



Views from the Top

The Cloudhaven Chronicle

Vol. 1, Num.3, December, 2003



Dear friends...

Actually this is Volume 15, Number 3, December 2017, but this masthead appeared on our first Christmas Chronicle way back in 2003. As previously reported, this will be the last year of formal ministry at Cloudhaven. God has given us nearly 15 years of service to groups, families and individuals and has allowed us to see him impact lives in many ways. We have seen young children grow up in Christ, marry and bring families of their own. Singles also have developed relationships, married and come back as families. Mission, college and church groups have undergone major changes and have still continued to find Cloudhaven a place to meet and be renewed and equipped to move forward in ministry.

God has also blessed our stepping out in faith to create Cloudhaven in 2003 by providing support and meeting all our needs over the years. Many of you have been his instruments in that regard for which we are exceedingly thankful. He has given us many dear friends who have enriched our lives by ministering to us during their stays here. He has also given us relatively good health amidst our decreasing stamina as we have aged.

The Lord has also provided ministry opportunities for us in area churches of our denomination and others, community involvement through the Sacramento Mountain Ministerial Alliance and in our Presbytery of the Southwest. We especially wish to acknowledge the support and encouragement of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Alamogordo—our church home since we first came to New Mexico.

Important giving notice

We will be dissolving Cloudhaven as a tax-deductible non-profit organization at the end of the 2017 calendar year. Any assets remaining at that time will be donated to other Christian non-profit ministries. All donations to Cloudhaven received after that date will be returned to sender. We are thankful to those who have faithfully continued to support us right up to the end. Your donations have helped us finish with no outstanding debt or financial obligations.

We will continue to offer our guest house as a Christian retreat for those whom God may send, but will no longer be serving multiple meals, hosting large groups or conducting regular events in our main house. Applications for stays at the guest house will be considered based on our assessment of spiritual need, but we're not hard to convince... Guests may choose to help offset our costs for utilities, laundry, house-keeping, etc., but that will be as a personal gift to the Baileys and not to Cloudhaven.

Ministry update

More than 75 people came for our climactic Grand Pig Roast in September. Mike and Susan Newnam cooked the 105-pound pig to perfection. Here are some other recent guests...



Rev. Steve Cavallaro & family



Rev. Jeff White & family



Rev. Ben Coppedge & family



The Ewings



Las Tierras Community Church



Intersarsity Christian Fellowship—our last large group?

Thoughts at Christmas...

The following is a reprint from our first Christmas Chronicle in 2003. Each year, we have returned to this theme in the season of Christ's advent...

This season, we've been thinking once again about what Matthew in his gospel (1:22f) wanted us to understand when he quoted Isaiah 7:14 and applied the name of *Immanuel* (God with us) to the Christ child.

Primarily, Matthew wanted his readers to understand that it was indeed *God* who had come, and that everything about this birth was a work of God in the midst of the active passivity of Mary and Joseph. In order to save his people from their sins, the eternal second person of the Trinity had come to be with us.

But in what sense was he with us? We can think of at least three. First, God had come to be with us in the sense of drawing near. Our God is not only transcendent and lofty, but he is one who draws near to his creatures to reveal himself in this unique way. The author of the book of Hebrews begins his inspired work by reminding us that in Jesus Christ, God has spoken to us in an unprecedented way. Later, Jesus himself would respond to Philip's request by saying, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9). Here was God drawn near so that we could see him, could watch how he lived, could share a meal with him, or a conversation while walking the road to Emmaus.

Second, if God has indeed come to be with us, we may well ask, "Is he with us or against us? Has he come as an advocate or an adversary?" The Bible makes it amply clear that this time God came in gentleness, not to judge us but to be with us in order to meet our deepest needs in a unique way. God came to heal the sick and disabled, to free the demon possessed, to warn the arrogant, but primarily to seek and to save the lost.

A third sense in which Jesus is God with us, is that Jesus Christ has joined himself with humanity by taking on a human nature forever. Not only is he the eternal Spirit, but he is God with us, the infinite Creator united with the finite creature, the eternal bonded with the temporal. Unlike us, however, his humanity is not compromised by sin. Because of the miracle of his virgin birth combined with his perfectly obedient life, his real space-time humanity remains perfectly good, like the perfected humanity believers look forward to in glory.

Why was it necessary for God to come to be with us in this way? Paul gives us the answer in Gal. 4:4. "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." Our moral problem is that we are law breakers. We have violated the law that is defined by God's very character. The law is given to *us*—not to animals, plants, or stones, so we need a human champion who can do what we could not: redeem us from the curse of the law

by keeping it perfectly. And because he is also the infinite personal God, that redemption can cover the sins of a multitude. He came to experience every temptation that we do, to shed his innocent blood, to die in our place, to bear the penalty for our sin—things that the eternal self-existing source of life itself could do in no other way. The hope of the faithful has ever been that one day we will behold the face of God. That face is a human face, the face of Jesus Christ, God united with us forever.

Finally, "God with us" reminds you and me that it is to *us* that God has come—a reality that demands our response. According to the Bible, there is no neutral position for us in regard to Jesus Christ. Either we believe what God has revealed and trust in his Son, or we do not. So the real question for us is not whether he is God with us, but whether we are with him.

Matthew never forgets that Jesus is Immanuel, and ends his gospel the way he began it by recording this promise of Jesus to his people: "...and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Our prayer is that you will find within your heart the gift of faith in his Son, Jesus Christ, who is himself God's greatest gift to us.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Merry Christmas with love,
Jim & Katy

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"I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you."—Is. 44:22