



*"Leading edge news and views of the ministries of Live Oaks Community Church"*

## Planning Ahead For Christmas

I know school has barely started, the state fair is weeks away, and Brett Favre has yet to make believers out of the fans in New York – but it is time to plan for Christmas! Christmas is the celebration of the Savior's birth who delivered us from sin... It is a time for thankfulness for God's great generosity to us in the gift of His Son... It is a time for joy, love and goodwill toward everyone around us... Right...? After the fatigue of a harried Christmas celebration last year, I committed to never drag myself through "the most wonderful time of the year" again!

Therefore, with the goal to hit the holiday hassles at the root before they bare the fruit of stress in the coming months, here are a few guidelines for creating a personal and ministry checklist to make the Christmas season go as smoothly as possible...

### Commit Christmas To The Lord

God's word plainly instructs us, "Commit (entrust, practice, and develop) your works to the Lord, and your plans will be established (succeed)." Proverbs 16:3 Praying over and being led by the Lord in the priorities and practices of your Christmas celebration will definitely put you in the path to receive God's blessings and promises as you develop your plan for your family and ministry. Put Christ and His word first, and keep putting Him first as you go through the planning process.

### Prepare Your Home For Guests

Most of you know that I am usually pushing hard to complete some home repair project in the last days before Thanksgiving. (Ok, occasionally in the wee-hours of the night before the big turkey day!) This year I am not planning any major or minor home projects for November or December. Instead, you and I must tour our homes making a list of what needs to be repaired, purchased or put up in preparation for the holidays or guests. This list should be prioritized so that the most important items can be accomplished by the end of October – after that they wait until the first of the New Year. In carrying this guideline into the church, the hospitality ministry of Live Oaks must begin now to determine what Christmas and Advent decorations or resources we need for the holiday season and purchase them. If new equipment is needed or existing items need repair, now is the time to do it. Whatever

we need to fix to welcome guests into our ministries or congregation should be addressed, repaired and fixed in the next two months.

### Plan Your Activity Involvements

Personally, our family has two milestone birthdays (one in November, "the big 50", and one in January, "the big 18"), this year along with our regular two birthdays the week of Christmas! In addition to this, there are the many and varied Thanksgiving and Christmas activities that we look forward to and have grown to love – hosting/participating in the traditional Thanksgiving feast, day after Thanksgiving shopping, celebrating the Advent readings and wreath, All-Church Christmas dinner party, Children's Christmas program, MD's dinner party, Caroling and cookies at Sandpiper Bay nursing home, Haag's open house, Business Christmas parties, neighbor/employer open house, Christmas Eve service, Christmas day breakfast or dinner, and any other number of personal traditional activities... It is a busy time! Yet all these activities can help us celebrate Christmas well! However, they can become a stumbling block and a barrier to Christmas cheer if we do not plan ahead for them!!! The key, whether these are personal or ministry activities, is to make a plan now and do all we can now in preparation for these valuable events. One strategy is



to make a list of every activity you are responsible for or will participate in with the items that need to be done for each of them. Then begin to accomplish as many of the tasks as possible, starting now, and each week before the holidays hit. Our Children's ministry, All-Church Events, and Worship teams should be working their lists NOW. In this way we will whittle away and eat the Christmas goose one bite at a time – instead of all at once!

### Start With A Gift And Card List

At the beginning of October, sit down and make a list of the people for whom you will send a card or buy a gift. Categorize your gift list in various groups – those whose gifts will be mailed; school/teacher/coach/team gifts; neighborhood/church gifts; special ministry gifts like "the Christmas Blessing" through Live Oaks and so on. Determine the best you can what gifts you will give. Work

## WHAT'S ON YOUR NIGHTSTAND??

Since Jan Burt had trouble finding someone to volunteer to have their brain picked this month, two of her children became her guinea pigs. If you have a book(s) you would like to share about, please see Jan and let her know!

First, we will hear from Gage Burt:

**1. What are you currently reading?**

The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas.

**2. What is your favorite part of the book?**

When Edmund Dantes exacts his revenge on his enemies, who do not know his true identity.

**3. Is there anything you don't like about this book?**

The ending wasn't as "complete" as I hoped it would be.

**4. Would you be willing to loan this book out for others to read?**

Absolutely!

Next up is Alex Burt:

**1. What are you currently reading?**

Pride and Prejudice, Emma, & Sense and Sensibility.

**2. Which of these was your favorite?**

Pride and Prejudice, hands down!

**3. What do you like about this book?**

It is my favorite Jane Austen book. I think it is more entertaining than her other books.

**4. Is there anything you don't like about this book?**

I would like to know more about what happens to the characters - the ending leaves me hanging.

**5. Would you be willing to loan this book out for others to read?**

I'm sure a copy is available at the public library!

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### CHRISTMAS

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weekly to knock out a few cards or gifts prior to Thanksgiving. For some of us just purchasing cards and getting our Christmas letter ready before Thanksgiving is a major accomplishment! Work your lists and set whatever goals appropriate for you. Remember, any progress is still progress!

#### Share The Good News That A Savior Has Been Born!

Pray over and come up with a plan to advance the gospel this Christmas season. Maybe it will simply be to faithfully participate in the gatherings of the Church during the Advent holiday. Your presence always makes a difference to God and others. What about sharing your testimony at work, at church, with a neighbor or with a fellow student? Research has shown that the vast majority of people, whether young or old, do not react negatively when a Christian simply shares what God has done in their life and what He means to them. How about having special family devotions once or more a week reflecting upon the Christmas story, God's work in human history, and God's on going work in your life and world? The local Christian book store will have resources you can easily use or better yet ask a fellow church member for ideas regarding family devotions during Christmas. Finally, what about doing something special and unsolicited for someone else just to share the generous love of God in Christ? An intentional act of giving and kindness can open the human heart to the love of God like nothing else!



Someone said, "The definition of insanity is to do something the same way over and over again and expect a different result!" I am seeking to change my approach to Christmas and inviting you to do the same. I pray these guidelines will help free you and I from the stress of Christmas past and prepare us to experience Christmas in style this year focusing on what and Who is really important in our celebration.

Merry Christmas Planning!

Pastor Kelley