

January 2010
Volume 1, Issue 1

Special Christmas Edition

Thank you to all who helped to write stories! Happy New Year!

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Raytown First Church
5413 Blue Ridge Cut Offaytownaytown,
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First Church

Stay Connected

We want to be connected. There are many possible connections in the world, but because we are the Church we should be connected to

- GOD
- OTHERS
- MINISTRY
- THE LOST

As your Pastor, I invite you to do an inventory of your spiritual life and of the ministry of the Church before we make the New Year resolutions.

Last year was more productive than ever. Our highest aspirations to grow were answered: our leaders gave an opportunity to all to reconnect with God and others through two new ministries. 2009 was spent on creating new opportunities for all of us to grow spiritually. People only have so much available time, and the leaders decided to free up time slots for people to be able to connect to the most essential programs in the process.

We started a small group on Wednesday night to help our members meet a requirement to experience small group fellowship through study and sharing bread together. We made an effort to combine three adult Sunday school classes into one class last fall to let our teachers get nurtured spiritually.

Now, we started the Hope Kitchen to give a new fresh opportunity to everybody to connect to ministry and to the lost. Regretfully, I observed that not everybody liked the change, or gave it much of a try. The Pastor and the staff should be committed wholeheartedly to the process of connecting people to God, others, the lost, and the ministry.

We are the Church, not a social club. We are called to exemplify the Christ of Hope.

The Book of Discipline says, "Each member is called upon to be a witness for Christ in the world, a light and leaven in society, and a reconciler in a culture of conflict."

Everything we do in the church needs to be evaluated from the point of how well our programs allow us to get connected to God, to others, to ministry and to the lost.

You might think that we are too radical. The truth is that we are too careful: one congregation named Christ



Hope Kitchen in action

Fellowship Church made an inventory of all their programs and realized that their Christmas service doesn't bring any new people. Church members were inviting friends and family to the Christmas

Eve Service. These guests were never exposed to a typical service and were less likely to return. Finally, the staff decided to combine the Christmas Eve Service with the regular Sunday service. The elimination of the special program paid off immediately as the number of people who were exposed to a weekend service skyrocketed.

Simple assessment and prayerful inventory connected people with the lost and with God.

Are we ready to be that radical in 2010?

Jesus said, "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:29)

United Methodist Women

We did not have a regular meeting in November or December, but we are still busy with our Mission work. President Mary Williamson, Arlene Bunce and Clara Fisher went to Spofford recently to help with a mailing. Five members also attended the Church Women United meeting at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Raytown. Our next regular meeting will be held immediately after Church service on January 24, 2010. We hope to have a good attendance, so please plan to join us.

Nut sales are over for this year, and a big THANK YOU goes out to everyone who purchased, took orders, and helped deliver. A special thanks to Dennis and Dianne McKinney who made two trips to Kansas to pick up the nuts for us, and Miss Dorothy from Agape who helped load the boxes for delivery.

President Mary met her challenge of selling 300 pounds, but we, as a group, fell a little short, although we did give it a good try. Our total sale was 737 pounds! That's a lot of wonderful cookies, cakes and Christmas goodies.

Our BEST CHOICE labels have been mailed in, but we will start again saving for 2010. Please keep us in mind when you purchase Best Choice items, to save the labels for us. We appreciate your continued support in this project.

The mitten tree donations were delivered to Della Lamb -- a big thanks to all who filled the tree with 180 items, which included mittens, scarfs, and hats. A special "thank you" to Ben and Vernie Ellerbeck who delivered the items to Della Lamb.



May you always be a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, and a hand through which Christ helps.

Have a wonderful and prosperous New Year! Blessings to all...

Sue Jones
Secretary

The Gift of Giving

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." St. Paul has it right, and the people to whom he said it had little to give. There is more meaning in his words when you want to give something and have nothing to give, or you simply have to do without to give.

The teacher I had for my first six years in a rural school was one of the most blessed persons I've ever known. She not only gave us a basic education, but she taught us to give. She set an example; she gave and gave and gave.

I know for a fact that Miss Elsie was making all of thirty-five dollars a month. This was two hundred and eighty dollars a year. Rural schools were in session for only eight months, partly because children were needed to work on the farm, and partly because the low tax base gave the local board of directors a limited budget.

Out of her salary, our teacher would give us prizes for achievement. Prizes were usually things we used in school: pencils, erasers, ink and pens, coloring books, crayolas, and Big Chief tablets. At Christmas time she gave more personal things such as tooth brushes and Teal tooth cleaner. Teal was a red liquid that tasted better than baking soda or salt. She gave cotton handkerchiefs which felt better on our noses than coat sleeves. The chewing gum she gave tasted better than paraffin, and the bars of soap smelled better than our homemade lye soap. Luxuries!

Miss Elsie was aware that most of her eighteen or twenty students would have nothing to give their parents at Christmas, so she helped us make things with materials she purchased. Most of these were Christmas cards, posters, picture frames, calendars, and scrap books or recipe books.

As we got older, some of the things were more costly, but involved learning experiences. She provided the brown Jersey gloves, and taught me to do a chain stitch in bright colored embroidery thread on each finger.



These were Mom's Sunday gloves for years. She purchased plain white dresser scarves and had me draw a design on each end and color it with crayons. Then I had to press the design with a warm iron over a cloth dipped in white vinegar to set the colors. That was easier than the time we had to embroider designs on tea towels. How I fumbled with lazy daisy stitches and French knots!

Colored feed sacks were popular, and one year I learned how to make fringe by pulling threads. These made small but pretty table cloths. Our big kitchen table has an oilcloth, so Mom used the colorful feed sack cloth on the library table in the living room.

This gift of giving carried over into our daily home lives. Several weeks before Christmas, we would sneak things out of the kitchen or dresser drawer and hide them. Right before Christmas we would wrap them in funny papers or brown paper sacks with original colored designs, and put them under the tree. Imagine Mom's surprise when she opened her gift and found a pot holder she thought she had lost, or the look on Dad's face when he opened his gift and found a pair of dress socks he thought he had thrown away!

When we grew older, we were given opportunities to earn our own money. Grandma would hire us to pull weeds or wash down a kitchen wall. Cousin Cora paid us for helping her pen her guineas. (Now, that was an adventure!) Anyway, since we had money, we drew names for Christmas to buy gifts. It was a big secret whose name was drawn.

I remember one year Earl bought a gift set of cologne and "toilet water." He hid it in his dresser drawer under his long handled underwear. He had no heat in his upstairs bedroom and the liquids froze, breaking the pretty little bottles. He not only had to buy another gift, but he went around in sweet-smelling underwear for several weeks.

Even Mollie, the baby of the family had the giving spirit, but few opportunities to earn money. Now, Daddy and Earl hunted rabbits during the months of November and December. Mom knew several recipes for rabbit. The rabbits were skinned out behind the smoke house.

Gift of Giving.

Continued from page 2...

Mollie very carefully picked up several rabbit tails. These she put them in a little box and wrapped them for Ida Ann. Ida Ann was a teen-ager, starting to use makeup. When she opened her box of cotton tails, she asked, "What is this?"

Mollie proudly announced, "You can use them for powder puffs."

Thank you, Miss Elsie, for teaching us the fun of giving. Thank you, family, for all the memories and the gifts we have shared all these years.

Clara Winston Fisher

Venture

Raytown Venture Crew 654 is growing! We have doubled in size to more than 15 youth. We have plenty of room for more. We are coed and currently 65% female so we'd love to see a few more older scouts show interest in Venturing to balance us out. Dual registry is free for the second unit registry. We meet once per month for activities and would welcome anyone with scouting experience. Of course more young women are welcome too.

This month we met for a great night of ice skating at Crown Center and in January we will meet to be trained on handgun safety and usage and then time on a range. Our Super-Activity for 2010 is to be one of several options to be decided (so keep an eye out), a trip east to New York City and Washington DC, a Caribbean Cruise with a stops in Florida's play spots (Daytona, Universal etc), or hiking and horseback trails in the Rocky Mountains. More to come each month!

Think big and think outside the box. It can be your Crew. We need your input. Email us.

Sean O'Rear s.orear@yahoo.com
(President)

Charlie Harrison
raytownventuring@yahoo.com
(Advisor)

24 Golden Hours

Please consider this the thought for a healthier, happier life.



"Outside my window,
a new day I see
And only I can determine
What kind of day it will be.
It can be busy and sunny,
laughing and gay.
Or boring and cold,
unhappy and gray,
My own state of mind is the
determining key,
For I am only the person
I let myself be,
I can be thoughtful and do
all I can to help,
Or be selfish and think
just of myself.
I can enjoy what I do
and make it seem fun,
Or gripe and complain
and make it hard on someone.
On the other hand, belittle and hurt
them as much as I can.
However, I have faith in myself,
and believe what I say,
In addition, I personally intend
to make the best of each day.
Every day you are handed twenty-four
golden hours. They are one of the few
things in this world that you get free of
charge. If you has all the money in the
world, you couldn't buy and extra hour.
What will you do with this priceless
treasure? Remember, you must use it, as
it is given only once. Once wasted, you
cannot get it back."

Janet Beck



Thank you notes:

Dear Friends at First Church:
We have so enjoyed the meals you have brought us – They were all very good.

May God Bless you all, He sure has us! We wish you all a very Happy Holidays.

Harold & Alma Corum



Dear J.O.C. members:
Thank you very much for your generous Christmas gift . Thank you for all your support and prayer for my ministry and



family.
Pastor Lydia

THANKS TO BELLRINGERS

Our volunteers rang the bells and collected funds for the **Salvation Army** on Saturday, Dec. 5 and 12, at the Independence Center.

- Those participating were:**
Richard & Bonnie Graham
Arlene Bunce & Terresa McKinney
George & Dolores Hanson
Bob Sego
Barbara Fisk & Abbie
Julie Tynon & Janet Beck

We are grateful to all those who participated in this fundraising event!

Darlene Thurlo

Christmas Long Ago

As with many my age we like to live in the past and recall the way things were when we were children. For many of us, our childhood was one of the most pleasant times of our lives. We have memories of our grandparents, our parents, aunts, uncles especially during Christmas. The following are my memories from the early 1930's when I was six or seven years old still believing in Santa Claus.

A Christmas We Remember

Christmas is an exciting time. When I was a small child, the anticipation was almost so much fun as Christmas itself. Sometime in late October or early November, wish books would come in the mail. These were the Christmas editions of the Sears Roebuck and the Montgomery Wards catalogues. We children would spend hours looking at the colorful pages trying to pick out the one or two things we thought we could not live without.

The Christmas when I was nine years old is remembered as my fuzzy slipper year. I had browsed the wish book for days and finally settled on a pair of fuzzy slippers. These were light blue and looked as soft as cotton. The fluff was so long one would have to walk with their knees apart to keep from tripping. This was a very practical wish – the floors in our house were cold. These were the days before we had bobby sox. Wanting to keep their feet and legs warm, girls wore long cotton stockings held up by garters or a contraption known as a garter belt. You couldn't jump out of bed, stick your feet in something warm and go. It took quite awhile to get your stockings on and fastened so they weren't sagging around your ankles. Mine usually sagged and were wrinkled and sagging around my ankles as pond water on a windy day.

Four of us girls slept upstairs in a cold room. Our only heat was from a stovepipe, which went through our room to the flue. My sister Helen slept in the other room that didn't even have a stovepipe in it. On cold mornings, we grabbed our clothes and tore downstairs to the slightly warmer living room to dress. Warm slippers would be a blessing.

Finally, Christmas Day arrived. Together we siblings raced down stairs to enjoy our loot. Sure enough, there was a pair of fuzzy slippers by age. My stocking was next to Helen's and that is where the fuzzy slippers were sitting. "Santa made a mistake," I cried in my usual loud voice. "I asked for the slippers." "No," Helen said, "They are by my stocking. They are mine." It was an argument only Mom could settle. The slippers were indeed for Helen. Her room was colder than the one I shared.

I don't remember the nice things I got that Christmas. I only remember what I didn't get.

Epilogue:

Fifty-four years later as I was leaving Helen's home after a typical family Thanksgiving Day, she gave me a package. "Here is your Christmas gift," she said. "It is either early or late depending on which way you look at it." I couldn't wait until Christmas. When I got home, I opened the present. Inside was a pair of lovely blue, fuzzy slippers.

I knew we both remembered that Christmas in 1943.

Clara Fisher



The Christmas season activities revolved around the family, the church and the school and were probably the most exciting time of the year. Strangely, we children really did not want a white Christmas because the roads could get bad and we wouldn't be able to go anywhere. Christmas season started when my mother, sister and I went out in our pasture and picked out a Christmas tree. The tree was a rather scraggy cedar tree four or five feet tall and had grown from seed that had been scattered by the birds, my father took a lumber wagon with a team of horses went to the pasture, cut down the tree and brought it to the house. The tree provided a nice aroma. We decorated the tree with cranberries and popcorn strung on thread, and chains made with colored construction paper and paste made from water and flour. We also had a few colored globes, store bought ornaments and tinsel which at that time was probably made from lead foil. Mother made popcorn balls to hang on the tree. Also a few small candles were put on the tree but never lit for obvious reasons. My grandmother always fashioned a goat from bread dough and baked it, and placed near the tree. She called it the Yul bock (Christmas buck). Only recently did I find the meaning of the Yul bock, in Sweden it was placed near the tree to protect the Christmas gifts.

On Christmas Eve, stockings were hung near the tree so Santa could easily find them. This particular Christmas my request was a Daisy BB gun although I didn't expect I would get on since in those times the few gifts I got were some small metal toys. My sister usually got a doll and some toy furniture. We also got some items of clothing. Shopping then was at the dime stores and JC Penney, stores which almost all small towns had.

Christmas day started with an early morning dash to the tree to see what Santa had left. There was my Daisy BB gun. Although the price at that time for a Daisy BB gun was probably less than \$2.00 it was a real sacrifice for my parents. Lunch time was a big family gathering - grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and cousins - usually 25 or more people.

Each year the relatives rotated from one home to the other. We drew names for gifts and after the meal Santa came and the gifts were distributed. I was a little suspicious of Santa because his shoes always looked like my Dad's. Since many of my relatives were first generation immigrants from Sweden much of the conversation was in Swedish and the food was very Swedish. Sill (Pickled Herring), lutefisk (dried cod fish reconstituted in lye water and cooked in a white sauce, smelled bad but was delicious), Svensk potatis korv (Swedish potato sausage), risgrynsgrö (rice pudding), knäckebröd (home-made hardtack) to name a few Swedish dishes. After the meal we gathered around the piano or pump organ and sang Christmas carols. Later on we played games of dominos, checkers, pitch and many others. Finally another happy Christmas season had passed and as they say, a good

time was had by all. *George Hanson*

The Tent

One evening close to Christmas, Bill and I were driving home to Harrisonville from a trip to Grandma Fisher's in Raytown. Our three children were asleep in their car seats lined up in back, or so we thought. I asked Bill in a hushed voice, "What do you want to get the kids for Christmas?" We discussed our plans for 3½ year old Meghan and little Gerry. Finally, we got around to Billy, "Do you want to get him a t-e-n-t?" I asked, spelling out the word just for extra precaution. "I think so," Bill replied. Suddenly from the darkness of the back seat we heard "A tent!! I'm getting a tent?" We were surprised to have an audience to our conversation and even more shocked that he could spell. "No, we were talking about another boy." Nothing more was said about the tent, but we were still concerned that we had spoiled the Christmas surprise.

Christmas finally arrived and we decided to go all out. We worked diligently to set up and prepare each child's area of toys so there would be no mistaking who go what. Little Gerry had his small trucks and toys around his filled stocking. Meghan got a play kitchen with dishes set up around the sparkling tree. We went to bed exhausted and just as excited as the children.

The sky was still dark when Billy burst through the bedroom door to announce, "It's time to get up and see if Santa was here!!" We slowly lumbered out of bed and down the stairs, turning on lights as we went. The children were wide-awake pulling us down to the last step. As soon as their feet hit the floor, Meghan and Billy ran to the tree. I sat little Gerry down besides his stocking as Meghan began exploring her new kitchen set. Billy had not moved from beside the tree. I couldn't believe that he hadn't said a word about the huge tent set up behind him. "Oh no" I thought, "He must be disappointed." Bill and I turned to him and realized that he was about to cry. "What's the matter son?" asked Bill. With a trembling lip and a look of complete despair, Billy said in a small voice, "I didn't get anything. Santa forgot me!"

Incredible, he hadn't even noticed the tent in the excitement to get to the tree. We had been so worried that it would distract the other children, and it had been completely unnoticed. I pointed to the tent behind him, "Maybe that is yours." He turned slowly, the teary expression turning to shock as he gazed upon the big green tent. "Go in", we said. "Maybe that stocking and those toys inside are for you!" Billy didn't need any more prompting. He was inside in a flash. We peeked through the doorway to see him sitting on the new sleeping bag with his toys spread all around. A huge green covered his face. "Santa didn't forget!" He exclaimed with satisfaction.

All is well that ends well. Not long afterward, Billy's booming voice could be heard shouting, "Mom, make Meghan and Gerry get out. This is my t-e-n-t!" It was a great Christmas after all.

Dawn Wiseman

Christmas of 1962

Back in 1962, I wanted to go home for Christmas and none of my relatives were going home that year for Christmas. So, I got a bus ticket to go.

It was the worst ice and snow storm of the year. The buses decided that the roads were too bad to travel south of Kansas City to Springfield. They said if anyone wanted to fly into Springfield, they would take us to the airport and call the bus station in Springfield and tell them that we would be flying in instead taking the bus. At that time, Springfield had no ice or snow.



My mother and dad did not get the message so they went back to Branson. I ended up staying at a hotel that night and took a cab to Branson the next morning. The roads were covered with snow but not bad. By the time we got to Branson, we had about 6 inches of snow on the ground. I had the cab driver let me out at the top of the hill and I would walk the rest of the way home for I knew he could not get back up the hill. My suitcase touched the top of the snow.

When I walked into the house my mother and dad were discussing what to fix for lunch and dad said "go ahead and fix what you were going to - Jean would be there very shortly", not knowing that I was standing there. Mom said she could not get here from Springfield for the roads were too bad.

Then I said "Hi!" and they were very surprised for they had almost given up on me coming home. I was only home for a little while when my brother had walked down to see if I had made it home.

By the time we got up the next day, we had three feet of snow on the ground. It looked so peaceful and quite. The day was clear and the sun was shining bright and made the snow sparkle.

By the time I got ready to come back to Kansas City, the snow had melted and the bus trip home was a smooth one.

It turned out to be one Christmas day I will never forget.

Jean Denham





Radical Hospitality

Christian hospitality refers to the active desire to invite, welcome, receive, and care for those who are strangers so that they find a spiritual home and discover for themselves the unending richness of life in Christ.

It describes a genuine love for others who are not yet a part of the faith community; an outward focus, a reaching out to those not yet known, a love that motivates church members to openness and adaptability, willingness to change behaviors in order to accommodate the needs and receive the

talents of newcomers. Beyond intention, hospitality practices the gracious love of Christ, respects the dignity of others, and expresses God's invitation to others, not our own. (p.11-12)

Radical means "drastically different from the ordinary practice, outside the normal," and so it provokes practices that exceed expectations, that go the second mile, that take welcoming the stranger to the max. It means people offering the absolute utmost of themselves, their creativity, their abilities, and their energy to offer the gracious invitation and reception of Christ to others. (p.21)

(All page numbers refer to *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, by Robert Schnase, Abingdon Press, 2007)

The First Word
5413 Blue Ridge Cut Off
Raytown, MO 64133

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Men Seeking Christ

Our First Church men's group met Saturday the 5th for the second monthly meeting. We started the meeting with biscuits and gravy prepared by our capable chefs in residence, Alan Bozich and Mike Gilmor.

The breakfast was followed by a short devotion from Psalm 1 by Scott Kiddle, in which the men were encouraged to be "blessed men" who



Join us for the

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Birthday Celebration "Unity and Love – Pass it On!"

Sunday January 17, 2009

4:00 p.m. Multicultural Celebration
Service

5:30 p.m. Reception

Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church
6429 Blue Ridge Blvd., Raytown, MO
816-353-2296

*Join us to celebrate Dr. King's legacy
and to renew our own commitment to unity
and love in our community*

"delight in the law of the Lord" and meditate on it "day and night" with the end result that we would be fruitful and stable and strong.

We drew the names of prayer partners from a hat and agreed to pray for one another, and then concluded our time together by praying together for healing for one of our men, and then went forth glad to have shared time together.

We invite any and all men of the church, their neighbors and co-workers to join us n January and have a great time seeking Christ and enjoying good fellowship together.

Scott Kiddle

Events

UMW – January 17th after church

"Unity and Love – Pass it Om" – community celebration – January 17th @ 4 PM at Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church

Game Day – 1st and 3rd Tuesday @ 10 AM at the church

Wednesday Night Alive – on Wednesday at 6:30 PM

Hope Kitchen – every Saturday 3-5 PM

Angel Tree

Many of you may have noticed an unusual looking Christmas Tree in the Front lobby of the Church.

This is the Hope Kitchen Angel Tree. Each Angel has a persons name on it. These are the names of some of the residents of Temple Heights Manor I and II for whom we deliver free dinners every week.

Each Angel costs \$10.00 and will feed one resident for



one month! These meals include a hot bowl of soup, a sandwich,

fruit and dessert. Watch for a new menu, including hot meals to start at the first of the New Year.

Your \$10.00 contribution can be in the form of cash/check or food. Food may be dropped off at the church and cash or check may be put into an offering envelope marked "Hope Kitchen Angel Tree"

January 2010

Thank you for making the Angel Tree a success this year and for many years to come.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND MAY GOD BLESS

THE STAFF OF HOPE KITCHEN

