

Throwing Bricks At The Huber

Misleading title but it works. Tonight was the monthly board meeting for [FCF](#) and a festive mood was created. Amongst other topics discussed was possible promotions to get the word out about *The Wizard of Oz* coming next summer for 4 sure-to-be spectacular performances. One idea bandied around was throwing bricks at the crowds watching the annual Jubilee Parade. Unfortunately, the idea was for FOAM bricks painted gold. I probably could come up with some real bricks... not sure if any are still left from the demolishing of the old town hall (haven't really noticed lately).

After the meeting, I went to dinner and had a great time as always and a mysterious spirit paid for our meal. All eyes turned to me when the waitress announced that our bill had been taken care of. Honestly, it was not me this time. Totally innocent THIS time! Happy Birthday once again tomorrow, Taylor!

Finally, I headed over for my nephew/Godson's Christmas concert which had been postponed from last Monday when we had our first pre-winter storm. As always, the Huber is a glorious site for a concert of any magnitude but it just creates a magical, festive atmosphere this time of year. This season, it is easy to see why the Junior High and High School bands combine: the senior High only has **10** members. Get some of those choir members to join. The concert was wonderful!

Everything from selections from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (one of the band director's personal favorite holiday specials... who am I to argue) to a few jazzy selections (didn't really care for a jazz arrangement of *Silent Night*... call me a traditionalist).

A few of the choral pieces took me back almost 20 years. A more traditional *Silent Night* ALWAYS creates nostalgic, bittersweet memories. As Jeff remarked, at least we could

stand for the final song: Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" from *Messiah*. I wasn't sure if anyone was actually going to stand until one brave soul got to his feet. Two seconds later and I would have risen. I have always said that ending a concert with the piece is a sure-fire way to get a standing ovation. I've often wondered what would happen if the performance was not up to par. After an hour and a half, I don't think anyone wanted to sit down again.

Merry Christmas!

Merry Christmas! Happy holidays! Happy New Year!

Whatever you are celebrating this year, here's to hoping that it is safe, fun, and happy!



Merry Christmas from our family to yours!

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior

has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

– Luke 2:8-20 NIV

Manny Returns

Last night, while the parents went to a holiday gathering I got to stay with some of my favorite little ones for a few hours. If I'm not mistaken they get a full two weeks for holiday break?! I think our own school doesn't dismiss until Wednesday. As always, I had a ton of fun!

Little Beebs was put down for his nap being promised that I

would be there when he woke up which (I am informed) put him down almost immediately. It did take him a few minutes to get the grogginess of sleep out of him when he first arrived. Get him busy on his new tool kit and we were all good. Although, I think the cordless drill might be running out of juice. So, I showed him the joy of pounding nails in with the hammer.

Sammie was captivated by her new digital camera. Carrying it around like an old pro snapping pictures here and there.

Dis was her normal, cute self. We cuddled on the couch and spent some time watching Spongebob. I must be outgrowing the adventures of the denizens of Bikini Bottom but delighted in the kids' excitement every time the sponge came on the scene.

Later, the three little ones played Thomas while Manny terrorized the train as the monster who kept throwing boulders from atop a cliff. Thankfully, I had dinner ready so I could put the Tank Engine to bed. Fold up kid size playsets are the best... only took a few minutes to figure out how each part folded up.

I did get to bring gifts for the little ones for Christmas and one for the young lady, Taylor on her birthday. Hopefully, the four can share the joint gift I bought. I thought it was a fun way to enjoy the holiday. But Taylor really has grown from the little girl I met nearly 5 years ago into a very helpful, mature, and fun pre-teen. While changing a little package of my own, Taylor was quick to answer a phone call and to release the hounds. Although SOMEHOW! "Beasel" got into the garage and created havoc or at least paw prints and diaper breath.

C&L and I did get to play a game when they returned and after the game was finished, I knew that we were all ready to say good night after a long weekend. An evening filled with fun and the unexpected (PSHEW!) as always.

Christmas Two-Fer

Looking for a bit of Christmas spirit (not THAT kind of spirit)? My nephew Alex, Megan, and I found a smattering at the Huber tonight as the Village Players presented a duo of one act plays. Things got started with an adorable retelling of the immortal Nutcracker story. Most of the cast was made up of children with a few adults in the mix to keep things under control. There were whole families taking part in some of the roles! And what would the tale of little Clara and her Prince on a magical Christmas Eve be without the classic music of Tchaikovski's ballet. There were also some of the dances thrown in: The Waltz of the (ADORABLE) Snowflakes, The Chinese (Tea) Dance, and of course The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy. And the Snow Queen really sent shivers down my spine.

BRRRRRRRRR! And WHO was behind the Owl Clock who kept popping up in rhyme?

After intermission, O. Henry's classic tale of unselfish, sacrificial gifting was presented. What better way to remind us all what the Christmas season is all about than by seeing a young couple give what they "think" is their most valued possession in order to purchase a gift for their true love.

Be it by reading the printed story, seeing it presented on stage, or watching the Mickey and Minnie version, *The Gift of the Magi* has always been a personal favorite of mine. And the narration wasn't bad, either ☐

After the performance, my trio greeted the cast... most of whom I have either worked with previously, been directed by, or been reviewed by ("a raised eyebrow speaks volumes" still cracks me up!). Travis received his giant nutcracker director's present... very appropriate. No present for Amber, yet. And of course, my young companion had to endear himself

to everyone. Calling Miss Mare “a gift from God?!” Honestly...

I did forget how much I adored the two sets. The Nutcracker was full of fun colors, a giant tree, over-sized sweets, and the razzle-dazzle of the season. The polar opposite was true of the second show. The young couple’s (by the name of Young, coincidentally) abode was dark and dreary. Both sets captured each tale beautifully.

A really fun evening full of friends and Christmas magic.

10 Years, 1 Year

December 18 marks two anniversaries of immense personal loss – 10 years ago today, my father-in-law passed away from ALS. Though some memories are still painful, a decade of time has numbed the pain of his loss a little, and it’s easier to focus on the good times we shared and the countless wonderful things he did for people during his lifetime. Albeit selfishly, I sometimes wish that Vince was here to meet his 7 wonderful grandchildren, to realize our family’s growing relationship with God and our spiritual journey, and to see how far his son has come in life. I think he would be so proud. [More about December 18, 2000 was written here.](#)

December 18, 2009 – Last year, on the day that was 9 years to the day after Vince’s passing, our family dog Charity passed away unexpectedly. She was almost 12 years old but in seemingly good health. She was fine in the morning, gone by dinnertime. Not enough time has passed to heal the pain of her loss since she was like a child to us, but there is no reason to dwell on such melancholy topics here in the blog.

I’m thankful that I have a busy December 18 this year, that

it's on a Saturday and that I don't have to spend it alone. I'm writing this ahead of time and scheduling it to post itself on December 18 automatically in hopes of maybe not realizing this day of personal infamy until it's over. Will the entire day pass without me thinking about Vince or Charity? Probably not, they and other loved ones lost hold a special place in my heart, and I think about them most every day, especially in December. But December 18 this year will have joy of its own as family comes from far away to celebrate the season. I look forward to making happy memories for December, especially for the 18th, which just happens to be exactly one week before Christmas, a day I'm really looking forward to celebrating this year more than ever. Losing Charity last year was an awful thing to happen just before Christmas time, just as it was even more terrible to lose a parent / grandparent in our family just before Christmas 10 years ago. But when I lost Charity, and I realized that I was more curious about God's plan for me than I was looking to be angry with Him, I knew that I was on my way to having a wonderful spiritual relationship with Him.

For that, I am very thankful, and it makes me want to celebrate this Christmas season for what it truly is: a celebration of the birth of Jesus and an acknowledgment of the glorious love that God has for us.

Counting my Blessings...

This December has definitely been one of the most difficult times in my adult life. It's one of those times where one is tempted to feel "I just can't get a break. Why am I being picked on?"

However, that makes it extra important for me to count some of my many blessings.

1. My Amazing Family

I can't say enough about my family. I have a loving and supportive wife who is always there to share in my joy and accomplishments and lift me up when my chin is down. She also keeps me grounded and focused when I start to feel sorry for myself or am tempted to make a decision that is poorly thought out or based on selfish ambition. And a wife who has also helped raise with me 4 delightful kids. Kids who are every bit the troublemakers they need to be to keep me from getting complacent and to keep our family from over-swelling with pride. But who are also very loving, affectionate, caring, generous, thoughtful, and adorable. God has placed the perfect family in my life to help round me out as a person and to fill my life with joy.

2. My Supportive Friends

I have friends who don't just fill my life with empty flattery and mindless conversation. They also don't only show their faces when I have something to offer. They are there when I need someone to listen, when we (our family) needs assistance, when I need a kick in the pants, and when I need to laugh and forget about the stress in life... God has gifted me with friendships that warm my heart and keep me moving forward. Between my family and friends alone I have been given so much to be thankful for – no matter what my circumstances.

3. Our Success and Opportunity

Even though I hit a rough patch every now and then, my life has been filled with nothing but opportunity and reward. Lisa and I often marvel at how much we have been **given** in terms of success. The ability to work from home for so many years and to rarely hunger. To be born into a country where we are free to peruse our desires, dreams, and passions. To be able to have an

influence in our community and to be able to use the creative gifts God has entrusted in us... The list goes on and on.

I have counted three blessings which I just feel I need to share. However, the list of blessings only start there... It is mind blowing to me how much I have been given especially compared to how much I have given back. One Bible passage that always sticks in my head is from Luke 12:48:

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

I have been given so, so much. So when times are tough, like they are this December, it is not time for me to get down and demand more out of my Creator. It is time to **give praise** and ask the Almighty God *what more I can do? What more can I give? What more is to be demanded of me? How can I submit and offer my body up as a living sacrifice?*

Because there can be no doubt; I have been given much. Much will be demanded. And, I welcome it... Just as any loving son would welcome the demands of his loving, supporting, and life-giving Father.

Go See... Oh Wait, It's Much Too Late And So Am I

Big surprise, time got away from me. How did that happen? Couldn't be that it's Christmas time and I have a million things to do. Honestly, I always try to refrain from sending Christmas cards, but sometimes I feel so badly when we get

cards from others and I'm not sending any back. So then I start sending some – just to my MOPs (Mothers of Preschoolers) group, I'll say. But next thing I know, I've decided to send Christmas cards to "a few" select groups of people, and that's when I realize that I'm just sending Christmas cards anyway even though I wasn't going to! Well, this that and the other stuff; Christmas cards are just one extra check on my holiday time to-do list, but that's a tangent...

My point was busyness. I was so busy that a few weeks ago when I wrote another newspaper review for one of our community theater groups, I forgot to post it on my blog. I usually like to post my reviews in my blog – since I'm doing the work to write them anyway, I might as well post them here to try to remind some friends and readers to go see the show. But now it's too late, for the show I saw and reviewed has finished its run. Oh well, such things happen; hopefully my review as it was printed in the paper made some people want to come see the cute show. For fun, here is a copy of the review:

Pageant Shines This Season

Early December finds many people preoccupied with the hustle and bustle of the approaching holiday season, so what better way to unwind from holiday stress than to see a live show?

A play guaranteed to inspire Yuletide spirit, The Best Christmas Pageant Ever is being performed by The Williams County Community Theatre in the playhouse at 501 S. East Avenue in Montpelier during these chilly December weekends between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

This festive show provides fun for the entire family. The audience can spend a wintery evening or an afternoon matinee getting to know the Bradley clan (cohesively played by Jake McAfee, Mary Valdez, Allie Boyer, and Logan Psurny) as their normally normal life erupts into chaos. Thoughtfully narrated by young Beth Bradley (a cute and concise Allie Boyer), a

heartwarming story unfolds, and the audience is a captive witness to the events leading up to what everyone hopes will be The Best Christmas Pageant Ever.

When Bradley mom Grace (a funny, flustered Mary Valdez) is chosen to replace Mrs. Armstrong (an amusing character played by Nicki Bassett) as director of the church's annual Christmas Pageant, all seems well until the Herdman family (outrageously played by Lance Day, Jessica Valdez / Sunny Bowman, Mason Bassett, Elliot Bowman, Isaiah Valdez, Jamison Grime, and Katie Taylor / Zara McNalley) slips into the scene. The Bradleys' seemingly picture-perfect world is turned upside-down when the six trouble-maker Herdman kids come to Sunday school. Even the reason why they began attending in the first place is hilarious (Logan Psurny takes the heat as Charlie Bradley). Poor Grace just wants to tell the story of Mary and Baby Jesus in the Pageant, but rehearsals are tough with a zany assortment of characters (brought to life by Amy Boyer, Jenna Bowman, Kyla Huband, Jake McAfee, Abby Ledyard, Makayah Long / Alisa Parsons, Kayden Long, Anna Valdez / Carolyn Rychener, Brook Ward / Bailey Ward, Taylor Brown, Amari Blanco, Tatum Grime, Savannah Kleinhen, Ethan Psurny, Hailey Tressler, Hannah Tressler) who just don't seem to like the idea of giving the Herdman kids a chance. Will it all come together in time to be The Best Christmas Pageant Ever?

It's the perfect time of year for this touching show, and WCCT's The Best Christmas Pageant Ever will have you flooded with Christmas spirit. Whether you simply come for the holiday fun, to see the joyously decorated theatre, or to watch the adorable children in the cast put on their Pageant, this show will tug at your heartstrings, chase away holiday blues, and leave you humming Christmas carols with a glow and a grin!

"After all, It's almost Christmas!", so come out to the theater and join the fun!

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever can be seen on the Montpelier

stage on Friday and Saturday nights at 8 pm on December 3,4, 10, and 11 and Thursday night December 9, and Sunday afternoon December 12 at 2:30 pm. Some of the roles are split between multiple actors, which is just one reason to see this show more than once. Reservations are recommended, but not required. Please call the WCCT Office for reservations and more info: 1-888-569-9228.

Taylhis has experience in community theatre that spans multiple decades. Ms. Taylhis has been on the stage as an actor, as well as behind-the-scenes doing production work like assistant-directing, producing, and stage-managing. As an enthusiastic supporter of the arts in Northwest Ohio, she has also enjoyed serving administratively on the boards of various local community theatre groups.

Voyaging Through The Winter Wonderland

Yes, yesterday found our first major storm of (the not even started) winter. Saturday night's forecast said not to expect any white stuff until the afternoon. Well... as I was walking to work at 7:50 AM, there was already a dusting and more falling. After work at 2, I walked home and spent the afternoon watching some holiday classic specials which have been DVRing faithfully awaiting the time when we could share in their viewing. Later, we watched one of Mom's favorite holiday movies, *White Christmas*. Old sentimental fluff but I must admit that it puts me in the holiday mood every year.

Tidbit... several people think that the immortal Irving Berlin tune originated in this movie. However, it really debuted in an earlier Bing Crosby classic, *Holiday Inn*.

Today, since schools were all closed (and even delayed last night), my brother decided to take his kids to the third *Chronicles of Narnia* feature, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

Since a more local multiplex did not have a matinee, we decided to brave the blowing blanket of white for the big city. Until we got on the Interstate, the going was rather rough.

The movie itself was wonderful. I have it on good authority that it the movie is once again very faithful to the novel.

The seven Narnia books are each quite a bit shorter than the Harry Potter installments so I was not really surprised. The thing which surprised me was the switch from Walt Disney to Fox 2000 studios. Apparently, the last film in the series (*Prince Caspian*) fell quite short in box office expectations and the Mouse House backed out of the remainder of the movies.

I have not read the book for some time so I did not know fully what to expect. I knew the basic plot but little of the details. But it was very good! I can't say what my favorite is because it is a series and definitely cannot stand on its own. If you have seen or read any of the installments, you know that the series is a thrilling allegory. Yet you do not have to be a devout Christian to appreciate the story. Just going in and expecting a thrilling adventure is really all you need. Growing up reading and re-reading all of the books, I did not take the time to note every Christian symbol. I could spend hours detailing C.S. Lewis' theological mind... but I won't.

Hope everyone enjoyed and was safe during the first winter storm of the season.

I Needed To Smile Today



A Bear-y Rockin' Holiday

AH... the holiday programs continue. Last night, my first grade niece, Alyssa, and fifth grade nephew, Alex had their Elementary Christmas Program. Unlike Elizabeth's production of *Seussical, Jr.* last weekend, every student in grades K-5 were involved. However, the evening was divided into 2 (or three if you count the 6th grade guitar class) musical extravaganzas.

The youngest 3 classes presented *A Bear-Merry Holiday* in which the Kindergartners were dressed in brown as Grizzly Bears.

The first grade group as white Polar Bears. The second graders transformed into either Black or Panda Bears. Some of the highlights of this show were the angry, rapping grizzlies who promised to "be good." However, when they thought they were not being watched, returned to their rappin' ways.

"Panda-monium" found a group of pandas chasing each other in a

circle... not much room on the stage and one nearly fell down; however, I think this might have been slightly intentional as the near stumble looked a bit choreographed.

After two intermissions (after the K-2 were finished and following the guitarists), it was time for the big kids to present *Santa's Rockin' Christmas Eve*. The televised variety show featured an array of musical talent everything from a 60s Motown girls group, to a bluesy Mrs. Claus, to a Beatles-esque fivesome (ok, the Beatles were the fab 4) who made the girls swoon and faint.

There were more individual character roles in this production and I would have to say that my favorite was the quick talking, frequently "ad-libbing" emcee Swingle Kringle (brother of the guy in the red suit who everyone was waiting to make a surprise appearance) who was often admonished for his penchant for going off the cue cards.

When Santa finally arrived, he did not come alone. He and his back-up group performed the traditional holiday Disco hit, "S.A.N.T.A." I think the costumes could have been a bit more creative for that number. Perhaps not the traditional garb of a police officer, construction worker, Native American, biker dude, and military guy but a little more than just the jolly old elf in his polyester suit.

After the performance, we came home for our annual viewing of the 1938 version of *A Christmas Carol*. One tidbit gathered from the pre-show introduction: Scrooge was originally supposed to be played by Lionel Barrymore who had for years performed the role over the radio and was the original choice.

However, just before filming was to begin, Mr. Barrymore took a nasty fall and was unable to be in the film. He would create a role just as curmudgeonly (love that word) some eight years later, Mr. Henry F. Potter, himself. Tonight, the Muppet's take on the Carol is on. Haven't seen that one in years!

Another fun-filled holiday extravaganza. Monday night (weather permitting) I will take in my final concert at the glorious Huber... weather permitting of course. We could be in for a bit MORE of the white tonight into Sunday.