

# Church Life News

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# First Christian

## CHURCH of VISALIA



## Mike's Musings

Time does fly, 2007 is over and another year is upon us! Every year seems to have its own unique qualities and 2007 can certainly be defined by two words, sabbatical and sesquicentennial. Celebrating our church's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary was a significant landmark we didn't want to pass up, but for many celebrating the past seemed to sidetrack us from building for the future. So after all the festivities in 2007 marking the great accomplishments of the past, 2008 is the year we can refocus on building the Kingdom of God for the present and future.

Our church's mission statement is Matthew 28:19 known as the *Great Commission*, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." In sermons, Bible studies and articles I have intentionally and persistently reminded all of us that our primary purpose and responsibility is to lead people into becoming reconciled with God through Jesus Christ. In 2006 we spent several weeks engaged in a study called "*Just Walk Across the Room*," in an effort to encourage and equip each of us to be more effective in personal evangelism.

Our purpose, our mission will always be evangelism, but the angle I will approach in 2008 to help each of us become better evangelists will be slightly different. The theme for 2008 is "*Pursuing God*," and the major thrust will be to help and guide each of us in working to develop a deeper relationship with God our creator. As you and I grow in our relationship with the Lord, as we become spiritually more mature, an interesting thing will happen whether you realize it or not...you will become a more effective evangelist!

Evangelism is more effective when other people can see that our lives are

truly a walk with God, and not simply a talk about God. When people see dynamic change in our lives it will entice many to desire what we have, so leading them to the Lord becomes easy.

The biggest obstacle for many Christians in being effective evangelists is that their personal relationship with God is weak at best. For too many Christians they affirm God in their minds, but not in their hearts. Many are content to know of God, but not to know God in a personal, meaningful way...a truly life changing way.

To start things in earnest in 2008 we have formed seven small groups (with hopefully more to come) which will study A.W. Tozer's timeless work, "*The Pursuit of God*." I want to encourage each of you to sign-up for one of our small groups that will meet week nights and week days to lead people into developing a deeper walk with the Lord.

Sign-up sheets will be posted in the foyer/narthex and you can also call the church office for more information (732-6623).

There is only one way to get a generate interest for the Lord in others, and that is for each of us to start developing a desire for the Lord in our own lives. When each of us works to grow in our relationship with the Lord we will not only notice how we are personally blessed, but will also notice that people are more attracted to us and will desire to have what we have...the essence of evangelism...sharing the good news not just through word, but also, and more importantly, through deed.

Through our daily walk with the Lord, may He richly bless each of you as we enter into this New Year! May God empower you to boldly grab hold of each opportunity He presents you for His honor and glory.  
Pax, Mike

# Stewardship

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## Give and Receive Money, Possessions, Eternity and Salvation

We spend a lot of time exploring the above areas of stewardship and how they affect our practice of recognizing what God has given to us. At this time of the year we celebrate the greatest gift He has given to us. Have you included God on your Christmas list? It should be at the top. There is a powerful relationship between our true spiritual condition and our attitude and actions concerning money and possessions.

You have been faithful this year to help us meet our budget. We have been able to meet our payroll, take care of the facilities, have programs, pay our loan obligation and do our outreach ministry. There is always a **However**. Salaries have increased after no raises for several years, program needs to accomplish our goals have increased, grounds and buildings are in need of upkeep we have not been doing and many other needs. Without an increase in

giving and tithing we will not meet those needs. Keep this in mind as you begin your giving in January. More importantly examine your heart for what God has done for you and given to you. Give based on that feeling, not what our personal church needs appear to be. We will have a time after the first of the year to emphasize stewardship.

The end of the year is a time to consider special gifts to the church. It can help you to reduce your income taxes and it helps the church to begin the year with a surplus in the operating accounts. Consider the following.

Cash - Deductible in the year you make the gifts. You can deduct up to 50 percent of your adjusted gross income.

Stock - Gift of highly appreciated stock has two tax savings. First you avoid the capital gains tax. Second you receive an income tax deduction.

Tangible Personal Property - You can deduct the fair market value up

to 30 percent of you AGI

Real Estate - You can deduct the value of the gift up to 30 percent of AGI.

## Year End Gifts

You must deliver or mail checks dated in 2007 to the church by December 31 st to claim a tax deduction for 2007. If you date the check 2007 and place it in the first offering plate collection of 2008 it will not qualify for a 2007 deduction even if it was predated to 2007 or was actually written in 2007. However, checks that are written, mailed, and postmarked in 2007 will be deductible in 2007 even if the church does not receive them until 2008.

Everyone must account to God for the following questions. Where did it all go? What did I spend it on? What has been accomplished for eternity through the use of all this wealth?

God Bless,  
Buz Southard  
Stewardship Chairman

# He Wants To See Fruit

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When I was a very young girl, I watched my brother Glenn experiment grafting fruit trees. Of course at the time, I had no idea what he was doing. I observed him cut a small branch from one cherry tree and then he took black stuff and smeared it over and around the branch an attached it to the tree.

Then he took three more branches from other trees and did the same thing. I thought he was just messing around, but he tended those branches carefully watching them for I don't know how long. Then one day I heard him yelling and laughing all at the same time. I ran to him to see what was up and there

he stood with the biggest, brightest smile I'd ever seen. Sure enough each one of those branches showed signs of producing fruit. It really was neat to see all that fruit, cherries, apricots (and whatever the other kind was) growing on his

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# Annual Meeting

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As per our By-Laws we will conduct our Annual Meeting following morning worship service on January 20, 2008.



## Youth Ministries

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Maybe you've noticed some newness around the youth department at FCC. We are really trying to make this a regular place for teens to have fun and learn about God. As you may have seen online **we have a new logo for the youth group and Sunday Night Sanctuary**. Check them out below if you haven't already seen them. It has been truly fun for me to add a new splash of life to the group.



We have also altered our **Sunday Night Sanctuary (SNS)** quite a bit as well. Maybe you are asking, "What is Sunday Night Sanctuary?" Well simply put it is our youth group meeting on Sunday nights. We want SNS to be a time of fun and deepening of one's faith. **Teenagers can make a difference in our world now** – they don't

have to wait until they grow up. We want to offer a place where one can find out how to make one's faith in Christ real and active. Starting in the New Year, we hope to **sponsor a child**, like the AWANA children do, and maybe even do **fundraisers for local causes**. Jesus loved those around him, and we want to do the same.



We've also added a **youth band** that practices before SNS, and are adding a **drama team** as well that will practice at the same time (see our calendar below). Another change we wish to make is adding a time for Juniors and Seniors. Those last 2 years of high school are so important. So we will be doing a **weekly Junior/Senior breakfast at McDonalds**. We will meet with a short devotion and prayer, but have time to discuss issues at school, questions about college, and about growing up. It should be an awe-

some time for teens before heading to school.

All in all I am excited to see what develops this year. I know **2008 is going to bring a lot spiritually to this church body and to the hearts in each one of us**. We are in fact called to live an adventure in our relationship with Christ and those around us. **So let's do this thing called Christianity**. Let's get serious about our relationship with Christ. Who's with me?  
January Calendar:

- Party4Life –  
December 31<sup>st</sup> 10PM –  
January 1<sup>st</sup> 6:00AM
- Sunday Night Sanctuary (SNS) – All 7<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> graders 6:30-8:00PM Sunday Nights. We meet on the south side of the building for a time of worship, fun, and study.
- Youth Band – 5:00-6:00PM Sunday nights before SNS.
- Drama Team – 5:00-6:00PM Sunday nights before SNS.
- Junior/Senior Breakfast – 6:30AM Tuesday mornings @ McDonald's Akers/Goshen

## Upcoming Events

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### January 5

9:30AM Come help remove Christmas Decorations and tidy up the church for the new year.

### January 8

7:00PM Home Study Groups doing AW Tozer's "Pursuit of God"

Three groups meeting at different homes: one at Mike & Beth Messenger's, one at Tom & Kerrell Lewis', and one at Richard & Gigi Shacklett's

### January 10

7:00PM Home Study Group doing AW Tozer's "Pursuit of God"

meeting at Wayne & Sue Geis' home.

For more information on groups please call the leader or the church office.

### January 20

11:45AM Annual Meeting immediately following worship service.

## January Birthdays

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Kevin Guy.....	1	Katelyn Baxter.....	18	Will Shattuck.....	26
Vannoy Little.....	1	Don Jones .....	18	Tom Baker.....	29
Christine Evans.....	2	Stephanie Black.....	20	Madeline Evans.....	29
Sharon Grant.....	3	Christian Brooke.....	22	Tracy Ronk.....	29
Donna Eastin.....	9	Chris Garringer.....	23	Caleb Gunning.....	30
Glenn Pratt.....	10	Sara Tharp .....	23	Elaine Rider.....	30
Carole Bradley.....	12	Dave Huff.....	25	Kyle Rowland.....	31
JoAnne Jordan .....	13	Rebekah Tharp.....	25		
Katie Guy.....	15	Ann Johnson .....	26		

## January Anniversaries

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Mike & Susan Leary.....	10	Pat & Joyce Hogan.....	26
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See  
Calendar  
click  
on  
icon  
top  
right

January 2008						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

# First Christian Church of Visalia

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## December Attendance

Dec. 2	101
Dec. 9	117
Dec. 16	126
Dec. 23	147

## December Giving

Dec. 2	\$6,741.00
Dec. 9	\$5,258.00
Dec. 16	\$3,635.17
Dec. 23	\$7,154.80

## January Ministers

Deacons		Elders
Ann Johnson	Jan. 6	Joyce Hogan
Roger Johnson		Pat Hogan
Wayne Geis	Jan. 13	Marcia Moore
Sue Geis		Keith Moore
Barbara Grant	Jan. 20	Roger Johnson
Joanne Jordan		Ann Johnson
Kelli Stowers	Jan. 27	Kerrell Lewis
Tami Tharp		Tom Lewis

## January Drivers

If you need a ride to church during the month of January please call one of the people listed below:

Tami Tharp	592-1406
Betty Baker	734-2806
Wanda Sharp	732-0836

## Prayer Concerns

### Health

Judy Addison  
Nadine Alexander  
Joyce Allen  
Lisa Ann Bachman  
Mary Baker  
Kay Bartell  
Audrey Bass  
Jenn Blackburn  
Venita Blackburn  
Betty Cates  
Bob Eastin  
Bruce Fife  
Marsha Jepson  
Stan Livesay  
Judy Miller  
Loreen Moore  
Frank Morales  
Thelma Mortenson  
Glenn Pratt  
David Smith  
Jean Stevenson  
Ray Watkins

plum tree. What a sight it was, but what I remember most was my brother's smile.

This visual aid helped me understand as I studied the Scripture regarding *spiritual fruit*. Our Lord is looking for the fruit that we produce. John 15:4 says, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me." Those who claim to be followers of Christ are the branches; Christ is the vine and God is the gardener who carefully watches the branches in order to make them fruitful. He expects true believers to be fruitful. The unproductive followers, those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment, according to the Word they are as good as dead and will be cut off and tossed aside.

It doesn't matter how hard people try to be good, honest people who do what is right, Jesus makes it clear, the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to him. My brother watched to see if the graft remained intact because he understood if it did not receive nourishment and life from the tree there would be *no fruit*.

In John 15:7, 11, 12, the Bible says that answered prayer, joy, and love are mentioned as fruit. Additional fruit, the qualities of Christian character are shown in Galatians 5:22-24 and 2 Peter 1:5-8.

Our God wants fruit and apart from Christ our efforts will be unfruitful. If the Lord tarries, we will have another year to be productive for God which means we must obey his teachings, resist temptation, actively serve and help others, and share our faith. James 1:18 refers to Christian believers as first-fruits, referring to their unique and sacred possession of God out of all he has created.

When we believe the gospel from an "honest and good heart" we are provided with fruitful soil for the Word of God (Luke 8:15; Romans 10:9). The tiny branch my brother grafted into the healthy tree had every chance to produce fruit, as long as my brother helped it out during difficulty so the graft would hold. The joy filled excitement when Glenn's tree produced its first fruit is still fresh in my memory.

As believers we can draw near to God, love him with all our will, mind and emotions; and remind ourselves that the Lord says, "it's not by might not by power but by My Spirit" that will make it possible to be fruitful.

The Scripture says, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." John 6:29 Family, God calls it *work* to believe. It is not time to *quit* when our circumstances don't seem to line up with God's Word, it is only time to get back into His Word and keep *obeying* what we read. Be fruitful and multiply is not a request, it is a command. God is looking for fruit and you and I should stay as close as we can to him, and I believe he

Glen Wells  
Charles Williams  
Joan Willis  
Roxie Wilson  
Jim  
Julie  
Linda  
Lyle  
Meghan  
Sierra  
Family Reconciliation  
Steven Stoner

Accident Recovery  
Kariel Young (Fragile)  
Freedom from pain  
Genevia Thompson  
Military  
Lane Boland  
Matthew Calhoun  
Ervin Edwards  
Nikki Walz  
Casey Wightman  
Cody Wood  
Wholeness  
Bobbie McDonald



1023 N. Chinowth St.  
 Visalia, CA 93291-4114  
 Phone: (559) 732-6623  
 FAX: (559) 732-6625

Website: [www.fccvisalia.org](http://www.fccvisalia.org)

*Biblically Based  
 Christ Centered  
 Spirit Led*

**Office Hours:**

Mon-Thurs 9:00 AM— 4:30 PM

**Staff E-Mail Addresses:**

- Michael Messinger, Senior Pastor**  
pastor@fccvisalia.org
- Joyce Hogan, Pastor's Assistant**  
pa@fccvisalia.org
- Carrie Guy, Youth Pastor**  
youth@fccvisalia.org
- Will Shattuck, Music Director**  
music@fccvisalia.org
- Sheila Ronk, Church Secretary**  
sec@fccvisalia.org

If you have questions contact Carrie or Joyce at the Church Office — 732-6623

# Kingdom Kids News

Where a kid can be God's kid!



*Happy New Year ♪ Happy New Year ♪ Happy New Year*

Kingdom Kids Programs:

- Sunday School—9 am Sunday Mornings
- Jesus Street—During Church Service (10:15 am Sundays)
- AWANA- 6:00PM to 8:00PM Wednesdays

## AWANA resumes January 9th

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

First Christian Church  
 1023 N. Chinowth Street  
 Visalia, CA 93291-4114