



# Celebrate the Light



Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name "Immanuel" which is translated, "God with us." Matthew 1:23



B I B L E B A P T I S T C H U R C H O F S O D U S

A W O R D F R O M P A S T O R



## The Shake-Up of the Shepherds Luke 2:8-18

When Christ entered into the world as a baby, whom do you suppose the angels would choose to announce to the arrival of the King of Kings and Lords of Lords? A fellow king, top political dignitaries, respected religious leaders. No, not even close...

According to Luke 2:8-20 (take the time to read this passage right now), we find a lowly group of shepherds are the ones that God decides to shake-up through the message of the angels. According to this text there are several key observations that need to be made in light of our impending holiday season. The shepherds were definitely shaken by the arrival of the Christ child, what about you?

### The first Nativity announcement was to the commoners (shepherds) of society. (8-14)

The shepherds were not well respected at the time of Jesus' birth. They were considered ceremonially unclean because of their work with sheep. They were looked upon as untrustworthy and viewed as thieves. In addition to the rejection you would face from others, shepherding was hard work. Many like these shepherds would spend nights outside with their sheep (in mild weather). The sleeping was rough, and the dangers were many from both animal and human preda-

tors. It wasn't considered a top job of prestige in this culture.

If you were marketing the arrival of the Messiah on a human level only, the shepherds would have been some of the last people on your list with people like tax collectors, unreligious Jews and common sinners. Imagine the surprise and fear of the shepherds when they received a personal visit first from one angel and then a host of angels. The mention of this child as being the Savior is significant. This term is used by Luke to denote the unique character of this newborn baby. He is no ordinary child!

When you combine the commonness of the shepherds with the character of the Christ child you discover that...

*God's choice of the shepherds is clear proof that Jesus was sent to the earth for everyone's benefit.*

Praise God that the salvation-offer is not status based. There is no one beyond the reach of this infant child who was in reality Immanuel: God with Us!

### The shepherds were the first to embrace the importance of the Nativity message. (15-16)

After the heavenly host return up to heaven, the shepherds take action. They didn't decide to form a feasibility group to analyze the probability of the validity of the angelic message. They didn't

schedule therapy sessions to help them cope with the trauma of their angelic encounter. They decided that they needed to leave immediately and check this event out. In verse 16, we read that they came with haste (diligent or eager search). They even had to leave the sheep behind.

*The shepherds were not going to let anything or anyone come between them and meeting the Savior.*

Some ignore the message. Others are disinterested. Some embrace just the spirit of the season, while others outright reject the notion of the Nativity. What have you done with the Nativity message?

### The shepherds were the first messengers to proclaim the arrival of the Messiah. (17-18)

These shepherds went out and found people to share the good news with.

Whether it was fellow shepherds or anyone else who would listen these guys were fired up about what they had seen and heard. They were convincing too because the people who heard their story marveled (amazed, wonderment) (verse 18)

This caused me to think about this challenge for us this time of year.

*Be bold and upbeat in your pursuit to keep Christ as the focus of Christmas.*

(cont'd page 2)

## L I F E   A P P L I C A T I O N

**Applying the Message**

At the end of the message on the 8 Things That Make God Happy, Pastor encouraged us to work on one of the areas. I have never really gotten past the High School Level of thanksgiving. When things go right, I am soooo thankful! I really am. But, when there are challenges in my life, I get pretty discouraged. So, I decided **NOT** to work in that area. :-)

Later Sunday night, I found myself in a very challenging situation, one that I was not responsible for, but found myself in nonetheless. I began to pray but honestly did not know what to pray. I finally said, "Lord, I know you want me to give

**Pastor continued-**

We live in such a politically correct culture that Christmas had become increasingly watered down. Just think about the terms we have created to replace Merry Christmas...

*Happy Holidays, Season's Greetings, Yuletide Blessings, Wonderful Solstice Sparkle Day, Winter Festivities, Cultural Displays, Holiday Cheer, Christmukkah: Merging of Christmas and Hanukkah*

Give me a break. When you are out and about this time of year shopping, getting gas, running errands, be intentional about how you address the holiday!

You don't need to be rude, but it would be good for those we encounter to at least be convinced that Christ is important to us this time of year! Even though the shepherds were clearly shaken by the news they received, they did not hesitate for a moment to proclaim the good news to as many people as possible. Good thing they did this before it had become politically incorrect! As you read this closing story, don't forget about Jesus

thanks in this situation. You said, 'In everything give thanks.' But, Father, I cannot think of a single thing to be thankful about. Nothing. But, you decided that this situation was good for my life. Somehow you want me to grow through this situation. So, I give you thanks for it."

About an hour later, the situation worked itself out in an incredible way, resolving a few other issues that I have been challenged with as well! I stood back in awe. Father had worked out everything for the good within an hour of my giving thanks in what looked like an impossible situation. I know that I will be faced with more challenges and hope to continue to work at the Graduate School level. But, I know it will probably come in

this year at Christmas, the shepherds didn't!

**The Case of the Missing Jesus**

*Daddy, guess what's missing! 7 year old Johnny yelled.*

*The place rang with excitement as the family put up the life-sized manger scene on the lawn.*

*What?, his father asked, as he fastened Joseph to a pole for support.*

*The baby Jesus, Johnny replied with a frown on his face.*

*Dad, if we can't find Jesus, there's no need for us to put up the manger scene at all.*

*If we cannot include Jesus in our Christmas, then there is no reason to celebrate Christmas at all.*

baby steps. Still, I will rejoice at seeing His hand in work in my life when I, in faith, prayerfully surrender to Him in thanks. That covers about 4 things that make God happy!

~Linda

## O U T R E A C H

*Free Coats To The Community*

On Saturday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. 18 people from our church gathered to hand out coats to those within our community. We handed out coats to over 125 individuals. This year we were able to bless 10 new families that we have not had previous contact with through any of our other acts of kindness.

One woman within our church made it her mission this past year to get as many XL, 2X, 3X and larger coats as she could for the women who come for free coats. Those coats were gone within the first hour. The Friday before the Free Coats to the Community she stopped at another yard sale and found a men's 5X coat. When she brought it to us while we were setting up we didn't think that we would have anyone that the coat would fit. Saturday came and while all the women's XL and larger coats went fast this men's 5X coat continued to sit there. A half hour before we were closing up for the day in walked a man who needed a coat....a 5X coat to be exact. What a blessing it was to see how God provided specifically for this man just the previous day. I am not sure who was more blessed the man who received the coat or the woman who bought the coat.

Thank you to all who donated coats. Your act of kindness is warming many this winter and provided us with the opportunity to share the gospel with so many people. It's not too early to start getting coats for next year's coat giveaway.

~ Brenda

HARVEST DINNER

*Remembered*

Don and Marion Sauer from Brockport, came to the harvest dinner because they enjoyed it the last time. My father, Don, has been fighting cancer that has made him weak, in pain and frustrated. We were very surprised that they were willing to make the hour trip, at night to join us at the fellowship, even after a lengthy discussion about us driving them. Dad cannot stand long so we sat at a table soon after arriving. He would normally be up talking to people and socializing quite a bit. Many people came to the table to greet Mom & Dad and many even remembered them from the last time. It was a great blessing to see people remember them. On our way out, they both were talking about the good food, good desert - with whipped cream, and the friendly people. Our Church family made a lasting impression on my parents. Even on our phone conversations, they talk about how nice the evening was. Thank you to our Church, yes of course to those who cooked, served and cleaned up, but mostly to the individuals that have the willingness to shake a hand, a kind word, and a memory created.

Thank You  
Mark & Pattie



A grateful heart is most precious to God when our situations don't warrant giving thanks.

"Saying "Thank You" to God helps us recall how loving, caring and faithful He is—as a result, our intimacy with Him deepens. And often, when others hear us express gratitude to Him, they are reminded that the Lord is their source for blessing as well."

~Charles F Stanley

Trivia

1. Paul said to "Walk in the \_\_\_\_\_ " and we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
  - A. spirit
  - B. law
  - C. Lord
  - D. love of God
2. First person to build an altar unto the Lord.
  - A. Abraham
  - B. Isaac
  - C. Jacob
  - D. Noah
3. Oldest person in the Bible.
  - A. Enos
  - B. Mahalaleel
  - C. Enoch
  - D. Methuselah

COMMUNITY DINNER

This Thanksgiving season it was a privilege for our family to be involved in and serve at the Community Thanksgiving dinner. Brenda Miller and her crew did a wonderful job preparing a delicious meal and we were able to enjoy it with several families from the community.

One family at our table had heard about the dinner through their grandmother who lives right in Sodus. She brought her daughter and son in law, Charles, and eight of her grandchildren. Charles and his family live on Pratt Rd. North of 104. It was a pleasure to be introduced to our "neighbors" and hear the grandmother dote on her lively group. We were able to open our church doors, open our hearts and share the love of Jesus with this family.

Geoff and Judy



*Birthdays in December*

- 5 Mike Guingo
- 6 Pattie Sauer
- 8 Kendra Maloney
- 9 Esther Dennie
- 11 Paul DiSanto
- 11 Nathanael Selby
- 14 Max Henretty
- 16 Sharayah Fisher
- 16 Christian Barnes
- 17 Vivian Ganze
- 18 Fred Tauriello
- 19 Katrina VanHoover
- 20 Alan Bartlow
- 21 Judy Parker
- 22 Ruth Teed
- 23 Spencer Preston
- 24 Greg Ornt
- 28 Fern Richmond
- 29 Jeffrey Mousso
- 30 Charitous Kanaley
- 30 Bob Watrous

## A B R A M

I spent 2 weeks on a mission trip in Welkom, South Africa and arrived home late on a Sunday afternoon, after a grueling 36 hour trip home. I am especially interested in sharing the story of Abram with you.

When we arrived at The Pines Children's Care Center, which is an orphanage- or really a home- for children affected and/or infected with HIV/AIDS, the missionary running the Center, Phil Carmichael, announced a long list of jobs to our team of 13 people. The list included construction projects, gutter replacement, painting, staining, refinishing, stump removal, computer related projects, some indoor tasks related to organizing clothing and other things. As he read the list, I kept thinking that none of those tasks were things I was especially good at or experienced in doing, though I was willing to do whatever was needed.



After he read the list, he said, "Oh. And we have a large need concerning one of the children. Are any among you experienced working with people who have special needs?" I about fell off the couch. He continued.

"We have a 3 year old boy named Abram, who has been here since February, but we do not think that we can keep him. He is deaf, cannot speak, and is autistic. We are trying to make arrangements for him to go to an institution, but things have not worked out yet for that to happen. We hate to

send him away, because everyone here loves him, but we cannot get through to him." I raised my hand and said I'd like to spend the morning with him and see if I thought I could be helpful with Abram.

So, I did. I took him to the library of the home and spent over an hour with him. He did indeed have some tendencies of autism, most notably finger flicking and tooth grinding and a lack of social skills, including not making eye contact or engaging in any social situations. But I was pretty certain about one thing; Abram was not deaf. Oh, he didn't respond to loud noises or anything. It was just something I knew. I knew he was paying attention to my words, even though he did not look at me or respond or react. I just knew it and I acted on that knowledge. I began speaking to him. A lot. (Talking is one of my well developed gifts!) I also was struck by the fact that Abram learned to walk early in life. That told me he probably had more abilities than anyone realized.

The children at The Pines are fluent in both English and their mother tongue which is pronounced Sutu, but is spelled very differently. Anyway, I knew that Abram had been exposed to English in his 6 months at The Pines. So, I just chatted away.

I went to speak with his "Mama". The Mamas are amazing women who provide total care for the 6 children who live in their flats for 3 week stints, 24-7, followed by a week off. Abram's house Mama my first week with him was the relief Mama, a dear 31 year old woman named Cynthia. I spent a lot of time with her

and learned that the biggest challenges with Abram were related to the fact that they had to do everything for him. *Everything*. I decided that if he could learn to do at least something for himself, it would minimize the burdens for the Mama. Cynthia agreed to support my attempts at helping Abram become more independent. Her support was critical to the rest of the story.

I decided to focus on helping Abram feed himself. In the South African culture, young boys use their hands to eat, and it requires some skill to do it well. Abram was very clear, however, that he would NOT be using his hands for such purposes. So, I decided we would go right to silverware. I used hand over hand teaching Abram to hold his fork and spoon.

Abram ate 2 meals with total hand over hand before he understood what he was to do. I went to his flat at nearly every meal, unless we were out doing other projects, at which time Cynthia took over doing exactly what she had seen me do. Abram still needed, and needs, assistance perfecting the skill, especially getting food onto his utensil. But, he was doing very well with it. In fact, he even was using his utensil to wipe off extra food from his lips, a skill he was not taught. When his flat-mates and Mama saw him using a spoon for the first time, they cheered and came and hugged him. I was so blessed to realize that Abram was loved.

It was time to move on to some other skills that would help him be more independent. We worked on drinking from a cup independently. Again, he learned the skill quickly, and, although he still

requires some support, he is more independent with a skill that no one ever expected him to acquire. Abram would not pick up or hold anything. Together we played many games and went on walks that required us to touch and pick up several things. At the end of 2 weeks, Abram was routinely holding objects. His pincer grasp needs to be developed and the staff agreed to help him with that.

The tooth grinding was something many of the staff complained to me about. So, it became something else we focused on. Not knowing any actual method addressing the issue, I simply took his cheeks into my hand and said, "Stop." or, "No." I was as consistent as I could be with it. Mama Cynthia was a great support, as was 14 year old, Nazo who lives in the same flat as Abram. Nazo adores Abram and offered to help do anything that would help him. By the time I left, it was a rarity for Abram to grind his teeth, rather than something he did continually.

Another skill I thought would be good for Abram to learn as he increased his independence was going up and down the stairs. There were three sets of long relatively steep stair cases that led to the floor where Abram lives. I taught him to use the handrail and change to the next rail each time he stepped up. He did not know how to bend his knee to go up or to extend it to go down. We spent hours practicing using the steps. Sometimes Abram was weary of using the steps. At those times, I only required he be successful climbing or descending 3 steps and then we went to another activity. As he became

more and more proficient using the steps, he did not want to leave them, even though I was ready to move on to something else. Abram came to enjoy his own successes, which was very exciting!

Because I began placing expectations on Abram, who had not been used to that, he began to have mild challenging behaviors. Using the tools that we teach at work, I was able to help Abram on several occasions calm and regain control. This is an area that I expect will become more challenging for both Abram and those who work with him as they continue to expect him to do more and more things. I gave them a crash course in what to expect and how to work with Abram, but not to see his responses as "naughty" and punish him. They asked many questions and seem to have a good understanding of how to address these issues. I am so grateful for that.

Abram and I spent a good deal of time together, not just working on skills. We walked all over the very spacious yard and I pointed out interesting things that never caught Abram's attention before. We played on the swings, something he never wanted to do before. We spent time with others both from his home as well as from the team that I traveled with. The more Abram was with people, the more he blossomed. He especially enjoyed being tickled and chased and cuddled. He loved when I hugged and kissed him, and I did it a lot!

After one week working with Abram, Linda Wade, an RN from England, came to The Pines to spend a year working at The Pines. It was decided that among her tasks my second week in Africa, Linda would spend time working with Abram and me.

I began to learn more about Abram, although there is not much to know about him. His mother died shortly after his birth of AIDS. Father paid someone to care for him but it seems that he suffered from neglect and abuse. I can only imagine what he endured that caused him to retreat so far into himself. Abram likely is mildly autistic. But, I am certain that many of his idiosyncrasies that were so quickly changed were the result of whatever he endured his first 3 years of life.

This is one of my favorite parts of the whole story! Abram did not speak. He did not even use "baby talk". But, I did not make any effort to teach him to speak, because we were working on so many other skills. With only one day left, Abram and I walked through the kitchen where many people that I came to Africa with were working, as well as the director's wife, Alana and the founder, Sally. Abram and I were holding hands as we walked through and I sang, "Hello!!" My hello was echoed by a very loud, clear, and sweet, "Hello!!" Everyone in the kitchen stopped as we looked at each other. We all cheered and celebrated. I scooped Abram up and gave him plenty of hugs and kisses. Later, he said, "Mama". The next night I said, "No" to him at dinner about throwing a cup. He responded by saying, "Yes." (Uh, oh.)

On my last night in Africa, Phil, the director, came to me and said that they would no longer be pursuing the institution for Abram as he has learned so many skills making him more independent. Linda Wade would continue working with Abram and the Mamas. I purchased a few books from

Amazon.com and had them sent to Linda so she could pursue the next BIG SKILL of potty training!

As I conclude writing my story, I think of one of my favorite Bible stories, that of Queen Esther. Her cousin said to her, "Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for this purpose?" That is exactly how I feel about my trip to South Africa. I had no idea how God would use me there, but He saw fit to use me in the life of a precious little boy who was just waiting for someone who could help him open some doors to the world. As much as Abram's life may have changed in 2 short weeks, I do believe mine has been changed more.

~Linda Selby



### December Prayer Emphasis

December is a month of Christmas celebrations, parties, and family times. It is also a time for intense loneliness for those without families, and an especially difficult time for those who have lost loved ones during the past year. Remember those who are alone during the holiday season.

### Trivia answers:

1. spirit
2. Noah
3. Methuselah

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our new members:  
 Carolyn Ford  
 Al and Cindy Ferland  
 Dave and Gloria Rodriguez  
 Tom and Kim DeStefano



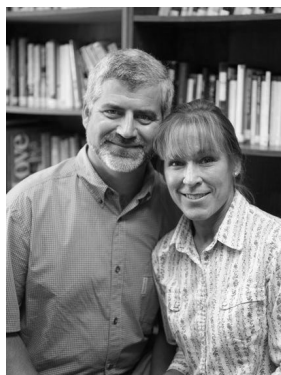
Carolyn and Paul



Dave and Gloria, David, D'anna,  
 Nathan, Samantha, Mathew, Michael



Al and Cindy, Christi, Hannah,  
 Thomas and David



Tom and Kim

MEET THE FAMILY

**Cheyenne Everett "Molisani"**

Have you met Cheyenne? If you have, you have been blessed. She has an enthusiastic smile and a "gift for gab." I really enjoyed my interview with her. Cheyenne has a love for music. She sings in the choir at school as well as at church. Some of her favorite music groups are The Apoletix, Thousand Foot Krutch, and Kutless.

Cheyenne has a desire to be a math teacher one day. So after school she can be found staying after with her math teacher Mr. LaBarge and running cross country. She likes many things, like chocolate chip cookies, salads, and oranges...the color purple, and babysitting.

Cheyenne looks forward to her adoption being made final and she would appreciate our prayers for DSS to hurry up the process. She has been attending our church for approximately 16 months total. She likes our church because "everybody is caring and nice."

~Katrina



If you still have not figured out who these special people are, maybe this will help:

Shelly says, "Mike is the one with the good sense of humor and the gift of discernment."

Mike says, "Shelly is the one with the bubbly sweet personality."

They are both so special to our church family!

~Katrina

MEET THE FAMILY

**Mike and Shelly McDonald**

Have you ever met two more wonderful people? If you have not gotten a chance to spend some time with them, you can find them about half way down on the left side of the church each Sunday. These are people you can count on. If they say they will help out, you can be sure they will be there and they will most likely be early!

They are hard working people. Mike is the Plant Manager at Heluva Good Cheese Horseradish Plant in Wolcott. Shelly is the Athletic Secretary at Wayne High School. Mike serves at our church as an usher and Trustee. Shelly is our Games and Music Director for AWANA. She is also the reason we have a newsletter each month.

If you want to start up a conversation with Mike, you could ask

him about the races at Spencer Speedway each Friday night, NASCAR, football, or if it were me, I would ask him about what he watches on TV. You might be surprised to find out what his favorite movies and reruns are. When you talk to Shelly ask her about the Walk of Emmaus and her involvement with Ultreya for 8 years. You could ask her about her prayer group at school or how she and Mike came to this church. Their testimonies are "Faith Boosters (Kind of like that glass of O.J. or that cup of coffee in the morning)."

They both would covet your prayers for their children (Ali & Mike) and their grandchildren (Berlin & Aidyn). Their love for them is immeasurable and nothing would mean more to Mike and Shelly than to see their family come to a saving knowledge of Christ and attend a church where their faith can grow.

*Celebrate Christmas At Bible Baptist Church of Sodus*

***Dec. 5th***

8:30/11:00am: Message: *Holiday Options: Christmas, Kwanza, or Hanukkah*

***Dec. 12th***

11:00am (no 8:30 service): Christmas Musical: *The Star Still Shines*

6:00pm: Christmas Musical: *The Star Still Shines*



***Dec. 19th***

8:30/11:00am: Message: *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town*

9:45am: Continental Breakfast (no SS)

6:00pm: Christmas Caroling



***Dec. 24th***

6:00pm: Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

***Dec. 26th***

8:30/11:00am: Message: *Twas The Day After Christmas*

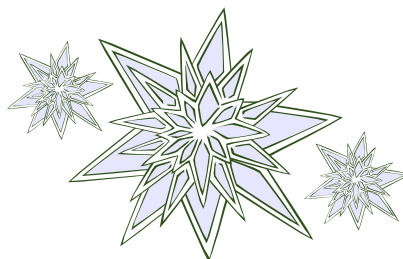
No Sunday School

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host  
praising God and saying:*

*Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"*

*Luke 2:13-14*

*Christmas*



*Blessings*