

Wilmington Emmaus

Volume 29 Issue 12

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Don't miss the
DECEMBER
GATHERING
ALL MUSIC!

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GROWING INTO THE GIFT from 1997 Community Chair, Yvonne Ferris

Did your aunt Louise or maybe your grandmother ever knit you a sweater when you were a kid? Slight miscalculation—the sweater ended down around your knees and the sleeves covered your hands entirely. Your mother was optimistic—she said there was plenty of room and in time you'd grow into it. That's how it was for me and Christmas—God's gift of love.

As a small child—Christmas was pine scents, construction paper chains, bubble lights, brown sugar, hickory nut candy hardening on Gram's old white platter with the chip, and worry—had I been "good enough" to meet Santa's requirements? Would there be a present for me? Yes!, a rubber baby doll I named "Candy" who drank and wetted.

Then a little older—English walnuts still in their shells, and a tangerine in my stocking's toe, Christmas specials on TV, and snow ice cream. Parents between jobs, would there be any presents? My first manicure set from my aunt, and 3 nesting wooden dolls with bobbly heads from another aunt in Japan.

High School—living again with Gram—new clothes, peppermint anything, slumber parties, a "Charlie Brown"

tree which stole my heart in the IGA parking lot because it so needed someone to love it, and of course, presents—choosing my first "boyfriend" present, learning to appreciate the mistletoe tradition.

Grown up – Kerry and Annie in Christmas pageants at school and Sunday school—tension—frenetic candy making, cookie decorating and card sending. Something to do every night—presents we couldn't afford—fill up the loneliness and pretend there is joy.

Spending Christmas Day alone—no money for presents, children with their father all day. Singing with the Choir for the Christmas Eve Midnight Service—the Hallelujah Chorus and Silent Night—standing by the organist God had sent into my life and I'd just married. New traditions, reading the Christmas Story from Luke and putting the baby in the manger of our nativity last thing before bed Christmas Eve. Everyone learning to fit—competing with other desperate parents for the present our children just couldn't live without.

A new son—a gift from God, unexpected, longed for—binding the 4 of us together with the silken-steel

chords of love. Lots of presents—all video taped for posterity.

Emmaus—God's perfect gift of love suddenly becoming REAL in my life and Tom's.

A crackling fire, snowy walks, cardinals dotting the pristine white, worship, communion, hope, love, peace, contentment. Glasses, gray hair, glorious grandchildren and humble gratitude... "For unto us a child was born", and He lives IN us, and walks WITH us, and teaches us how to love. The only present that truly matters—the presence of Christ in our lives, and those of the ones we love—stolen moments together from too-busy lives, making memories precious and irreplaceable.

Thank you, Lord, for your wonderful gift of love, your Son, and your patience until we finally grow enough to recognize, accept, and cherish your GIFT above all. May God's love bless your holidays.

In His Love and Service,
Yvonne Ferris



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TABOR TALK

Chuck Swindoll, in his book *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility* (Word, ©2000), relates the account of a man who was a patient in a Veterans Hospital for an extended period of time. This man had a young son, and during his confinement in the hospital, he had made a little wooden truck for his boy. Since the boy was not allowed to go into the ward and visit his father, an orderly had brought the gift down to the child, who was waiting on a bench on the lawn in front of the hospital with his mother. The father was looking out of a fifth-floor window, watching his son unwrap the gift.

The little boy opened the package, and his eyes got wide when he saw that wonderful little truck. He hugged it to his chest.

Meanwhile, the father was walking back and forth waving his arms behind the window-pane, trying to get his son's attention.

The little boy put the truck down and reached up and hugged the orderly and thanked him for the truck. And all the while the frustrated father was going through these dramatic gestures, trying to say, "It's me, son. I made the truck for you. I gave that to you. Look up here!"

Finally the mother and the orderly turned the boy's attention up to that fifth-floor window. It was then the boy cried, "Daddy! Oh, thank you! I miss you, Daddy! Come home, Daddy. Thank you for my truck."

And the father stood in the window with tears pouring down his cheeks.

How much like that child we

are, especially at this time of the year. While we gather to celebrate a Thanksgiving holiday around tables filled with bounty, we often assume that that bounty is the result of our own hard work and good pleasure. We often express our gratitude to our parents and grandparents for the life they have given to us, but we then all-too-often neglect to thank the One who is really the author and source of our blessings.

Then comes Christmas, when the sights and sounds and smells of the season often bring forth a plethora of sentimentality and songs and a jolly good time. Oh, yes, there are a few "Bah! Humbugs!" which may spring forth from time to time, but by far and away the majority of our expressions are of peace and good will toward almost everyone around us. Many times those manifestations turn into adoration and even worship of fictional elves and other mysterious creatures who only "appear" at this time of the year. Our hearts overflow with gratitude and praise for all that they have brought to us.

In many ways, those expressions of praise and adoration are much like the initial response of the little boy, thanking the hospital orderly for bringing him the truck which his father made, rather than thanking his father for the gift. It is indeed praiseworthy that when he discovered his father was indeed watching him the little boy thanked his dad profusely as best and as enthusiastically as he possibly could.

When Moses, the great leader of the people of ancient Israel, asked to see God, God

was very receptive to the idea, although He told Moses he could not see his face. But as the Lord passed before Moses, whom He had hidden in the cleft of a rock, He told Him who it was He was seeing. He said, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7). In other words, when God shows up, His character, His attributes, His perfections are on display.

Won't you join me in making this Christmas a Thanksgiving holiday? Right from the outset, may we be encouraged to make the time during the hustle and bustle of this holiday season to thank the Father Himself for all that He has given to us. For life, for health, for another day to take a breath and to wish everyone around us a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! And yes, even for the hard times and the difficult situations that life seems all too eager to throw our ways. But especially for eternal life through His greatest gift, His own Son, Jesus Christ! And may we realize that the Father is the source of "every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17), that He is the great Physician and that He knows exactly what is best for us. The agony of this world is only temporary, and His timing is always perfect!

Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy new Year!

Chuck Tabor

What Do You Want for Christmas?

How many times have people asked us, "What do you want for Christmas?" And each time we glibly recount the items on our lists that we have hinted to our families or friends that we desire. And that, of course, is all part of the season's enjoyment.

But what we really want, we never mention. The intangible things like happiness and health, peace of heart and joyous outlook on life, things like a zest for living each day as it comes with optimism and expectancy, like a strong faith in God which enables us to approach life with confidence and serenity. These gifts—and they are gifts—are the greatest treasures we can receive.

So the next time someone asks, "What do you want for Christmas?", maybe we might reflect a moment on how many of the real gifts we possess, on how often and abundantly we have been blessed by the hand of the Lord.

Reprinted from 1994 Wilmington Emmaus Newsletter

THE FATHER OF FATHER CHRISTMAS

In 1822 Clement Clarke Moore decided to write a special poem for his six children, one he could read to them before bedtime on Christmas Eve. A learned scholar, he taught Greek literature at General Theological Seminary and lived on a 94 acre farm just outside the growing city of New York.

New York had originally been settle by the Dutch, and Moore had read of Dutch youngsters putting up stockings to be filled by Saint Nicholas. Moore was attracted to the legends of this saint who gave gifts in secret on the eve of the Feast of Saint Nicholas on December 6. But he wondered, *What if Saint Nicholas made his visits on Christmas Eve instead?* Wasn't Christmas, when God gave man His only Son, a more appropriate time for giving?

Inspired, Moore wrote of things his children would recognize, like the bedtime customs of "Mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap." Certainly there's a hint of the linguist in the names of the reindeer he created, such as Donder and Blitzen (from German for "thunder and lightning").

On Christmas Eve he read his poem out loud, and his youngsters begged him to read it over again before they were sent off to bed. Moore never intended his work for a larger audience, but the next year a friend placed it without the poet's name in a Troy, New York, newspaper. By the following year it had spread to other newspapers, broadsides, almanacs, and handbills. Finally in 1837, when the poem that begins, "Twas the night before Christmas" was well-known, the modest author let his name be revealed.

Today on Christmas Eve children everywhere are begging to hear the poem that gave the world that "chubby and plump" Father Christmas.

(Reprinted from the December 1994 edition of Wilmington Emmaus Newsletter)

PRAYER LIST

Prayer was requested for these people at our November Gathering. Please join us in intercession for return to health, overcoming adversities of life, recovery from loss. Pray for the pilgrims who will be on Men's Walk #60, pray that God will soften hearts of those who will be invited to this walk. *NOTE* These names taken from verbal requests. Please excuse us if we made a

mistake.

David Barber
Ron & Liz Bogan
Nathan Cotrill
Farmers harvesting
Fire Service Men's Group
John & Velman Flint
US Government
Donald Hahn
Family of David Hall
Lois Hall

Charlene Hamann
High School Youth at Wash. CH
Robert Jordan
Our Military
Phillip Pennewitt
Sandy Quigley
Bill Snowball IV
Kathy Snowball
13 Death Row Men on recent Kairos
Janet Workman and her sister
Bob Yorick

Wilmington Area Walk to Emmaus

Wilmington United Methodist Church
PO Box 191
Wilmington, OH 45177

We're on the web:
www.wilmingtonemmaus.org

See you at the GATHERING:
December 9

ALL MUSIC GATHERING
CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

Wear your nametag!
Bring a snack to share!

NEWS FROM 20 YEARS AGO

NEW EMMAUS COMMUNITY IN CHILLICOTHE

The Greater Scioto Valley Emmaus Community is a reality! Walks will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church on Main St in Chillicothe. The first Men's and Women's are as follows:

MEN—FEBRUARY 2-5, 1995

WOMEN—MARCH 2-5, 1995

Our own **Bob Hodson** and **Pat Hakes** will be the lay directors. Your support will be important as this new community gets on its feet.

So, it became a reality! GSV Emmaus will be celebrating their 20th anniversary of their first walks in a couple of months! Why not send a gift of Agape in the form of a card to the community, a love offering, or visit a Gathering (3rd Thursday) or a candlelight or closing? Check their website for details on dates.



Devotion

And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and named it Ebenezer; for he said, "Thus far the Lord has helped us."

1 Samuel 7:2-17

Have you ever wondered what the old hymn "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" meant in the second verse by the cryptic line: "Here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by thy help I've come"? The answer is in the above reading taken from Samuel. Modern revisions of the hymn rephrase it "Here I find my greatest treasure..." which makes the line intelligible, but loses some of the original meaning. It's captured again in another old faithful hymn: "We've Come This Far by Faith."

None of us narrates our lives in quite the same way as Samuel did, but making those periodic markers of progress is an invaluable tool on the road of faith. That's what we do when we keep a spiritual journal, when we go on retreat, when we keep a quiet corner of our day reserved for prayer, when we reflect on our path at the end of the day.

"Raising our Ebenezer" is about taking stock and getting perspective, with gratitude, and fortifying ourselves with faith for the next stage of the journey.

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