

**CHURCH OF CHRIST
MEETING IN CLEVELAND, MN**



December 2008 Vol. 26 No. 12

THE BEST OF TIMES

By Mark Howells, Elder at the Cleveland Church of Christ

I am not exactly sure what sparked the brain cells to try to think back in my life to “The Best of Times.” It may have been the hectic schedule the past few weeks. Perhaps it was hearing all the negative reports about the economy, the bailouts, etc. Every once in a while, when things seem so bad, I wish for “The Good Old Days.” Perhaps you catch yourself doing this occasionally as well.

Come with me on my journey to *The Best of Times*. Perhaps you can relate to some of stops I make on my trip down memory lane. The first stop was with my dad. I remember going to the old Met stadium in Bloomington to see my very first MLB game. My hero, Harmon Killebrew, and the rest of the Minnesota Twins were playing the Baltimore Orioles. With the score tied in the bottom of the ninth, the Twins first baseman Vic Power ran from first to home on a line drive, knocking the ball out of the catcher’s mitt, to win the game. Here I was 7 years old, without a care in the world. My dad took me to a game. My team won. It was *The Best of Times*.

Well... maybe *The Best of Times* was during those fun years in high school. We had a great youth group in Austin and lifelong friendships began. Or *The Best of Times* could have been those years in college. I was living away from home for the first time. That independence, along being with Christian friends, could possibly have been *The Best of Times*.

No, it had to have been when I married my college sweetheart. Or was it when I became a parent? Wait, I know. It was definitely when I became a Grampa. Yeah, when I became “Bampa,” that has to be it.

Perhaps for you *The Best of Times* was when you were 7 or 17 or 27. Perhaps it was riding a horse or a bicycle for the first time. Perhaps it was a special birthday, an athletic award, playing the piano, getting an “A” on a final exam. Maybe it’s being with family, traveling to another country, or getting that special pet. There are times in our lives when we look back to those *Best of Times*.

You know those *The Best of Times* may be overrated. Our recollection may overlook some of the tough times that accompanied the good times.

Paul says this in Philippians 3:12-14...

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Did we catch that? There is a prize ahead. *The Best of Times* have not passed but are there for us as we strain toward the goal. Dwelling on the past may sometimes prevent us from progressing toward to the ultimate good time with our heavenly Father and Savior Jesus Christ. *The Best of Times* are yet to be. Come join me as we surge ahead to **THE BEST** of *TIMES*.



**CHURCH OF CHRIST
900 State Highway 99
Mail to: PO Box 307
Cleveland, MN 56017**

OUR HEAD: Jesus Christ
INTERIM PASTOR: Randy Hardy

ALL SUNDAYS unless noted otherwise

8:45am Pre-JAM Fun for all ages
9:00am JAM Sessions = Bible Classes
10:00am Fellowship Time
10:30am Worship Service

www.clevelandchurch.net

OFFICE PHONE: (507) 931- 5924
OFFICE/GENERAL: office@clevelandchurch.net
PRAYER CHAIN: prayerchain@clevelandchurch.net
SECRETARY LISA: lisa@clevelandchurch.net



CHRISTMAS EVENTS



CHRISTMAS CAROLING

All ages are invited to join us Sunday afternoon December 14 after the Youth Group Spaghetti Fund Raiser for Christmas Caroling. We will begin around 1:00 p.m. from the church.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM PRACTICE

All children, youth, and adults that are participating in the Christmas Program, practice will be held on Saturday, December 20 from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. A lunch will follow practice.

TEEN YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY

7th–12th Graders are invited to bring a favorite appetizer and a \$5.00 gift to exchange on Sunday, December 21 at 6:00 p.m. at the church. Plan for snacks, games, and a cozy time around the tree. Call Deb or Gary with any questions at 931-3591. Bring a friend. Hope to see you there!

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

On Sunday, December 21, at 9:00 a.m., our youth will be presenting “nine lessons and carols.” The story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus is told in nine short Bible readings, interspersed with the singing of Christmas carols and hymns. All the children and youth will be participating. This weaving of scripture and song has a long tradition in the English church. The young people will personalize the service by interpreting the lessons in costume. Please plan on attending.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Join us for our annual Christmas Eve Service at church on Wednesday, December 24 at 5:00 p.m.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER 2008

- Choir practice – Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m.
- Drive-Through Live Nativity at Crossroads College – December 5 & 6
- Movie Night – December 7*
- Dorcas Fellowship – December 9*
- Church Board Meeting – December 9, 7:30 p.m. – Sherm R will host
- Building Offering – December 14*
- Spaghetti Meal Fundraiser – December 14*
- Christmas Caroling – December 14*
- January newsletter articles due in – December 18*

All events are at the church building unless otherwise noted.

* Indicates an article is elsewhere in this newsletter.

- Ladies Nite Out – December 18*
- Christmas Program practice – December 20*
- Christmas Program – December 21*
- Teen Youth Christmas Party – December 21*
- Christmas Eve Service – December 24*
- Praise & Prayer – December 28*

COMING IN JANUARY

- Movie Night – Sunday, January 4 at 6:30 p.m. featuring *THE SECOND CHANCE*.

MOVIE NIGHT

On Sunday, December 7 at 6:30 p.m., we will be showing the movie “*The Last Sin Eater*.” This movie is directed by Michael Landon Jr. The movie takes place in the Appalachian Mountains in the 1850’s. It is about 10 year old Cadie’s quest for redemption which uncovers a dark secret...and the truth shall set her free. Bring popcorn or a snack to share and set back to watch the “big screen.”

DORCAS FELLOWSHIP

Dorcas Fellowship is open to all women. It meets monthly, typically on the second Tuesday of the month, in the afternoon. Dorcas Fellowship offers a time to get together to visit but also it is a time to minister. The focus of their ministry is praying for needs they are aware of and sending cards of encouragement. This month’s Dorcas Fellowship will be on Tuesday, Dec 9 at 1:30 p.m. at the church.

BUILDING OFFERING

We will receive our monthly building fund offering on Sunday, December 14. We encourage you to catch up with your commitments to the building fund in December, if you are behind in your yearly giving. Of course, we also welcome special gifts to the building fund at any time. Thanks to all who have faithfully given to the building fund.

SPAGHETTI MEAL FUNDRAISER

The teen youth are hosting a Spaghetti Dinner after our worship service on Sunday, December 14. The fundraiser is to raise the annual needed funds to support Deivi, their sponsored child in Columbia. Additionally, some of the money raised will go toward the redecoration of their youth room at church. A free will offering will be taken.

LADIES NITE OUT

Once a month, on the third Thursday of each month, ladies of all ages gather in one of the area eating establishments at 6:00 p.m. for a meal and fellowship. On Thursday, Dec 18 at 6:00 p.m., we will be meeting at Kokomos in Cleveland.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

Bring a sack lunch for after the worship service on Sunday, December 28, and plan to stay for Praise and Prayer at 1:00 p.m. We will sing your favorite song, read your favorite verse from scripture, and pray together.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Phil Miller, 46, minister of a sister church in Moorhead, MN, died on November 10, 2008. To read more information, see www.caringbridge.org/visit/philipmiller and the Valley Christian Church website at www.rvcc.org.
- The Operation Christmas Child response was very generous! We delivered 94 filled shoeboxes to the Mankato drop-off location!!! We send our prayers with the boxes we have collected from our Cleveland congregation. May God match the right child with each box and may His love be evident with each gift. Thank you all for helping in this project. The shoeboxes will go to locations around the globe – all in time for Christmas!
- Our Celebration of Thanksgiving service on Sunday, November 23 was a grand success. 150 people attended the meal after the service.
- 210 people attended the annual Cleveland Community Thanksgiving Service.

OUR PRAYER CHAIN

Prayer is an important ministry of the church. As of this print, nearly 50 family units are involved in our prayer chain to pray for you and yours as special needs arise. TO SUBMIT A PRAYER REQUEST:

Call: Carrie 507-261-0279 (try her first);
Betty 507-931-5947 (leave a message).

Email both Carrie and Betty in one email:
prayerchain@clevelandchurch.net

SNACKS NEEDED for the 10:00 a.m. Sunday Fellowship Time. Sign up on the list on the church kitchen counter. Bring 6-8 dozen snack items. Volunteers are responsible for setting up, serving, and cleaning up on your service day.

HAPPY NEW YEAR !

If you would like to submit something for the January 2009 newsletter, you've got 2 ½ weeks to get it to Lisa, our secretary. Lisa likes to have the monthly newsletter information by 8:30 a.m. on the 3rd Thursday of the month for the next month's newsletter. December 18 is the number for this month. With Christmas and New Year events, it will be a busy time. Being on time with your submissions lightens the load. Thank you.

BIRTHDAYS: December 8 – Evelyn E; 12 – Sandy K, Cindy S, Emma S; 13 – Sheila P; 15 – Annette S; 18 – Dale R; 19 – Billy R, Deivi E (World Vision Child); 22 – Greg S; 23 – Annalisha S, Mike W; 25 – Lois T; 28 – Lance F

ANNIVERSARY: December 31 – Dale & Linda M (Missionaries to Zimbabwe)

If you wish to no longer receive our email newsletters **OR** to update your email address, please reply to this address: newsletter@clevelandchurch.net
Thank you, Church of Christ meeting at Cleveland, Minnesota