

# NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2002

## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

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### Why Go To Church

I was remembering a conversation I had many years ago with a "friend" of mine. He had just told me he had joined another church. I asked him, "Why?" His answer surprised me. He said, "The new church allows me to do more things." What he meant was the church he attended didn't believe in drinking alcohol and dancing in bars. The new church permitted those activities, so he changed. My surprise included the idea that he wanted to go to church, but he didn't want that church attendance to affect the way he wanted to live his life. He was like many today who will judge the Bible, but not let the Bible judge them.

It is obvious that most people do not go to church at all (weddings and funerals are excepted). Those that do go to church have various reasons for attending. I would like to talk about some of those reasons.

Even those who want to keep one foot "centered in sin," go to church. Perhaps for some, attendance is only fire insurance. Others do believe it is important to go to church, but haven't thought about the conflict of trying to keep their old life and then trying to live a new life in Christ. This kind of motivations isn't all bad, but isn't there more to attendance than that?

Some go to church because it is a good social experience. The fellowship and good is good. Friendships are made and continued. Their life is centered in church activities that make them feel good. They don't read their scriptures or even think much about God, but they do have a good time. This kind of motivation isn't all bad, but isn't there more to attendance than that?

Some go to church for "what I can get out of it." For these folks, church attendance is based on how the experience makes them feel. This is the reason that many "modern" churches are using modern marketing techniques to attract and keep people in the seats. Is the speaker entertaining? Does the orchestra and choir or

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## TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

### Confess His Hand In All Things

The message of the Communion Sunday morning in December was preceded by a dramatic presentation by Diane Anderson. She portrayed the life of Enos of the Book of Mormon by reciting the entire book of Enos. God's spirit was in abundance in the sanctuary during the presentation. Her contribution was greatly appreciated by all in attendance.

Elder Gerald Bolingbroke began his sermon by referring to Doctrine and Covenants 59:4-5b. This scripture tells us that we offend God if we do not confess that His hand is in all things and if we do not obey His commandments. Brother Bolingbroke continued by sharing some things with the congregation in which God's hand can be seen.

He first asked the people to consider water, which is so necessary for life. Our bodies are mostly made of water. Water has unique properties. It has a great heat capacity or the ability to hold heat. We live on a water planet. This did not happen by chance. Because we have so much water, a great deal of heat may be transported from the equator, where there is a lot of heat, to the northern and southern latitudes, making those places more comfortable in the winter months.

Water has other properties. It is the universal solvent. Water can dissolve both polar and non-polar substances. This is because water is a polar molecule. Our clothes would not be as clean if it were not for this property. When water freezes it becomes less dense allowing ice to rise to the top of lakes. If this did not happen, lakes would freeze from the bottom to the top, killing all fish. It is also interesting that the infrared satellite, which is in orbit around the Earth has found that water is in all the gaseous and dust clouds in space.

Next, Brother Bolingbroke asked the congregation to look at our atmosphere. It is almost 78 percent nitrogen gas and about 21 percent oxygen, with one percent other gases. If we had about 50 percent of each or less than that of nitrogen, burning would be uncontrollable. The nitrogen is also needed for plants to grow. The property of oxygen is that it can form molecules with 3 atoms attached to each other called ozone. The ozone layer in the stratosphere protects us from ultraviolet radiation coming from space, which can cause skin cancer. Where did the oxygen come from? It came from plants, as they were the first creation, changing the carbon dioxide atmosphere to the mixture we see today.

**Church of Jesus Christ, Mount Ayr Restoration Branch**  
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God's hand can also be seen in creating the elements. The elements are created inside stars with different fusion cycles. The first elements were hydrogen and helium with the most part being hydrogen. First, hydrogen fuses with other hydrogen to make helium inside the core of a star like our sun. When the core becomes all helium, fusion stops and the star starts contracting and heating and then another fusion cycle begins. This is the fusion of helium to make carbon and oxygen. This would not occur if there was not a particular resonance energy level in carbon. As Fred Hoyle wrote in the November, 1981, issue of *Engineering and Science* "A common sense interpretation of the facts suggest that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature." That super intellect is God. Hoyle had predicted the resonance or energy level precisely as it should be, based on life's need for it. Later scientists searched for it and found it.

For stars like our sun this is the last fusion cycle, but massive stars go through other fusion cycles making all the elements as far as iron. Then fusion stops and the stars explode scattering the elements into space. This scattering of elements is effective because in our sun right now the convection zone is only near the surface with the radiative zone being the largest region. Gamma rays work their way to the surface losing energy with each collision until they are visible light rays at the surface in the radiative zone. When the sun and stars like it are ready to die, the convective zone reaches to the core making sure the elements created in the core are brought to the surface so human beings can exist.

Brother Bolingbroke talked about the importance of light. It has the ability to carry so much information. Lucent labs says they will eventually be able to carry all the telephone conversations in the world on a single fiber optic cable (a cable which transports messages by means of light) simultaneously. Right now the information transmitted in a single fiber has been more than doubling each year. Today a fiber optic cable can carry more than 30 million phone calls across the Atlantic Ocean in one second. Atoms create light.

Light can be polarized. It can be Doppler shifted. It is the ultimate speed for matter. It figures in the special theory of relativity. When you get close to the speed of light, time slows and distances get shorter. Light has dual properties, wave and particle. Both properties can be used for useful devices. For example, the particle concept is used in the photoelectric effect used in elevators to keep the door open to allow people time to get into it. Light reveals the world to us. Body and soul crave it. It sets our biological clocks. For some people, less light in the winter causes depression. This can be corrected by using full spectrum light sources. It triggers in our brains the sensation of color. Light feeds us by supplying energy for plants to grow. It inspires us with rainbows and sunsets. Section 85 of the Doctrine and Covenants tells us that Christ is in the light, and as it enters our eyes it quickens our understanding.

Brother Gerald emphasized that God is all power, but yet He is concerned about each one of us. We understand God through Jesus Christ who was concerned so much for us that He died for us. Look at what God has prepared for us. See Sec. 76: 2 a-d. The Lord has told us to call on Him, and He will be there. See Sec. 85: 16-17.

Before the sermon we witnessed the story of Enos in the Book of Mormon. Enos called on the Lord all day for remission of his sins. He did not cry in vain. God answered and said his sins were forgiven because of his faith in Christ whom he had not seen. We know the universe is filled with power. The power in simple atoms of hydrogen when joined with other hydrogen and making helium is tremendous. There is power flowing into this room today, lighting the lights and supplying heat to our building. Christ

created all that we see, and there is spiritual power available to each of us. Gerald reminded the congregation that we would soon partake of the Lord's Supper and in the prayers we promise to keep His commandments that we may have His Spirit to be with us. Gerald encouraged each one of us to acknowledge God in all things and keep his commandments.

## A Testimony of Praise

Wayne Dillon of Odessa, Missouri was our speaker on December 9, 2001. Elder Dillon shared his testimony praising The Savior of men, whose birth we celebrate at this time of year, for His goodness to him and his family. He expressed his appreciation for the spirit of fellowship and welcome experienced in the congregation, with the ministry of Ron Smith as he shared with them the baptism of their oldest daughter in their congregation, and with the relationship of others in the congregation to his family.

By way of introduction to his sermon he told us that he had come to Graceland College 24 years ago against his will. He had his mind on a certain track that did not include Graceland, and so failed to appreciate the blessings waiting for him there. This morning he wanted to share with us how easy it is for him "to get a course, set a path and be convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that that's where the Lord wants me to be, and all of a sudden to wake up and realize that He had a different track in mind for him. A couple of times that has taken me to kind of bump into something rather hard to get to that knowledge and other times it has been something that I have been able to respond to without maybe having to be woke up so hard."

Referring to the Isaiah scripture (Isaiah 9:6-7) which had been read in invitation to worship, calling Jesus Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, our speaker said, "That's what I want to do this day is to praise Him and to bear testimony of how good He is in our lives." He read Proverbs 10:1-3 that ends with, "The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish; but he casteth away the substance of the wicked." "You know, as I view my life and the things I have been through, I see anything but righteousness. I see natural man entering in. But you know, I do praise God for the foundation He has given me." He reviewed his life briefly affirming that all his life he had wanted to be a farmer just as his father was. "There was no doubt in my mind that was the course I had set," he declared. "That was where my life was going and my desires. I felt strongly about that, and there is a tremendous testimony that comes out of that very fact right there. Because, you see, in 1981, as I was getting started and buying land, I bought a piece of ground that was next to the home farm. I had to pay a lot for that piece of ground, but I had to have that, so I bought it. I struggled through the years to make the payments on that piece of land and wondered why this was so. I had prayed about it and didn't fully understand it."

Then the time came when the congregation left the institutional church. Their first meeting place was metal building they called the buggy barn, right next to I-70 where you could hear every truck that passed and one Sunday morning there was a heavy rainstorm and they could feel the Spirit but couldn't hear a word the preacher was saying. The time came that they knew they must move out of that building.

"The scriptures say, you should give of your first fruits - give of your best to the Lord. The congregation said, 'We need to find a piece of ground.' The Lord spoke to me in a very clear way and said, 'You know you need to give your best, don't you?' I said, 'Yes, but I can't do that. That would just ruin that piece of property that I bought. You see, that land lay between our farm and town, a quarter mile north of I-70, right on a beautiful black top road and was a perfect location for the church. I struggled with that a little

bit and kind of grumbled and finally, grudgingly, sad to say, I got up and said, 'You know, I do have a piece of property' and that's where the church of the Odessa Restoration Branch is located today." Afterward Wayne learned that others had seen their church located in that place years earlier. God had led him even in the purchase of the property. "Financially, after that point in time, I actually had to sell the rest of that piece of property, but the church is there. God had opened the door and provided, even though I wasn't seeing it His way, but He had gone before. As Sister Parker read (Third Nephi, 1:4-24) in the early worship of how when Nephi was praying, the door was already opened, the way was prepared before he went on his knees before the Lord and said, 'You know tomorrow we are going to be killed because of what we believe in. What do we do?' And that was the night (of Christ's birth)! God was there.

### **A Life Time Plan is Changed**

"And that's what has happened in my life so many times. I want to bear testimony to you of what has taken place in this very year. A year ago. If I would have stood before you, I would never have imagined where I would be today. You see, I had spent my entire life wanting to farm and had that opportunity, but in 1998 I came to the realization that it was time to make some changes. On February 2, 1998 our youngest daughter was born and two weeks later, I began to punch a time clock for the first time in my life, working in heavy equipment operations in a rock quarry. As I realized my situation had to come to an end, I enjoyed heavy equipment and moved in this direction. March 12, 1998, we had our auction to sell our farming equipment." The temperature was below zero, a record that stood for a year and a half. Two weeks later a good friend had an auction on a day when the weather was a beautiful 70 degrees, but he didn't get half the money for his equipment that Brother Dollins got for his. "I can only rejoice and thank God for His blessings - for what He did that day. Even though it was horrible weather and cold, He was there and blessed us.

"I went from the first job to a second job into management at a rock quarry and enjoyed that for, you see, my life had actually prepared me for that. I had been running my own operation and working the ground. Now I just worked rocks instead of dirt. I enjoyed it and was having a good time, and in November of 2000 the company sent me to manager's training. I felt like things were settling in. I had been there a couple of years. I had a good crew. I enjoyed it and felt, although I was no longer farming, I had another course. I was in my home community, I was helping people. I said, 'Lord, I can see this' and I got kind of comfortable. (That's what's interesting in my life. I get comfortable somewhere, the Lord doesn't really appreciate that because of what happens in my life. I need to be on the edge thinking, 'Lord what can I be doing.' On New Year's Eve, a year ago, my boss called me and said, 'I want to talk to you.' I said, come on down, I've got some more paperwork to do. I'll be here. He walked in and said, 'I'm sorry, you're not cutting the mustard. I'm bringing in a new manager. When do you want him to arrive?'

"It's New Years.' Wayne responded. 'You might as well start the new year with him. Bring him on in.' I still had a job, so my family wasn't going hungry. It kind of put a bad taste in my mouth, but you try to make the best of a bad situation, but you say, 'OK, Lord, that's all right, but what are you doing here?' My wife had been working on me for probably six months telling me I ought to consider moving on, but I kind of enjoyed where I was. It was kind of fun being in charge and doing the things I was doing, and I was comfortable, wasn't I?

### **A New Path Is Forged**

Wayne enrolled in night school at the business and technology school in Kansas City in heating and cooling. He said he went kicking and screaming in protest but his wife had pushed him into

it. That he went was another testimony. Six months earlier he had been bad mouthing a good friend for continuing his education instead of taking care of his family? He walked in the door, kind of grumbling and upset, and was surprised to find that the instructor was a personal friend from Odessa area whom he had known for over 13 years. "A testimony right there because of what he was able to do for me at a later time. God was providing, He was opening doors and putting things into place."

Wayne enjoyed his schooling and so set a new time line in his life. He decided to leave the quarry in a year or year and a half and go into this field. March 12, this spring, something happened at the quarry. Wayne was doing three jobs that morning, covering another man's job as well as his own, and did not have time to do the fourth one properly. Because God has called us to be different, a peculiar people, and he had learned to do his best in every situation, Wayne had been doing all that he could to do the jobs that needed to be done that morning. He just didn't have time to do the fourth one properly. (He wanted us to know that he was not bragging. He just wanted to share this as something we could also do that might give us a sliver of hope when we stand before the judgment bar of God.) As a result of not having time to do a certain action, a piece of equipment broke down. When he went to work the next morning, he had to make a decision. His co-workers said, 'Be careful and cover yourself'. He told them he appreciated their concern and could see what was happening. "I realized that my decision would have far reaching consequences. I chose that I was not going to lie. I feel strongly about that. My boss walked in and says, 'Did you do this certain thing?' And I said, 'No. I did not.' He had the biggest shocked look on his face. He left and an hour later he came back.

### **Fired! God Opens Another Door**

"Now let me tell you what happened during that hour. Annette called me and she said, 'Guess what. I have a job interview set up for you tomorrow.' I said, 'That's nice, but I can't make it.' She says, 'Well, you had better call in that favor your boss owes you.' I said, I can do that, probably. I'll see.' An hour later, I called her back and says, 'Guess what, honey. I've just been fired. I no longer have a job. I can make that job interview tomorrow.'

"But, you know, what was interesting is what took place. I was sharing with you that when you give of your best, you leave nothing. There was no pain that went along with that firing. I can better understand now how Paul and Silas in the prison could be singing and praising God. They had a clear conscience. They had given their all. They were doing their best. How could Abinadi go before King Noah on a one way street and go with a clear conscience? Because he was giving his all. As that took place, I could move on with a clear conscience because I hadn't left anything. I had given my best, and if my best wasn't good enough, they needed to find someone else. Two weeks later, I was working, self employed, in the heating and cooling field as a result of that job interview that next day. You see how God has the doors open and ready?

"But you know the picture is even bigger than this, for you see, one of the things that we had done was that early in January, we were asking the members of the Odessa branch to pray for us; so as we moved through this, they would say, 'How are things going?' I would say, 'See what has happened today. This has been an exciting day.' You see, as I lost my job, I picked up the phone and called my instructor in night school. I said, 'George, what do I do? I have opportunity to move into this field, but I have just begun my education.' He said, 'Call me any time you have problems. I want you to go ahead and do it.' And the first week, he got quite a few phone calls. Two months later, we were in class one night and he said, 'Wayne is mad at me.' I kind of got a puzzled look on my face, and he had a grin on his face as he said, 'Wayne hasn't called me for a few days.'

"I'm not doing that to brag. I am doing that to tell of the blessings of God. You see, He had prepared a way ahead of time. The summer went on, and you know how quick my faith gets away. Here we had had these tremendous blessings through the year. We had spent four months trying to get a specific dealership on a certain type of heating device. In June, I finally gave up hope. I said, 'OK. Lord. You must be asking me to go a different direction. What do you want me to do now?' This was on a Monday. On Tuesday, I was in a home in Kansas City working on an air conditioner install. My phone rang. It was my wife, and she said, 'You had better finish in a hurry, because we are leaving tomorrow to go to Minnesota to go for training in this dealership we had been wanting to get. You see how things fell in place? She had already found a place for the kids to stay, and we actually had a couple of days away to spend time with this training.

"That has been the story of my life - how God had prepared. The question was, 'How many times was I ready to listen? How many times was I not willing to listen?' You know, as a young man, I could see only one path, and that path had been a blessing, yet God had a different way to go. A year from now, I don't know where I will be. I think I will be in the heating and cooling business. I think that's where I'll be, but I'm not sure. But, you know what, I can stand before you and say, 'God will provide, whatever that is.'

"We had another situation in our lives where we had laid out a financial plan. We were actually putting in a development on a piece of property, and this was going to pay off our debts and to provide, but that didn't happen in the time line that we set it out to be. That this was not moving forward on the right time line was another reason we had to have the auction in 98. We hadn't sold anything on it for two years until this summer. Then we sold enough to provide so we could get this business off the ground. Again, how He is providing when we are not even looking!

#### **Blessing Of Healing**

"Our son Ryan had a tremendous blessing this week that I want to share with you. He has struggled through his life with fluid in his ears. We would notice that his hearing would come and go. So a couple of weeks ago we took him to the doctor who said he needed to go to a specialist. Last Wednesday night he was administered to. On Thursday the doctor gave him a hearing test and said, 'His hearing is actually normal or above normal.' We went in to the specialist, and the specialist looked at him and asked, 'Why are you here?' Annette tried to explain that he had had problems, but the specialist asked again, 'Why are you here? There is nothing wrong with him!' You know, God can be so good through His healings and those things He does!

#### **God Answers With Stupor of Thought**

"At other times He makes us think. Our family has been through its own share of pain through the church. My mother and father stayed with the church, and that was a tremendous trial in and of itself. He was devastated by the split that took place in the church. My father passed away in 1992 with cancer. At that point I was in partnership with him in farming. Before he passed away one night he called us and said, 'I want you to come over. I've had a dream I want to share with you.' We went and Dad began to share his dream. I had spent my entire life working with my father. I knew him very well and so enjoyed those examples he had set in my life. He said in this dream we had been working together as we always did. He said we were working up on this ridge on this mountain side building a fence together as we had done many times. He said we were working on the upper side of this fence, on a steep incline. There was a small ledge on the other side of this fence, about five feet wide. He said as we were working along, all of a sudden, for some reason I jumped over this fence and landed on my feet, then I stumbled and fell over the precipice. He said he was just devas-

tated as a father when he saw his son falling and realized that had to be certain death. He looked over at the rocks down below and saw that I was not killed but was broken up very badly. He said, 'I want to tell you the explanation for this dream. The explanation is that you jumping over the fence was your leaving the church and going with the Restoration movement. He said, 'You need to come back to the church. That's what this dream means'.

I said, 'Well, I appreciate that Dad, but I feel like I want to pray about that for my own testimony.' So the wife and I made a pact that we would not talk to each other about it but would pray about it and each ask for our own testimony of what this had to do with. I wanted to honor my father, and I wanted to make sure that I had my own testimony and was not going on someone else's opinion of something. So we began to pray about this, and all of a sudden, a strange thing happened. Three weeks went by and I woke up one morning and realized that I had forgotten to pray about this and felt slack in my duty. With kind of an embarrassed, sheepish approach, I went to my wife and I said, 'Annette, have you received your testimony yet?' She got a strange look on her face, and she says, 'I haven't been praying about that.' I said, 'I have forgotten, also. But never mind, we've got to do this again. We've got to make sure. We've got to pray about this.' So we went another three weeks. We both forgot again, and we felt strongly that God had answered our prayer. In the ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants it is. When you have a question, you ask me. I will give you a burning testimony if it is right. If not, I will cause a stupor of thought. We had both, on two occasions forgotten to continue praying about this. We felt strongly that we had our answer. We were to continue on the path that we had set out. God was answering in His own way. He was reassuring and redefining in our lives what we stood for.

#### **Pride or Penitence**

"It is interesting as we enter this Christmas time, the wonderful things that the birth of our Savior stands for, the wonderful things that He stands for in my life, the testimonies that He has guided, He has directed, provided. As we look at our nation, there are some tremendous testimonies that have come out as we have gone through this tragedy of September 11. It is interesting as we read from the Book of Mormon.' Brother Dillon read Mormon 1:34-40 the account of the time when the Nephites began to call upon God because no man could keep his own possessions because of the thieves, the robbers, the magic art and witchcraft in the land. Mormon saw their lamentations and mournings before the Lord, and was glad because he knew the mercies of God to those who repent and hoped his people would again become a righteous people. But he was disappointed because 'their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God, but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin. And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God and wish to die. Nevertheless, they would struggle with the sword for their lives.' Mormon's sorrow for his people returned because he realized that the day of grace had passed for them and he saw thousands of them 'hewn down in rebellion against their God.'

"I am reminded of what is taking place in this nation as I read this. To me, there is a parallel. Is our nation repenting? Many did return to church in the days after September 11, but recently they are saying numbers are dropping again in churches. We see people praying for our service men, yet as I am in the world, I hear people bragging about how great our military is with our technology. Look what our technology is doing in this war! See how quickly we are overcoming our enemies! You know, that bothers and worries me, because I believe we are beginning to be lifted up in pride even greater in our nation, as if our pride wasn't great enough already. I wonder in my mind how long the Lord will put up with us as a

people and at what point He will say, 'Enough is enough! You have crossed the line!' I don't have the answer for that and don't even want to pretend to. All I can do is look within and try to prepare myself - to try to accept those things that He is bringing into my life - those trials that I go through - and to rejoice in those and realize that He is guiding me - He is directing me to a path to a place that He desires.

### **More Blessing From God**

The Odessa congregation recently had a retreat that was a tremendous blessing. The branch made preparation ahead of time for some within the branch who had tremendous problems to receive administrations during the Communion Service. "To me, that was one of the highlights of my life - the Spirit that was there as we came together that morning in our congregation and as we gathered around those to be administered to." One of the ladies has had diabetes all her life and in her middle forties has gone blind. She desired to be healed. Her testimony is that as they were administering to her, she felt tears dropping on her arm that were not wet. She felt very strongly that there was an angel administering to her. Her eyesight was not restored at the time and she has since been hospitalized, very, very ill. Brother Dollin shared with her concerned daughter that when his father came down with cancer and passed away, during the funeral, the one in charge said, "He was healed. He was taken home." Wayne further said, "We don't have the answers. We don't know all things. Maybe the answer is that her healing is that she is being taken home. I don't have the answer, but the blessing I saw was that the congregation came together in love for one another to ask for the Lord's blessing. The second lady that was administered to was pregnant and was having tremendous problems with the pregnancy to the point that even her life was in jeopardy and maybe even the life of the baby. She has not had the baby yet, but she feels strongly that she was healed and that all will be well. "It's amazing what God does in our lives when we take a moment to turn to Him".

"Lauren was two years old. It was a beautiful afternoon, 65-70 degrees, and I was working at harvest when Annette came frantically running to where I was and said Lauren had disappeared. We live a quarter mile off the blacktop road and there is a field in front of our house. We have lakes or ponds some distance from the house, but at two years of age, we knew that if she got to one of them, drowning could be a distinct possibility. Frantically we began to search, to call the church members and to call the police. For the next two hours the community responded and came to our home and were searching. They brought out the police dogs and were getting some clothes so they could get on the trail when they heard the shout that she had been found. A lady from the church had found her. She had been praying and chose to walk in a different direction from the one she had walked previously, and she walked directly over to where Lauren was sitting in the tall grass. She had spent the last two hours sleeping as we were frantically looking for her. She had just woke up from her nap and was beginning to whimper, ready to find Mom and Dad. God had taken care of her that whole time. We had driven not too far from where she was, looking for her. Other people had driven up and down the driveway. She was just a short way off the driveway and said she had heard cars going up and down the driveway. You know how good God is. He looks out for us even when we are not doing things that we ought to be doing."

### **Ask And Ye Shall Receive**

Brother Wayne read from Section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants, "Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. Ask and ye shall receive. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. Amen." "This is a tremendous strength in my life. As I read this scripture, as I think about it, as I rejoice at what God has done in my life, the

beautiful family that He has given me, the beautiful church family that he has given me, the strength that I get as we share together, and I hope and pray that you can keep your faith and your hope strong as you go through those trials in your life that will be different than those I have had to go through and will be different than those I will have to go through ahead, but you know what? The tremendous blessing is going to be when we stand before God and He says, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'

"I look forward to worshipping with you in days ahead, whatever paths that may take us. In the meantime, may God bless and keep you."

## **Jesus Christ and the Act of Giving**

Elder Michael Jordison chose to read Alma 3:27-83 to introduce his sermon on Jesus Christ and the act of giving. It is the testimony of Alma, gained from much fasting and prayer, that Jesus Christ would come into the world to bring the possibility of new birth to all. It begins with Alma's long series of questions: "And now, behold I ask you, my brethren of the church, Have you spiritually been born of God? Have you received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God, to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body? I say unto you, Can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day, Come unto me, ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth? Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say, Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth, and that he will save you? Or otherwise, can ye brought before the tribunal of God, with your souls filled with guilt and remorse; having a remembrance of your guilt; yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness; yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God? I say unto you, Can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, Can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances? I say unto you, Can you think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects of the devil?"

Alma challenges all to "have the image of God engraven in your countenances", and to be faithful to His purposes, because the time will come when we will face the "tribunal of God" and remember perfectly all our sins. Our only hope is "that our garments have been cleansed and made white, through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem His people from their sins." Alma contrasts the plight of those who hear the call of the Good Shepherd and follow Him and those who chose to be a "child of the devil". He even lists some of the sins from which we must remain cleansed to inherit the kingdom of God, even after we have "experienced a change of heart and felt to sing the song of redeeming love": Have you kept yourself blameless before God? Are you sufficiently humble? Are you stripped of pride? Are you stripped of envy? Do you not make a mock of your brother or heap persecution upon him? If you do any of these things, Jesus says, 'Repent and I will save you.'

Those who come unto Christ and bring forth works of righteousness shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, while those who do not bring forth good fruit and do not the works of righteousness "will have cause to wail and mourn." The Good Shep-

herd calls after all by his own name, the name of Christ, and those who will not chose to be a part of his fold will, of necessity, be of the fold of the devil. "Whosoever denieth this, is a liar and a child of the devil." He who brings forth good works has heard the voice of the good shepherd and follows Him. He who brings forth evil works must receive his wages of the devil, "therefore, for his wages he receiveth death, as to the things pertaining unto righteousness, being dead unto all good works." But Jesus Christ is coming into the world, even the Son, the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, mercy and truth, ... to take away the sins of the world; yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believes on his name." (Please read it all for yourself.)

"Jesus is referred to as Emmanuel," Michael noted, "God with us. He is the focal point of the season, but more importantly, He is the focal point of our faith. Just who was Jesus, and why is He so important to us at this time of year?" To answer his own question, Brother Jordison read the words of Abinadi, a prophet to the wicked court of King Noah, from Mosiah, 8:28-32. "... I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem His people; And because he dwelleth in the flesh, he shall be called the Son of God: ... (He) suffereth temptation and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people.

"And because He dwelleth in the flesh, He shall be called the Son of God." Michael repeated, tapping his arm. "Flesh! This same stuff that you and I have. This tabernacle. He made it, and He made it for Himself - the flesh, which by definition has become corruptible and is subject to the penalty of sin, which is death. But Jesus showed us that there is to be victory over that death. And He showed us by His victory over the cross by His resurrection. Jesus gained the victory over the cross because of one simple thing. He did only the will of His Father. That means He took His own perfect self, His own perfect nature - God took Himself who is perfect and He subjected that perfectness to the limitations, to the frailties, the vulnerability of the flesh. But unlike us, though He was subjected to it, he didn't give in. He didn't give in to sin. He didn't do like we do and cause Himself to need to be punished for that transgression. He refused for two different reasons: 1. because of His love for the Father, and 2. Because of His love for us.

### **Jesus, the Personification of Love**

"By very nature, Jesus Christ is love. He's the personification of love. If we could have one word that we could use to describe Jesus, that word would be love; because love is the embodiment of all the attributes of Jesus. I John 4:16 tells us that 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.'

"The Apostle Paul and Moroni talked about love and shared with us what love is." Brother Jordison read from, Moroni 7:51-52 but indicated that the same words are found in 1 Corinthians 13. 'And Charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail; but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with them.'

"Can you think of anybody who fits those characteristics so perfectly, other than Jesus Christ? 'Rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, suffereth long'. I don't know of anybody today who has all of those attributes. I know there are some who have some of them, but not all. When we do express those characteristics, we are expressing the nature of Christ within ourselves. When we suffer long and envy not and are not puffed

up, seek not our own, we are actually taking upon ourselves Jesus' characteristics. That is the way we begin to see His image in our countenance. It's because we love and He is love. When we exhibit love, He is manifest in our very lives.

"What made it possible for Jesus in His tabernacle of corruptible flesh like we have, to possess all those attributes? We could say that because He was God, He had them. He came for a specific reason. He came to show us. Everything He did, He did for a purpose. The thing that allowed Him to possess those virtues was that He kept the commandments. He did the will of the Father." From John 14 our speaker read, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. .... He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. .... If a man love me, He will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.' Jesus recapped that by saying, 'And I tell you these things, that ye may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.' He was saying, 'I'm showing my love for the Father by doing the will of the Father. Therefore, if we want to exhibit love, we also have to do the will of the Father.

From 1 John, 5:2-4 Brother Jordison read, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." "So, when we keep the commandments, He makes it possible for us to love; and when we love, He makes it possible for us to keep the commandments. It's a circle. When you do one, you get the other. And when we do those things, the attributes of love become personified in our lives. We take upon us, the nature of Christ, and His image is born in our countenance. This is fully realized when we respond to the commandment to repent and be baptized for the remission of sin that we might receive of His Spirit by the laying on of hands through the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. That's why He said, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.' (1 John 5:4-6).

### **The Spirit Teaches Us**

"And how does the Spirit bear record to us? We begin to exhibit those qualities in our own lives. When we begin to exhibit and to feel those characteristic of love and show them to our fellowmen and to God, it's born record in our own lives, and we can know that it's true. John 14:26 says, 'But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.' So that's the promise of His Spirit. It is to teach us in the attributes of love - to teach us how to give and how to serve.

"This time of year, we find ourselves celebrating Christmas. We often times are out cutting down trees so we can take them inside, put up lights and hang pretty ornaments on them. We go around singing Christmas Carols to our neighbors. Often times put lights outside the house for our neighbors to see. We're busy baking goodies so we can eat all through the holidays, all the way into next year. We talk about Santa Claus and wonder what he is going to bring us for Christmas; and some of us will take an old cardboard box down, open it up and pull out balls of crinkled newspaper. Inside will be little tiny figurines that we unwrap and place on the mantel piece, arranging them in a uniform fashion - the ones with the wise men and the camels, maybe a couple of shepherds, sheep, a cow and a calf, and of course, the angel, and Mary and Joseph. Then there's this little boy. He is all wrapped up in clothes

and he's sitting in a manger. And who is that?" "Jesus", the children respond. "What was it Abinadi said? 'I would that ye should know that God himself shall come down among the children of men and shall redeem his people; and because he dwelleth in the flesh, he shall be called the Son of God.'

### **That Tiny Baby Was God**

"That little tiny baby there was God. He was vulnerable, incapacitated, dependent upon his mother for life. If Joseph hadn't been warned in a dream to flee into Egypt, he would have suffered the same fate as all the other children from approximately two on down. He would have been killed. Think about that. God subjected himself as a little baby, completely vulnerable. Why did He do that? Why did He undergo that fleshy experience? He did it so we might be able to be brought back into a right relationship with Him - because we were separated from Him in our sin. The writer of Hebrews (Heb. 9:15-17) puts it this way: 'And for this cause, he, (who is Jesus Christ) is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of a victim. For a covenant is of force after a victim is dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the victim liveth. ...' Michael read on through the rest of the chapter in which the comparison of the animal sacrifice of the Law of Moses which had to be made repeatedly, are contrasted with that of Jesus who was "once offered to bear the sins of many; and he shall appear a second time, without sin unto salvation unto them that look for him.' (Please read it all).

### **Jesus Came To Die**

"Jesus came to die." Brother Jordison emphasized. "The purpose of His coming was to die that we might have eternal life. You know the scripture, 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.' Under the Mosaic law the carnal sins were remitted through the blood of goats and of calves - of animals - but the spiritual sins that were committed were remitted by Jesus - all of those. All our sins then and today are remitted by Jesus Christ, for He said, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; and ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.' He came to die to establish His covenant with us.

"What's a covenant? A covenant is a contract with two parties. If Jesus is the party of the first part, then we are the parties of the second part. And if He, being God, had to lay down His life for us to make the covenant of force, what do you suppose we have to do? Can we do any less? You know, Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. If He, being holy, had to be baptized, what about us, being unholy? If He laid down His life, then, we, too, need to lay down our lives.

### **Our Covenant Requires Death**

"To be made in His image that we might know Him requires our covenantal obligation to lay down our lives - our own carnal, sensual desires. We are to refuse to give in to temptation. In fact, we are instructed to teach our children to not sin. That's a tough one when we are doing it ourselves, isn't it? It's hard. I can speak from experience. I am sure there are many things I have taught my children that are not right, and I am sorry for that. Incidentally, one aspect of the Kingdom of God is that the children will grow up without sin, because the parents are living unto God. In the Kingdom, they are not living unto themselves any longer. That's the goal we are striving for. So if we are buried with Christ by baptism unto death, when we are raised out of the water during our baptism, we are likewise resurrected unto new life. We become new creatures, and new creatures do not continue to keep the habits of the old creature. The old creature is prone to sin. The new creature is prone to do acts and works of righteousness.

"So if a covenant is of force when the victim is dead, and while the victim lives the covenant is not in force, what that means is that in order for our covenant to be in force, we have to die and have to remain dead to the old self. We have to live according to that new creature which Christ has given us by the laying on of hands - the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. Because we have received His Spirit within us, now it is manifest in the works and the acts which we do. When we continue in sin, we are not doing those works and our covenant is void. It's like us ripping up our contract and saying, 'God, I give up. You don't have to keep your part of the bargain. I don't have to receive Eternal Life. I don't want to do what it takes. I don't want to love you.'

"Section 10, a revelation given to Orson Hyde, tells us several times, in fact, 'Now as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, Keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.' Later He says, 'Keep my commandments and assist to bring forth my work according to my commandments, and you shall be blessed. ... Keep my commandments. Hold your peace; appeal unto my Spirit; ... ' and then here is the clincher, 'Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind and strength; Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word.' OK, this is our work - to keep the commandments - and God has already told us what His work is. From Section 22:23b - 'this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man.' How is that accomplished? How is God's work accomplished? It was accomplished through the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have got to die in order that we can be born again.

### **Our Covenant Requires Rebirth**

"Born again. What does that mean? Mosiah 11:188 has a real quick definition. 'Yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming His sons and daughters; and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God.' So, you must be born again. New creatures. They don't continue in sin, right? They die to themselves.

"The very God of heaven hung up there on that cross, and He bled, and He suffered many physical pains. He suffered more than I would want to physically; but He suffered also spiritually, which I couldn't take. I couldn't handle that, and I don't think anybody here could handle that. In fact, I know that nobody here could handle that. And that's what God is trying to save us from - our sin. And when we continue to sin after becoming born of God - after receiving His Spirit - we crucify Him all over again. As I believe Apostle Oakman has stated, every time He'll go back to that cross for us. But why should He have to? Why should He have to? We are new creatures, and we've got to receive His Spirit in our lives. We've got to be diligent. We've got to be faithful in keeping His commandments. And we've got to encourage one another - lift each other up in love - but we have to teach what's right. We have to be born again. And I want to read again what I read to you earlier from Alma, 'And now, behold, I ask of you my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? And have ye received his image in your own countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? Do you exercise faith in the redemption of Him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith and view this mortal body raised in immortality and this corruption raised in incorruption to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which hath been done in the mortal body?'

"At this time of year, when we celebrate Jesus' birth, I would like to encourage each of you in the festivities and the joyousness to remember why we celebrate His birthday. He came to die for us - to take our place."

We sang as did the Herald Angels, "Glory to the New Born King - Jesus our Emmanuel!"

# Christmas Program

## Celebrates Birth of Jesus

A wonderful Christmas program was held on Sunday, Dec. 23, put together by Jan Jordison, Lynda Rolfe and Diane Anderson. It included scriptures, music, youngsters dressed in costume to tell the Christmas story, and a candle lighting ceremony. A story detailing all the events of the service was written, but was lost by a computer glitch. It was a great way to celebrate the birth of Christ.

## Music Service

### Celebrates Christmas

Under the direction of our pastor Rob Rolfe, the music service on December 30 continued our celebration of the birth of our Lord. We began with the prelude with Nathan Smith at the piano. Then the congregation sang the joyous hymn, "Since Love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?"

After the invocation, Brother Rolfe led us in singing, "I'll rejoice and praise the name of Jesus." Psalm 135:2-3 reminded us again of the injunction to sing praises to the Lord, "for he is good", and to sing His praises "is pleasant".

Family music groups and Christmas stories continued the celebration. Gabel and Jazmyn Galusha played Christmas hymns on their violins. Erin Cornish and Cara Smith sang, accompanied by their brother, Nathan. Featured were the Alan Smith, the Michael Jordison and the Steven Smith Family Singers. Ronald Smith and Valle Smith each read stories of Christmas giving that touched our hearts.

Brother Rolfe sang the Biblical Ballad of Elisha and the Syrian army that reminds us that there are more with us than there are against us when we are aligned with the heavenly hosts. Ron and Di Smith sang "Mary's Little Boy Child." Nathan Smith made a special musical offering of "Once in Royal David's City" and we were dismissed with the Lord's benediction resting on our worship.

## News & Notes

### Birth of Jesus Celebrated

Christ's birth was celebrated throughout the month of December in many kinds of worship experiences.

Morning Family Worship services featured scriptural incidents surrounding His birth. Gifts for a needy family the congregation "adopted" graced the entryway of the church on the 16th.

On Wednesday, December 19, the congregation gathered at the home of Gerald and Patricia Bolingbroke, prepared gift plates of fruit and other goodies and distributed them to many of those to whom we sang throughout Lamoni, including Crown Colony, home of some of our elderly. We reassembled at the Bolingbroke home and had dinner together.

The Christmas service of December 21 is reported in detail elsewhere. On Sunday evening, Dec. 21, those who could gathered at the home of Ron and Di Smith and just sang Christmas music with piano guitar accompaniment for nearly two hours before we stopped to have refreshments.

Then 53 celebrants gathered at the Winkler home to usher in the New Year. It has been a joyful time for the congregation.

## From the Pastor's Desk

*Continued from front page*

band sound good? Is the time of day the service is held and the length of the service convenient? It is unlikely that these people ever consider what they might give, especially of themselves. This kind of motivation isn't all bad, but isn't there more to attendance than that?

A few go to church to try to obtain power. Obtaining power is a goal of modern man. The word control is used when power is the goal. Our sports-based culture uses numerous words that describe power over others. Many of our games are based on concepts of power over people or things. Thank God there are a few churches in the world where God manifests real spiritual power in dramatic ways. For some, they would like this power to use only for themselves. The growth of churches that practice witchcraft is evidence of those that want this kind of power. Like Simon of old (Acts 8:9-24) they are willing to do whatever it takes to obtain the power. This kind of motivation is bad, and leads to misery and despair.

Fortunately, many attend church because they believe a Christian has a duty to worship God. They enjoy worshipping. They attend church, but are also willing to give of their time and money to serve God and His kingdom. Sadly, too many of these folks are like the woman at the well. As Jesus said they "worship ye know not what." (John 4:24) They still carry their prejudices and false teachings with them, in part, because of their pastors and teachers who are "wolves in sheep's clothing." These folks are not willing to give God the power and "worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:26). This kind of motivation isn't bad, but there is more and better available.

Have you thought about why you go to church? Do you see yourself in any of the categories listed above. I, for one, have been in more than one of those categories.

The final category is one in which I am sure I belong. I go to church because I am a sinner. In case you have been wondering about it, yes, I am a sinner. BUT, sinners belong in church. A church is the one place sinners should certainly go. They should go, not just to attend and continue in sin, but to go and receive a new life in our Lord Jesus Christ. They should go to pray, to study, to sing praises to God, and hopefully, continue to find more and more Truth. When the Truth is found and made active in your life, you will have spiritual growth.

Because I attend church, I have grown. My most precious beliefs have changed when I have discovered more truth. These beliefs changed because in some cases they were too shallow, in some cases I misunderstood, in some cases I was deceived and sometimes I was plain wrong. All of these circumstances can be overcome through our faith in Jesus Christ.

One of things Jesus said was, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." (John 14) Have we found and accepted the Truth? Only in part! Only in part! Why? Because some of us guard our beliefs and won't look at the Truth. Because some of us don't want to commit the time and energy to finding the Truth. Because we are not willing to say and do the things required that are found in Genesis 9:22. May that day come quickly!



**CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST  
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# **News & Notes**

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