

IN THE SERVICES

December 2, 2007

Lord's Supper—

- L1Officiate: Stanley Archer
- L2Helper: Matt Holt
- L3am(only): James Crutchfield
- L4am(only): Brian Little
- R1Assistant: Rob Mullins
- R2am(only): Brian Hopkins
- R3am(only): Lonnie LaRue
- R4am(only): Paul Pappireddy

Morning Prayers—

- Opening: Jarren Garrett
- Closing: Chris Robin

Evening Prayers—

- Opening: Larry Richard
- Closing: Edgar Wolf

December 9, 2007

Lord's Supper—

- L1Officiate: Greg Hamby
- L2Helper: Alex Wells
- L3am(only): Darwin Hodge
- L4am(only): Charles Martin
- R1Assistant: Lee Dean
- R2am(only): Timothy Barry
- R3am(only): Homer Ballard
- R4am(only): Milton Chance

Morning Prayers—

- Opening: Jody Bennett
- Closing: Troy Trahan

Evening Prayers—

- Opening: Jerry Covington
- Closing: Ross Holt

EVANGELISTS

- Steve Dewhirst** 727-1568
Home 722-1188 Cell 718-7708
Email: sdewhirst@juno.com
- Steven Cuffle** 727-1568
Home 767-8776 Cell 543-2589
Email: stevencuffle@gmail.com
Church Website: www.stonegatechurch.com

ELDERS

- Blake Bergman
- Jerry Covington
- Andy Crandall
- H. G. "Buddy" Hamby
- Sam Holt
- Randy Robin

DEACONS

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| Jeff Baker | Jimmy Moss |
| Ken Barry | Doyle Osborne |
| Jeff DeLord | Stephen Savant |
| Jarren Garrett | Ricky Scogin |
| Jathen Garrett | Andrew Smith |
| Keith Gremillion | Jim Threadgill |
| Garry Hamby | Tony Vela |
| Greg Hamby | Edgar Wolf |

TIMES OF SERVICES

- Sunday Family Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
- Sunday Morning Worship 10:00 a.m.
- Sunday Evening Worship 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday Family Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

- Announcements** — Jerry Covington
- Greeters** — David Garrett, Jim Threadgill, Alex Wells, Jimmy Moss
- Lockup** — J. Threadgill / B. Bergman
J. Arbuckle / M. Martin



The Stonegate Standard

“Lift up a standard for the people...” (Isaiah 62:10)

3948 Highway 365 • Port Arthur, TX 77642 • (409) 727-1568

Volume XIV

December 2, 2007

Issue 48

THE TRUTH ABOUT:



It's that time of year again. The card aisles are packed with red and green envelopes, there are bows and plastic trees for sale, and outside retail stores there are red buckets and bell ringers. Of all the things that beckon for our money, nothing strikes such a deep, resounding chord in our hearts as that tiny, ringing bell.

The Salvation Army knows how the bell makes people feel. They know it makes you feel guilty for not putting your loose change in their shiny, red bucket – which is exactly why they started using bell ringers in the first place. However, before you go and put your money in their bucket this year, there are some things you should consider.

The Salvation Army is not a charity. They are not a social service organization. The Salvation Army is a denomination. That's right, they are a denominational church. They have an earthly headquarters based in London, and their leader is called "the General". There is a "High Council" which meets yearly and elects the next "General" when necessary – much like the Roman Catholic College of Cardinals. The

High Council has divided the world up into districts, again very similar to the Catholic concept of a "diocese", and those districts are headed by "officers" of various ranks. As one becomes a member of the Salvation Army (SA hereafter), there is an official "Soldier's Creed" which must be stated before a group of witnesses. In the SA there is a marked distinction between clergy and members: clergy are "officers" and lay members are "soldiers" or "enlisted". When you get down to it, they are nothing more than a creed-based, denominational body with a divided perspective of Christianity.

Well, what does this have to do with the local bell ringer? *Everything.*

The SA uses the money from their little, red buckets to promote a false gospel. If you look closely at their website, you will find their mission statement: "To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs in His name without discrimination." On their website, they describe themselves as a modern "evangelical" group, and, holding to that pattern, they do not teach nor preach the same gospel as the

apostles of Jesus Christ. They will not tell someone that they must be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16), or even intimate that baptism is something commanded for one to be saved (Mark 16.16, Matthew 28.18-20, Colossians 2.12, 1 Peter 3.21). Money that you put into that red bucket will be used to promote a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all (Galatians 1.7). There is one gospel, one faith, one salvation, one Lord, one baptism – and none of those are the things that the SA teaches (cf. Ephesians 4.4-6). Do we really want our money to be used for that purpose?

In addition to using your money to preach a false gospel, your money will be used to support their denomination. There are over 26,000 “officers” (their clergy or priests) in the SA who must be fully supported, there are 80,000 miscellaneous full-time employees in the United States alone, and then there are mortgages on all their facilities that must be paid. The money you put into the bucket hoping to help someone in need could, in reality, go into the pocket of an SA clergyman or employee whom, I am certain, has more than enough to eat.



So, what are we supposed to do when we walk by that ringing bell and our conscience tells us to throw some money into the bucket? Firstly, do not give into impulse and put in money. Secondly, allow your conscience to have its proper effect and change your actions – but on Christ’s terms, not the SA’s.

There ought to be something inside everyone which tugs at their heart when they think about others who are hurt or hungry. The fact that we are all created in the image of God demands that we treat each and every other person with respect and dignity. Our recognition of this fact, however, does not put food on plates or people in shelters, there must be action on our part (cf. James 2.15-16).

Now, it is not the responsibility of the Stonagate church to house and feed people. But, as our conscience has already attested, it **IS** everyone’s individual responsibility to do good to others: to orphans and widows (James 2.17), to brothers and sisters who are in need (Matthew 25:34-46, 1 John 3.17-19), to all people (Galatians 6.10), and to anyone who asks something of us (Matthew 5.39-48, cf. Job 31.16-22, Hebrews 13.16). These are serious charges that demand serious commitment. We must love God enough to love others more than ourselves (Mark 12.29-32 and cf. John 13.34). If we refuse to obey the second greatest command, to love our neighbors, then we do not have “pure and undefiled religion” and we will be counted among the goats rather than the sheep.

Christ did not intend for us to fulfill this command by establishing a world-wide, denominational body that begs for money. Christ’s disciples are not to shame others into donating to *their* plans; Jesus wants us to conform ourselves to His image so we will carry out *His* plan in *His* way (Romans 8.29, Romans 12.1-2, Colossians 3.10, 2 Corinthians 5.17).

A simple way to sum up our individual duty to mankind is this: **do all the good you can, anytime you can, to whomever you can.** There is never an excuse for us to refuse love. There is never a good enough reason for us to pass up an opportunity to show the love of Christ to another human being. When people see this kind of love in us, then, only then, will they truly know that we are one of Christ’s disciples (John 13.34-35). However, for Christ’s commandment to be fulfilled, we must actually be the ones doing the good – not some third party, pseudo-social-denominational body. We must be the ones helping the poor, the sick, the hungry. We must be the ones loving our neighbors; we cannot pay someone else to do that for us.

So, the next time you walk by that shiny, red bucket, keep your change, but change your heart: there’s work to do... —Steven Cuffle

Family Talk

Continue In Prayer For—

Wanda Pruitt
Charles Fleniken
Rex Phillips
Tammy Holt
Wilma Beasley
Iva Fernandez

Our Friends and Loved Ones—

Becca Scott
Hilda Morgan’s family
Samantha Fuller’s parents
Richard Furby
David McNeese
Beth Ann Eckman
Avery Guerra
Dolores Norment
David Arcineaux
Bobby Jackson
Joyce Trahan
Paytlee Picou
Anjelkia & JB Hall
Joni LeJeune
Jodi Esquivel
Alex Edgerly
Scott Sparks
Wanda Barrios



New Song Practice—immediately after services next Sunday evening in the Auditorium.

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Brother **Lee Dean** has requested to step down as a Deacon at this time due to personal reasons.

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If you would like to send a card or letter to **James Smith** or **Wesley Threadgill**, their addresses are listed below. They are sure to appreciate all notes of encouragement.



James Smith
FSC 94ENGBN
LSA-ANACONDA
APO-AE 09391

Private Wesley Threadgill
HHC 498-CSSB
Unit 15275 Box 648
ATO, AP, 96260-5275

We are very thankful for the recent improvements of **Mike Manos**. Please keep Mike, Wilma and Jim in your prayers.

7th-12th Grade Devotional—next Sunday evening at **Jeff and Gayla Baker’s** home.



Please remember to turn off or set to vibrate all cell phones and pagers during services.