

Near the Cross Emmaus



December, 2011
Volume 6, Issue 10

Join Us for Gathering, December 3, at Noon

One Christ, One Body In 2011 Fall Walks

Christians from 26 churches in 20 towns felt the call of Christ to worship Jesus in the 2011 fall walks at Mt. Zion Baptist Church. It was the most diverse body of believers in the six years of the Near the Cross community.

Denominations are not mentioned in the conference room setting but your editor joins many others in rejoicing in the outreach of our community. Pilgrims came from Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee and throughout Arkansas to find a common bond in Jesus Christ. Regardless of their church affiliation or home town, the pilgrims learned to love each other and worship the Risen Savior.

Regardless of their faith, Pilgrims joined hands, dined together, sang together and prayed together in a 72-hour retreat that will stay in their memories forever. The purpose of Emmaus is to build leadership in the local church, and many pastors rejoice as they welcome a new Spirit in their churches.

Towns Represented

Batesville	Lake City
Blytheville	Lakeview
Bono	Marion
Brookland	Monette
Corning	Olive Branch, MS
Eads, Tenn.	Paragould
Greenwood Springs, MS	Quitman
Heber Springs	Tuckerman
Jonesboro	West Memphis
Kennett, Mo.	West Plains, Mo.

Comments Sought On By-Laws Change

In their Spirit-filled wisdom, the founders of our Near the Cross Emmaus community provided for an occasional change in our By-Laws to bring them into conformity with the current practices of the community (Article XI: Revisions of the By-Laws.)

It has become necessary and expedient to count ballots earlier than prescribed in the election of new directors. By advancing the date one week, we are able to invite the new directors to our board retreat in November. The extended retreat gives all directors a chance to relate things about themselves that would not come forth in business meetings.

The current By-Laws state:
Section 4: Election of Board Members
C. Returned ballots shall be received by the Secretary and opened and counted at the November Board meeting by three (3) Board members.

The proposed change reads:
Returned ballots shall be received by the Secretary and opened and counted one week prior to the November Board meeting.

Article XI: Revisions of the By-Laws ... "Any proposed revisions are to be reviewed and approved by a 2/3 vote of the Board, then submitted to the Community for review and comments for a period of 30 days...The Board may then ratify the approved changes."

The Board voted unanimously to approve the change and submit it to the community for comments.

Rekindle Jesus' Spirit With Your Friends

Just as Jesus called you for your Walk, He is still calling us to sup with Him, praise Him and join Him in fellowship and love. Gather for a potluck feast starting at noon in the First United Methodist Church, Jonesboro. We will join with fellow believers to lift up Jesus in song and prayer, then gather for Holy Communion.

God has led Rev. Marion Fleming to bring forth some powerful Fourth Day speakers this year, and we look forward to another from our body to share their Emmaus experience. The event concludes by joining hands in a wide circle and singing "Bind Us Together."

One of the past Fourth Day speakers is featured in this newsletter. You can read other talks by going to our website:

www.nearthecrossemmaus.org

Under the Newsletter tab on the left side, click on June, July, September and November issues. The Fourth Day talks will be presented on pages 2 and 3.

Congratulations Newly Elected Board Members

Marion Fleming (clergy)
Cherokee Village
Travis Emery
Caraway
Sara Frazier
Pocahontas
Shelly Fulks
Gosnell
Haley Mitchell
West Plains, Mo.

All Things Become New

All Things Become New

Holly Woody 4th Day Talk

Growing up in a loving home with loving parents and being spoiled rotten, I was truly one of the most rebellious children you could ever imagine. Even though my mom was always a church goer and my dad was not, we lived in a world of parties, alcohol, screaming and fighting for a portion of my world. We kind of looked normal and maybe we were, at least we were called a family.

My name is Holly Woody, Noah's of Ark Chrysalis Flight #1, table of Nerks.

My mom was always the one to get my sister and I up and ready for church, Sunday school, youth group, fellowship suppers and Sunday school activities. We were at all church activities, to the point of missing ball practice or ball games which were my number one thing or anything else that happened to be scheduled at the same time as a church activity. My mom would even pray for rain if a ball game was scheduled at the same time as a church activity. I'm telling you, she was a wicked witch in my book and was the only mom in my sphere of friends who did that! She would even tell people out loud what she was praying for! How embarrassing was that!!!

Even though we were still going to church and participating in church there were still parties and drinking going on and my parents screaming and fighting in drunken stupors. Around the age of 13 or 14 I started noticing a change taking place in my mom.

When I look back, it was about the same time that my parents had gone on some weekend Christian retreat. I didn't know then but know now, it was called the Walk to Emmaus. All of a sudden, there were no more parties, and no more friends hanging around at our house drinking. And my, my...pictures of Jesus and Scripture readings were appearing all over our house, and there was no more fighting. I didn't have to go to dad in the bedroom and ask why he wasn't going to church. He was up and dressed and ready to go to church with us!! Even as a teenager, I noticed that something was drastically changing. Someone has taken my parents and did something to them. (I thought to my self.)

My era as a teen consisted of a big Aqua Net hair spray. The bigger you could make it stand up the more in style you were. That style was put on hold!! No more hard rock music, no more "just go see whatever movie you want to see." When I went on my first date my mother actually asked my boyfriend to recite the 10 Commandments and for sure to let him know that he was carrying precious cargo. Oh my Lord, what had happened to her!!! And for further confusion my sister and I were called to the breakfast table for devotions and prayer time before school! For my dad, my name changed from Holly to Holly Nicole! When my middle name was added, I knew a father/daughter talk was forthcoming. My whole world was beginning to fall apart and on more than one occasion I decided I would leave home...The first time was at the age of 14.

By the time I was 17, many Holly Nicoles had filled my ears, and I was grounded many, many times. One time for 9 weeks I got to hang out with my parents for 9 long, hard weeks!

However, being the stubborn rebellious child I was, I chose to continue to do right the opposite of my parents' instructions and ventured down my own path to destruction. I did many, many things I now regret.

During my journey, my mom announced that she and dad had signed me up to go to a teenage weekend Christian retreat. After many temper tantrums and being sulky for weeks on end, my mom uses the good ole reverse psychology and says "I don't want you to go." Then I asked if I could invite some friends and she agrees. "Whoo-hoo" I say to myself, "We will all be miserable." However, as the weekend began to unfold, I remember being touched by the Holy Spirit like never before, and I laid down a lot of stuff. I cried when I saw my parents at the Service of Light on Saturday. My closing was on Father's Day, and when I got up to speak a yellow butterfly landed on the cross in front of me. I will share with you about the butterfly a little later on.

On my arrival home, I wanted to live for Jesus soooo bad and tried to make up my mind to. Only if I could just stay here in this environment and not go back out into the world. But when I woke up on my 4th day, I was right back in the same rut as before...hanging around with the wrong friends and before I knew it, the world had just sucked me in.

During my 37 years, many bad choices have been made and many trials have come on my journey. However, I am married to a wonderful man, have a handsome 13-year-old son and an 18-year-old step daughter. You see, my husband is a recovering alcoholic and has now been sober 20 months. We thank God every day!

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All Things Become New

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Being a Christian was something I just was. I prayed and went to church (even if I had a party at my house the night before). My world came crashing down with one of my husband's relapses in 2005. He entered rehab and I was so angry, bitter and unforgiving. That December in 2005 was when Jesus became so real to me and in an almost audible voice told me, "Holly, you are not in control and you have to forgive." Nearly falling to my knees, I looked back on my life and saw the many times when Jesus was holding me and carrying me through the darkest pits of my life. That's truly when my 4th day started.

My mom studied and knew some sign language. One of the signs she always used to my sister and me was the sign of love, which means "I love you!" When we would pull out of the driveway, or go up to bat, or be hurt on the court or field, or anytime there was distance between us, there was that sign.

Isaiah 49:15-16 says "I can never forget you. I have written your name in the palm of my hand." The Holy Spirit revealed this to me and that's exactly what Jesus does for us. He signs "I love you" in our darkest moments. When I began to look back, I then saw the leadership, love and parenting that my parents did.

When my own child was born, I suddenly realized how smart and loving my parents really were. I thank God today for parents who stood the test, and hard as it was, and showed me that life styles can be changed to live for Jesus in our daily lives, in our work place, in our community, and in our own homes.

Well, I became a Jesus Freak! Because of that, I was not so popular at home. I was not very popular at work and didn't have many friends. The people who I thought were my friends really weren't. And even to this day I learned a couple of months ago that a friend wasn't really a friend.

My full testimony is much too long to share because I could write a book. There is much more to the story, but let me say that today I am now the wicked witch. I'm the mom who will not let the boys and girls go upstairs to watch movies unsupervised. I am the mom who checks Facebook, text messages, calls other parents and calls the school. I'm the mom who insists on our son attending worship and youth activities, even to the point of missing football practice if it is scheduled for Wednesday nights. Of course I call my mom to discuss it.

In Al-Anon, a very wise woman with years of Al-Anon experience said to me, "if you don't learn something in your crisis, you may get to see that crisis again." I am in no way perfect. I am still stubborn and determined to have the last word. I still have control issues. I have trials and am currently facing one as I speak.

God has given me these trials to grow closer to Him. I praise Him in the storms, but I thank God every day for my parents and their love for me, for leading me to Christ and sending me on a weekend in what I thought at the time was a prison and the background to find my way back to Him many years later. Proverbs 22:6 says to lead a child in the way he should go and he will come back.

Despite the fact that I refused to sit with my mom at our first mother/daughter banquet and also the time my dad stopped me on a Sunday morning with a pint of whiskey between the knees, I'm thankful...thankful for the example set before me...thankful that he used all that in teaching me and showing me the way.

I say all this to remind myself and you parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends...don't give up. Pray over your children daily. I have heard it said that we might be the only ones praying for our children on any particular day. God has placed each of us on a journey called "life" and a part of that life is raising teenagers. Don't give up...God's grace is sufficient for us.

I told you I would tell you about the butterfly...

Before it becomes a butterfly, a caterpillar goes through a growth stage which is called "chrysalis." On the surface, it may not look like much is happening, but the delicate chrysalis process changes the fuzzy caterpillar into an awesome butterfly with wings of intricate designs and intense colors.

The chrysalis process symbolizes how Christ can transform us into something beyond our dreams. It happens when you grow beyond yourself, opening life to Jesus' power and love. Chrysalis is the name chosen for youth and the young adult version of the Walk to Emmaus. It is parent involvement because it symbolizes the spiritual growth that is essential between adolescence and adulthood. That growth is as crucial for youth as the cocoon is for the caterpillar.

**I was in that cocoon for years but I am thankful Jesus turned me into a butterfly!
Fly with Christ!**

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Check us out!

www.nearthecrossemmaus.org

From the website, you can post prayers & praises, print sponsor & work forms, find reunion groups and upcoming events.

Also find our history, names of board members and assignments.