



THE FAMILY

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

JANUARY 2012



- 4 Deana Patheal
- 8 Ben Wall
- 12 Ryan Hall
- 14 Naomi Bach
- 17 Jamie Vanbiber
- 18 Jonel Hickey
- 27 Kelly Mills
- 30 Sharon Hall

Kitchen Clean-up for January **Sarah Strong and Deanna Wall**

Fellowship Lunch Hosts and **Hostesses January 8, 2012**

- **Nancy Strnad
- *Michele Spencer
- *Kelly Spencer
- Scott Lindsey
- *Lindsey Chandler

* Please bring one bag of ice. ** Please bring sliced lemons for tea. Each hostess should bring a portion of bread to share. If we have a special function in place of fellowship lunch, the team will be asked to serve in some capacity. Thank you for your help. God Bless. Please call me if you cannot be there. Nancy

Financial Update

November 2011		YTD
Giving Income	21,420	252,858
Expenses	24,961	273,222
NET	(3,541)	(20,364)



Another year has ended, and a new one is beginning. I always feel a little sad as I put away Christmas decorations, but I then get excited as I begin thinking about a new year. To me, it is a fresh start. New and exciting things are in store for us.

First, however, let me go back to 2011 and thank everyone who had a part in the Christmas Musical, LIGHT LOOKED DOWN. The presentation went well, children and adults. Thank you, all, for the part you played in this: the adult and children singers, the drama, you who brought snacks, the decorations, the clean up, and all of you who came. The goal for the evening was to honor and glorify Jesus, and that was done, indeed.

Voices of Worship will resume rehearsals Wednesday, January 4, at 6:00 p.m. Joyful

Sounds and More resumes on Wednesday, January 11, at 3:30 p.m. Membership is open in both groups, so, if God is leading you to become a part of this music ministry, please join us at the given times.

May God bless you as we work together to honor Him in this New Year.

In His Service,
Sarah Joe



Young at Heart will meet Tuesday, January 24, 10:30 a.m. in the Choir Room. Watch the bulletin and email for more details.



The year 2011 was a great year for the EPC Children's Ministry! The Lord was so generous to bring us new families, new children, new ministries and many new opportunities to spread the gospel. Many, many thanks to those who helped with the Easter celebration, Vacation Bible School, and the Harvest Festival as well as weekly ministries such as Sunday school, nursery duties and weekly childcare for various Bible studies. I've also been blessed to be a part of the Polar Thang and Great Escape camps this year, as well as the Pine Hill outreach and Joyful Sounds Children's Choir each week. Whew, there's a lot going on at EPC! I'm looking forward to a 2012 that is just as rich with ways to serve and take part in the building up of the Kingdom of Christ!

Love to you all,
Angie

Youth Gathering



The Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Church Family,

On **Saturday January 7th** I am planning a Hire the Youth! for our students to earn some money for future trips and activities. This work day will have two time slots: 9am to noon and 1pm to 4pm. A signup sheet will be in the foyer beginning Christmas Sunday. Some of you may not know what to donate toward these work days and therefore you might not want to sign up to hire our teens. But let me say that while we have had large donations for work, we have also had smaller donations too. Whatever you feel is appropriate for the work done is what you should give and you should only give as you are able.

The Christmas season slows everything down in terms of our regular ministry activities and it's a needed break. But while our Pinehill outreach and Sunday Night Youth Gatherings will take a short break, the outreach to Willoughby Juvenile Detention Center will not. So please pray that these young men and women will find hope to cling to as Christmas approaches. I have seen the despair on their faces as some of them realize they are going to be celebrating Christmas locked away. They need hope that only Christ can give.

Christ's and yours,
Ben



Last year in January, I invited whoever was willing and medically able to join me in some sort of a 21-day fast. I'm planning to do it again, and I invite you to join me. For me, last year's fast was a modified "Daniel fast" in which

I followed Daniel's lead in Daniel 10, although I wasn't mourning as he was. Basically, I gave up everything but fruits, vegetables and whole-grains, and those I ate in smaller portions than I normally would (I lost 8 pounds, but weight-loss wasn't the goal, or even a consideration). Also, two days per week I fasted completely (water only). I'll probably do that kind of fast again this year, beginning on or around January 22. I like to start and end on a weekend, and since Jamie's birthday is January 17, I don't want to begin before the cake and ice cream!

Last year's fast proved to be a spiritually beneficial time for me! I had become spiritually weary, but in the fast I found spiritual refreshment in my devotion to Jesus and an increased fervency in serving Him. If you'd like to hear more about it, I welcome the inquiry.

If you choose to join me, you don't have to do the modified "Daniel fast." Other types of fasts are legitimate. For example, you might want to do a water-only fast for one or two days per week for the 21 days. I would suggest this for beginners. You can even supplement the effort with some sort of clear broth on the fasting days. The point is to abstain from some kind of normal nourishment pattern. If your medical situation makes fasting from nourishment unadvised, try fasting from some sort of entertainment or leisure or from some other regular enjoyment. Just make sure it *feels* like fasting (i.e., fasting from work doesn't count!). Some of you might want to be more aggressive than I and do a more rigorous fast from nourishment. If so, make sure you're not taking unnecessary health risks. Are you interested but stumped? Let's talk about it – I'm sure we can come up with something together.

Why fast? Jesus told us a wrong reason for fasting in the Sermon on the Mount: we should never fast to impress other people and receive their praise. And we must never fast to *earn* God's favor, or to put Him in our debt – to "twist His arm" to do what we want. Those things should never be our motive for fasting.

Now let's answer the question: why fast? We fast to draw near to God and to feast on the spiritual fare that comes from deep communion with Him. Fasting helps satisfy our desire for God! This idea is reinforced in **Psalm 73:25-26**, *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

God is my portion. What a wonderful thought! In the December 2010 issue of Christianity Today, Carolyn Arends' column refers to a book by Christian psychiatrist Gerald May. Arends writes:

In his classic Addiction and Grace, May argues that each of us have a profound desire for God. When that desire is inevitably frustrated or misdirected in a fallen world, we experience pain. We deal with that pain in two ways. We repress the longing, or we attach it to something else.

According to May, attachment "bonds and enslaves the energy of desire" to certain people, things, or behaviors until we are obsessed by unworthy masters who can never truly satisfy. Tragically, our attachment to anything other than God (even to things that are not themselves bad) uses up our desire for God. It truly "wastes" us.

Doesn't this cry out for us to embrace the psalmist's words in Psalm 73? "*Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.*"²⁶ *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*" In some ways, fasting is a spiritual house-cleaning!

So why fast? At the foundation of all the secondary reasons to fast, the underlying purpose is to feed our souls on God – to seek deep communion with Him, to rekindle spiritual zeal, to catalyze holy passion for God in our lives. It's a means to spiritual awakening and refreshment. Fasting expresses to God that He

is our deepest longing, and it appeals to Him to satisfy that longing. Perhaps it will help to see it as a form of prayer by which we say, **“My flesh hungers for food; but my heart hungers for God. Holy Spirit, satisfy my heart before my flesh!”**

If you join me in some sort of fast, remember, we hunger for God more than we hunger for food. Also, let me encourage you to be more often than usual in prayer, and to use every hunger pang to remind you of your desire for God. Who knows what God has in store for us as we fervently seek Him in this way? For all who fast and pray, Godspeed! I hope that you enjoy God in fresh and deeply satisfying ways. And for everyone reading this, whether or not you choose to fast, may rich communion with Him fan the flame of holy zeal in your hearts – through whatever means of grace you employ to pursue Him!

Under His Mercy,

Pastor Craig

Evangelical Presbyterian Church
4700 Victory Drive
Marshall, Texas 75672
903-935-7898
Craig Vanbiber, Pastor
Sarah Joe Strong, Music Ministries
Ben Wall, Youth Ministry
Angie Anders, Children’s Ministry
Shirley Ransom, Secretary
info@epcmarshall.org
Web: www.epcmarshall.org