

# Family Matters

## December 2008

### Jesus' Church: Living decorations to brighten up our community

*"For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made us understand that this light is the brightness of the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. But this precious treasure — this light and power that now shine within us — is held in perishable containers, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own. 2 Cor 4:6-7 NLT*

The celebration of Christmas is fast approaching and I love how many of our traditions reinforce the truth: "That God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son." (Jn3:16) In many of our malls and retail stores throughout our land, Christmas hymns and carols are still played over the public address systems declaring the mystery of God becoming human. Just the other day, I walked up behind a guy at the FSK Mall and overheard him softly singing along with the words to "Joy to the World" as it was playing throughout the decorated corridors. Yards and homes, desks at work and in dormitory rooms, fireplace mantles and store windows are adorned with decorations that sparkle and glitter, reminding us that the One we celebrate is worthy of our highest praise and of the One that is our only true source of joy, peace, and hope. In many places around the globe, ever-greens and all types of greenery (green is the color of life) are used in our decorations reminding us of the truth that the One we celebrate is the only means to everlasting life. Along with all these inanimate Christmas decorations that speak of a Savior, there is another "decoration" given by our Creator and Heavenly Father that also "shines like lights" to get the attention of a lost and hopeless world and to "light" the way to a life-giving relationship with Jesus –His Church. Jesus declared this about our role and purpose in the world,

***"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matt 5:14-16 NIV***

The living Christmas decorations of Jesus' Church are not people without problems or stresses or troubles; that kind of life is reserved for heaven. When Jesus' followers pose in front of the world as ones who have no problems they are like the manufactured evergreen decorations that are prevalent in America today –they look very life-like, but they give off no fragrance of life that comes with the "real." Rather authentic "lights" are people who "sparkle" with His peace and hope, His love and joy –all the while they live through the common realities of life on this planet.

As we decorate for this year's celebration of Jesus' birth, may we be reminded that the empowerment to be His life-giving decorations that shine forth with hope, peace, joy and love comes not from our own strength, goodness, wisdom, or wealth, but from another gift to us –His Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. ... He lives with you and will be in you. John 14:16-17 NIV

The news of our day is filled with uncertainty and negativity. Such headlines can dampen our spirits and cast a cloud over our celebration if we allow them to, but the reason we celebrate has nothing to do with our earthly realities. The gift of God in Christ Jesus is still the why behind our celebration, and when this truth is the center of all our traditional holiday activities, we will be living decorations that our neighbors will see the light of Jesus in our lives. Have a joy-filled celebration of our Savior's birth.

Deb and I love you,

**Pastor Dave**