



A Word from Pastor John

God's Secret Weapon For Church Growth

The Session Retreat is Saturday, February 2nd. It will focus on church growth. Please pray for us as we gather from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. to pray and plan for outreach and growth.

While some may respond with skepticism and hesitation about church growth, I believe the potential for growth in our church is tremendous! But Mark 11:22-24 reminds us of the critical role prayer plays in all of this, "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

I believe our church will grow through prayer. Here are some reasons why.

1. One of the greatest benefits of prayer is to develop a personal relationship with God. People of prayer build their church as they pray and grow in their personal relationships with God.
2. We pray to receive spiritual power. Churches do not grow just through human planning and engineering. In his victory over Goliath, David acknowledged that God had given him the necessary power (1 Sam. 17:45-47). The secret to attaining spiritual power is to kneel before God in prayer. Then we experience church growth.
3. We pray to exercise spiritual gifts. Church growth expert Dr. C. Peter Wagner teaches that there are 27 spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible and they play an indispensable role in church growth. That's because church growth occurs when members of the church pray to discover and utilize their diverse gifts in ministry. Then the possibility of church growth is more than just a dream, it becomes a reality.
4. We pray to offer spiritual worship to God. People are seeking spiritual worship. These people will join the church where they have experienced God and are spiritually inspired.

That's why, based on Scripture, I believe that prayer is an indispensable ingredient for church growth. I am sure that God wants our church to grow, but a question remains to be answered:

Will YOU claim the power and promise of prayer in Mark 11:22-24?

Blessings,
Pastor John

EASTER OFFERING

The Easter Offering has traditionally been sent to the General Assembly to be used for disaster assistance such as the Katrina Hurricane and the Tsunamis, which recently devastated parts of Indonesia and Sri Lanka, etc. Since our church (First Pres.) is engaged in mission trips and projects to relieve suffering as well as spreading the Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Mission Committee was granted the privilege of using this offering to purchase supplies for our mission trips to Mississippi and other areas of need. Each project will be approved by Session. None of these funds will be used for transportation, lodging, or other personal costs incurred by those involved in the project. This offering will be received March 16, 2008. We have been blessed by not having any disasters, such as earthquakes, or being burnt out by the recent fires. Let us remember those who have not been so fortunate. You may use the pew envelopes marked "Easter Offering", or include your donation with your regular tithe and mark "Easter Offering Included" on the envelope. Thank you for caring and sharing.

Submitted by Sharon Hankle

THE GARY BONNER SINGERS IN CONCERT HERE SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 5 P.M.!

The world-renowned Gary Bonner Singers will present a program of Christian music here on Sunday, March 9, 2008, at 5:00 p.m. The choral group consists of 60 singers with classic as well as original Christian music in their repertoire delivered in a very exciting and dramatic fashion!

The Gary Bonner Singers, although launched in October 1995, have already distinguished themselves as a choral ensemble of musical excellence and versatility; contagious, sparking performance; and warm, vibrant choral tone.

Ranging in age from 18 to 65, the Gary Bonner singers represent a wide diversity of backgrounds and occupations. Audiences respond enthusiastically to the voice ensemble's full range of choral music and unique style, which emphasizes communication and relationship with the audience.

Please come Sunday, March 9th! We will be hosting the Gary Bonner Singers in a potluck in Boyd Hall immediately following their performance. Please check the Sunday bulletin for further details. It will truly be an evening to remember!

“BEING USED”

The following are some excerpts from a letter that was written by Nicole Ofori-Atta to Ed Bush in response to his letter to her . . . then forwarded by Pastor Paul to me for publication in this newsletter. Nicole received Ed’s letter on her birthday and was excited to hear from someone at home and how they are being used by the Lord. She, too, is being used by the Lord. While she does not go into any great detail, from her letter one gets the sense of how desperately help is needed in every aspect of life at the Center she has been assigned to by the Peace Corps.

Here, then, are some thoughts from Nicole:

“I’m working at a wonderful center called St. Camillus Home Based Care Center. My supervisor is Sr. Juliana Manele. She’s such a great woman, she founded this center with another Peace Corps Volunteer after caring for those infected with the virus. She had no knowledge of how to care for the sick, she was a cook at the convent, not a nurse, but she was willing and since she is still willing, God uses her tremendously.

“The center provides food for orphans, trains home-based caregivers, monitors work of its home-based caregivers, teaches knitting and sewing for people living with HIV AIDS and inmates at the prison, conducts testing, facilitates youth workshops, counseling and sooooo much more.

“I’ve helped with grant reporting and I’ve set up an anonymous question box at the clinic next door. Some of the questions are “Where are the areas in Mohale’s Hoek where there is the most HIV, so we can stay away from there?” (As if HIV is just floating in the air and one gets infected.)

“The biggest challenge I face is to help make the center self-sustainable. They are very capable here and run things well. They rely on grants and donations . . . The center sells leftover produce from its garden, purses, jewelry, AIDS pins, knitted caps and Aloe Vaseline, but these profits don’t cover the cost of the center and its activities.

“There are around 5 women who are all HIV+ who come to the center daily to volunteer. They are happy here; they knit sew, crochet, laugh, talk, sing and dance. They don’t sit at home and worry about their status, which could make them more ill because stress hurts the immune system.

“I’m quite happy. I have days when I’m frustrated, it is after all another culture and certain things about Basotho culture are hard for me to understand from an American point of view and I certainly feel that those things contribute to the rise of HIV and prevent eradication of the virus. However I’m blessed to work with so many people who are educated, work very hard and are passionate about helping their fellow countrymen.”

Troop 4 — 4th Annual Yard Sale

Saturday, February 2, 2008

7 AM – 1 PM

Please bring all donations to the Scout room (room 405) on February 1st from 6-9PM. Proceeds go to fund the scouting program, now in its 81st year. If you are unable to bring your donations on that evening or have large items you wish to donate please contact the Scoutmaster at medicrick@gmail.com or the Committee Chair Cheryl Johnson at cherylner@aol.com.

Thank You, Rick

VALENTINES DINNER

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2008

TIME: 6-8pm

COST \$10 PER PERSON

Enjoy a fun filled evening with your sweetheart or just friends at the Valentines Dinner sponsored by our own Boy Scout Troop. The menu is Italian food and there will be plenty of good times. There will be flowers for purchase and special pictures as well.

For more information see the Valentine booth in between services near Boyd Hall. Money goes to sponsor summer camps to Canada, Camp Whitsett and Hume Lake as well as other activities throughout the year.

SCOUT SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 3, 2008

Members of Venture Crew 4, Cub Scout Pack 4 and Troop 4 wish to invite you to a very special Scout Sunday. They will present National Awards to the church and receive religious medals for their work. We are asking all former cub scouts, boy scouts, explorers or scouting leaders to please wear red or blue on Scout Sunday. We would also like to ask you to submit to the Scout leadership your name, the year(s) you were in scouting and the place of your unit and its number if possible. All submissions should go to our Scoutmaster Rick Travis at medicrick@gmail.com prior to February 1st.

Thank you, Rick

January Prime-Timers Lunch

The January Prime-Timers Lunch was held on Wednesday, Jan. 9th with about 30 in attendance. We had a tasty and hearty potluck followed by a talk by Dr. Kenneth Greenlee, whose topic was “*Teach Us to Pray.*”

Dr. Greenlee pointed out that while God's sovereignty rules over everything, He has delegated authority to us on earth. When man fell to sin, however, Satan became the ruler of the world (Eph 2:2, 6:12). God now chooses to do His work in the world through and in consultation with us. Our communication with God is through prayer. In it, we stand as intercessors between the world and God. He also pointed out that we are all unique individuals and intercede to God in different ways. Some of these styles of intercession are:

- ▶ Issues based on intellect
- ▶ Mercy requests based on emotions
- ▶ Salvation for lost souls
- ▶ Personal needs for specific people
- ▶ Prayer list of needs
- ▶ Financial needs for people and causes
- ▶ Crisis intervention
- ▶ Spiritual Warfare
- ▶ Praise and worship of God
- ▶ Many others

Prime Timers events are held regularly. Plan to join us for the February Valentines Lunch on Feb. 13th.

Submitted by Don Olmsted

PRIME-TIMERS FEBRUARY LUNCHEON

Let's show the love!! Join us for a lovely lunch and Valentine's Day program Wednesday, February 13th at 11:30 a.m. Bring your friends! (we will have a donation basket for this one). Sign up table will begin Jan. 27th on the church patio (between services) or call the church office for a reservation - 893-1393.

PRIME-TIMERS MARCH LUNCHEON

For our March get together, we will have an outing on SATURDAY March 8th to the PAGEANT OF OUR LORD at Rolling Hills Covenant Church. Members of our church that have attended before enjoyed the Tableau Presentation. The \$10 tickets are on a first come, first serve basis. The presentation begins at 1 PM. Early arrivers can get a tour of the actors getting their make-up. For those wanting to car pool, we will meet at the church parking lot. Specific info will be given when you purchase tickets and also at the Jan. 27th sign up table.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

NOVEMBER STATED MEETING

Treasurer reported October income of \$35,775 and expenses of \$35,161 with a budget of \$40,565. Year to date income is \$388,342 with expenses of \$371,785 and a budget of \$405,785.

The One Great Hour of Sharing offering used by our Katrina Rebuilding Mission Team was not fully expended. Remaining funds will be used to help victims of the recent Southern California fires.

The Celebrate Recovery Program at our church has been closed. Attendees have been referred to a church in Orange with an active program.

Repairs to the Sanctuary roofing and the Fellowship Hall furnace were approved.

On-site and off-site Bible Study ministries of our church, led by Myron Heavin, are now reaching approximately 80 people on a weekly basis.

The Session Retreat for 2008 is tentatively scheduled for Jan. 26 and will focus on Church Growth.

DECEMBER STATED MEETING

Treasurer reported November income of \$33,846 and expenses of \$41,440 with a budget of \$40,564. Year to date income is \$422,244 with expenses of \$413,225 and a budget of \$446,198.

The Ligonier Ministries conference attended by Pastor Paul was great. The speakers were Joel Beeke, Steve Lawson and R.C. Sproul. The themes addressed were narrative preaching, expository preaching, worship and characteristics of godly worship and prayer.

Scrip Report: We have received a total of \$554.49 from Albertsons and \$71.19 from Ralph's so far this year. The money is used to supplement Missions activities of the church.

Our current Alpha Course was completed on December 2nd. A total of 13 participants completed the course.

The new heating furnace in the nursery has been installed.

Authorized payment of an \$800 deposit to Regents Point in Irvine for the Women's Ministries 2008 one-day retreat.

The Africa Team Ministries sale of crafts and jewelry realized \$1125 to further their mission.

The Women's Ministries Christmas Brunch had 114 guests. Gayle Harvill presented "Majesty in the Manger" as the message. Proceeds will go to the Heifer Project.

Pastor Paul is starting weekly Morning Prayer Meetings on Fridays at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room.