



# INFO

## Words From The Path. . . . .



For me, the Christmas season is hard to let go of! Each year I look forward to the sights and sounds of Christmas. As a child, I looked forward to that one special gift and getting out of school for two weeks. But now, I just enjoy the aromas and atmosphere more than the commercialism of Christmas.

For me, Christmas this year was wrapped up in a variety of different bows. One colorful bow was a children's production titled "Visions Of Christmas" that was as well done as any stage production I have ever seen in my life. I think we have been 'duped' however. I don't think these are really children. I believe they are small adults. Most of them are veteran stage performers and it shows. They get excellent leadership from their directors, yes. But I have never heard an audience remark about the natural talent as I heard this year. One of the highlights was the visual presentation of old slides from days gone by. I saw one of a train trip that we took five or six years ago. A group of us from the church went down into North Carolina and rode on a train back into the scenic Smokey Mountains. What visions of memories this invoked for those of us who made that two-day journey. And at the close of the production, misses Jillian Hall and Olivia Basham singing "Happy Birthday Jesus" again overwhelmed me to tears. What a beautiful production and what a great

job by Missy Hall and her entire staff and cast.

Of course there was the bow of the Christmas Cantata by the Sanctuary Choir. This year, we repeated a performance that we did a few years back titled, "Unspeakable Joy." One of the many highlights of this production was a song titled, 'Come And See What's Happenin.' The first words say, "Come and see what's happenin' in the barn." This is a contemporary version of the birth of Christ. Those around the manger setting couldn't believe what was taking place. A baby was born in the manger or barn, and .....well, you know the account. But this is one of the most fun songs I have ever had a part in singing. After the Sunday morning production, Dr. Chuck Estep came up to us and said, "I loved that song about 'seeing what was happening in the barn.'" Others said the same thing. I know that the choir had a lot of fun performing this Cantata. Special thanks to Sandy Spera for directing and Danny Mullins for his work as sound technician.

Another wonderful bow of Christmas was the two day Christmas journey to Pigeon Forge with my wife. For the past four years, this has been our Christmas tradition. We have encouraged our children to stay at home and have a family Christmas with their children. In so doing, Diania and I are alone, so we go to Tennessee and enjoy shopping on Christmas Eve and going to a nice restaurant for dinner and relaxing in a motel. Sounds dull to many I know,

*By Pastor Ben Murphy*

but it has been a yearly highlight for us. At 6:00 pm on Christmas Eve, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg almost turns into ghost towns. That is when we go out for dinner and see the beautiful lights and attractions of the mountains there.

Another promised bow has not happened as I write this article. After Christmas, our children and grandchildren will be coming to spend New Years with us for a week. We always look forward to the special time that we get to spend with family. We will open our Christmas gifts and the grand kids will have all the paper and ribbons strewn throughout the house. It's the one time each year I get to see our house in disarray. I love it!

Yes, there were many gifts for Christmas this year. There was the gift of snow. I know, I know. Many of you hate snow, but I love it. To me, snow just makes the Christmas season look like the Christmas season. And there was also the bow of church family and friends and cards and gifts. You all are too much! Thanks to each of you who dropped by or took time to send a card or give a gift. You have spoiled us, and Diania and I love each one of you, our church family.

Well, it's 365 days until another Christmas. But the bows of Christmas 2010 will stay with me for a long while. I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and we wish you a very prosperous and a Happy New Year. Remember to spend each day *On The Path With Jesus!*

**"INFO" GUEST COLUMN**

Education &amp; Christianity

By

Julie Easterling



In the year 2011 there will be monthly articles in our church newsletter pertaining to careers and how they pertain to Christianity. When I was asked to submit an article about my lifelong career of teaching I thought, "That should be easy!" But as the wheels in my mind started turning, I realized that speaking in general terms would be difficult. Teaching is a very personal profession. Each teacher brings his or her own experiences, creativity, and personality into the classroom. I can't bump them into one style. Besides, teachers don't work each day with inanimate objects that can be designed, repaired, or developed; they work with people. That's where the diversity and challenge comes into play.

This being the case, I'm writing simply from 37 years of personal experiences. In the early days of my teach-

ing, society as a whole was different. I not only wanted to prepare my studies academically, I wanted to instill in them what I considered important life values. I realized quickly that these children came from very different backgrounds, and many of them didn't receive the love, support and guidance that I had as a child. At that time, teachers had more religious "freedoms" than they have today. My students and I enjoyed presenting classroom programs that included Christmas and Easter presentations. We weren't afraid to have manger scenes, recite poems about God's love, display religious bulletin boards, create Christmas cards, and sing carols. Each day before lunch we said grace, and any child who wished to pray was given that opportunity.

Those joys were short-lived. Some people decided that religion had no place in the classroom and the government created rules and regulations that "tied" teachers' hands. I didn't like the fact that my style of teaching had to change. This was coupled with more behavioral freedoms for students and less disciplinary guidance by teachers. I guess this was one instance where my stubbornness helped. A change of rules didn't mean a change in how I cared for my students or in how I lived my life in front of them. You see, students of any age know when a teacher is sincere. They're very sharp about that sort of thing. Christ not only taught us in parables, but in His compassion, by His example, and by His very life on earth,

he gave us faith and hope to meet all our needs.

So I focused each day on not only teaching, but showing my students compassion and love as Christ did. And that meant being very firm at times. They still needed guidance on how to treat others with respect and have enough trust to share with me when they were upset, frightened, or just needed to vent. When the county schools were allowed to have a moment of silence after saying the pledge to the flag each day, I expected my students to be silent. They always saw me bow my head in prayer, (I really needed it for myself to get through) but I gradually saw children bowing heads. A Christ-like example!

We should turn to Christ for help when we meet obstacles; He provides a way! This is true in any profession. I know that God has a plan for each of our lives. His plan for my life was teaching. I'm thankful that He opened the door for me to influence children in a way that may have helped them to make life-changing decisions.

(From the Editors)

Julie Easterling recently retired after 37 years of public teaching. She is married to Neal Easterling. Neal and Julie have one daughter, Karey, an interior designer in Nashville, Tennessee. Julie is the organist at Wise First Church of God and serves on the Program & Ministries Council.

Newsletter

Articles or information to be published in the Newsletter are due by the third Sunday of the month. Please submit to the church office.

Singers and Musicians

If you are on the monthly music schedule to sing and find you cannot do so, it is your responsibility to find a replacement. Please notify the church office of such a change. Our thanks to each of you who serve.

—The Ministries & Programming Council

When There Is A Death In The Family

If there is a death in your immediate family, (Parent, Sibling, Spouse, Child,) or in the family of a church member, please notify a member of the Benevolence Committee (listed below) so the church may send flowers and for food preparation when applicable.

—The Benevolence Committee

Mona Orr—Chair

Phyllis Belcher

Sue Ellen Fleming

Diania Murphy

Diana Mullins

## Bible Quiz

Epiphany is the last of the 12 days of Christmas. Epiphany celebrates the wise men seeking the holy family at the time of Jesus' birth. "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?" they asked.

This interesting story is found in only one of the four gospels. In which Gospel is the story told?



- A. Matthew
- B. Mark
- C. Luke
- D. John

Answer: A

## Prayer for Guidance in the New Year

On the edge of a new year, Lord, teach us again  
to order our priorities and number our days and hours.  
And teach us to trust — life, history, one another, You.  
So that even in the gray and gloomy days, when the  
ceiling is low, we may trust the star  
that enabled wise men of old  
to live in hope and proclaim the divine promises  
which call us on in Jesus Christ. Amen.



## A Vow for the New Year

Making plans for your life in the new year? Could it be that God already has a plan for you and is patiently waiting for you to make that plan a reality?

When one considers how everything seems to have a purpose in nature (atoms, genes, plants, animals, etc.), it makes sense to believe that each of us has a purpose as well. On the other hand, if all of creation seems to have just happened without any reason, then this means our minds and spirits must have no reason or purpose as well. How can we trust them?

But believers trust that there is a great Intelligence that brought everything into existence.

There is a Mind and a Heart at the center of all creation. If that's the case, then life can only make sense when we seek what the Creator has in mind for us.

Jesus, who knew the Mind and Heart of God better than anyone who ever lived on Earth, once said to the erring Peter: "You are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" (Mark 8:33, NRSV).

Setting our minds on human things can get us into trouble. That's why it often seems we live in a crazy mixed-up world. How can life ever be fulfilling, without the purpose God has for that life?

To set one's mind on divine things leads us to consider the one vow we should take seriously for the new year. Your will, Lord. Your will and nothing else.

**HAVE YOU  
TALKED  
TO GOD  
TODAY?**

