

The Grapevine

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Spiritual Director

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What matters most

By **PHILIP REICH**
Lay Director

Certainly, at least at this time of year, we each should pause and reflect for a moment on our lives and consider where we are, what we are doing with our days, and what really matters the most to us. Perhaps we need to recall our thoughts as pilgrims when we sat, listened, and considered the Priority talk. When it is all said and done and we breathe our last, what footprints, carbon prints, or better yet, fingerprints will we leave behind—in this world—upon those we love or those whose paths we have crossed?

We each have much to be thankful for. It is believed that true happiness is found only through a proper perspective of thankfulness and appreciation of what one has and has received, not by worrying and striving for what one does not have. God's grace and mercy have been abundantly with the Emmaus Community in 2012.

How else would one explain the comfort, inspiration, healing, and miracles manifested in countless reunion groups, clusters, walks, and services this year? Should it not matter most to us that we know and feel Christ's presence with us in the midst of our living and struggles, and are thankful?

It is believed by many that there are special

times and moments—birth, death and Holy Communion—when the veil between heaven and this human existence is at its thinnest point, and if we pay faithful attention, we may experience and catch a glimpse of the Divine. One of the early saints, Teresa of Avila, who lived in the 16th century, at the direction of the Church, attempted to describe that which she experienced at Holy Communion. She wrote that Christ is present with us in a very real and personal way each and every time we celebrate The Eucharist.

How regularly do I not look for or anticipate His presence, let my mind drift to think about other matters, and rush out of the sanctuary at service's end! Teresa suggested that we close the eyes of the body and open those of the soul and look into our own heart. He will then reveal Himself to us in a real way. Teresa would linger for hours after receiving the Elements, basking in Christ's presence. For us too, this could be our own Mount of Transfiguration for revelation, understanding, inspiration, and empowerment.

Is Emmaus not another special occasion for a thin Heavenly veil? So then, what does Emmaus mean to us? What did you say at closing of your walk, verbally or internally, by reason of God's special presence with you? Part 2 of your ques-

(Please See Reich Page 2)

O Holy Night – A Christmas Card

By **D. Jonathan Watts**
Spiritual Director

The melody is rhythmic and intentional – bom-bom-bom-bom-bom-bom. The sound sets one on the edge of his seat anticipating the entrance of the soloist. It was Mom at the piano. She has quite a reputation for being a musician who could follow any soloist. Some have the ability to play good music but let ego get in the way and the voice heard has to compete with the instrument being played. Not so with Mother – it was a gift.

The sound of the music was not as smooth as it should have been. You see, "O Holy Night" was written in the key of C and the G below middle C was broken. So the sound had a distinctive skip in the sequence. Meanwhile, Dad would sit there like a nervous cat getting ready to jump of a limb, waiting for the musical notes to float past so he could hop on one and take off. Mother was always patient, continuing the roll until Dad finally joined in.

The sound of his voice paints the image of lava like

syrup slowly moving across a hot buttered biscuit. Warm, mellow, rich. Nobody in the world can sing "O Holy Night" like my dad. I always wanted to have Dad's voice, but that was the one thing I did not inherit. Only two things kept me from being a great vocalist: range and quality.

I was brought into this world bathed in music. Mom was the church organist and pianist. She had been so since her teens. Dad was the choir

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Reich

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tion was, "So what are you going to do about it?" If we also reflect prayerfully for a moment, we know that doing our part for God once or even several times is never sufficient. Christ's example to us is always to be persistent and continuous in prayer, in service, and in doing good. What should matter most to us in our Emmaus Community is to faithfully continue in service, in leadership and sponsorship.

I am blessed in my new job to work on a wide variety of tasks, one being substance abuse in college-aged students. This is perhaps the greatest danger and obstacle to our sons and daughters. There is no lack of need or challenge in this area for years to come. Hopefully, we do not think that there is not as great a need today as in the past for spiritual recovery, renewal, and direction that comes from Emmaus. The fields are indeed white for harvest! There are so many who God is calling now and counting on to renew and empower His Church. God really is counting on us to carry on in effective leadership, service, and sponsorship while we can! Is this what matters most to us?

What matters most to me is that I give all that I can each day to God. Nothing else really matters, does it? There really is no risk here if we are only faithful. We are enabled to love the people and things that we have always loved so much better when we give all that we can to God. There is a popular Christian song, played on the airways regularly, entitled, "I Want to Live Like That" by Sidewalk Prophets. The lyrics of the song hit close to home and describe the thing that should matter most to each of us—that God's will is accomplished in us as we are used in the way we were created to be used. Are we thankful for the moments of interruption—calls to serve and love others? Do we realize that these precious occasions enable us to "get to" be Christ's vessel and not simply present us with a task that we have "got to" do?

So, while the day is still with us, while it is still light for us, let us be faithful to our call in our 4th Days. I am blessed to be able to say, on behalf of the Emmaus community, these words to pilgrims on the Sunday afternoons of each walk: "So when you get home, hug your spouse, your kids, your parents, your friends... and if there is something at home in your church that needs taking care of, just do it!" What should matter most is that we continue faithfully in our call and in our 4th Days.

The greatest need for Emmaus and its best days are ahead and not behind! Do you believe this? What matters most is that we each do.

**DeColores,
Philip Reich**

The Grapevine

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Christmas blessings to all the Community

As I write this article it is difficult to turn my thoughts into words. First of all, I want to wish everyone a very blessed Christmas; not just best wishes, but a truly joyous time; not just happy holidays, but an authentic holy season.

The literal meaning of Christmas is "Christ's Mass." It is much more than an occasion to shower ourselves with gifts! It is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

I would like to share with you some Christmas blessings. Hopefully you can share them with others as you celebrate the birth of our Lord this year.

"Somehow not only for Christmas
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others
Is the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend in blessing
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more of your heart's possessing
Returns to make you glad."
~ John Greenleaf Whittier

May the spirit of Christmas bring you peace,
The gladness of Christmas give you hope,
The warmth of Christmas grant you love.
~Author Unknown

Give us, O God, the vision which can see Your love in the world in spite of human failure.

Give us the faith to trust Your goodness in spite of our ignorance and weakness.

Give us the knowledge that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts.

And show us what each one of us can do to set forward the coming of the day of universal peace.

~Frank Borman, spoken from space during the Apollo 8 space mission in 1968

"Let us remember that the Christmas heart is a giving heart, a wide open heart that thinks of others first. The birth of the baby Jesus stands as the most significant event in all history, because it has meant the pouring into a sick world of the healing medicine of love which has transformed all manner of hearts for almost two thousand years... Underneath all the

bulging bundles is this beating Christmas heart."
~ George Mathew Adams

"May the Blessings of Christmas be with you today and always."

~ Carolyn Phillips
Talladega 1st UMC
AL Emmaus Walk #63, Table of Ruth

Watts

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director. My earliest memories are of church music being sung by volunteer choirs, laughing ladies trios, off-key tenors and shaky soloists. I made the big step when I was 12. I was asked to help sing the Christmas Cantata "Love Transcending" by Peterson. I sang alto. I think it was that year that another church gave us their old choir robes. In those burgundy cloaks we thought we were "up town!" It was that year we went on tour – singing the cantata at two other churches.

Christmas day we all gather at Mom and Dad's house by lunch. - me and my sister and brother, our spouses, and the grandchildren. We all pack into the house where Christmas music is playing, the TV is turned up loud, and we are all talking even louder. For the most part the men find safety in the den – away from the kitchen where the real work is being carried out to get the Christmas Feast ready. And I do mean feast. Do you remember the scene in Charles Dickens [Christmas Carol](#), where the ghost of Christmas is surrounded by the bounty of foods? Well, that is what the table looked like at Mother's on Christmas Day.

Turkey, vegetables, fruit, the world's best dressing, the largest banana pudding made in a turkey roasting pan (and was usually all gone by the supper snack) and that marvelous apple/banana cake – I call the "Lazarus Cake" because it is better after about 3 days – when all the fruit juices sink into the cake and ripen!

We then settle into watching a ballgame, telling family stories, and mellowing out on coffee or spiced cider. Eventually we get to a restless time and someone moves to a musical instrument which is our call to gather around for a time of singing. Mom is at the piano, four or five of us are playing guitars, some have spoons or pans, others just sing. "Silent Night," "Rudolf," "Frosty," "Jingle Bells" – and on and on the list goes. We would begin a song and Dad would

stop strumming long enough to yell out, "Barbara, what key are you playing that in?" Dad moved up and down the neck of the guitar, Mother kept the steady pace, while each of us chimed in to add harmony to those festive, seasonal songs. It is not exactly an angelic chorus. But then again, who knows what the angelic chorus sounds like? Does it sound like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir? Do they use instruments? Do they sing in Latin? It has always seemed like a heavenly injustice when you think about the angels singing to the shepherds, and there is nothing to lead us to believe that Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus ever heard one note of the joy which rained down from above.

Before we finish our concert, the sound of familiar note chains begins, we all pick a part and Dad takes the lead in singing "O Holy Night" – like only he could sing it!

I wonder if they celebrate Christmas in Heaven? And if they do, do they have a pageant with shepherds and angels and magi? Would the angelic choir sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "Joy to the World," and the "Hallelujah Chorus," or even "Silent Night"? I can, in my mind, paint a picture of a Heavenly Christmas. Streets of gold lined in green garlands and blinking red, white, and green lights. A Special Star would shine even brighter, and the joy of the ages seems at a higher pitch than usual. Shepherds would get together for a reunion and laugh about their terror at the sight of angels. The Magi would remember the power of a Star.

Who knows, 2000 years from now when the Heavens gather to celebrate Christmas, maybe they will turn down the heavenly lights, as a Mother sits at the piano and, with the steady and patient pulse of the keys, all would become quiet as the smooth, rich, mellow, voice of my Dad begins to sing "O Holy Night."

Merry Christmas.

Upcoming Walks					
Walk	Date	Lay Director	Spiritual Director	Cluster	Board Rep
410	Feb 21-24	Kristy Akin	Lori Carden	B'ham E/B'ham S S. Shelby	Dolores Bunn
411	Mar 7-10	Don Shelton	Eric Brown	Shoals/Moulton/Athens/ Decatur	Bill Jordan
412	Apr 4-7	Betty Sibley	Dallas Culver	Franklin/Hamilton/ Haleyville	Sheilah Wiginton
413	Apr 25-28	Rocky Harnon	TBA	Gadsden/Marshall/ Cherokee-Dekalb	Missy Bissonnette
<p>*Men's Walk Reminder: Candlelight service begins at 7:45; Closing begins at 4:45. Please remember that children are <i>not</i> to be present in Hutto or at meals during a walk!</p>					

**Alabama Emmaus Walk 410
February 21-24, 2013**

Lay Director	Kristy Akin (Perseverance)
Asst. Lay Directors	LaShawn Scholl (Priority) Tena Hilario (Fourth Day) Carolyn Goza Angela Jones Lisa Elliott Danielle Butler
Spiritual Director	Lori Carden (Means of Grace)
Asst. Spiritual Directors	Angela Martin (Prevenient Grace) Johnny Jordan (Justifying Grace) Betsy King (Sanctifying Grace) Ricky Ruston (Obstacles to Grace)
Music	Charlie Beavers
Asst. Table Leaders	Suzanne Trammel (Priesthood) Ruth Ann Clay (Study) Julia Rudd (Discipleship) Alisha McDonald (Changing Our World) Emily Lansford (Christian Action) Barb Heisey (Body of Christ) Angie Nash (Life In Piety)
Table Leaders	Julie English Carol Rayfield Roxanne Edsall Christy Heath Linda M. Smith Diane Fisher Michele Walker
Board Rep.	Dolores Bunn

Committees

Agape:	Heather Voshall	205-620-0337
Meal Service:	Ronnie Harris	205-525-4850
Refreshments:	Kay Jordan	205-478-1186
72-Hour Prayer Vigil:	Lisa Fornwalt	256-404-8954
Housing:	Teresa Harris	205-525-4850
Candlelight:	Diana McQueen	205-988-3051
Clean-up:	Jimmy Jarrell	205-664-2857
Closing:	Gene Rayfield	205-640-3131
Entertainment:	Chuck Terrell	256-267-1300
Follow-up:	Chuck Ferguson	205-491-1634
Speakers' Prayer Chapel:	Bob Voshall	205-620-0337
Sponsors' Hour:	Lynn Carmichael	205-491-1634
Worship:	Lynne Pearson	205-669-7327
Photographer:	Larry Matthews	205-602-8733
Humble Servant:	Melissa Jarrell	205-664-2857

Name	City	Sponsor
Cheryl Bell	Alabaster	Rebecca Austin & Melissa Jarrell
Terrie Hilburn	Albertville	Shirley Chupp
Lori Loveday	Albertville	Sammi Kirkland ,Natasha Tidmore
Brandy Bagwell	Albertville	Barbara Harris & Nancy Walden
Monica Carnes	Arab	William Koch
Suzanne Joiner	Athens	Diane McFarland
Paula Henry	Athens	Scott Henry, Wes Henry, Kim Henry
Tracie Faulk	Birmingham	Holli Jackson
Vanda Simmons	Birmingham	Holli Jackson
Lori Vaughn	Boaz	Patricia Corbin & Dana Hill
Diann Evers	Boaz	Nona Proctor
Noel Eason	Boaz	Sammi Kirkland ,Natasha Tidmore
Chris Gladney	Buhl	Pam & Lynn Gibson
Tonya MacNicol	Chelsea	Kacie Davis
Brandi Baucom	Columbus	Michelle Gibson
Mary Pippin	Cullman	Dianne Lyrene
Cheri Waldrop	Cullman	Kerry Hanvey & Kim Dockery
Brenda Whitten	Dawson	Victoria Mann
Beth Sexton	Fayette	Pattie Gann
Debbie Bailey	Fayette	Pattie Gann
Beth Bayles	Florence	Rose Marie McFall, Glenn Stokes
Becky Burgess	Florence	Megan Smith
Alma Kennamer	Grant	Cindy & Eddie Kennamer
Tiffany Smith	Guin	Tim Alexander
Lavonne Vaughn	Guin	Pattie Gann
Minnie Lou Hendrix	Guin	Tim Alexander
Kathie Scofield	Guntersville	Rick Williams, Rod Smith, Page Williams
Amanda Patterson	Guntersville	Joanna Ellis
Deanna Nicholas	Gurley	Tina White
Michelle Helms	Hamilton	Kity Frederick
Emily Stidham	Hamilton	Sheilah Wiginton & Andy Stidham
Karen Long	Hampton Cove	Ann & Dale Cohen
Kay Carr	Holly Pond	Tina Holcombe
Lynn Thomas	Hoover	Peggy Harrison
Lisa Lucky	Huntsville	Pam & Rusty Congo
Norma Westmeyer	Huntsville	Treva Whitmore
Chrissy Freeman	Huntsville	Beckie Caldwell & Kelly Hensley
Elizabeth Renfroe	Jacksonville	Matt & Stacie Johnson
Kim McCutcheon	Jacksonville	Debbie Mosakowski
Kellyn Williams	Lawrenceburg	Joey Watson & Linda Watson
Linda Webb	Lincoln	Marsha Martin
Cathy Limbaugh	Lincoln	Marsha Martin
Pat Heath	Lincoln	Marsha Martin
Sally Benton	Madison	Carolyn Owen
Nancy Wesson	Madison	Carolyn Owen
Beverly Herr	Meridianville	Scott & Donna Thackerson
Courtney Boyll	Moulton	Kay Seale & Nancy Pinion
Jo Ann Medendorp	Moulton	Bobbi Shelton
Jayne Mecke	Muscle Shoals	Donna Cook
Amy Richardson	Owens Cross Rds.	Glenn Stokes, Rose Marie McFall
Sandra May	Owens Cross Rds.	Sherry Johnson & Debbie Collins
Marlina Martin	Owens Cross Rds.	Ken & Jackie Albrecht
Gena Mueller	Pelham	Holli Jackson
Kim Prater	Piedmont	Rhonda De Haven
Ginger Bogue	Scottsboro	Shirley Rossano
Robin McClendon	Springville	Lori Kersh & Kate Windle
Donna Ambrosius	Springville	Teresa Harris
Andrea Smith	Sterrett	Stephanie Kirby
Laura Sisson	Trussville	Will King & Freda Crumpton
Miaomiao Pang	Tuscaloosa	Ken & Karen Worley

Alabama Emmaus Walk 411 March 7-10, 2013

Lay Director	Don Shelton (Perseverance)
Asst. Lay Directors	Billy Hudson (Priority) Rod Alexander (Fourth Day) Tim Littrell Billy Hargrove Tommy Whitlow Lile Backley
Spiritual Director	Eric Brown (Means of Grace)
Asst. Spiritual Directors	Dudley Brock (Prevenient Grace) Jeff Fleming (Justifying Grace) Carl Long (Sanctifying Grace) Ian Butler (Obstacles to Grace)
Music	John Schuessler
Asst. Table Leaders	Brian Moore (Priesthood) Bob Whitlock (Study) Roger Keenum (Discipleship) Jay Sims (Changing Our World) Jimmy Grisham (Christian Action) Ronnie Chronister (Body of Christ) Don Kennedy (Life In Piety)
Table Leaders	Frank Patterson Gerald Glover Ray Vincent Steve Glenn Davis Twesme James Pinion Scott Keenum
Board Rep.	Bill Jordan

Committees

Agape:	Kay Seale	256-974-3109
Meal Service:	Cathryn Bickley	256-974-8924
Refreshments:	Barbara Chenault	256-974-0776
72-Hour Prayer Vigil:	Kasey Shelton	256-974-7083
Housing:	Marketa Terry	256-974-2707
Candlelight:	Mark Custer	256-760-8560
Clean-up:	Bobbi Shelton	256-974-1034
Closing:	Jerry Carroll	256-974-0991
Entertainment:	David Norwood	256-974-1378
Follow-up:	Diane Norwood	256-974-7395
Speakers' Prayer Chapel:	Bob McDuff	256-764-8575
Sponsors' Hour:	Frederick Martin	256-771-0645
Worship:	Ann Glover	256-974-0368
Photographer:	Mitchell Stevens	256-766-3675
Humble Servant:	Bobbi Shelton	256-974-1034

Name	City	Sponsor
Dale Childress	Albertville	James Dennis Ryan
Lucan Bagwell	Albertville	Jim Harris & Allen Walden
Eli Hatcher	Auburn	Brady Nelson
Sam Holmes	Birmingham	Carrie Wesley
Billy Jackson	Birmingham	Holli Jackson
Jonathan Powell	Boaz	Scott Wiggonton
Alan Smith	Boaz	Chuck Decker
Larry Kloep	Decatur	Vern Spearman
Richard Martin	Elkmont	Fred Martin
Tommy Glasgow	Florence	Band of Brothers RG (Donnie Armstrong)
Troy Walker	Gadsden	Terry Walker & Ben Sublett
Jeremy Patterson	Guntersville	Freedom Christian Fellowship RG (Eddie Marsh)
Dewey Tribbett	Huntsville	Benny Sisk & John Masson
Joe Campbell	Huntsville	Carole Foret
Tommy Poe	Kimberly	Bill & Kathleen Drake
Jeff Hamby	Moody	Terry Walker
Elbert Patterson	Northport	Ken Hanby, Sr.
Craig Stewart	Northport	Joe Powell
Luther Wright	Reform	Jeremy & Erin Burns
William Simpkins	Sylacauga	Chuck Terrell & Stephanie Terrell
William Boyington	Toney	Full Circle RG (Bruce Parris)
Ivey Gilmore	Tuscaloosa	Brad Almond

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Newsletter of the Board of Directors of the Alabama Walk to Emmaus

The
Alabama
Walk to Emmaus
Board of Directors
wishes you all
a Christmas
filled with *love,*
hope, peace,
and *joy!*

Praying for You

Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to members of the Emmaus Community and their families in the loss of loved ones.

Gloria Caneer (126), for the loss of her husband, Charles Caneer (144)

Jack Galgay (316), for the loss of his wife, Barbara Galgay (312)

Dolores Bunn (LW 20), for the loss of her mother, Frances Eleanor Reynolds

Please remember to say a special prayer also for those members of the Community who have lost loved ones during the past year.