her personal experience to save others. She recently even allowed her story to be told on a billboard in Times Square, desperately hoping her warnings will be heeded. Shared Hope International strives to prevent the conditions that foster sex trafficking, restore victims of sex slavery, and bring justice to vulnerable women and children. We envision a world passionately opposed to sex trafficking and a committed community restoring survivors to lives of purpose, value and choice - one life at a time.

Call Mike Parris, KC Area Ambassador of Hope, for Speaking Opportunities: 816-982-1042

WWW.SHAREDHOP.ORG

TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA: THE CHRISTMAS ATTIC. December 23, 4:00 pm & 8:15 pm. Sprint Center 1407 Grand Blvd, Kansas City, MO 64106. \$30-\$72.50. 888.929.7849.

FAMILY OUTINGS

ALL WRAPPED UP. Through December 30 (closed December 23, 24, & 25) Monday through Saturday, 10:00 am-4:00 pm; Sundays 1:00-4:00 pm; and a special Twilight Tour December 7, 4:00-7:00 pm. Bingham-Waggoner Estate, 312 W. Pacific Ave., Independence, MO. On December 7 enjoy light refreshment and live music. 816-461-3491.

CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK 2014. Through December 31; Sunday-Thursday 5:30-10:00 pm, Friday & Saturday 5:30-11:00 pm. Longview Campground, 10711 West Scherer, Kansas City, MO. Free—Donations Accepted. 300,000 glistening lights and 175 colorfully animated holiday scenes. 816-503-4800.

JERUSALEM. Through January 5, various times. Extreme

Screen Union Station, 30 W. Pershing Rd., Kansas City, MO 64108. Discover why this tiny piece of land is sacred to three major religions through the stories of Jewish, Christian and Muslim families who call Jerusalem home.

THE KCP&L PLAZA LIGHTS SHINE. Through January 18, daily from 5:00 pm-3:00 am. Country Club Plaza, Kansas City, MO.

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE. December 6, 10:00 am-4:00 pm. Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop & Farm, 1200 Kansas City Road, Olathe, KS 66061. Free admission (suggested donation of \$2/person ages 3 & up). Begin your holiday season with 1860's Living History activities and holiday music. 913-971-5111.

WESTERN CANDLELIGHT HOMES TOUR. December 6, Noon-8:00 pm & December 7, Noon-5:00 pm. 816-640-2909.

SANTA EXPRESS 2014. December 6, 7, 13, & 14. Midland Railway, Santa Fe Depot, 1515 High St., Baldwin City, KS. www.midlandrailway.org 913-721-1211.

NUTCRACKER. December 6-24. Kauffman Center for Perform-



JAN 5 THROUGH **JERUSALEM - EXTREME SCREEN UNION STATION, 30 W. PERSHING RD., KANSAS CITY, MO. CONTACT UNION STATION FOR TIMES.**

ing Arts, 1601 Broadway Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64108. Sponsored by Kansas City Ballet. 816-931-2232.

SANTA'S WONDERLAND 2014. December 12, 6:00-8:00 pm. Gillham Park, Gillham Road & 41st, Kansas City, MO. December 13, 4:00-6:00 pm. Penguin Park, North Vivion Rd. & North Norton Ave., Kansas City, MO. December 14, 4:00-6:00 pm. Longview Tract, 7101 Longview Rd, Kansas City, MO. Free. Gather friends and family and spend an evening celebrating the holidays with festive music, entertainment by Starlight STARS of Tomorrow, the Rockin' Rob Show, light displays and, of course, a visit from Santa and his friends.

COZY QUILTS-STORY TIME. December 13, 2:00 pm. Red Bridge Branch Library, 11140 Locust Avenue, Kansas City, MO 64114. Wrap up in a comfy quilt and get cozy as storyteller Jo Ho presents homespun tales to warm hearts and toes. These charming blanket tales offer stitches of laughter and a bit of quilt-making history to delight all ages. 816-942-1780.

MISSOURI TOWN CHRISTMAS. December 13, 9:00 am-5:00 pm. Missouri Town 1855, 8010 E. Park Road, Lee's Summit, MO 64064. Adults \$5.00, Youth 5-13 and Seniors \$3.00, Under 5 free. Experience the unique holiday customs of our English, German and French settlers in our historic antebellum community.

1ST ANNUAL BELL RINGER 5K UGLY SWEATER RUN. December 13, 5:00 pm. Siloam Mountain Park, 401 S. Ellsworth

St., Excelsior Springs, MO 64024. This event is where participants can wear an ugly sweater to celebrate the season while competing for the prize of ugliest sweater. This event will be professionally timed. The course will be lined with many Salvation Army bell ringers from all over the area. 100% of all profits will go to the Salvation Army. 816-630-6200.

HOLIDAY FUN WITH SANTA. December 13 & 20, 9:00 am-12:00 pm. Powell Gardens, 1609 NW US Hwy 50, Kingsville, MO 64061. Breakfast served until 10:30 am. Prepaid reservations required. Discuss that wish list with Santa over pancakes and eggs-Chris Cakes style! Then take part in the rest of the fun: hear a fireside story in the Grand Hall, make a craft to take home and take photos in the Conservatory decked out in its holiday finest. 816-697-2600 x209.

AN UNBOUND EXPERIENCE. December 18, 5:30 pm. 1 Elmwood Ave., Kansas City, KS 66103. Listen to live Christmas music by The Snow Globes. All proceeds will benefit out Education program. 913-384-7187.

TRILogy CULTURE ARTS CENTRE. December 28. The Madrid Theater, Kansas City, MO. It will be an evening full of dancing, great food, silent auction, and highlight performances from our first 5 years!

MONTHLY MEETINGS

BUILDING BETTER MOMS. The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, 13720 Roe Ave., Leawood, KS. For local mothers of children in early childhood, elementary school, middle school, high school, and for single moms, with both day and evening meeting times available at the Leawood campus. www.ccor.org 913-897-0120.

WEEKLY - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MEN'S COMMITTEE meets weekly in various parts of the city. Call Jim Mathis, 913-269-6709, for time and location.

WEEKLY - FAITH BASED 12-STEP PROGRAM OF RECOVERY FROM COMPULSIVE OVEREATING. Call Overeater's Anonymous 913-383-5933 or visit www.kansascityoa.org for more information and to access the schedule of various meetings in the metro area.

MONTHLY - MISSOURI RIGHT TO LIFE CHAPTERS 816-353-4113; KANSANS FOR LIFE CHAPTERS 913-268-8486.

SUNDAYS. DIVORCECARE AND DIVORCECARE4KIDS. 6-7:30 p.m. Help for those going through or having gone through divorce. Timothy Lutheran Church, 425 NW RD Mize Road, Blue Springs, MO. 816-228-5300.

2ND & 4TH SUN. -METRO CITIZEN'S COALITION. 2:30 pm. Trails West Library, 11401 E. 23rd, Independence, MO. Free. Open to public. Rear parking & entrance. 816-781-6394.

3RD SUNDAY. CANCER SUPPORT GROUP. 6:30-8:00 pm. Beacon Free Baptist Church, 10825 E. 79th Street, Raytown, MO 64138. Connect with others who share your journey, you are not alone. 816-353-7447.

MON. - JOB TERMINATION SUPPORT GROUP. 7PM. Christ's Church, 5500 W. 91st St., (91st & Nall), OPKS. If you've been laid off or terminated and are looking for peer support please join us. We pray for each other and are doing readings from "Battlefield of the Mind". 913-648-2271.

1ST MON. - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS CONNECTIONS NETWORK. 9am. Country Club Café, 21911 W. 66th St., Shawnee, KS 66226. 913-441-2444.

2ND & 4TH MON. - MOPS. 9:30 a.m. First Baptist Raytown, 10500 E 350 Highway, Raytown, MO Support groups for mothers of preschool-aged children. Offers creative activities, social events & learning opportunities. 816-353-1994.

2ND & 4TH MON. - JOB LOSS SUPPORT. 9-10am. Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 7851 W. 119th St., OPKS. 913-381-1285.

TUES. - FEAR NOT SUPPORT GROUP. 7pm. New Summit Presbyterian Church, 1800 NE Independence Ave., Lee's Summit, MO. Support group for anxiety and depression.

TUES. - CELEBRATE RECOVERY. 7pm. Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 7851 W. 119th St., OPKS. Christ centered 12-step program for anyone with addictions, compulsions, dysfunctional behaviors and other needs. Contact Craig Hauser, 913-449-7265.

TUES. - HURT, HABIT OR HANG-UP. 7pm. Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 7851 W. 119th St., OPKS. 913-449-7265.

TUES. - CHRISTIAN MUSIC NIGHT. 7 - 9 pm. Skate World, I-35 & Shawnee Mission Parkway, Mission, KS. 913-262-0711.

1ST TUES. - CREATION SCIENCE ASSN. FOR MID-AMERICA. 7 p.m., Westbrooke Church, 9777 Antioch, OPKS. Nursery available for fee. "Creation Safari's". www.csama.org for more info. Res. req. 816-618-3610.

1ST & 3RD TUESDAY. - GRIEFSHARE. 7-8:30pm. Timothy Lutheran Ministries, 425 NW RD Mize Rd., Blue Springs, MO. 816-228-5300.

1ST & 3RD TUESDAY. MOPS & MOMS NEXT. 10am. Roanoke Baptist Church, 3950 Wyoming St., KCMO. Call or email Bo Price for info. pastor@roanokebaptist.org or 816-561-4932.

2ND TUES. - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS CONNECTIONS NETWORK. 1:30pm. East Side Baptist Church, 19901 E. 78 Hwy, Indep., MO 64057. 816-796-0955.

2ND TUESDAY, MOPS. 6:30 p.m. Emmanuel Baptist Church, 10100 Metcalf Ave., OPKS. 913-649-0900.

2ND & 4TH TUESDAY. "WINGS OF HOPE." Blue Springs Christian Church, 7920 S. 7 Hwy, Blue Springs, MO. A Christian

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The staff and volunteers of Returning Glory want to Thank You for your support and prayers; and for entrusting the hearts of your children to us and our "teachers" – the horses. The ranch is quiet now with the horses enjoying just being a horse, maybe even another snow day!

We ask for your continued prayer for 2015 and the plans the Father has for Returning Glory.

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 816.223.9662

based ministry to provide support for families grieving loss through miscarriage or infant death, because every life matters. Email: wingsofhope@bscc.org 816-210-4594.

2ND & 4TH TUESDAY, MOPS. 9 a.m. Emmanuel Baptist Church, 10100 Metcalf Ave., OPKS. 913-649-0900

3RD TUESDAY, LUNCH & LEARN. 12:00 pm. KC First Church of Nazarene, 11811 State Line Rd. Kansas City, MO 64114. Each session will focus on a different geographical area or skill set. Please bring your own sack lunch; desserts and beverages will be provided. 816-942-9022.

TUES. & THURS., LIFE PERKS COFFEE HOUSE. 7:30-11:30AM., inside First Baptist Church, 125 N. Armstrong, Pleasant Hill, MO. 816-540-5872.

WEEKLY - LIVING FREE, CHRIST-CENTERED 12 STEP PROGRAM. Every Wednesday, Room 6, 6:30-8:15. Abundant Life Baptist Church, 414 SW Persels, LS, MO. 816-554-8181.

WEDNESDAYS - GRIEF SHARE. 6:30pm. Summit Woods Baptist Church, 2501 SE Shenandoah Dr., Lee's Summit, MO 64063. A ministry that assists those who have suffered loss through the death of a loved one. 816-525-8215.

WEDNESDAYS - BREAK TIME CLUB. 9:30am-2:30pm. Timothy Lutheran Church, 425 NW R.D. Mize Rd., Blue Springs, MO 64014. Enriching environment for older adults with mental and/or physical limitation. \$10 donation. 816-228-5300.

WEDNESDAYS - AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP. 11:30am-12:30pm. 601 E. Oak St., Pleasant Hill, MO (please use North basement entrance off Myrtle Street). Are you troubled by someone else's drinking?

WEDNESDAYS - CELEBRATE RECOVERY. 6:30 p.m. at First Baptist Raytown, 100500 E. 350 Hwy., Raytown, MO. Please enter through the rock entrance. Meet in room B-116. For info call: 816-778-1156 or www.firstbaptistraytown.com.

WEDNESDAYS - CATCH THE FIRE SOAKING PRAYER CENTER. 7-9pm. 816-804-8283.

WEDNESDAYS - DELIVERANCE - BREAKING CURSES WORKSHOP. First Love Ministries Church, 4747 Hadley St., Overland Park. 7 p.m. 913-403-9644. Call Tues. - Fri. after 1 p.m.

2ND WED. - LEE'S SUMMIT WOMEN'S PRAYER CONNECTION. 9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. In a comfortable setting, we get to know each other better and take time to pray (silently or audibly) for our nation, families, Lee's Summit Women's Connection, and our national organization. Call Millie Mathews for meeting location: 816-537-9898.

2ND WED. COFFEE CONNECT. 6:30 pm. IHOPU, 12901 S. US

Highway, Grandview, MO 64030. An informal gathering with believers from different spheres of influence. www.ihopekc.org/josephcompany.

3RD WED. - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS CONNECTIONS NETWORK. 3pm. Gusto! Coffee, 3390 SW Fascination Dr., Lee's Summit, MO 64081. 816-767-1100.

4TH WED - SOUTH KANSAS CITY AGLOW. 9:30 a.m. Grandview Assembly of God Church, 12400 Grandview Rd., Grandview, MO. 816-761-5739.

LAST WED. CHRISTIAN LEGAL SOCIETY LUNCHEON. Noon. Levy & Craig, 1301 Oak, KCMO. First time guest free. \$10. 816-559-2173.

THURS. - HEALING SERVICES. 7 p.m. Christian Assembly of God Church, 17310 E 40 Hwy., Independence, MO. Spon. by Royal Priesthood Global Ministries. 816-220-1914. If you need encouragement or prayer, you are welcome!

THURSDAYS. PARENTS OF PRODIGALS. 7pm. Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, I-35 & 291, Liberty, MO. Free and open to the community. Support group for parents of children of any age who have strayed from God and/or family. 816-781-5959.

THURSDAYS. DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, BIPOLAR SUPPORT GROUP. 7pm. Pleasant Valley Baptist, 1600 N. 291 Hwy, Liberty, MO. 816-781-5959.

THURSDAYS. CELEBRATE RECOVERY MEETING. 7:00-9:00 p.m. Life Church, 16111 S. Lone Elm Rd., Olathe, KS 66062. 913-829-7511.

THURSDAYS. REAL MEN ROCK. 7-8:30pm. Vineyard Church, 9777 Antioch Rd., OPKS. We will have a sign with a phone # on the front door if you arrive after 7pm. www.ourchurch.com/member/REAL_Men_Rock/. 913-636-1862.

THURSDAYS. ENCOUNTER. 7:30 pm. KC First Church of the Nazarene, 11811 State Line Rd., Kansas City, MO 64114. College students and young adults meet at KC First Church of the Nazarene for a time of prayer, reflection, Bible study, and fellowship. Contact Pastor Audrey Landers for more information at alanders@kfc.org. 816-942-9022.

1ST THURS. - MOMS IN ACTION. Abundant Life Baptist Church, Room 1, 414 SW Persels Rd., Lee's Summit, MO. A group of encouraging Moms getting together to grow and serve Christ. 7-9pm. albcmomsinaction@gmail.com.

1ST THURS. - CITYWIDE PRAYER MOVEMENT. Colonial Presbyterian Church, 9500 Wornall Rd., KCMO, 7:00 a.m. 816-

217-5679.

1ST THURS. - HEART OF AMERICA CHRISTIAN WRITERS' NETWORK (HACWN). Evangel Temple, 1414 E 103rd St., KCMO. \$3 members, \$5 nonmembers. Evangel Temple-816-942-1414.

1ST & 3RD THURS. - NEW HOPE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP. 6:30-8:30pm. Liberty Manor Baptist Church, Birmingham Rd., Liberty, MO. This group offers a safe and confidential environment to share your hope, struggles, and feelings of your cancer journey with others who understand. 816-217-5813.

2ND THURS. - FIBROMYALGIA SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS. 7:00-8:30PM. Countryside Christian Church, 6101 Nall Ave., Mission, KS. No meeting in December, watch for new meeting day, time and location in January Spon. by Fibromyalgia Coalition International. Contact Yvonne info@fibrocoalition.org or 913-384-4673.

2ND & 4TH THURS. MOPS. 9 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. (Mothers of Preschoolers) Overland Park First Assembly of God, 7700 W 75th Street, OP, KS. A relaxed time of fellowship, encouragement, and support for mothers of children from infants to kindergarten. Childcare provided. Brunch served. RSVP apprc. 913-432-3281 or opagmops@gmail.com

2ND & 4TH THURS. - ARCHDIOCESAN CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP. 7:30 pm at Cure of Ars, Vianney Center, 9401 Mission Rd, Leawood. Fellowship follows. 913-649-2026.

3RD THURS. - AFTERCARE PROGRAM. Life Group meetings. All past participants are encouraged to attend for a time of fellowship. For more information or if you would like to volunteer to help please contact Lori, 816-847-2911. Spon. by If Not For GRACE Ministries. Committed to healing after an abortion.

3RD THURS. - HEALING MASS. Council for Charismatic Renewal, 7:30 pm, Cure of Ars Church, Father Burak Room, 9401 Mission Rd, Leawood. 913-649-2026.

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PERFECT CHRISTMAS

continued from page 9

stories to carry on to a younger generation. Someone in your life needs to know that the baby born 2,000 years ago still brings hope and joy to your heart and life today. Your story is the most precious and least expensive gift you will ever give. A set of photo coasters, a handmade craft, or personalized photo calendar are items that will bring joy all year long. Spending quality time with someone you rarely see is a gift. Who wouldn't prefer any of these treasures to the latest gadget or another set of hot cocoa mugs? Slowing down and being intentional, we can give gifts of time and memories that truly keep on giving.

Maybe you've thought about doing this for years. Is there any better year than this to bring true meaning to life in your Christmas, to step away from gifts, gifts, gifts... and step toward quality time, blessed memories, and the perfect love of Christ?

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THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING IS BOTH INSPIRATIONAL, DEPRESSING

moviereview

by Adam R. Holtz

What if there was one master equation that explained, well, everything? For genius Cambridge doctoral candidate Stephen Hawking, the dogged pursuit of such an equation occupies his every waking moment.

Until, that is, Stephen's world of theoretical physics gets rocked by something that's not theoretical in the least: a pretty young woman named Jane Wilde.

And then it's rocked again.

No sooner has the young couple's love begun to blossom than Stephen is stricken with a terrible disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, which is also called Lou Gehrig's disease. After a spinal tap, Stephen's doctor delivers the somber prognosis: a life expectancy of just two years, most of which will be consumed by the devastating ravages of the disease as Stephen inexorably loses control of all his muscle functions.

In the wake of that ominous diagnosis, he tells Jane simply, "Go." But she'll hear none of that. Not from Stephen, nor from her father, who warns her, "The weight of science is against you. And this will not be

film411

THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING

STARS: Eddie Redmayne, Felicity Jones, Tom Prior, Sophie Perry, Finlay Wright-Stephens

DIRECTOR: James Marsh

RATED: R

a fight, Jane. This is going to be a very heavy defeat, for all of us."

"I don't look like a terribly strong person," Jane replies fiercely. "But I love him, and he loves me.

We're going to fight this illness together." "You can't help but be moved by Stephen Hawking's valiant struggle against the terrible toll ALS takes on him."

And so they do, getting married soon after.

As Stephen's condition worsens, Jane attends to his every need ... and manages to raise the couple's three children to boot.

But the burden of such heroic caretaking takes its inevitable toll on Jane, and her resolve to "fight this illness together" begins to buckle—especially as she begins to develop a friendship with her choir director at church, a soft-spoken, lonely widower named Jonathan.

The Theory of Everything is, in some significant ways, a deeply inspirational story. As Stephen Hawking slips ever deeper into the awful grip of ALS, he's determined to keep working, keep going, keep thinking. His first question when his doctor describes the disease is how it will affect his mind. "What about the brain?" he asks, and he learns that his mind will be one of the few things that's not affected by the affliction. And apart from a fit of anger right after his diagnosis, Stephen never sees himself as a victim who should be treated with pity.

The film powerfully illustrates the dignity and value of a life, even (especially) one that's so devastatingly impacted by disease. But Jane fiercely rejects

that notion of "pulling the plug" and fights to keep her husband alive. Indeed, she tenderly and sacrificially serves his every need for decades.

Stephen and Jane are no more than a couple of minutes into their first conversation when the subject of God comes up. And it turns out that the two are on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of what they believe spiritually. Stephen



quips that he's a cosmologist. When Jane asks what that means, he replies, "It's a kind of religion for intelligent atheists." Stephen's mildly dismayed that Jane is a member of the Church of England, but he more or less laughs it off.

As the film progresses, Stephen's beliefs get fleshed out more fully. He says, "I have a slight problem with the whole celestial dictator premise." He's dismissive of Einstein's famous statement, "God doesn't play dice with the universe." Au contraire, Stephen replies, "He not only plays with dice, he throws them where you can't find them." Elsewhere he says that a physicist can't allow his work to be muddled by belief in a supernatural creator.

At one point Stephen thinks he's figured out an equation indicating that time

had a definite beginning. But if there was a beginning, both Jane and Jonathan say, that opens the door for the idea of creation and of a creator God. Jane quotes from Genesis 1 as the couple looks at an expanse of stars in the night sky. She's thrilled when Stephen seemingly bends a fraction in his unbelief by talking in his book about knowing "the mind of God."

Stephen ultimately amends his beliefs about the universe to say that there is no beginning, that the universe has always existed. It's a statement, Jonathan rightly surmises, that demands "the death of God."

It's a rare thing for a movie to feel incredibly inspiring and yet deeply depressing all at once.

You can't help but be moved by Stephen Hawking's valiant struggle against the terrible toll ALS takes on him (by way of actor Eddie Redmayne's remarkable, Oscar-worthy portrayal of the man's physical suffering). Even as Stephen's body wastes away, his mind is active and alert, utterly given to the questions about the universe and life that transfix him.

Equally inspiring, at least for a time, is Jane Hawking's care for her husband. For years, she's a model of perseverance and love, compassionately laying down virtually everything in her life to serve her hus-

■ See MOVIE page 19

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'Risking It All' features Christian family escaping modern culture

Selling all possessions, retreating to mountains; stars say experience brought them closer to God



Ben and David Kemp working on the deck.

David and Shay Kemp decided to sell their possessions and move to the middle of nowhere in order to reconnect and get closer to God.

The parents of five wanted to get away from the craziness of everyday life in South Carolina and refocus their energy on their family and God. When TLC came along, offering them the opportunity of a lifetime, to participate in a reality series, "Risking It All," they prayed to seek God's will for their lives, if this was truly what God wanted for them and their family.

"We really felt like the Lord told us to do it," Shay said. "He was definitely all in—he had prayed about it but said that I needed to feel as convicted as he did. I felt that this is what I was called to do, to take this leap of faith and journey."

During their time off the grid in the mountains of North Carolina, the family became closer to God and deepened their faith, which was their goal all along.

"Our family had struggled because of my hours; we had come apart some. God gives us a family for a reason, and I think He showed us how we were to have communion (unity) together and how we have

to depend on Him. When you're out in the elements and faced with survival, and you're taken away from the conveniences and distractions, connections with things that really don't matter, it makes you look to God to be your provider. There were plenty of times we could do nothing but say, 'Ok, God, we're trusting You on this,'" David said.

"For me, personally, it was really difficult. I couldn't just step away from this and learning to lean on this inner peace and inner voice was something I had never done before. There was nobody else there. That was incredible growth to my faith. I learned to hear the voice of God before in

my heart and mind like never before," Shay added.

Even though their journey into the wilderness is not over, Shay and David noted that they have learned a great deal about how they want to live once they come back into the hectic, connected world.

"We definitely want people to watch the show and see what happens. We certainly didn't just walk away from the principles of living off the grid. We've realized that technology is something you use, not to let it use you. You have to make deliberate choices, and that's really important," Shay said.

"Just because cameras stop rolling doesn't mean that this journey is over. When I was working, making really good money, one of my main things was that I had a reliance, a comfort in what he had. Sometimes you have to be taken out of your comfort zone to see where your allegiance lies ... does it lie with material things or

with God? That was one of the biggest things for me. Over the years, I've had it handed to me, and I needed something like this to pull me back into perspective with my God, my family, and others," David noted.

"Risking It All" airs on TLC on Tuesday nights.

MOVIE

continued from page 18

band's vast needs.

But despite the very best of intentions, both Jane and Stephen stray from their marriage vows. The film seeks to help us understand how such an outcome might occur, and neither is portrayed as a villain or a cheater. Instead, they're just two people whose ability to cope with Stephen's illness together reaches the breaking point.

Even more depressing, I'd suggest, are the deeper implications of Professor Hawking's life philosophy. On the surface, his saying, "While there is life, there is hope," might seem powerfully motivating. And on one level it is: While we still have

breath, we can always hope for the best outcomes in the struggles we all face.

But digging under the skin a bit, in the way that Stephen's beliefs and his unbelief ask us to, we find that it also confronts us with this fierce fiction: that when life ends, there is no hope. That, of course, is consistent with Hawking's atheistic beliefs. And, of course, it doesn't come close to lining up with the hope God so freely gives us. Stephen's refusal to welcome God into his cosmological world leaves us with the dire dogma that we're nothing but smart monkeys circling an insignificant star. There's no meaning in either our faithfulness or our betrayals. Our success or suffering. Dying from or living with ALS.

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What documents do I need to donate my car to Heartland Habitat?
The online Donation Wizard will tell you what documents are required in your state. Most states require that you have a clear title to the vehicle; some states also require a notarized signature to transfer a vehicle.

What are the tax benefits of donating my car?
Habitat for Humanity is a 501c3 nonprofit. If you itemize your deductions on your income tax return, you may be entitled to deduct the gross sales value of your donated vehicle. Donors will receive appropriate receipts and should consult their tax advisor and/or the IRS to determine benefits.

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'Tis the season for Christmas music



D.C. JEANES
 Metro Voice music critic

musicscene

In the spirit of Christmas, I wanted to list a few of the Christmas albums my family enjoy and consider classics. Some are truly time tested and traditional, while a few are a bit more recent and contemporary; all of them, however, share the joy of Jesus' love and the beauty of the season. If you don't already have some of these, may I recommend you go out and find them for your tradition, too?

Selah's "Rose of Bethlehem" is an album not be missed this time of year. Combining the trio's soothing and soulful voices with some of the greatest songs of Christmas, the message of God's love is clear on this disc. Even Dolly Parton does a cameo on her "Once Upon a Christmas!" Beautiful.

"It's Christmas Time" Nat King Cole, Bing Crosby, and Frank Sinatra is a great collection of songs from when my parents were kids. This particular version also has radio show performances, which brings with it a historical vibe that is just plain classy. Add the soothing voices of Nat, Bing, and the explosive Sinatra and

you've got a great listen. We like to play this one loud in the car!

Amy Grant "Home For Christmas" Is an album I remember getting on cassette (if you don't know what a cassette is, ask your parents) one Christmas Eve and listening to it all the way to our grandparents house, eight hours away. Grant's husky voice works seamlessly with many of the classic carols she sings on here, and her rendition of "Breath of Heaven" is heart wrenching and stirring.

Michael Crawford's the voice of Phantom of the Opera, and lends an amazing vocal talent on his "A Christmas Album."

Collecting traditional favorites and some contemporary songs, the album is a wonderful showcase of Crawford's skills. I'm almost embarrassed to admit it, but by the end of his version of "O Holy Night" I have chills and am so moved by the range of his voice I come close to tears... and I've heard the song many, many times!

MercyMe "The Christmas Sessions" is another modern take on some Christmas traditional.

Described by singer Bart Millard as "the



most 'rock' album we've done," it may not be what some of you are looking for. But the singing and music are great and these guys know how to put out some catchy tunes, all while celebrating the birth of our Savior.

Would the Christmas season be complete without Andy Williams "Merry Christmas" playing on the television and the radio? Probably his most remembered seasonal song "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" is still played throughout December, whether inviting everyone to Branson, or simply offering a cheerful reminder. My favorite, however, has always been "Do You Hear What I Hear."

Even as a child, when my dad would pull out the LP and put it on the turntable, I would belt that song out for everyone to hear. Now, when I listen to the song, I'm reminded of a gentler, more fanciful time, but also reminded of the meaning of the song; Jesus is here and He has come to save.

I hope it's been a good year for you, as it's been one of challenges and growth for us. God teaches us so many amazing things in this life, especially about His grace.

We also celebrate His immense love for us this time of year as we are reminded of the amazing gift He gave us by lowering Himself to walk among us and teach us. Merry Christmas, indeed! God bless you all!



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Join the **TOWN**

Grab some popcorn, enjoy these festive holiday features

"A Charlie Brown Christmas" (1965)

The Peanuts gang searches for the true meaning of Christmas in this half-hour animated treasure. It features funny dialogue, charismatic voice performances and an award-winning jazzy score by Vince Guaraldi. And how often do you hear cartoon heroes quoting from the gospel of Luke, proclaiming the Christ-child as the Messiah?



(for some violent content).

"The Little Drummer Boy" (1968)

The moving seasonal song comes to animated life in this 30-minute clay-mation parable with the highly-capable voices of Greer Garson, Jose Ferrer and Teddy Eccles. Puts present-giving into perspective.



"The Nativity Story" (2006)

Keisha Castle-Hughes and Oscar Isaac star as Mary and Joseph in the retelling of the birth of Christ. The filmmakers worked hard to ensure that The Nativity Story was both historically and biblically accurate. There were several Christians involved, such as screenwriter Mike Rich and producer Wyck Godfrey, and a wide spectrum of Christian New Testament scholars and historians were involved in the pre-production process. Rated PG



"Three Godfathers" (1948)

John Wayne stars in this Western morality tale about three outlaws who come across a dying woman and her newborn baby. The symbolism between the Christ-child and this newborn baby has a redemptive effect on the three bandits. Unrated.

"The Gathering" (1977)

Ed Asner and Maureen Stapleton star in this Emmy-winning TV movie focused on a dying man's efforts to reunite his family. It reinforces the



importance of family and presents positive Christian images, including a believable prayer and the Scripture reading of Jesus' birth. Unrated.

"The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey" (2007)

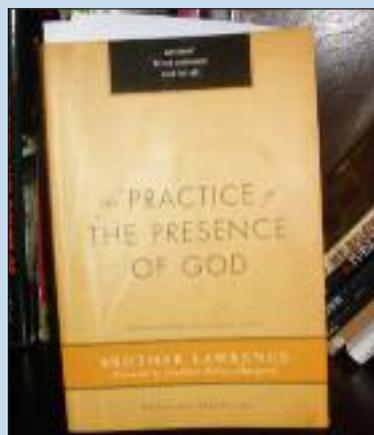
Tom Berenger, Joely Richardson. A mysterious recluse also happens to be the best woodcarver in the valley. Slowly, the woodcarver finds his world transformed by a young boy and his mother who have asked him to carve a yuletide scene. Positive messages, including a respect for God and Christ (prayers are spoken, church is attended and the main characters acknowledge the birth of Christ). Unrated.

"The Fourth Wiseman" (1985)

"The Fourth Wiseman" (1985) Martin Sheen stars as a devout man searching for the Messiah in order to give valuable treasures. But one by one he sells his priceless gifts to help the needy. Full of compassion and illustrations of how our Lord would have us treat our fellow man. Unrated.



Collection of letters, a classic for any bookshelf



Called an "unparalleled classic", The Practice of the Presence of God has moved readers for centuries. In this admired collection of letters dating back to the 1600s, author Brother Lawrence (born Nicholas Herman) pens spiritually convicting passages, sharing his insights about the loving presence of Almighty God.

Even today, Christian readers open Brother Lawrence's letters to glean understanding of the majesty and blessing of God in our everyday lives. A quick review of the book's comments page on goodreads.com reveals The Practice

of the Presence of God's current impact. Goodreads.com reviewers, numbering almost 17,200, rate the book 4.3 stars out of 5, saying it's "a gem", "one of the best books I ever read", and "amazing, beautiful".

In the 1895 publication of Brother Lawrence's work, Holiness movement author Hannah Whitall Smith introduces the Catholic monk to readers as one who was "not troubled with any theological difficulties or doctrinal dilemmas. For him these did not exist. His one single aim was to bring about

■ See **BOOK** page 22

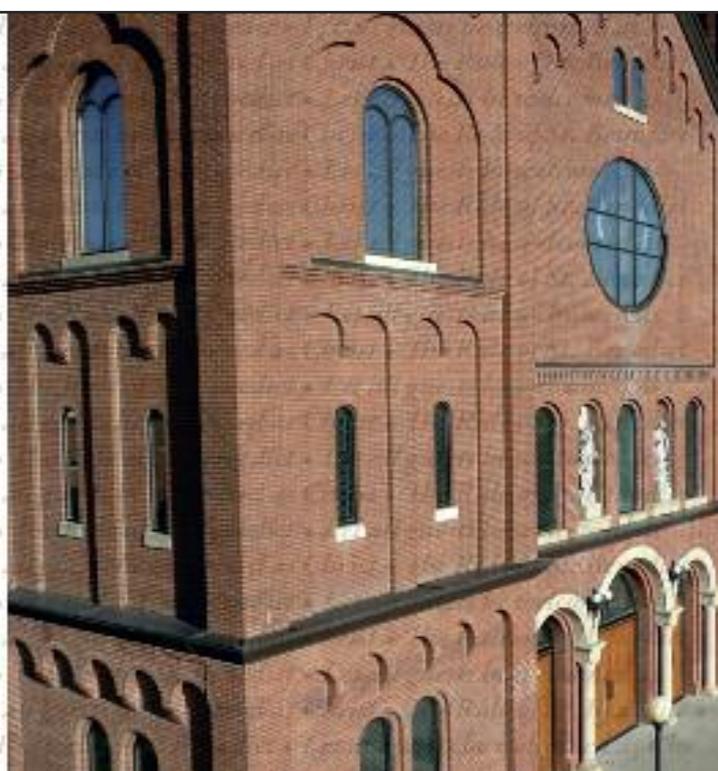
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BOOK

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His one single aim was to bring about a conscious personal union between himself and God, and he took the shortest cut he could find to accomplish it. The result can best be described in his own words:

"If I dare use the expression, I should choose to call this state the bosom of God, for the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there." - Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*

God remains, in some ways, a mystery, even to the most veteran of believers. Thus, His glory-filled presence yields such great curiosity in those of us who wonder.

If you're curious, as I am, there's good news. Brother Lawrence's entire book is available to read online for free. Open the book and delve into what this consecrated man of God realized about the tangible manifestation of our Heavenly Father.

HANUKKAH

continued from page 6

No. Did he come to His Temple at the conclusion of the Temple's rededication eventually known as Hanukkah? No.

Neither experienced the witness of the Spirit presence of God.

In the Gospel of Luke (1:67-80) we read about another Zechariah who prophecies identically of what is to come. Filled with the Spirit, he declares the salvation of the Lord is coming and already in motion with the announcement of his son in the spirit of Elijah, Messiah's herald. He is coming, the Messiah, the seed of David, the one who forgives sins and reveals the light of God.

So it was. Simeon held these prophecies in his hands officiating at a Pidyan Haben (the redemption ceremony) 30 days after the birth of a first born son.

Which son? He was the one that was anticipated (Lk 1:31-33). Yes, "his name shall be 'Jesus' for he shall redeem his people". His Hebrew name is "Yeshua", a form of the name

Yehoshua, or "Joshua". The Lord fulfills His promises to Zechariah and Malachi.

It should be noted that Yeshua celebrates Hanukkah in Jn. 10:22ff., or didn't you notice! Perhaps Hanukkah is a Christian holiday?

If it were not for Hanukkah, there would have been no Temple for the Lord to return. If it were not for Chanukah, there would be no revealing of the light of the world. Historically, if it were not for Chanukah, there would be no Christmas!

If it were not for the Jewish Messiah there would be no salvation for the Gentiles. Christmas celebrates Israel's Messiah "a light for salvation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Apparently Christmas is a Jewish holiday. Well, it should be! Tell your kids when they get their "toys" this year!

This "Christmas" perhaps we need to ask once again, "Where is the one who has been born "King of the Jews"?"

Jerry Feldman leads the Messianic congregation of Adat Yeshua, 8512 Stearns, Overland Park. www.adatyeshuakc.com

TRADITIONS

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up to higher branches on the Christmas tree, and help your child make fun decorations for the bottom.

■ String pieces of colored tissue paper cut into squares onto shoe-strings to hang as garland.

■ Get out the glitter and make paper ornaments.

■ Mold a nativity scene from clay dough and display in a prominent place. Tell the story of Christmas while you do this.

Ages 4-7

■ Help your little ones focus on others this season by making use of those Christmas cards received in the mail. Place the cards in a basket on the dinner table; taking turns each night drawing one out. Then pray together for that person or family.

■ Also, start a family tradition by picking out a new holiday picture book to read each Christmas Eve. Some of my favorites are:

■ 10 Minutes to Showtime, by Tricia Goyer

■ The Crippled Lamb, by Max Lucado

■ The Stable Where Jesus was Born, by Rhonda Gowler Greene

■ The Christmas Rose, by William H. Hooks

Ages 8-12

■ Ring in an international Christmas by assigning a country to each child. Besides reporting about how that country celebrates the holiday, he or she can prepare a seasonal dish to share, or demonstrate a song or folkdance. Then pray for the people of that culture so that they too might understand the meaning of God's love.

Ages 13-18

■ This age group is old enough to bundle up and go caroling. During each visit allow for a few seasonal songs and readings from the scriptures proclaiming the birth of the newborn king. Besides visiting the neighbors, teens may want to stop by the local convalescent home, hospital, or homeless shelter.

All Ages

■ Many families choose to celebrate Advent – the days leading up to Christmas Day. There are fun Advent calendars on the market, some with doors that open and play songs, others that hide chocolate candies or other treats.

Online Advent Activity Calendars offer daily Scripture readings, and parent-child activities and links to stories, crafts, Christmas carols, recipes, Adventures in Odyssey audio dramas and more! Consider making each Sunday leading up to Christmas special by lighting a candle, reading passages from scripture, and serving a yummy dessert.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

continued from page 2

food and household products to more than 620 not-for-profit agencies, serving 141,500 people every month.

"This donation of protein is very important to Harvesters and to the clients we serve," said Valerie Nicholson-Watson, Harvesters' President and CEO. "Protein can be an expensive food item to purchase and is often difficult for families to access. But it is a key food group for a healthy diet. Harvesters is committed to providing the healthiest food possible, and this donation allows us to help meet the need of feeding one in seven people in our community."

Last year, Harvesters distributed more than 43 million pounds of food, which provided more than 37 million meals.

Tyson Foods has assisted Lift Up America in providing food in more than 20 cities to reduce hunger in the United States. "There are millions of hard-working adults, children and seniors who simply cannot make ends meet and are faced with the realities of hunger," said Annetta Young, Tyson Foods' director of corporate social responsibility. "We want to make a difference in these people's lives by helping them provide nutritious food for themselves and their families."

Tyson Foods is one of the world's largest producers of chicken, beef, pork and prepared foods that include leading brands such as Tyson, Jimmy Dean, Hillshire Farm, Sara Lee, Ball Park, Wright, Aidells and State Fair. The company was founded in 1935 by John W. Tyson, whose family has continued to lead the business with his son, Don Tyson, guiding the company for many years and grandson, John H. Tyson, serving as the current chairman of the board of directors.

In 2011, Tyson launched the "KNOW Hunger" campaign to raise hunger awareness. As part of the campaign, the company released the results of a survey which found that one in four Americans is worried about having enough money to put food on the table and that many Americans are unaware of how serious hunger is in their own communities. Raising awareness that hunger exists in every community in the country reinforces the campaign's imperative that "We should all KNOW Hunger."

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GRACE

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to end up like your parents in jail, that you are not going to make it in life, drawing was my escape where I could create my own world with endless possibilities," Grace said. "In art, no one can tell you are wrong, because it is your creation. It was easier to escape there than deal with the real world. Drawing takes things off my mind. Whenever I get mad, drawing calms me and lets me go to a place that I can think and relax."

Before coming to Show-Me, a pencil and paper weren't always easy to come by, so when she had a chance to draw it became her special time. She said she felt like she could make anything—the possibilities were endless.

But she wasn't always encouraged to draw.

"Whenever I drew things for friends or school, the adults in my life never had anything nice to say. It was always just... okay and back to whatever they were doing," she said. "When nobody seemed to care or see good in what you do, it is hard to take pride in things. You doubt yourself and think am I worth anything?"

Like Grace, many kids arrive at Show-Me battered by the world they've been forced to survive in. "With the love and support of their family, and the extended Christian family involved in this ministry, they find the beginnings of worth and value as a beloved child," said Director Chad Puckett. "With that support they can begin to rewrite the self-condemning scripts etched on their hearts and find purpose in their life yet to be written. We never know what catalyst might lead to a revealing moment, so we expose them to a wide array of academic, athletic, and artistic opportunities, then sit back and watch God "do His thing." It's incredibly humbling to see the transformations."

For Grace, the transformation of see-



The kids with their cards from left to right: Cassie, Grace, Ethan and little Jenna. Not pictured: Tati and Anna.

ing herself through God's Eyes rather than her own started out as a simple project when she was encouraged to participate in a contest to design Christmas cards for Show-Me. The designs are voted on by the children, families and staff. The top four each year are used for the annual Christmas Card.

The children were asked to make cards based on what they think Christmas looks like and what it means to them.

"The goal was to do something that the children could see that the best Christmas gift you can give someone isn't a physical thing at all, it is the gift of ourselves," said Ruhnke, who coordinates the project. "Whether we bless someone with a picture we make, prayer or encouragement, we all have something we can give to reflect God's love at Christmas, which was shown in the ultimate gift of Jesus Christ."

The contest created a new spark in Grace.

"She sat down and started sketching

some ideas. Her talent blew us all away," Ruhnke said. Last year, two of Grace's designs were chosen, and as various people saw the finished cards, they started asking for copies to use as their own personal Christmas cards.

To meet the growing requests, SMYCH worked with the local printing department at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg to have the cards professionally printed under the premise of supporters using them as a fundraiser or for their own personal use. These cards each feature one of Grace's designs on the front and are blank inside for people to write their own message. On the back, Grace signed 'Merry Christmas' and along with SMYCH's contact information, there is a warm reminder that—"This card was designed with love by a child at Show-Me Christian Youth Home."

"Our hope is that these cards let new people know that God has a place called Show-Me Christian Youth Home waiting for the children who need it. There

is no better way to testify to the difference God is making at Show-Me than through children like Grace," explained Ruhnke.

In its 47 years, Show-Me Christian Youth Home has provided loving homes to nearly 2,000 children. Different than state-run foster care, Show-Me focuses on Christ-centered homes and families to help rescue and restore young lives. Through specialized educational programs, professional counseling and therapeutic services as well as support and guidance as they reach adulthood, we support young people

on their journey to wholeness and purpose by offering opportunities for building a better future and an excellent eternity.

"Being a true ministry, we want to show the world what God does through God's people," said Puckett. "From the ministry staff, to the volunteers, to the contributors, everything revolves around faith exercised in love. Whatever the need, God provides through His people."

According to Ruhnke, the Christmas cards have not only been a part of that testimony and provided valuable resources for the home, but each step has provided new blessings for the people who have been a part of the process. Show-Me distributes the cards to any individual or group that wants to raise funds for Kingdom building goals. Some groups are raising funds to help Show-Me directly, other youth groups are using the proceeds to cover the expenses for their kids to do missions, and even one veterans' organization decided to sell cards to create an ongoing schol-

arships for kids at Show-Me like Grace. As Diane Maddix, a long-time volunteer at SMYCH, said "it is the message I was looking to send, reminding my friends of the simple child-like joy of Christmas and being able to help children in the process."

For Grace, it also is tangible proof of the love and support she receives every day from SMYCH.

"Each time someone sees my card and likes it, it was like it chipped away at my doubt and feeling of worthlessness," Grace said. "And, I don't think I am the only one. For each of us kids (at Show-Me), I think that is what the love and support we receive does. It is proof to me that we matter and

we have value."

If you ran into Grace at Show-Me today, you will see that things are different now.

You will have to look into her face, but the change is there: Her smile.

"She does not like to smile, because she does not like her teeth. Yet, when she saw her artwork in the cards for the first time, she gave the biggest smile I have ever seen," Ruhnke wrote. "Moreover, she has been smiling a lot more this last year."

Whether it is on Grace's face or from knowing the joy they are sharing when someone receives their Christmas Cards, the children at Show-Me Christian Youth Home will have a lot more to smile about this Christmas.

more information

For more information or to order cards for yourself or as a fundraiser for your organization, call Chris at 660-347-5982 or email chris@showmekids.org.

GRACEWAY

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"We are the inner city," youth baseball director Rod Suydam said. "We've been this for 10 years, and nobody wants to admit it."

The YMCA folded last year, and the decline of other leagues has left Graceway's multisport rec leagues in a unique position. Many Raytown schools depend on the church for coaches. The decades-old baseball league now serves more than 60 teams and 600 kids, stretching its 150-plus volunteers.

When he's not working at Children's Mercy Hospital, Suydam is often at the field. He moves pitcher's mounds and base paths for different age groups, recruits and trains the next generation of coaches, and teaches them how to connect with families.

Baseball coach John Tweedie became a Christian 16 years ago in the church's adult basketball league, and the coach who led him to Christ is still there. Grandparents who played are now coaching their grandkids. "I'm getting to see some of the people I've helped coach... becoming rock solid

members of our church," Tweedie says.

Suydam cringes at the thought of turning away kids and this year drafted one too many teams, asking God to provide the coach. The volunteer who came, a school administrator, recognized the signs of abuse in two of his kids and was able to intervene. "It's some blood, sweat, and tears, but to see what God is doing and to try to keep up with him... it's a blessed ride, I'm telling you," Suydam said.

That ride took Suydam to the Wild Card game Sept. 31 to see the Royals face Oakland. One of his three sons nominated him for the Buck O'Neil Legacy Seat, named for the late Kansas City baseball icon and community builder. Volunteers judged to embody O'Neil's community-minded ethic are invited to sit in his old seat behind home plate.

The 9-8 extra-innings victory awakened a rabid baseball city and propelled the Royals to their first World Series in 29 years. And that success may mean a few new baseball fans show up when Graceway's league fires up again in March down the street.



Suydam coaching at Graceway's facility.

"Me and Rod were joking—we better start praying right away for more coaches," Tweedie said.

For information or to volunteer call the church at (816) 358-1515 or check out their website at www.visit-graceway.org.

SINGLES

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end the cycle of loneliness and lack of purpose in your life.

Some Kansas City's single believers are experiencing something they consider ground-breaking. A small network of single adults have come together to begin "Genesis". As their logo suggests, it's a place to begin, belong and become.

Although Genesis is only in the preliminary stages of their ministry, they have an enormous launch event planned for New Year's Eve. They are inviting singles between the ages of 40 and 60 to join them for a celebration. The event will be held 8 p.m. to Midnight on New Year's Eve at Winterset Park Club House, 2505 SW Winterset Dr., in Lee's Summit. A live D.J. will keep the things lively as everyone enjoys great music, the dance floor, mixer games, karaoke, dance lessons, photo booth, Chipotle buffet, prizes and more.

Genesis has been building its success through a series of activities meant to bring singles together for plutonic Christian fellowship with a lot of fun and laughter mixed in.

"This is the first time I got out

among other singles since the loss of my husband a year ago. I had forgotten what it was like to laugh," states Kathy, a new attendee. "I enjoyed talking with friends who identified with some of the struggles I'm facing."

The ministry wants to serve adults 40 years of age and older who find themselves at an unexpected turning point in their life. For some, a new beginning was forced upon them through the death of a spouse. For others, an unexpected divorce has turned their life in another direction. But don't limit this group's needs to only the challenges of those divorced or widowed. There are many singles that find themselves at a new beginning as they enter a new chapter of a health crisis or financial bankruptcy. A 'genesis' in life is simply a new starting point, a new beginning. And the Genesis ministry is available for singles to blaze this new trail together, not alone.

The Genesis leadership says they're fueled by a desire to help and love those that are on a new journey and often hurting in the process. Times of prayer, Bible study and social events allow single adults to forge friendships and give them a sense of belonging when they feel vulnerable and alone.

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