

Paul and Kaelin

December 2009 - Christmas Update Letter

Merry Christmas from the Irelands! May God bless you and your family this season! Another year went by so fast! I hope this last year has been good for you and that you are looking forward to a wonderful Christmas season! We would love to hear from you.

We'll be in Portland for Christmas and New Years. Drop us a line if you will be too!

Life updates from this year

The big updates on us for those who do not keep up with our regular updates: We're still living in Downtown Minneapolis and Paul is training for ministry at the Leadership Development Institute at Hope Community Church. This is his last year and then, Lord willing, we will be planting (starting) a church, hopefully around Easter 2011. We look forward to see what God will do in this coming year!

Luke is now 16 months old and is a walking, talking, sassy little man. He is intelligent, a good communicator, and quite determined. He is a ton of fun and already has a sense of humor; he likes to put various objects on his head and say "hat". He loves playing the drums and already has better rhythm than Paul. There's a drum set in the basement which he plays, plus his Uncle Dylan started playing drums so he can play his.

We are also expecting another child in early June and are looking forward to how that will change and bless our family!

So what's happened this last year?

- This year we went to 8 weddings, 4 baby showers, and 2 funerals.
- We made big headway for church planting, we got approved by the Converge church planting assessment center in June (basically a week-long interview) and have approval from Hope's elders to begin dreaming up a plant.
- We were blessed to be able to go to Orlando (church planting conference), Portland (visit family), Seattle (wedding), and Wichita (wedding). Thanks to Hope, our parents, and other generous friends who made these trips possible!
- We celebrated Luke's 1st birthday with family and friends both in Portland and in Minneapolis.
- We've raised over \$15,000 this year (Jan-Nov) in support, not including various gifts and other support.



photo courtesy of
Annie Marie Photography

Prayer Requests:

- Health and Safe Travels for the Holidays
- Vision for the coming Church plant
- Hearts abounding in joy, peace, and love.
- Peace for all our family and friends.

PHOTOS FROM 2009



He Came Here!

In some places in the world, talking about Christmas will get you killed. In a Muslim country like Somalia, telling someone that Christmas is when God came down and was born as the man Jesus Christ is a blasphemy worthy of being stoned to death. Yet in our cultural context, we miss how ridiculous that sounds: **God came here.**

Today our culture tends to be pantheistic, meaning people think God is everything. Often people talk about praying to "the Universe", basically saying that God is just everything added up together. From that perspective, the idea that God came down as a humble child born in a dung-filled barn to a poor carpenter and his virgin wife does is not outrageous, since to them the child, the barn, and the oxen are all god.

Our culture has a small picture of God. We treat God more like Santa Claus than the all-powerful creator of the universe who we have mortally insulted with our sin. We do not see the God that was so Holy that when He was at Mount Sinai giving Moses the 10 commandments no person nor animal could even touch that mountain or it would immediately die. God is not creation, He is totally separate and far more wonderful!

Jesus was killed for what Christmas represents: that Jesus - a man - was the son of God; that the Holy God became part of creation. When they asked him if he is the Christ, he replied "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matthew 26:64). The high priest then declared "He has uttered blasphemy" (26:65) and the council of elders declared "He deserves death" (26:66). Jesus could simply have remained silent and saved his life, but did not. Good Friday celebrates the crucifixion of Jesus; but the event of that day only took place due to the message of Christmas:

HE CAME HERE! Maybe that does not land with you nor make you want to scream for joy. But really think about how outrageous this is! God, who is perfect in joy, power, and glory and has no need for us, did the unthinkable... He came down as a humble servant and **WILLINGLY** gave His life... for you, for me, and us sinful people. God loves you **THAT** much. That is good news! May that thought stay with you this Christmas season!

Christmas Prediction 700 years before Jesus

13 And [Isaiah] said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? **14** Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name **Immanuel (God with us)**. (Isaiah 7:13-14)

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**. (Isaiah 9:6)



Our little drummer boy at our early Christmas we celebrated with Kaelin's family.



Our little helper! On the left Luke is helping make salads. On the right he's delivering presents while grandma says "thank you" in sign language.