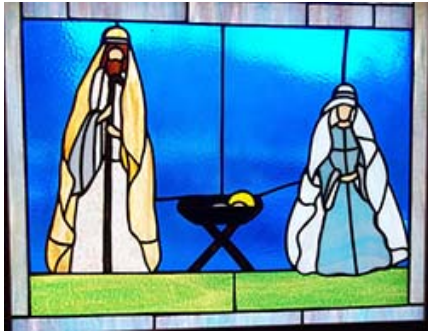


Celebrating Christmas--Vol. 8, No. 51--Dec. 19, 2014



Christmas week is upon us! How I long for this week when the cares and concerns of life and work fade, even if only briefly, and more eternal matters come into focus. I so enjoy the music and spirit of Christmas when it's okay to see life through child-like eyes once more. I hope I never outgrow the excitement, anticipation and joy that characterizes Christmas. I pray I may never lose the wonder of the Christmas story, how Jesus came to the manger in Bethlehem and why he did so. Long ago I was required to memorize Luke 2:1-20. I'm glad of it! The classic phrasing of the KJV combined with Handel's Messiah have forever fixed the lines in my mind. Christmas brings me hope and so much joy!

Last week Linda's brother, Ken Long, joined the Church triumphant after a three-year battle with pancreatic cancer. His passing certainly puts the reason for the season in high relief. Though our family is saddened by his death, we still have cause to rejoice. Kenny himself remarked that he expected to celebrate Christmas in Glory this year. Folks, Jesus is our hope and our joy. Because of his coming we have every reason to celebrate Christmas, even in the face of death.

As I drove back to Findlay alone last Sunday following the graveside service, I popped my "Messiah" CD into the player. I listened to it several times on the long journey home rejoicing in Kenny's home-going and anticipating my own one day. I highly recommend a "Messiah" uplift. Be sure to listen to both the Christmas and the Easter sections. One of my personal favorites is "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth!"

Monday this past week was an office day to wrap up all that needed to be done in 2014. Of course, that didn't happen! Some things will just need to wait until next year. Tuesday we held our annual Christmas party at the Christian Ministries Center, inviting all former staff to join us for the morning. We start with devotions, which somehow fell to me this year. I was glad actually, because this would be my final Christmas party as a part of CGGC staff and because I felt the Lord had given me a word for the day.



Ed brings the Christmas devotions



Some of our retired CGGC coworkers (l to r): Kim Greer, Dee Callahan, Roberta Bakies



Alberta and Darrell Prichard



I chose to play the portion from the “Messiah” celebrating the message being delivered to the shepherds. We dimmed the lights and I asked everyone to close their eyes and imagine themselves in the Judean hills looking up into the night sky. Then the music started. When it ended, I read the rest of the story (Luke 2:15-21) and challenged us all to do as the shepherds did. Go, seek the Christ child, and celebrate with everyone God’s great good news.



Enjoying breakfast



Lance Finley shows off his bowling form

Afterward everybody shared in a buffet breakfast followed by a Christmas movie. This year’s flick was the 2004 release entitled “Angel in the Family.” It certainly made a point about what’s really important in life. Before noon the guests left and the CGGC office staff reassembled at the local bowling alley for a time of fun and fellowship. Of course, there was food and a lot of good natured encouragement and teasing as we knocked over the pins, or not (as in my case).



Watching with bated breath to see how Lance did

After two games we circled chairs and played a gift exchange game with everyone bringing a mystery present for someone else to take home. It's our way to show appreciation for each other. I also gave each one on staff a very personal gift. My brother-in-law Kenny had acquired woodcarvings in Haiti (where he served as a missionary teacher for the Wallace children in the mid-1960s), Africa, and South America. I bought them at his sale to give them to my co-workers as mementos of the Lord's worldwide work.

The party finished about 3 p.m. and I began my drive to PA to rejoin Linda and celebrate Christmas with our family. I rejoiced on my journey as I listened to the "Messiah," even while traveling through the rain and enduring the road slop. Such is life. I wish each and every one reading this, a very blessed and holy Christmas. Enjoy it! Celebrate it! And be sure to share Christ wherever and whenever you can!

ONE Mission Together,
Ed
Soli Deo Gloria!



Candice Shoemaker shows off her award for bowling



Dave Green (left) and Mike Martin check out what gifts they received



Ed Rosenberry, Bill Shoemaker, Don Dennison, Lance Finley, and Ben Tobias exchanging gifts (left to right)

**Winebrenner Theological Seminary
at the Scotland Campus
*presents***

**The Second Annual Winebrenner "Christmas at the Chapel"
Sunday, December 21, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.**

You are invited to join with us here at Winebrenner Theological Seminary on the Scotland Campus to celebrate The Second Annual "Christmas at the Chapel."

The Order of Service is an historical celebration of Scripture and Carols, with musical accompaniment featuring the organ, piano, harp, cello, and violin.

Come join us for a special evening as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.



Operation Christmas Child Shoebox List

We've got a few more to add to the shoeboxes collected by CGGC churches for [Operation Christmas Child](#) organized by [Samaritan's Purse](#). We've surpassed 6,000! Please send in your church's name, your region, and the number of shoeboxes collected to communications@cggc.org. Also let us know if your church sent any volunteers to one of the processing centers to help prepare the boxes for shipment overseas. Below is the list we have so far.

Region	Church	# of Boxes	Volunteers
ERC:	Brunswick First	42	
	Camp Hill	100	
	Carlisle	121	
	Central Manor	133	
	Country Meadows Retirement Community	60	
	Eberly's Mill		X
	Elizabethtown First	156	X
	Germantown	98	X
	Hanover First	1009	
	Kennedy's Valley	110	
	Mechanicsburg	104	
	Mt. Holly	20	
	Mt. Pleasant	60	
	Newburg	228	
	Newville First	252	
	Shippensburg First	480	
	Shiremanstown First	77	
Swatara	41		
GRC:	Catalyst	75	
	College First	253	X
	Mt. Carmel	100	
	Mt. Tabor		X
	Pathway Community	26	
	Shawnee	25	
	Union Chapel	12	
	Vanlue Community	8	
ARC:	Buchanan	300	
	Center Bethel	352	X
	Garman	550	
	Kennerdell	47	
	Orchard Ridge First	314	
MRC:	Berreman & Pleasant Valley	240	
	The Crossover	924	
	Mt. Pleasant	121	
	Zanesville		X
Total		6438	

It's not too late to enter *The Gem Writing Contest!!!*

Do You Enjoy Writing?
Share your gift by entering the 10th Annual
GEM WRITING CONTEST

Open to all ages in three levels:
Adult, Youth, & Child

Two categories: Short Story and Poetry
Plus Coloring Page for Children under age 7)

Deadline: Postmarked by December 31, 2014

For Rules and Entry Forms see your church office,
contact Rachel Foreman at the CGGC office
(419) 424-1961, or go to the website at
[http://www.cggc.org/ministries/
denominational-communications/
gem-writing-contest/](http://www.cggc.org/ministries/denominational-communications/gem-writing-contest/)



Train Your Church Leaders

In the fall of 1988, my last semester of college, I filled in as the youth pastor at a local church. I was given a key to the church and wished the very best of luck. Truthfully it was a fairly frustrating few months.

I didn't know how to engage volunteers. I didn't know how to turn the youth into an effective team. I didn't know how to develop young leaders. I was young and available. Luck wasn't enough. I needed training. I wasn't the only one.

I have built a solution for developing leaders in your church. You may want to start with yourself. You may want to train your staff or key volunteers. There are three steps to this solution.

Step # 1: Take our "Foundations in Christian Coaching" class. During January and February of 2015, we are offering it at three different locations (Mattoon, IL, Findlay, OH, and Pittsburgh, PA), AND we are offering this class for the first time online.

Step # 2: Take "A Coach Approach to Christian Leadership" class. This class will be taught in Findlay, OH on March 23-24 (Mon-Tue) by Bill Copper, a seasoned ministry coach and teacher.

Step # 3: Take our Mentor Coaching class and hone your coaching skills to a level of confidence.

These three steps will also make you eligible for the Certificate in Christian Leader Coaching from Coach Approach Ministries.

It is very frustrating to be want to lead for your church and not know how to do it. These three classes will give your leaders confidence and tools to lead your church into the vision God has for it.

Can you imagine how much less frustrated and more effective your church leader could be by May of 2015?

To sign up for any or all of these classes, click here: <http://www.coachingclarity.org/become-a-coach/>

Because you are with the Churches of God General Conference, use the Promo Code "CGGC" for a 30%

discount on any or all classes.

Listen to my interview with author Reggie McNeal, as he speaks about the importance of building a coaching culture in your church: <http://www.coachingclarity.org/?p=917>

Thanks!
Brian Miller