

# The Grapevine

“Building the Kingdom”



## Feeding the Community

Lot's of food made for a great time around the table with a lot of talking and laughter.

It was a great evening as we gathered together to share Thanksgiving with the community. There was enough food to feed an army, and we had close to that. There were several families from the community who stopped by to have a full plate of food and get to know us better. We were even blessed to break bread with our Hispanic brothers and sisters from the Iglesia Shalom Church.

The Leadership would like to thank all those who came out, helped set up, and then stayed around to help clean up the kitchen afterward. Because of the many hands on deck it made for an easy evening and a great evening of laughter. Not one person had to stay late to make sure that everything was put back where it belonged. That is the Church working at its best. We're now looking forward to a great year of that continuing.



We've been so blessed by the Lord this year. I'm looking forward to another great year of working together to "Build the Kingdom." Happy New Year.



### Congregational Business Meeting

Its that time of year again. Please be in prayer, mark the date on your calendar and then be in attendance for our Annual Congregational Business Meeting. Sunday, January 21 at 9 a.m.

## Eagle's Nest Recognized Nationally

Pastor Watts was recently interviewed for the Church of God National Newsletter. Here is that article.

If you've been to many camp meetings across the country, chances are you've sat under the bold preaching or inspirational worship leading of pastor and evangelist Ralph Watts. The pastor emeritus of Columbus West Church of God in Columbus, Ohio, is used to sharing Bible stories and passages that point to Jesus Christ. But his own story points to Christ, too, one that is nothing short of remarkable. He and his wife Karen have fostered a total of thirty-five special needs children over the years, and have adopted fourteen.

"Before Karen and I were married," Ralph reflects, "we were discussing having a family and she made me promise that, after we had our children, we would adopt one special needs child. While we were pastoring the Columbus West congregation, one day at lunch Karen reminded me of that promise and suggested it was then time to follow through. I gave the okay, and she signed us up for adoption



classes." That was just the beginning, and neither of them could have imagined the scope of the amazing,



yet agonizing adventure upon which they'd just embarked.

Adoption is challenging already. Adoption of a special needs child is downright difficult, should only be done by those God has called for such a task, but is essential for the countless individuals who desperately need unconditional love. When asked if Ralph would encourage others in the body of Christ to do what he has done, he's appropriately cautious. "I'm not sure encourage is the right word here," he explains. "Over the years, several of our church people, as well as our family (two of my younger sisters have adopted several) have taken the adoption journey. Don't get me wrong. I believe we need more believers to take that adoption journey, but just like raising your own biological children, it is quite a commitment. Pray, be open, pray, follow the leading of the Lord, and pray again. If we are doing what the Lord would have us do, his name is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord who provides. That is true in the adoption journey, as well"

"Quite a commitment" is an understatement. The watts family was first introduced to Ana at an institution in Houston, Texas. Ana had been born nine years earlier to a teenage girl who

had come alone across the U.S. border, got pregnant with twin girls, and couldn't handle the pressure. Tragically, she abused the little girls, killing Ana's sister and leaving Ana unable to walk, talk, or see. After a history of unfortunate situations at the institution, she developed a coping mechanism of habitually and violent scratching her body. The psychiatrist advised Ralph and Karen not to take Ana. "She will never give love or receive love," the psychiatrist explained. "Her hurt is too great."

But the Lord's leading was clear, and the psychiatrists was wrong. Despite the bets that were taken on how many days would pass before the Watts family would return Ana, and although the institution wouldn't let them take Ana until her government savings account was signed over to the institution so they could keep her bed open for

Ana's expected return, Ralph and Karen persisted. The road to stability was rutted and rocky, but after several years and many intense struggles, Ana has completely ceased scratching.

Ultimately Ralph could report that "the first round in the house in the morning is Ana's laughter, and the last sound in the house at night is Ana's laughter."



One year after they adopted Ana, the county contacted them about adopting a brother and sister. They did. What transpired from there is history, a complicated mix of searing emotional pain and rich blessing too deep—too wonderful—for words.

- All fourteen of their adopted children, including boys and girls, have been mentally challenged.
- Half could not speak.
- Two were blind.
- One was deaf.
- Five have been wheelchair-bound.
- Two have cystic fibrosis.

• Two have suffered from Angelman Syndrome.

• Three had feeding tubes.

• All experienced physical, emotional, sexual, or drug-related abuse, and most of their challenges are a result of these abuses.

The public wasn't always gracious, either. Family road trips were marred with refusals of service while eating out. Government regulations, intended to make things better, often made things worse. Hospital visits were routine, and the Watts had to endure the

deaths of a few of their own. But through it all,

God's light shone brightly through this incredible family, strengthening their faith and the faith of others.

"For several years, our family had a school for behavior-challenged students" Ralph reflects. "Whenever a new student would join us, we would have an assembly to introduce them to our small student body (twenty to thirty, K-12). I always took the opportunity to remind everyone that we all 'special needs.' We all have special needs and we all need to help and be there for each other accordingly. Our heavenly Father recognizes those special needs, loves us, and ministers to each need accordingly and 'in spite of' It is a shame that it seems to take us so long for us to recognize our special needs and God's special love."

Through their experiences, the couple was able, with the partnership of Bishop Timothy Clarke and First Church of God, to establish Eagle's Nest, a home in the inner city for special needs children For thirteen years, Ralph and Karen lived in the inner city as God took care of the needs of that house The full story of Eagle's Nest and the years surrounding is replete with miracles and examples of God's timely provision.

Today Ralph and Karen continue to offer their ministry of tender love and care, as they have ten in Karen's sister, who is also wheelchair bound, unable



to speak, and medically fragile. They have five of their adopted children still living with them, ranging from the early teens into the forties. One of those, their adorable Ana—whose adoption would change her life and the life of her new parents forever.

By Carl Stagner, Anderson, Ind.



Kira is coming to CW Church January, 14, 2018. Here's a little about her story.

Kira was born in Kiev, Ukraine and moved to the United States with her family at the age of ten. She dreamed of becoming a singer and went to one audition after another. But she got rejected at each one. "I went to different venues, asking to sing, but everybody said, 'no.' One restaurant owner even said, 'Kira, my worst singers are better than you.' It was heartbreaking! Then one day, she got invited to sing at a church concert and everything changed..."

We invite you to come and hear her story on the 14th in the morning worship service. A love offering will be taken in support of her ministry.

## Next...

With all the Holiday shopping, I know that you more than likely stood in some long lines. As you stood there waiting, and waiting and waiting, there is nothing like here that magic word, "Next." Shopping is a process of different steps. You have to get up the energy to go to the store, deal with the crowds, hem haw and decide what to get, and then pick it out. Once you've gone through all of that, you go and stand in a long line to pay for the things that you want to purchase.

Last month I talked with you about being in control of your life. I talked about how we need to surrender that control to the Lord. That is the only way that we have true success. That may not look like a fat bank account or a powerful position, but it does mean that we are children of God.

Okay, now I've surrendered, what's next? Well, I'm glad you asked. Jesus tells us that we are to "go and make disciples." We're to teach everything that He has commanded us. Of course in order to make disciples we have to become a disciple. So, I would say that the next step in our Christian walk is to become a disciple of the Lord. Now, some might argue and say that they are just by asking the Lord into their life. Well, that makes you a Child of God, and you have a ticket to heaven. However, that doesn't necessarily make you a disciple of Christ. In order to be a disciple you have to study. You become a student of the Word of God. You develop this relationship that you've started.

Let me try and put to you this way. You meet someone new at the store, work, on the street, or at church. They are nice, and maybe you think that you'd like become friends. What's the

thing that you start to do? You might give them a call and ask them to get some coffee with you, or grab a sandwich, or go to lunch. You start to do things together. You start to ask them questions about their likes and dislikes. You start to ask them about their history. Where they come from. You become a student of that person. You're studying them, becoming their friend, companion, and eventually maybe even close enough that they would consider you a brother or sister.

That's what we do with discipleship. We spend time with the Lord in the Word, through prayer, and in worship with other believers. We learn together. Talk together. Share together. Grow together. Iron sharpening iron. There are a lot of believers that struggle with discipleship because it takes time. You have to discipline yourself to be a disciple. It's not something that comes easily.

We have something that can help here at CW Church. This past year we have an individual who is taking on the task of discipling believers. He is working one on one, in classroom settings, and small groups. If you are interested in taking the "Next" step, I would encourage you to call the church office, or call my cell and I will put you in touch with this young man and we'll get you started on your journey. I guarantee that the Lord will bless you and grow in ways that you never thought possible.

Until NEXT time,

Pastor Rob

## **Start Your Day in the Evening!!!**

In the last issue we started talking about the Commands of Christ. The first thing that we'll do in this issue is answer the question of why Esau failed to find repentance from simply selling his birthright even though he sought it desperately with tears. Esau's repentance was faulty because he did not understand true repentance. He was a profane fornicator (take a look at Hebrews 12:16-17), and he simply wanted to regain the blessings that he had lost (Genesis 25:33-34).

However, when David was confronted with his sin, he repented for the right reason. He wanted to restore fellowship with God. If we repent for any other reason than this we are not experiencing true repentance. (See Psalm 51).

Now let's discuss the question of why God designed the day to begin in the evening rather than in the morning. "The evening and the morning were the first day (Genesis 1:5)."

- ▶ The evening is the most important part of our day because it affects the quality of our sleep and sets our mental attitude for the rest of the day. Therefore, people do not "get upon the wrong side of the bed"; they go to bed on the "wrong side."
- ▶ The evening is the best time to evaluate the achievements of the previous day and to set new goals for the next day.
- ▶ As we go to sleep meditating on Scripture and setting our goals before the Lord, our minds will be cleansed (this may produce unusual dreams). Then we will experience an exciting phenomenon: our "reins will instruct us in the night seasons" (See Psalm 16:7).

This means that God will give us practical insights from His Word and clear direction, which will have a profound impact on the success of our lives.

This has been one of the most exciting experiences of my life. It is how the questions for this study came into being, including the question on true repentance. If we meditate on the wisdom of God's Word, we can claim this promise: "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions" (Proverbs 8:12).

**Remember our responsibility is to meditate day and night. God's responsibility is to give us creative insights and direction. "The entrance of thy words giveth light." (Psalm 119:130).**

