

The Messenger

The Greatest Gift!

Rick Warren, best selling author of The Purpose Driven Life, and pastor of the mega-church, Saddleback, has written a new book, The Purpose of Christmas. This book will provide the foundation for our Advent messages on Sunday mornings.

Amidst all the busyness, decorations, parties, and intermittent snow-shoveling, we forget how astonishing it is that the simple birth of a Jewish, peasant boy to an unwed mother turned history upside-down. Warren makes the point that every date on every calendar (except, ironically, the Jewish one) references the birth of Jesus Christ. He says, "Even *your* birthday is dated by *his* birthday" (emphasis in the original). Imagine how perplexed and amazed the shepherds must have been when angels (!) proclaimed the birth of the Messiah, the savior of the shepherds and the savior for all people. They knew they witnessed an incredible life-changing event in experiencing the birth of Jesus.

According to the angels, they shared with the shepherds "tidings of great joy!" And I'm sure the shepherds were impressed and joyful. But I wonder, with Warren, whether people today experience the great joy that Christmas offers. For many people this Christmas may not be a joyous, magical celebration. Instead, Christmastime this year may be cause for tears over the loss of a loved one. There will be sorrow in our family this Christmas due to the passing of Cari's father last March. In many of Broadway's homes, lights may not seem so bright because of loved ones who are gone.

In addition, Christmastime this year may be a time of worry and anxiety due to finances or health issues. Employment continues to be a problem in Rockford, and while some have found jobs and new careers (praise God!) others are still seeking and hurting financially. Others are hurting physically. Whether recovering from knee or leg surgeries, or anxieties over cancer treatments, and potential weight gain over the holidays, Christmas this year will be stressful and hard.

But we forget the purpose of Christmas. We forget that Christmas is important to God. We forget that Christmas is an opportunity for God to transform our darkness into light, to ease our pain, to dry our tears, to redeem our lives!

Each Sunday in December leading to Christmas, we will experience God's purpose for Christmas. We will rejoice because Christmas is a time of **Celebration**; we will exult because Christmas is a time of **Salvation**; and we will be challenged because Christmas is a time of **Reconciliation**. Christmas is a time for each one of us to turn our hearts and our minds toward God. In so doing, I am convinced that we will experience God's greatest gift to us.

How will we respond through this experience? Will we keep our celebration to ourselves? Or will we share the joy with those around us? Will we hide our salvation from those who know us best? Or will we shout about our receipt of Christ's eternal gift to our neighbors and friends? Will you unwrap the gift of reconciliation, knowing you are forgiven and released to forgive others?

As we reflect on the purpose of Christmas and the amazing gift of Jesus Christ God has given to us, I hope you share the gift you have received with those around you asking, "what can I give?"

In celebration of Christ's birth,
Pastor Eric

The Messenger Delivery Options

In addition to U.S. Postal Service delivery, you can get The Messenger at www.broadwaycovenant.com, and you can receive an e-mail telling you when it's ready. The Leadership Team is looking for ways to be better stewards of your offerings, to invest more in ministry and spend less on operating expenses. One way to do that is by providing The Messenger in digital format. You can get the latest issue -- or last month's issue or one from several months ago -- at www.broadwaycovenant.com. A link to the most recent issue is posted on the home page. To get The Messenger earlier than the U.S. mail gets it to you, sign up for an e-mail alert. When Sue finishes the newsletter, she will post it to the Web site. She also will send an e-mail to subscribers who have asked to receive an alert. The e-mail will provide a link to the pdf file of the new issue. When you get The Messenger from the website, you can print as many copies as you want. You can e-mail it to a friend. Or to friends. Copies of The Messenger also will be available in the southeast narthex. If you'd like to pick up a copy instead of getting it mailed to you, give Sue a call at the church office or send an e-mail to her at sue@broadwaycovenant.com.

Student Ministries

Ralphie is a household name around the Christmas TV screen. Who can forget the Bumpus hounds, Miss Shields, Flick and the flag pole, Scott Farkas, the decoder pin, the fishnet stocking leg lamp, pink bunny pajamas and the Red Ryder BB gun? I watched this classic for the first time a few weeks back and loved it as much as all the other times. I'm talking of course about the timeless movie entitled A Christmas Story. I'm glad they picked that title because it's true; it is "a" Christmas story, but not "the" Christmas story. Take a minute to clear your head and focus on the real deal from Luke 2:1 - 20:

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to **Bethlehem the town of David**, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was **expecting a child**. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son**. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An **angel of the Lord appeared to them**, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." **So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger**. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **and all who heard it were amazed** at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary **treasured up all these things** and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, **glorifying and praising God** for all the things they had heard and seen, **which were just as they had been told**.

On behalf of our student ministries, Merry Christmas Broadway! As you enjoy the Christmas season, may you inject the joy and wonder of Jesus' birth into those you meet in checkout lines, escalators, classrooms, office cubicles, dining room tables, sanctuaries, parking lots and wherever else you may find yourself. May "the" Christmas story flood our world this season...I wonder what that might look like!

Peace,

Derek

Mission Report

We are praying for three local ministries this month. **Carpenter's Place** was established in June of 2000 to provide a daytime shelter for homeless adults.

They provide services to 95 homeless guests daily:

1) Practical and essential life services including bathroom facilities and a shower, breakfast and lunch, clothing, storage of personal belongings, and a mail/message service.

2) A day room to seek shelter and engage in a positive socialization in a safe and welcoming environment and to build trust.

3) Case Managers who identifies their needs and creates a Life Recovery Plan that helps them make positive life changes, find housing and jobs.

Grounds for Life also helps the homeless. Several of our members help serve breakfast twice a month. They provide nourishment for the body and encouragement for the soul. For more than 15 years area homeless have found hope, help & direction from the staff of Grounds for Life.

- They are open 7 days a week 365 days a year.
- They have church services every Sunday
- They serve on average of 80 homeless a day.
- They provide sack lunches for those who work.
- Provide spiritual guidance & encouragement.

The Rock River Valley Food Pantry currently is providing emergency food assistance to an average of 2,200 families every month. These families receive enough food for 6 nutritionally balanced meals for every member in the household. Over 45% of those served are children. They give every family a jar of peanut butter which is nutritious and liked by most people. We have been collecting peanut butter for several years and have given 152 lbs so far this year. There is a box in the SE narthex for donations.

Prayer and Praise:

KICY Radio Station, Alaska

- Praise their signal has reached as far as China.
- Pray they will raise the funds for a generator.

Steve & Ellen Peterson, Asia

- Praise that seeds planted in a woman four years ago brought her recently to accept Christ.
- Pray that this woman would hunger and thirst for God's Word.

Read their newsletters and other letters from our missionaries in the book by the Missions Board.

Robert & Joyce Widman	Johnna Hayward
Leonid & Leanna Regheta	Peter & Ruth Dutton
Tim & Andrea Johnson	David & Judy Dolan
Steve & Ellen Peterson	Byron & Sue Bruckner
Jim & Barb Mikrut	

Christmas Card Banner

As Christmas is approaching and we are all busy please consider sending one Christmas card to your church family and donate the money you saved on postage to Missions. The Christmas Card Banner will be displayed in the narthex.



Church Family Military News

Be sure to pray for our military families who are separated from their loved ones during the Christmas season. We will continue to collect hard candy, body powder, and deodorant, National Geographic – adventure series, phone cards, chapstick and crystal light in the southeast narthex.

Pecans for Sale

We have pecan "Fancy Mammoth" halves in 1 pound bags and chocolate covered pecans in 12 oz bags. Both kinds are \$8.00 per bag. Call Carolyn Augenson at 815/398-6814 with your order.

Women Ministries News

Reflecting God's Glory is the theme for Triennial XIII to be held July 22-25, 2010 in Washington, DC. Check out the website www.triennialxiii.org for more information. Save \$50 by registering between now and January 15, 2010. Over 400 women have already registered for this exciting event. Why not join them for a life changing experience.

Sunday Smorgasbord

We look forward to seeing you at our annual smorgasbord on Sun., Dec. 13th at noon. We'd like you to bring your appetite and one dozen cookies. The cost is \$7.50 each or \$28 for a family of 4 or more. Invite friends and family for the "God Jul" gathering. Have a great holiday! Nancy & Dennis

60 Plus

Plan to join us for the 60 Plus lunch, December 15, 2009 at 11:30 a.m. at Thunder Bay on East State Street, by the tollway. After lunch we will go back to church and have a Christmas Carol sing-a-long followed by dessert. Please call Peggy, 282-0640 by December 13th and let her know if you will be attending the lunch and the sing-a-long.

Birthdays

- 3 Florence Boyer
Julia Heinzerth
4 Carl Ecklund
Emily Schweiger
6 Crystal Burdick
7 Maggie Kasicki
13 Beth Holmertz
Judy LeGault
17 Jill Page
19 Christiana Melin
20 Nancy Ilgen
28 Kim Anderson
Kay Forsen
Althea Myers
Jeanine Parker Heck

Anniversaries

- 22 Eric & Cari Filkin
27 Gary & Lois Ecklund
Paul & Susan York
28 Fred & Darlene Pearson

Remember in Prayer

Rowlie Holmertz released from the hospital.
Justin Holmertz & **Justin Murdock** serving in
Afghanistan and **Craig Anderson** in Iraq.

Thank You

Dear Broadway Covenant Church family,
Thank you so much for the plant I received while in
the hospital. Thank you also for being the caring
church family that you are. I know I have a few
months to mend and the going seems slow but I
look forward to being more mobile soon. Thanks
also for the visits, especially Pastors Eric and Joyce.
Love in Christ, Arlene Schweiger

Financial Update

from Dave Holmertz, Treasurer

My estimated amount of donations needed during
Nov. & Dec. to pay all of our bills and missions
commitments: \$75,000.
Received 11-1 (5,720.)
Received 11-8 (5,826.)
Received 11-15 (9,638.)
Needed for next 7 Sundays \$53,816.

This need averages \$8,969 per Sunday

Charitable Contribution From IRA's

A tax law that permits charitable contributions to be
paid directly out of IRA's for persons over age 70 ½
is scheduled to expire on 12-31-09. In certain
situations this is a very tax-advantages way to make
charitable contributions. Ask your tax advisor.

2009 Christmas Love Tree Outreach

Remember to return your gifts to church on or
before Sunday, December 6th for delivery. Please
contact Laura Price at (815)397-3548 if you have
any questions, or if you are interested in helping to
deliver the gifts.

Kid-Friendly Christmas Eve at 5:30

Please join us for worship at 5:30 pm for worship
on Christmas Eve. As we have done in the past, our
children will lead us through music and readings. If
your child would like to participate by playing an
instrument or reading Scripture, please let Pastor
Eric know by Sunday, December 20. Christmas
Eve will be wonderful, kid-friendly celebration of
the birth of Jesus Christ!

Renew + Rebuild = Revival!

This is the theme chosen for our coming Capital
Campaign. The Building Committee presented a
motion at the special congregational meeting held
November 8th to approve \$469,000 capital
campaign to refurbish the Broadway Covenant
Church facility. There was unanimous approval of
the motion. Special thanks go out to the Building
Committee consisting of Al Damrose, Carl Ecklund,
Keith Holmertz, Eric Holstein, Randy Price, Kim
Schweitzer and Steve Schweitzer. Their hard work
and dedication was evident in their detailed
proposal. The planned renovations include a
remodeled north entrance with expanded gathering
space, a renovated southeast entrance with new
restroom facilities and a new air conditioning unit
for the sanctuary. It is anticipated that construction
would begin in the spring. A Steering Committee
led by Kim and Steve Schweitzer has been
appointed. During the coming months, you will be
receiving information on how you can participate as
the three-year Campaign unfolds. Please be praying
for its success as we get ready to Renew and
Rebuild for Revival.



December 2009



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 12:00 Prayer 4:30 Journey 5:30 Supper 6:00 Crosswalk/Roots 6:30 Choir	3	4	5
6 9:00 Sunday School 9:45 Prayer 10:15 Worship 6:00 Overhaul	7 9:00 Patchwork Quilters	8 8:30 Corporate Prayer 6:30 Leadership Team Meeting	9 12:00 Prayer 4:30 Journey 5:30 Supper 6:00 Crosswalk/Roots 6:30 Choir	10 6:30 Homeless Breakfast Pgrm	11	12
13 9:00 Sunday School 9:45 Prayer 10:15 Worship Noon Smorgasbord 6:00 Overhaul	14	15 8:30 Corporate Prayer 11:30 60 Plus at Thunder Bay & Sing-a-long 7:00 Ministry Partner dessert	16 Messenger News Due 12:00 Prayer 4:30 Journey 5:30 Supper 6:00 Crosswalk/Roots 6:30 Choir	17	18	19
20 9:00 Sunday School 9:45 Prayer 10:15 Worship 6:00 Overhaul	21	22 8:30 Corporate Prayer	23 12:00 Prayer	24 5:30 Christmas Eve Worship	25 <i>Merry Christmas</i> 	26
27 9:00 Sunday School 9:45 Prayer 10:15 Worship	28	29 8:30 Corporate Prayer	30 12:00 Prayer	31		



Broadway Covenant Church
3525 Broadway
Rockford, IL 61108

Return Service Requested

Care is for All God's People

The Care group continues caring for the Broadway membership and church friends. I am reminded that "care" covers a broad expanse of tasks, but more than anything else it is extending the love and grace of Jesus to those in our midst.

Jesus said: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." (Matt. 11:28-30) (translation: The Message).

As we look to the coming year that is fast approaching, it is my prayer that all of our church family will be loving and accepting of all people. Love and compassion were high on Jesus' priorities. He healed people, fed people, and talked with people even though many of them were far from being spiritual giants. May we be gracious with one another, allowing for each others shortcomings and provide open arms for those who are hurting in which they can feel welcomed and supported. Jesus said our burdens should be light because we are sharing them with one another. There is always someone in the church family who needs our concern and compassion. Let 2010 be the year that ALL of the Broadway family reaches out to those who are struggling in our midst. You may not specifically be part of the Care Team at Broadway but everyone is part of God's Care Team because we are all the body of Christ. Jesus said we are to abide in him, live in him, and remain in him. Embracing his example, let us walk along side of others while extending his abundant grace to them on the journey.

Some of our church family already knows that I have a second job besides my job at Broadway. Do not let this hinder you from contacting me. If you leave me a message at my house or on my cell phone I will return your call as soon as possible. I am here to serve you.

Peace and Grace to you, *Pastor Joyce*