

"Tastes and Sounds of Christmas" — It's Back! -- by Leslie Mitchell

The Oak Grove Women's Department is sponsoring the "Tastes and Sounds of Christmas" at the church on Saturday, December 1 (time to be announced). Proceeds from this event will go to local charities supported by the Women's Department. You'll find all your holiday favorite foods there for sampling, including sweet breads, appetizers, cookies and candies. In addition, there will be special Christmas music by a variety of performers, as well as a Christmas drama.

Several of these events have been held in past years and everyone attending has had a great time. The public is invited. Please join us!

(Note to Oak Grove women: If you would like to provide something for this event, please call Monica Rush to sign up)

Worship Times:	Communion Sunday	
Sunday Early Worship	9:00AM	9:00AM
Sunday School	9:15AM	9:15AM
Prayer Service (Sacrament Sunday only)	10:00AM	
Sunday AM Worship	10:30AM	11:00AM
Sunday PM Worship	6:30PM	
Wednesday PM— Prayer and Testimony	7:00PM	

Zion's Path

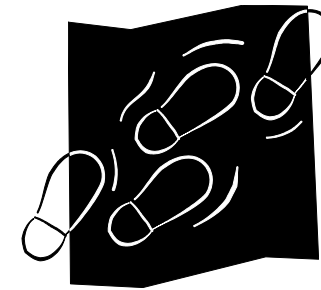
"...and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths..."
Isaiah 2:3

Church of Jesus Christ
Oak Grove Restoration Branch

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Oak Grove, MO 64075

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Zion's Path

"...and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths..."
Isaiah 2:3

From the Pastor's Inkwell 

Early this last month, a momentous event occurred in the life of our branch, namely the 2007 Vacation Church School. I was traveling that week for work, but I returned home on Thursday and convinced my wife to trade places with me on Friday so that I could attend. I can testify that each one of the volunteers was excited to be there and were busy giving their all in service to the children.

The enthusiasm of the leaders was clearly rubbing off on the kids. They seemed interested in all of the activities, involved in the lessons and discussions, and were expending their limitless amounts of energy in the back during recreation.

We were blessed with such an organized and creative staff and I would encourage you to again pass along a word of thanks for the contribution that each one made.

We're cutting the cover article short so that we can devote some "front page exposure" to the wonderful efforts and accomplishments from that week.

- By Priest Eric English, Associate Pastor

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Vacation Church School 2007—Choose God's Truth -- by Jill Gowan

Vacation Church School for 2007 had fantastic reviews from staff and parents alike. Our theme was "Choose God's Truth!" We emphasized daily themes to help "choosing truth" seem real and pertinent to our children and youth.

Students were given opportunity to memorize a Book of Mormon verse, Moroni 1:88-91, and were rewarded with an ice cream treat! We had many students from the Bates City mission and some from other branches attended as well. We ministered to about 85 children per day.

The VCS staff included our Pastor, Mike Ballantyne, and our teachers, Becky Beal, Dawn Robinette, Synthia DeBarthe, Connie Smith, Janet Williams and Monica Rush. Lisa Postlethwait and Cindy Green, along with 8-9 older youth, assisted students with their craft project, a beautiful board book, with lift flaps and photos that can be read again and again to remind them of our themes. Valerie and Carianne Lidberg brought beautiful sounds to our ears by leading the music,

and Lacie Mitchell headed up the team for snacks-- Yum! Yum! The children were able to enhance teamwork skills and just release some energy at recess, which was admirably led by Phillip Thomas, assisted by Milana Freeze and Patrick Asberry. Our incredible photographer, Elizabeth Martinko, was able to capture special moments on film to see the next day on our display boards as well as at the VCS program slide show! Our assistant teachers and registration helpers were Jordan Gowan, Marquel Witt, Jill Beal, Edie Cutshall, Sarah English, Pat Allen and Sarah Turner. Our nursery was handled by Lisa Newman, Holly Gamble and Heather Smith.

Others of you gave of your precious time to make the entire week fun, educational, cooperative and uplifting. Thanks to all of you and our Heavenly Father for His blessings. May your children continue to grow in spirit and experience joy as they Choose God's Truth.

(Continued on page 7 with photos galore)

Ring a Joyful Noise --- by Sarah Norman, Bell Choir Director

For the last twelve years, our congregation has enjoyed the sound of our hand bell choir. Its first performance was at the wedding of Sarah and Eric English in January 1996. Since that time, the bells have rung out many different times, usually playing at Christmas and Easter. The bells were also used by the youth at Oak Valley Country Day School, which gave them an opportunity to provide ministry to many different churches and people. The choir consists of twenty-five bells, and usually eight to ten ringers.

This year a new performance is being added to the schedule. On September 15, 2007, the choir is going to "ring a joyful noise." Praise songs such as "Above All" and "Awesome God" will be played, as well as classic hymns like "How Great Thou Art."

This concert is to help raise funds for a third octave of bells, which would include twelve more bells, two cases, and foam to cover the tables during performances. The choir is also hoping to refurbish the two existing octaves. They have served us well for twelve years, but need a little TLC. The refurbishing would include fixing or replacing broken pieces and a thorough dismantling and cleaning. Our bells would return to us bright, shiny and as perfectly pitched as when brand new. Bell choir members began fundraising in August with a very successful yard sale at the church. We are now more than one fourth of the way to adding to our hand bells!

Please join us on Saturday, September 15 at 6:30 pm at Oak Grove Restoration Branch as we praise God together. Invite all of your friends and family to come as well. There is no fee to enjoy the music, but donations are welcome. After the concert, the ladies of our congregation will be providing refreshments. Also, there will be a "sneak peek" of the music on Sunday, September 9, during the morning service (prelude begins about 10:15 a.m.) We will begin accepting donations at this time.



Upcoming Events

- September 9: Bell Choir Sneak Preview
- September 15: Bell Choir Concert
- October: Missionary Series Month at OGRB
- October 10: Deadline for Military Care Package Items
- October 14: Deadline for Christmas Cards for Military
- December 1: Tastes & Sounds of Christmas

Spiritual Stewardship Groups to Reorganize --- by Mike Mitchell

It is time for the Spiritual Stewardship groups to reorganize. We have sign-up sheets in the foyer at church. If you haven't been in a group and would like to be, please fill out a form and put it in the container on the table. If you are already in a group and would like to continue to be in a group, please fill out another form. Also, if you would be interested in being a lead elder or assist the lead elder, please note that on your form. Please have the forms turned in by September 30th. Mike Mitchell and Todd Smith will get together and form the new groups.

Vacation Church School (cont. from cover) --- by Jill Gowan

Our theme was "Choose God's Truth!" We emphasized daily themes to help "choosing truth" seem real and pertinent to our children and youth.

Monday we talked about "Where to find truth." Many students enjoyed this day as we took a journey through Lehi's tent and saw actual "Brass Plates" and the "Brass Ball, directors or compass." We discussed how important it was for Lehi and his family to have the plates so they could teach their children the truth. We talked about the sacrifice they made in trying three times to obtain the plates. We also learned of the importance of having the Holy Spirit guide our lives with truth, similar to the "Brass Ball" directing Lehi's family. Without this guidance we would be wandering aimlessly and be lost, just as Lehi's family experienced at times when they did not go to God and seek his direction, or chose to not follow his commandments.

Tuesday centered our thoughts on "God is real and He loves you." With this theme we tried to show the students proof of God's existence though nature, history and scripture. We also showed them about His love as found in His Son Jesus and His sacrifice for us. Many testimonies were shared by staff and students of the reality of God's love.

By Wednesday we were learning "Obedience brings blessings!" We learned of disciples Nephi and Lehi's prison experience and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's deliverance. These men were obedient and were greatly blessed. We also talked about why we sometimes don't want to obey and what makes our hearts get hardened. Wednesday also was water day, which was a huge hit due to the intense heat we faced this week.

Thursday's theme, "In Me your Joy is Full," helped lighten the hearts of all. It was an excellent reminder that God wants us to find joy in this life. If we will choose His ways, we will experience a heartfelt joy and peace that stays with us, even when difficult things happen in life. Paul and Silas, our scripture story for Thursday, showed their joy even while in prison. They were found singing and praising God while under arrest, even when they had done nothing wrong. Because of their joyful attitudes they were used by God to convert the guard to Jesus Christ. They also were miraculously delivered from the prison.

Friday the youth treated us to a skit called "Truth or consequences." Our theme for Friday was "Choose God's Truth." This challenged all of us to make a commitment to follow God's commandments and look for ways to live the truth.



Ministry provided in Grain Valley

--- by Edie Cutshall

Since February of this year, our branch has been providing ministry to the Essex Care Facility in Grain Valley. Various priesthood members, and often their families, visit the Care Facility on the second and last Sundays of each month and conduct a short worship service. Rachel Horn has been helpful in providing people to lead singing at each service.

Twelve residents live at the facility, with Penny Cordell as the manager. Usually, five to eight people attend the service. They are always very appreciative and enjoy the singing, reading of scriptures, and worship thoughts.

They are a delightful group, and we are happy we can provide ministry to them.

(Editors' note: This ministry is led and coordinated by Elder Don Cutshall.)

New Concrete Parking Lot to be a Reality

--- by Charlie Booth

A Branch Business Meeting was held on Sunday evening, August 19, during which Elder Ron Lidberg presented the recommendations of the Building Committee for Branch action. The committee recommended approval of a proposal by Calvert's Paving, Inc., to provide all labor and materials for Phase I of the parking lot. (Phase I includes the north, south and west sides of the building. The area east of the building will be completed as Phase II in the future --- probably when the remaining area in the basement is finished.)

A detailed presentation and question/answer session included comparisons of asphalt vs. concrete and other considerations. Those members present then voted to approve a proposal consisting of 100% concrete paving and authorized the Building Committee to enter into the contract. Elder Lidberg noted that the project, which is expected to last between one and two weeks, could begin in as little as five to seven weeks. It was also decided that a qualified individual from our Branch, with extensive construction experience, would be found to oversee the work.

This project is the culmination of dedicated efforts by many who have served on our building committees over the years. The fruits of their service and the devoted stewardship of our members will soon be seen in a very concrete way!

(There is a need for some additional funding for this project, though the amount needed is much less than previously anticipated. Please contact Ron Lidberg if you feel led to help in this way.)

Support Our Troops

--- by Leslie Mitchell

We are gathering "new" Christmas cards to send to active duty military personnel stationed overseas so they will be able to send cards to family and friends. Please bring the cards to the church by Sunday, October 14. That will give the troops enough time to receive the cards from us and still be able to mail them out to their families.

In addition, we are also preparing care packages to send to the troops for Christmas. You may donate items such as shampoo, cat flea collars, gold bond powders and hair conditioner. Also needed are snack foods like individual beef sticks, beef jerky, hot chocolate, cup of soup, nuts, etc. Please bring those items to the church by Wednesday, October 10, so we can get the boxes ready.

If you would like to donate money instead of going shopping, you can give the money to Alice Blea or Leslie Mitchell. We can do the shopping for you.

Thank you for supporting the military. They really appreciate it. Some of the men and women don't get mail from anyone. This is a wonderful way to reach out.

Getting to Know — Leonard Smith

Ruth and I were married just shy of 66 years. We courted for four years before we married. We had three children; Sylvia, Celia, and Lyle.

Sylvia was my "tomboy." I called her "my boy." Sylvia helped me in the barn and with all the livestock. Celia was the "house girl." She was always helping her mother in the kitchen and around the house. We called her "CJ." Lyle was "mommy's boy."

We always had a dog or two or three around the house. Our favorite was Sandy. She was such a good dog. All we had to do was mention the name of one of the cows and Sandy could round it up.

The kids always helped feed and milk the cows. One day they were out in the barn filling the troughs with feed. Celia tossed the bucket back to Lyle and hit him in the head, which started bleeding. The kids ran back to the house, Celia yelling she had killed Lyle. We had to take him to the doctor. He survived.

Our family vacations consisted of visiting my sister and brother-in-law in Colorado. When the kids got old enough, they would ride the bus to visit them and attend reunions with my sister. They would end up spending half the summer there. They loved the mountains.

I was reared in the church in California. We left California in 1925 to move to Missouri. It took 30 days to drive from California to Oklahoma. Dad got a job and bought some land. We ended up staying there for four years. We finally made it to Missouri in 1929. We settled just northeast of Lee's Summit. We attended the Lee's Summit branch where I met Ruth the very first Sunday we were in town. Ruth's family moved here from Montana in 1920. They also settled in Lee's Summit. In 1934, I was called to the office of priest. In 1946, I was called to the office of elder and in 1967 to the office of high priest.



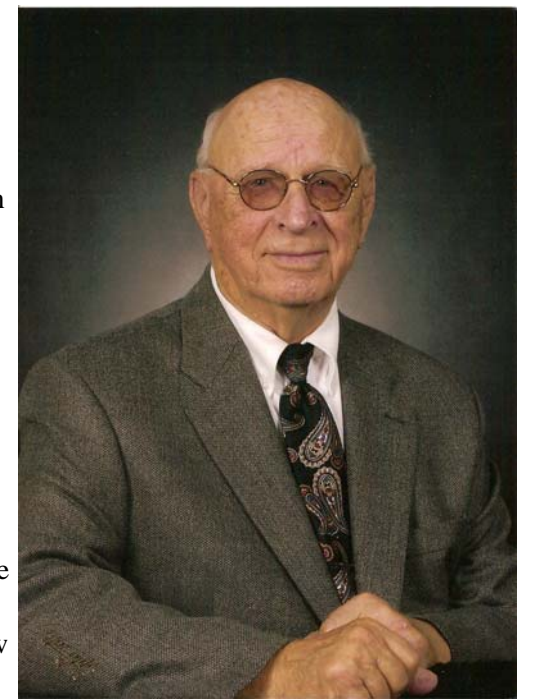
We have attended the Oak Grove church since it originally opened in 1947. We were there the night it was organized. Some of the first families were the Cutshalls, the Quicks, and the Smiths. The first pastor was John Quick and I was his assistant.

So I have been a part of Oak Grove for 61 years. I served as pastor from 1949 to 1970. Five of those years were spent as pastor of the Blue Springs Congregation, from 1960 to 1965. From 1970 to 1990, I served on the Central Missouri Stake Standing High Council.

My favorite part in the Book of Mormon is about the experiences of the brother of Jared when the Lord reached down and touched the stones and gave them light. The brother of Jared moved mountains through his faith in God. He had such a strong faith in God.

I am a firm believer in the Doctrine and Covenants. It is close to my understanding and my life. I admire Joseph and Emma's perseverance through their trials and so many tragedies....yet they stayed faithful to the Lord to the very end.

Ruth and I took care to raise our three children to love God, yet they knew they had their own agency to choose the lives they wanted to live.



Question Time — Can we have righteous anger? --- by Elder Chip Gowan

I am certain that everyone reading this article has allowed anger to build within them at some point in their life. Anger is an emotion that stems from so many areas of our human existence. Whether it is selfishness, an unfulfilled want, disappointment, frustration, injured pride, ill-prepared reactionary words, or just simple maliciousness; anger is a common occurrence in the world we live in today.

There have been times where I have caught myself in some public place pondering how a mother, with precious little kids listening intently, can completely lose her composure, lashing out with words only a sailor on his worst day might be caught saying, all because she did not get satisfaction with her request. Worse yet, there I am, so utterly shocked, and at the same time filled with pious pride, hypocritically thinking how much more righteous I am than she is. However, if you are like me, I have been guilty of letting a situation get the better of me and have lashed out with some unkind word, action, or thought that originates from the root of all these negative actions - anger.

James 1:19-20 states, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." I believe most of us realize the harmful effects anger has on our own hearts and the destructive effects it has on those that receive the brunt of our anger.

Still, there are certainly times when our patience is pushed beyond the tolerance of even the holiest saint. Is not our anger justified then? The scriptures have 586 references to the words "anger" and "wrath." The vast majority of them refer to God's wrath or anger which stems from punishing those that are disobedient to the commandments. So that begs the question – is there not a time when we can have righteous anger?

Can we keep the holy word and respond in righteous anger similar to God? What about those occasions when we are the recipient of someone else's anger or recognize the obvious disobedience of another? Is our wrath appropriate then? I can think of several obvious sins that can stir up anger in most of us – child abuse, homosexuality, and genocide just to name a few. Is not our anger justified in response to these most obvious of sins?

After careful and prayerful consideration, I am most assured the answer is emphatically NO! There is no way for us to have righteous anger. Why do I say that? Well, first there is not a single place in the 586 scripture references that say "man's righteous anger" or come close to implying God's approval of when men (or women) have anger or wrath. This makes complete sense when we ponder it deeply. The only way for us to have righteous anger towards another person, is to be able to judge the heart of that individual. We cannot do this without God's eyes and even then we see the person with God's love, grace, and mercy; not His anger or wrath.

Righteous anger is exclusively God's. That does not mean that God will never reveal to us his judgment or request us to perform an act that is in response to his judgment of disobedience. One can cite the occasion of Jesus clearing the temple of the money changers and sellers of doves or the numerous accounts of the Nephites being led in battle against the Lamanites. However, in each instance God did not give license to the people to hold anger in their hearts or act in wrath towards their enemies.

Brothers and sisters, the next time you find yourself rationalizing your anger in an attempt to justify your actions, I ask you to consider the case of Alma and Amulek watching the innocent suffer the pains of a fiery death or the Anti-Nephi-Lehi people who allowed themselves to be slain without fighting against their Lamanite enemies. Consider the crucifixion of our Savior Jesus Christ and how his death and resurrection was meant for us all. May God bless us all as we try to quell the emotions that stir our hearts to anger. Amen.

"Righteous anger is exclusively God's."

The Freeze Point --- Commentary by Susan Freeze

Many parents tell their children when they go out, "Don't forget who you are and whose you are." This reminds me of my grandfather, a man of great integrity and work ethic. My mother said she never heard him curse or speak a bad word about anybody. He had the image of the Lord in his countenance.

When I was younger we often vacationed with my grandparents. Once I was kidding him about napping in his lawn chair. He quickly told me he wasn't napping, but was looking for holes in his eyelids. I was just young enough to quickly close my eyes to check for holes.

Mostly what I remember is his legacy. As his health declined in his nineties, he needed help day and night. I helped some and was struck by the way he prayed at night for his family. He was eloquent. I am sure he couldn't name all his great-grandchildren, but was assured that God knew them.

As he continued to age, he forgot who I was. Once when my mom asked him if he knew her, he said, "I know you are one of my daughters but I can't remember your name."

Toward the end of his life, my parents took him to church and he took communion. Both of my parents wondered if he understood what he was doing. The Holy Spirit rested on my father and impressed on him that when people take communion without remembrance of the Lord it is just bread and wine, but with the remembrance of the Lord it becomes Holy Communion. My father was given to know that my grandfather had taken Holy Communion and that it would be his last time to partake on earth. He died a month later.

Grandpa Sherman's legacy will be felt for generations to come. My prayer for all of us is that, like him, we would *always* know who we are and whose we are.

Sharing the Gospel in Honduras --- by Katrina Campbell

I had the opportunity this past year to live in Honduras with the family of Chuck and Regina Sperry. I taught kindergarten at a bi-lingual school, as well as choir for 1st through 5th grades and guitar to the Jr. High and Sr. High.

There was only one Christian at that school, though most did have a religious background, such as Catholic, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. I made new friends that I was able to pray with and share testimonies. The Lord also opened opportunities to share my testimony about the Book of Mormon and to talk about such things as grace, the atonement and Christ's visit to the Americas.

One time I visited with another teacher in her home. As she shared about her life and family, she mentioned that she didn't go to church at all. She didn't know which church to go to because they all had different doctrines. So I told her about a young man who had the same question in the 1820's, and how he read James 1:5, prayed in the middle of the woods and received the answer from the Lord.

While in the Sperry home, everyone spoke English, and I did receive some classes in Spanish from them. I learned most of my Spanish by listening in the church services, singing songs in Spanish and reading the scriptures in Spanish.

At various times I had the opportunity to stay in the home of a church family who spoke only Spanish. They lived in El Progreso, a couple hours away from the Sperry's home in Siguatepeque. There were no other church members there and no church to attend. While learning Spanish, I also had the opportunity to bring ministry to the family through song and talking with them individually about the Lord.

It is my hope and prayer that the Lord will continue to open doors there, that the whole congregation will come to know the gospel of Jesus Christ and be baptized, and that there will be a branch of the Church of Jesus Christ in El Progreso.

(Editor's note: Watch for more of Katrina's testimony in the [Zion's Call](#))