

Words



from West End

*The newsletter of the
Community Church
Without Walls*

December 2008

"A Savior has been Born to You."

Every year we hear the story. Shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night, only to be disturbed by angels announcing the birth of the Savior, Christ the Lord. It is a beautiful story that speaks of hope and peace. It's a story that seems so far removed from the cross on which this child would suffer.

How could something as harmless as a baby and sheep, shepherds and wise men, a manger and a mother cause so much trouble? Every year at Christmas, when I look at the romantic images of the birth in manger scenes in living rooms and churches, I wonder if we miss the point. The fact is, the birth of Jesus was much more threatening than these images suggest.

In the Christmas story, Jesus is declared to be the Savior, Lord, and the prince of peace. But Jesus was not the only person to claim these titles. The Roman emperor did also. When the angels declare, "A Savior has been born to you," they are making a political statement. Caesar is not our Savior; Jesus is. Caesar is not our Lord; Jesus is. Caesar is not the prince of peace; Jesus is.

More than anything else, the Christmas story

reminds us that God has chosen to save the world not through mighty rulers and powerful politicians, but through the birth of a baby for whom there was no room in the inn.

Into a world that anointed Saviors because of the size of their army or the wealth of their empire, a child is born that shatters the notion that peace can come through violence and salvation through empire. The Christmas story removes the illusion of

peace and salvation on which Caesar claims his power and tells the truth about where real peace and real salvation come from. And just as this story did 2000 years ago, it continues to remove the illusion that peace comes through war and salvation from shopping. It reminds

us that our hope is not based on an election but on a birth. And just as this story called to the shepherds to go and see this homeless baby, it calls to us. It calls us away from the shopping malls and elaborate parties to places like the stable, to places where babies have no place to lay their head, and to places where unwed mothers struggle to survive. For God has a history of bringing the hope of the world into these pain-filled places.

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Give to Community Church Without Walls...

85 Percent of Your Donation Goes Directly to Hands-on Ministry

Two and 1/2 years ago when we started Community Church Without Walls, we felt our calling was to be a church with and among the poor of West End, the neighborhood with the lowest median income in the state of Alabama. In a context with such great need, we knew that we could not do this work alone, so we invited people and churches to partner with us. Many of you have stepped up to the plate, and because of your commitment, we have had a wonderful year of ministry in 2008.

We now have four house churches with about 50 people worshipping each week. Our youth program is vibrant and active. Every Wednesday over 40 kids come for a meal and Bible study. We have Friday Youth Nights and take our kids on a mission trip and spiritual formation retreat yearly. We have been able to help 67 people with utility or rent assistance, and seven people in finding work. We provided school uniforms and supplies for over 50 children and scholarships for two of our youth who were accepted to a college preparatory high school. We have been able to share God's love in Donaldson

Prison as nearly 25 inmates come each week for our Bible study. And we are planting the seeds of God's kingdom (literally) through our new community garden. One of the joys of being a Church Without Walls, a church without a building, is that almost every penny we ask for is used in direct ministry. In fact, for 2008, outside of the pastor's salary, over 85 percent of our money has been used in hands-on ministry and direct assistance.

We are excited about what God has done among us this past year and even more excited about the opportunities for ministry in 2009. We plan to start more house churches, grow our youth program, further develop our garden, continue our direct assistance, and start a new transportation ministry.

We hope you will partner with us. As our ministry grows, so does our need. I encourage you to prayerfully consider making a year-end tax deductible contribution and also make a pledge to our church for 2009, knowing that 85 percent of what you give will be used in hands-on ministry.

Join With Us – Return This Today

YES! I want to know more about the Community Church Without Walls.

- I want the pastor to call me.
- I want to enter into a partner covenant with the Community Church Without Walls by promising to support the church through prayer.
- I want to enter into a partner covenant with the Community Church Without Walls by giving \$ _____ as a one-time gift, \$ _____ as a monthly gift, \$ _____ as an annual gift.
- I want to volunteer or bring a meal for the Friday Youth Night or Wednesday Youth Bible Study.

If your address is incorrect, please make changes on reverse and return this to us so we can update our mailing list.

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Community Church Without Walls Scholars

Winning Awards and Showing Promise for a Bright Future

Last year, Holy Family Catholic High School in West Birmingham became a Cristo Rey school. Cristo Rey is a national school initiative specifically for high school students from low income families. In neighborhoods where the high school drop out rate is often over 50 percent, Cristo Rey Schools not only graduate but send over 90 percent of their students to college. In fact, last year, out of a graduating class of 22 from Holy Family, 22 were accepted to college. That's the kind of opportunity we want for our kids!

Therefore, we are committed to offering a scholarship to any of our kids who are accepted to Holy Family Cristo Rey, and two of our kids, Shay and

Shawanda Polk are students there now. Shay is in the 11th grade and Shawanda is in the 9th, and both are excelling. Shay has recently been accepted as an Honor student and Shawanda received the "Student of the Quarter Award," one of the highest awards given to a Holy Family student.

In starting a new church, one of the most necessary components is to develop leadership among the youth because they are the ones who will be leading the church in ten years. We are so proud to have youth like Shay and Shawanda and are confident that they will continue to make our church and our community a better place.

Compost Now for Our Garden this Spring

Start a compost pile now, and the free fertilizer will be ready for our Community Garden this spring. It's easy:

Place coffee grounds, food scraps, leaves, twigs, and grass clippings into a bin or pile about three to four feet square. Don't add diseased plants or meat scraps. (Good rule of thumb: if it has been cooked, it doesn't belong in the compost.)

Keep the pile moist and turn it every five to six weeks. It will be ready by May.

Have you visited our Web site recently?

Get a complete listing of home church meeting times and locations, find details of our different ministries, and make donations using PayPal or a credit card. Bookmark the page and use it to quickly find our phone number or e-mail:

www.communitychurchwithoutwalls.org

Our Weekly Activities

Community House Church on Tuscaloosa.

We worship together on Thursday evenings at 6:30 p.m. at R.G.'s house, 1656 Tuscaloosa Avenue.

Grace House Church on McMillon. This house church meets on Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. at Bridgette's house, 1027 McMillon Avenue.

Table of Grace Church. On Wednesday mornings at 10:30 am, we gather for worship and Communion in the community kitchen at Urban Ministry.

Agape House. Worships on Friday evenings at 6:00 p.m. in the home of Juliette and Larry Thomas on the corner of St. Charles Ave SW and 5th St SW.

Prison Bible Study. Each Friday morning, we offer a Bible study for men at Donaldson prison.

Overcomers Support Group. We offer a support group for addiction on Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday Youth Bible Study. Each Wednesday, about 20 kids participate in a Bible study. We begin with a meal and then spend an hour in an interactive Bible study that relies on art and drama.

Friday Youth Night. We use the Urban Ministry building to provide a safe place for kids to come and hang out with other kids. Once a month, around 45 kids come for dinner and games.