



The Weekly Messenger

December 18, 2011

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I pray that each of us has had the opportunity to gather with family and friends in this hectic time to appreciate and celebrate the amazing blessings we have in each other! In my own family, we have been carving out brief periods to spend with my sister, brother-in-law, and three nephews who are here visiting from Japan. The amount of time we've spent together is not nearly as great as we'd like, but we are savoring each and every moment!

During one of our "outings" together, I had the opportunity to speak with Tim, my brother-in-law, about the various places he has visited in his 19 years in the Air Force. I was struck by the amazing depth and admiration he expressed for the various cultures and people he has been blessed to call friends over the years. Whether it was his time in Iraq and Afghanistan, or the many training missions he has been a part of in Asia, Africa, or Europe, Tim has learned to identify and affirm the very best in the people he has been called upon to work and serve with. He credits this ability to have a very broad perspective of people anywhere to the discipline of listening to their stories from their point of view.

Beginning January 8th, we will begin a study of the major world religions titled *A Spiritual World Tour*. This study is roughly based on another Adam Hamilton study done six or seven years ago which he attempted to answer four questions. First, why are there some many different religions? Second, how should Christians view other religions? Third, how is God at work in other religions? And maybe the most pressing question, what is the fate of those who earnestly pursue God through other religions?

For most of us, our understanding of other faiths around the world is limited at best. We might utilize relationships we have with others or simply what we can glean from the media or public perception to gain a better understanding.

CON'T ON BACK

ON THE CALENDAR



Saturdays at 6:30
Free Coffee - Live Music

Saturday, Dec 24 from 6:30 pm
Christmas Eve Services

See schedule on back.

Sunday, December 18
from 5-7:30 pm
Interactive "A Christmas Story"
Children's Worship Center



**CHRISTMAS
EVE SERVICES
AND
CHRISTMAS
DAY SERVICE
DETAILS ON
BACK**

Sunday, January 8
Old-Fashioned Methodist Potluck
Fellowship Hall

Sunday, January 15 at 12:15 pm
Informational Lunch for
Upcoming Disciple Bible Study!
Room 20

DECEMBER 25 MESSAGE: PASTOR TODD

"A Christmas Blessing for All"

While we celebrate Jesus' birthday with family and friends, with the giving and receiving of gifts, let us also take a close look at the people God used to recognize this newborn King!



A SPIRITUAL WORLD TOUR, CON'T

But the truth is, as Christians, we would never want those unfamiliar with Christianity to gain their understanding of our faith from assumptions and indirect sources. As such, I have conducted interviews over the past few months with religious leaders in our community of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam. In each case, I asked each leader (or group of leaders, in one case!) to present their particular religion as if I had no prior knowledge or pre-conceived notions. And let me be very honest...that sounds a whole lot easier than it really is! On one occasion, I had to excuse myself because I found myself wanting to debate the theological merits of their faith with Christianity rather than receiving the gift I had asked them to share with me!

So, beginning on January 8th, I am going to do my very best to present what these leaders so graciously shared with me...from their perspective! In doing so, my aim will be to begin to answer the four questions above, present what I have learned firsthand from practitioners of these various faiths, as well as share how this has helped to shape my own Christians convictions.

What I can tell you is this: I now have a better appreciation for our brothers and sisters that practice other faiths. I have new friends that challenge me and ask questions that make me examine my own faith. And I have a renewed enthusiasm for why I am a Christian that does not diminish, judge, or condemn others for their equally strong conviction!

As we head towards this new study together, I want to ask two things of everyone. First, please begin to pray about this time together that we might have open minds and hearts, and that we might receive with grace the offering that leaders have shared with us. And secondly, pray that God might encourage you to invite someone who does not have a relationship with Him. It is my hope that this will be a time for us to openly and seriously examine our own faith, as well as the merits of other world faiths.

May your Christmas be blessed with family and friends, with memories and laughter, and the miracle of the Christ child!

Grace and Peace,
Todd



Christmas Services SCHEDULE

December 24—Christmas Eve
"the manger"

4:00 pm: Family Service
6:00 pm: Solid Grounds Service
8:00 pm: Traditional
11:00 pm: Communion (Pastor Reuben)

After all the talk and preparation, at some point we are called to action. Often times, we don't feel ready or adequate to the task. Mary and Joseph surely felt the same way! And I'm sure that they revisited those same feelings throughout the rest of their lives! After all of the prayer, learning, and anticipation, we too need to put our faith into action. But we also need to realize that this will be an ongoing venture in our "journey"!

One service at 10 am

December 25
Christmas day



SATURDAY,
DECEMBER 31
6:00-10:00 pm

Solid Grounds Coffeehouse New Year's Eve Party!

*Dance to the music of
Los Radiators!
Appetizer and dessert buffet,
door prizes, family-friendly!*

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1



Special
Wesleyan
Covenant
Service

Two services at 9 and 11 am

4th Annual St. Stephen's UMC Presents
A Interactive CHRISTMAS STORY™ Event!

Bring your favorite movie snack to share, dress as your favorite character, get out your pink bunny jammies, bring your Red Rider BB gun, and help us act out the funniest scenes with Ralphie and the whole gang. This will be a hilarious night of Christmas fun, for all ages, don't miss it.

TODAY!

5-7:30 pm
in the
Children's
Worship
Center

COOKIES FOR THE TROOPS



Thanks to the IMMENSE kindness and generosity of St. Stephen's, we will be able to deliver over 2,000 cookies to the Kirtland AF Base troops this Christmas season! — Bonnie Eddings

