

December, 2009

## A Word From Your Pastor

It's time to rethink Christmas Biblically and for the church to take it back. Here are 4 simple ideas from a website called [adventconspiracy.org](http://adventconspiracy.org). You may want to check it out after you read through these strategy points.

### **Worship Fully**

It starts with Jesus. It ends with Jesus. This is the holistic approach God had in mind for Christmas. It's a season where we are called to put down our burdens and lift a song up to our God. It's a season where love wins, peace reigns, and a King is celebrated with each breath. It's the party of the year. Entering the story of advent means entering this season with an overwhelming passion to worship Jesus to the fullest.

### **Spend less**

Before you think we're getting all Scrooge on you, let us explain what we mean. We like gifts. Our kids really like gifts. But consider this: America spends an average of \$450 billion a year every Christmas. How often have you spent money on Christmas presents for no other reason than obligation? How many times have you received a gift out of that same obligation? Thanks, but no thanks, right? We're asking people to consider buying ONE LESS GIFT this Christmas. Just one. Sounds insignificant, yet many who have taken this small sacrifice have experienced something nothing less than a miracle: They have been more available to celebrate Christ during the advent season.

### **Give more**

God's gift to us was a relationship built on love. So it's no wonder why we're drawn to the idea that Christmas should be a time to love our friends and family in the most memorable ways possible. Time is the real gift Christmas offers us, and no matter how hard we look, it can't be found at the mall. Time to make a gift that turns into the next family heirloom. Time to write mom a letter. Time to take the kids sledding. Time to bake really good cookies and sing really bad Christmas carols. Time to make love visible through relational giving. Sounds a lot better than getting a sweater two sizes too big, right?

### **Love All**

When Jesus loved, He loved in ways never imagined. Though rich, He became poor to love the poor, the forgotten, the overlooked and the sick. He played to the margins. By spending less at Christmas, we have the opportunity to join Him in giving resources to those who need help the most. When Advent Conspiracy first began, four churches challenged this simple concept to its congregations. The result raised more than a half million dollars to aid those in need. One less gift. One unbelievable present in the name of Christ.

Love in Christ,  
Pastor Steve



## News from the Session (Elders)

In our last newsletter, we gave you a report from our Elder Retreat. Following are some steps we have taken as we began implementing some of what we discussed:

We have divided our members into 13 groups, distributed equally among each of the Deacons and Elders. Each officer will be praying regularly and keeping in contact with the people under his or her care. If you have not been contacted yet by an officer and would like to know who has been assigned to you, feel free to contact the church office.

We are in the process of forming an Evangelism/Outreach Team. The idea is not that this group will do evangelism for the church, but they will look for ways to inspire, equip, activate and mobilize our church in the area of witness to the world. This team will have a clear vision and goal for what they are seeking to accomplish. They will also have some fun and be very creative in the area of outreach. If you have an interest in being a part of this team, please email Pastor Steve at [steve@stgilesepc.org](mailto:steve@stgilesepc.org).

We encourage each of our members to be in prayer about the upcoming officer elections for Deacon and Elders on December 13th.

Here are a few scriptures to meditate on as you seek the Lord for the people He is raising up to serve our body: 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9.

**Duties of an Elder:** Represent the mind of Christ, pursue God's mission and vision for St. Giles, support the ministry staff and provide for the spiritual wellbeing of our members. The Session (Elders) is the governing board of authority for our church and has the role of accountability and if necessary, discipline for ministry staff and for church members.

**Duties of a Deacon:** Lead St. Giles in the ministry of service and compassion. They are entrusted with oversight of the physical property (buildings and grounds), including the care, maintenance, and preparation of the church and its facilities. They also oversee our church finances.

*Love in Christ from Your Session,*

*Jeff Barhite, Norman Kaneklides, Steve Keller, Eric Newman, Bob Poole, Rick Watkins, and Robert Whitlow*



## Congregational Meeting December 13

There will be a congregational meeting following the morning worship service. The purpose of the meeting is to elect two elders and two deacons for the Class of 2012. Names being submitted by the Nominating Committee are: **Elder:** Bud Carrier, Gerry Edwards, Ward Sheffield; **Deacon:** Christie Barber, Sharon Bynum, Michael Tregidga. There will be a Business Meeting for the Corporation. **NOTE:** *The Nominating Committee is submitting three names to fill two slots for elders and three names to fill two slots for Deacons.*

A special word of thanks and appreciation to the following elders and deacons who will be rotating off at the end of the year: Elders: Bobby Poole, Robert Whitlow; Deacons: Paul Farish, Ken White.

## Church Schedule for December 20 - January 4

|   |   |
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| Sunday, December 20                     | No evening services   |
| Thursday, December 24                   | Church office will be closed<br>5:30 pm Communion/Candlelight service |
| Friday, December 25                     | Church office and Loaves & Fishes Pantry closed                       |
| Sunday, December 27                     | No evening services   |
| Monday - Wednesday,<br>December 28 - 30 | The church office will be open 10:00 - 2:00 pm                        |
| Thursday, December 31                   | Church office will be closed  |
| Friday, January 1                       | Church office will be closed  |

If you are dropping your year end contribution by the church office, we will need it by Wednesday, December 30. If you are mailing your contribution, it must be post dated by December 31.



### Contribution Envelopes for 2010

**2010 Contributions Envelopes** will be available the last two Sundays in December in the Administration Building in the first room on the right as you enter the building from the Sanctuary. If you are not a member and would like a set of envelopes, please let us know.



### Remember in Prayer Our Expectant Mothers

Penny Harrison, January 20  
Jennifer Goldenburg, February 28  
Ellen Westover, March 10  
Sara Oedy, April 1  
Deborah Pasko, March 23  
Anna Newman Hollingsworth, April

Congratulations to Paul and Meg Bowden on the birth of their son, Asher Fields, born December 7!

## UPCOMING EVENTS: JANUARY



On Wednesday nights beginning January 13, we will offer a financial class to members of our church. Financial Peace University is a life-changing program that teaches you how to make the right decisions with your money. You'll be empowered with the practical skills and confidence needed to achieve your financial goals and experience true financial peace! There is a time commitment of 13 weeks and some cost involved. We are able to offer 10 free slots for those who need them. More information to come soon. Please contact Pat Andrews at [pat@stgilesepc.org](mailto:pat@stgilesepc.org) to register.

## *Aletheia* MINISTRIES

“and the **TRUTH** will set you free”

Training sessions will be offered in January for all interested men and women. The goal of this training is to provide tools, information and first hand experience that have proven to be effective in releasing people from bondage. If you feel drawn to this ministry and would like to learn more, you are encouraged to attend our first training sessions: January 15-16 & 29-30, 2010 at **St. Giles Church campus**. Please contact Ellen Westover with any questions at 704-504-0511 or [ellenwestover@att.net](mailto:ellenwestover@att.net).  
Registration fee: \$35.00 (includes: lunch and materials)



## Comunidad de las Naciones (Hispanic Ministry)

Visitors are coming to every service in Comunidad. Some people bring their friends, others come through Loaves and Fishes, and some just come from we don't know where. But we are glad they come and are finding life in Jesus.



We have a “**La Vigilia**” (watch) meeting at the end of each month on a Friday. During these times, we praise and worship, watch a video, share testimonies and have personal ministry. The meeting goes until the wee hours of the morning as we worship for hours on end. The children come in their pajamas with their blankets and pillows and go to sleep after the movie and snacks. The hunger and thirst for the Presence of the Lord finds fulfillment in the fountain of grace and mercy that the Lord is pouring over us.

# Small Groups



**You also are like living stones. As you come to Him, you are being built into a house for worship. ~ 1 Peter 2:5**

The Lord loves small groups, and He provides these gatherings in cozy, safe, home settings for believers and seekers to encounter...Genuine friendships, God-centered worship, Loving ministry, Faith-building encouragement and Great snacks!

The goal of St. Giles small group ministry is to create opportunities for our church family, friends, and visitors to experience the reality of our church's Destination Statement:

**Pursuing the heart of God together by moving...**

**UPWARD** > Lifting up Word and Spirit in a life of wholehearted worship

**INWARD** > Discovering who we are in Christ and who Christ is in us

**OUTWARD** > Recognizing our spiritual gifts and using them to reach the world for Jesus

For the past three years, Scott Carney and the small groups leadership team have worked hard to lay a strong foundation on which to build this vital ministry. After investing significant prayer, time, skill, gifting, and energy, the Lord has released Scott from his responsibility as the Small Group Director. It is with much gratitude that the small group coaches and leaders acknowledge all that has been accomplished under his dedicated leadership. Because I am passionate about small group ministry, it is with thanksgiving, joy, and expectancy that I've accepted the invitation to step into this role.

I believe our relationships with the Lord, with one another, and with those who desperately need an encounter with Him are vital to who we are and who we're called to be. Small groups are an integral setting where this can happen.

Throughout the fall, the small group leadership team\* and I have: met together for prayer and to wait on the Lord to hear His heartbeat and seek His direction and wisdom for this next season; hosted a gathering for the small group leaders to bless and encourage them and to hear their hearts for this ministry; and met one-on-one to share our challenges, passion, and vision as leaders.

As God raises up leaders and new small groups are formed, we encourage you to ask Him if He wants *you* to be in a small group. If you sense that nudge, it's because He wants to bless you with new friends...provide a safe place where your relationship with Him can deepen and grow...and encourage you in your faith!

St. Giles' small group ministry is under construction and God is using "stones" like you to build it! Look for exciting and encouraging updates in bulletins, the website and newsletters.

Your Fellow Living Stone,  
*Karen White*

\* The current small group leadership team consists of:  
Marty Barkey, Deanne Smith, Doug Smith, Robert Whitlow, Karen White

## Women's Ministries

Ladies!! Mark your calendar for our 2nd annual **Silver & Gold Progressive Tea!** On Wednesday, December 16th, beginning at 7:00 pm, we will gather in the Fellowship Hall for a time of celebrating friendships, both old and new, and engaging in stimulating conversation and unique experiences as we rotate from hostesses to hostesses enjoying tea and holiday treats. Invite your friends and bring a treat. Please call Missy Evans if you would like to host a table (704)543-9907. Please email Margie Gladden at [margie@stgilesepc.org](mailto:margie@stgilesepc.org) if you plan to attend the tea.



## Young Adults Class (18 –35)

The Young Adults will serve a meal and lead a brief service of worship at the **Center of Hope** on Saturday, December 5, 11:15 - 1:00. Join us as we share the love of Jesus with the homeless. We will also have our **Christmas Fellowship Dinner** Dec. 19, 5:00 - 9:00 pm at Matt and Ashley Franklin's home. You are invited to an evening of fellowship, food, laughter, worship, a personal testimony and ministry/prayer. For more info contact Rick & Karin Slate, (704)865-4656.



## Attention All Members and Visitors Special Catered Christmas Luncheon - December 13 (after the service)

You are invited to a special, catered meal immediately following the morning service on December 13. Come enjoy a time of fellowship as we honor the following Young at Heart members:

June Ector, Eleanor Johnson,  
Tip & Pat Johnson, Rachel Stasko, Louise Williams

A special meal will be provided for children age 10 and younger. After the luncheon, children may be excused to meet with our Youth Director for a planned activity while we complete our program.

Cost: \$7.50 Singles; 15.00 couples; Families: \$20.00.

Please respond by emailing [margie@stgilesepc.org](mailto:margie@stgilesepc.org) if you plan to attend. We ask that you send your payment in by December 5 or you may place your check in the offering plate Sunday, December 6 (make sure you write "for luncheon" on the memo).

# Youth Ministry: *τελειος*

## A Fragrant Offering

Part of being a mature follower of Jesus is loving others like Jesus loves them. A few weeks ago, *τελειος* (the St. Giles youth group) had an opportunity to love a sweet lady in our community. By the end of the day, we had amassed 59 bags of leaves on the curb! We were also able to demolish two large bushes that were blocking her view in the driveway, clean the roof and gutters, mow and edge the yard, and weather proof our new friend's windows for the winter! What an awesome day!



Our new friend shared her faith in Jesus with us throughout the day as we worked. To her, our service was the Lord's blessing and comfort to her. The best part of the day was seeing the tears on her face as she expressed how much it meant to her that we'd come out. She, in fact, blessed us and prayed for us as we left for the day!



In the end, we didn't do anything spectacular. We spent one day caring practically for the needs of someone in the name of Jesus. But the fragrance of Jesus has been left on her block. Her neighbors will smell Christ as they drive by her newly groomed yard. Her family will hear of God's goodness as she tells them how He provided. Truly this is at the core of what it means to conformed to Christ (Rom 8:29) – to love others as Jesus loves. As we approach Christmas, I pray that we at St. Giles will leave the fragrance of Jesus in every place our feet trod... with the man at the gas pump, the lady behind the register, the person in traffic who's bogging down the highway, the family member who feels alone, the friend who just needs an ear, and the person who doesn't know the Christ of Christmas.

May we fulfill our God given destiny of being transformed into the likeness of Jesus this year as we leave His fragrance in our wake.

Merry Christmas from *τελειος*!

Nate Horne  
Youth Director



## King's Kids Christmas Aglow!

December 13 – All King's Kids (ages 4 yrs. – 6<sup>th</sup> gr.) and leaders will meet at 6:00 pm (5:30 Hang Out Time) in the gym. Everyone will receive a glowstick to help us let our light shine as we Christmas Carol through the neighborhood. [Please dress warmly!](#) We will return to the gym for Hot Chocolate, cookies and a Christmas movie!

## News from our Missionaries

### **Perspectives on the World Christian Movement**

Join with believers from dozens of other Charlotte area churches and learn to use your skills and passions to glorify God in all the earth - no matter your location or vocation. **Perspectives** begins in January. Contact Steve Seward at (704)557-9923 for more information.

### **Corey Booher - Poland**

Please pray with the Booher's as they trust in Him as their strong tower, shield and the lifter of their heads. Pray for Corey's timely healing with no complications after a recent hard fall down a flight of steps.

### **The Youngs**

Pray for development of relationships with the contacts they have in their community and pray for wisdom as they work with the many people who come to them for money.

### **Glenn Price**

Glenn is heading up an assessment team to Thailand from December 1-8 to research how MercyWorks can make a lasting difference in the lives of young girls caught up in human trafficking. Pray for finances for the trip, as well as seeing things through God's eyes. Pray also for Glenn to have divine appointments with all he meets with in Thailand.



## Loaves and Fishes Pantry News

In September, we served 656 people with our food pantry, up 80% from September of 2008. The recipients of our food tell us they really appreciate the amount and quality of our food, based on what they have received from other pantries that the Loaves and Fishes organization had assigned them to for other months.

We receive appreciation from everyone and some even leave "thank you notes" for us. A lady named Tiffany wrote, "Me and my family of 5 have been homeless for months. All of our possessions were thrown out because of lack of money. I have a car, but its broke down. Me and my family here been sleeping in the car. I have not eaten in two days, saving food for my 3 children. If it was not for God laying the love of charity with the volunteers, me as well as my children would not eat. If you guys were not here simple things like food would be non existent to us. We appreciate you more than you know."