



**COMMUNITY SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR'S THOUGHTS**

Dear friends

Yes, it is that time of year again when we go looking for that special something for that special someone because God sent a very special gift to us who are special because the living God who created us says we are.

In my case the special someone is Sharon and the special something happens to be a designer XXXXXX (name deleted to protect the element of surprise). As I looked over the Internet, I was at first surprised to find quite a few of the designer XXXXXX I was looking for at prices I actually might be able to afford. I was then horrified to find that these "reasonably priced" items would very probably be not the real designer XXXXXX but very clever "knock offs" or imitations of the real thing even though their websites would claim "100% authentic."

At first I thought "If you look real closely at the real thing you will probably be able to tell the difference in fabrics, logos that would be lacking in key places, etc.", but no. I looked at the real thing and then looked at some that I knew were knock-offs and you really could not tell, online at least, which were the fake and which were the real. Needless to say, my efforts headed in a different direction.

The challenge for all of us in this Christmas season is to find, not the real designer XXXXXX

but the real Jesus among all the things posing as suitable substitutes. In the first case you might find you had wasted a few dollars when the stitching gives out or the color rubs off. In the second you would find your life headed in the wrong direction with the ultimate loss of the inestimable value of your eternal soul. Because that is exactly what is at stake here.

Jesus is the real thing who has four logos imprinted on his life that have a direct and profound life-changing effect on our lives. Anything or anyone else who pretends to be the real thing and does not have these effects is a fake and a fraud, a "knock off" to be avoided at all costs. In Luke 1: 26-38, these three logos are presented by the archangel Gabriel to Mary as he announces her coming pregnancy and birth.

The first is "Favored One." She is favored of God because of her role and relationship with the coming Savior. Jesus is the Son with whom God is well pleased. We, like Mary have found favor with God, because of the birth of Jesus.

God so loved you that he sent his only Son to be your Savior. When you receive Jesus as your Savior, when you say, "Yes" to God, you are fully accepted in the eyes of God. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12). Martin Luther rediscovered what Mary heard first here, that salvation, acceptance by God, is a gift from God through Jesus, not by any works that we can do. Imitations will put you through their paces, making you measure up to this standard and do that task. Don't be fooled. When you come to Christ he will forgive your sins, change your life and make you a born-again child of God.

The second is "Jesus", or "God saves". There is nothing subtle about this name. God is working through this name to save us from sin and death.

From the moment of creation, God has intended for us life – peaceful, abundant and eternal.

However God did not make us robots but gave us a choice so that we could love him freely.

We chose to disobey God and go our own way into sin and death. We still make this choice today. You, at some point in your life, made this choice. This separated you from God. The Bible puts it this way, "For all (you and me) have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) and "For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23). People have tried in all kinds of ways to bridge this gap with "knockoffs" of this real relationship with God. "There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to death." (Proverbs 14:12)

God has provided the one way to him through this child whom he is about to plant in Mary's womb. This baby born in a manger will grow to be a man who will die on a cross and rise from the grave to save you and me from our sins. Jesus is the one bridge between God and us. "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

—1 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

We need to trust Jesus to be the real thing; just what his name says he is, "God Saves."

Third, Jesus is the "Son of the Most High".

In the movie "Talladega Nights", Will Ferrell, playing stock car driver Ricky Bobby, says that he prefers to say grace to the little baby Jesus, praying, "Dear tiny Jesus, golden

## COMMUNITY SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR'S THOUGHTS...CONTINUED

fleece diapers, with your tiny, balled up fist..” Is this where we would like to keep our Jesus too?

However this baby Jesus is now Lord of all, all power in heaven and on earth has been given to him. “He will reign over the house of Jacob forever” says Gabriel, “and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

If we receive this Jesus as Lord, he is going to change our lives forever. He is going to command us to do things like “Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you. If anyone strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also.” (Luke 6: 27-30)

If we are obedient servants of this glorious king, Jesus

promises us “Your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High.” Do you see what Jesus is saying? We will be just like him – “Sons (and daughters” of the Most High.”

When Mary heard Gabriel’s words, she made this leap of faith. She accepted and said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” (38).

Mary could tell the real designer stuff when she saw and heard it.

May you and I be able to do so as well.

Bill Kelley  
Spiritual Director

## MERRY CHRISTMAS BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

As we approach this Christmas season, I reflect back upon when my children were young. In doing so, I remembered how I always got caught up in their enthusiasm and excitement. It was easy to forget back then the true meaning of this wonderful time of year. Now that my kids are all grown with children of their own, my thoughts about Christmas have taken on a more spiritual meaning. There is something I now know that I fully neglected back then when my Christmases were so “busy.” Some of you may recognize the same thing in your own lives. Isn’t it wonderful that in acknowledging how often we may have neglected our Savior, Jesus Christ, we can always ask for His forgiveness and receive it? Some of us may have used our dying communion experience to ask God for forgiveness for neglecting Him not only at Christmas but at other times also. Jesus’ forgiveness is a cause for celebration at Christmas and at all times!! Let’s always thank and praise our Savior, Jesus Christ, for His unmerited love for us.

The Gathering in November was awesome. Several of the Pilgrims of Women’s Walk #54 truly blessed us with their 4th Day testimonies. During the weekend there was a Pilgrim who was able to discard her walker, one who had her hearing restored, and others spoke of healed relationships. I’m also sure there were many other miracles that came from this Spirit-filled Walk. The Holy Spirit kept Betty Yoakem and this devoted Team busy from the Thursday night “flooding” (backed-up sewers) to the last minute of the closing service. Everyone who

helped with the Walk made it special by sharing their gifts and talents. Also at the Gathering we had “mini” share groups before we closed in prayer. We made a complete prayer circle around the sanctuary while Pastor Carolyn asked God to bless the expansion plans of High Street UMC.

Speaking of expansion plans—there has been a delay. High Street decided this week to postpone remodeling the church until the restructuring of the seven Springfield United Methodist Churches has been decided upon. Therefore, we will be able to continue to have our Walks until further notified. Let’s be in prayer for all seven of the Springfield United Methodist churches as they await the leading of the Holy Spirit and seek God’s will for their futures.

Remember, monthly Gatherings are now held on the second Sunday evening of each month. The December Gathering is our Christmas Praise Concert. If you plan to stay for the social, please bring a dish to share. Some people are only putting money in the free will offering basket at the social, but no matter how much mustard you put on those dollars they still don’t taste like a sandwich.

God’s love and blessings to you and your loved ones for a very Merry Christmas,

Larry McMahan  
Community Lay Director

## MUSIC

1. *Anyone who is interested in presenting Advent/Christmas agape music at the Dec 14 gathering, please contact Sue or Vic Neves at (937) 767-2976*

2. *We also ask for help with developing a new songbook for the Emmaus weekends. We are asking all past music directors to send us a list of music, not currently in the yellow song books, that they like to use on walks. Email them to [farmmama@netzero.net](mailto:farmmama@netzero.net)*

## KAIROS MINISTRY

### How You Can Become a Volunteer in the Kairos Ministries

The three different ministries of Kairos Prison Ministry each have their own core requirements for Christians who serve in them. People interested in serving as a volunteer on a weekend team are encouraged to submit a written or oral request to leaders in the ministries. Team members for the special weekends and retreats are discerned and decided by the leader for each event. So, requesting to serve as a volunteer does not guarantee acceptance. All teams for Kairos weekends, etc. are obtained by the event leader through prayer and discernment.

### Kairos Ministry

Kairos is the main ministry of the Ohio Kairos organization. The complete Kairos ministry is operating in five state prisons. A couple of the ministry continuation activities of Kairos are operating in two state pre-release prisons, because women have been moved there who were in the Kairos program at Ohio Reformatory for Women.

Christian men and women are considered for service in the Kairos ministry if they have completed one of the following Christian renewal weekends:

- Catholic Cursillo
- Christ Renews His Parish
- Cum Christo
- Episcopal Cursillo (or Happening
- Youth Weekend)
- High School Catholic Kairos
- Koinonia
- Lutheran Via De Cristo
- The Great Banquet
- Tres Dias
- Walk to Emmaus ( or Chrysalis Youth Weekend)

The responsibilities and activities of Kairos team members are very extensive, so prospective volunteers are encouraged to pray about, and plan for, the many hours that are involved:

- 8 team meetings to prepare for the 3-day "short course in Christianity" that the team will conduct in prison (meetings are Friday evenings or Saturday mornings).
- Provide 200 dozen home-baked cookies for the Kairos Weekend (ask church members, family and friends to bake). Each weekend needs 10,000 dozen cookies.
- 3-day Kairos Weekend inside prison.
- Attend monthly reunions of Kairos "graduates" at the institution for one year. Reunions are held Sunday afternoons or evenings or weekday

If you want to apply to be considered as a volunteer team member for a Kairos Weekend contact Ohio's Kairos Volunteer Recruiting Leader by emailing Kairos of Ohio.

Also, go to the Publications and Forms page, download and complete the Information Sheet for Prospective Kairos Volunteer (PKV) and mail it to the address at the top of the form. Also download the Kairos Volunteer Recruiting Brochure for more information about the ministry. NOTE: The "Information Sheet for Prospective Kairos Volunteer" is not an informational resource about Kairos, but instead a form for Kairos to obtain information about you - the prospective volunteer. See Kairos Volunteer Brochure or contact Jim Vineyard.

Jim Vineyard  
H - 324-4333 / C - 206-0749  
lorijim@woh.rr.com

## FROM THE AGAPE ROOM

Leftover Agape from walks are displayed during gatherings. Please make it a point to pick up your left-overs so that you can use again on upcoming week-ends. If you do NOT want your leftover agape, leave a note with it when you drop it off and it will be donated to area programs for child and adult enrichment programs after the completion of a walk. Please do NOT help yourself to agape they you did not donate. Thanks for all your continued support of agape for week-ends. You are all doing a fantastic service for our Pilgrims!

Thanks, Rhonda Voorhees

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### **UPCOMING GATHERINGS!**

**Sunday, December 14, 2008 at 7 PM:**

*Gathering*

*Starting in December gatherings will be held on the second Sunday of the month.*

### **FOOD & FELLOWSHIP:**

After each gathering, there will be a time of fellowship and food.

**If you plan to stay, please bring a dish to share.**

### **WALK DATES:**

#### **Men's Walks**

#37 April 23—26, 2009  
#38 August 13—16, 2009

#### **Women's Walks**

#55 February 19—22, 2009  
#56 June 18—21, 2009  
#57 November 5—8, 2009

### **APPLICATIONS!**

I would like to encourage all to get more men's applications in!

### **Emmaus Directories**

New directories current through June 2008 are now available for \$1.00 donation. The small donation is to cover printing and paper costs. To date we have 3,514 members in the data base. If you have a name change, a new address or phone number, please contact John Ahlborn, tel: 322-1958 to update the data base.

*"Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."*

*Luke 2:14*