



Merry Christmas!

I hope this Christmas letter arrives to you and your family at a time where you all are happily preparing and settling in for the Christmas holiday. The Staley house is a bustle of activity as always this time of year. Donna has promised me that she will make a couple of her pumpkin pies, some chocolate chip cookies with whole nuts, and some really good tasting dried beef and cream cheese spread. Our outdoor Christmas lights are up in place and our five foot fiber optic tree was brought down from the garage attic after yanking, wrestling and unfortunately the tree falling to the garage floor. The Christmas tree is once again setting in our living room ablaze with lights. Lighting the tree was not a good event though. The plunge to the garage floor was a little too much for the ole tree as I went to light it up and discovered that the special power adapter was damaged beyond repair. So, here we are, ready for Christmas with a beautiful rotating multicolor fiber optic tree and no light - no movement. I called around and tried to contact the original manufacture to purchase a replacement power thingee-adapter but found that the manufacture - Nakatomi Tree Company - Here Today, Gone Tone Tomorrow Fiber Optic Christmas Tree Company, was nowhere to be found. I'm now desperate. A fully loaded tree and no way to show it off! And at the Staley household there may not be many presents under the tree but there will be lots of lights. After much research and hassle. I decided to pull the power supply that lights up my outdoor shrubs and give it a try. The outdoor power adapter was bigger and stated "Heavy Duty" so what did I have to lose. A little electrical tape and a few connections later and I was ready to fire the tree up. To my amazement, the tree came to life with great brilliance and lots of movement. The only problem we now have is that we can only look at it for a second or two at a time as it makes you sick watching it rotate so fast. We also keep our sunglasses close at hand to avoid eye damage. Of course, Donna is upset with me (again) over the tree thing but I know she will happy up when she opens her main Christmas gift and finds her own set of welding goggles with side protection for viewing the tree. Now please don't do like many of you did last year and tell Donna about her special Christmas gift - actually, her only gift this year.

In review of 2003, the Staley's had a great year. Chris and Shaun are busy with jobs and Shaun is also attending FCCJ full time. Chris plans on taking some courses at FCCJ next semester. We either see our boys at the house with ten or twenty other teens with them or we don't see them at all as they are on the move all the time. Both boys have been on the Atkins diet for several months now and have each lost forty-five pounds. I think I have compensated for them and feel like I have gained their ninety. I won't speak for Donna's weight activity. Donna and I have remained busy at work. Working at church is a little different than other jobs as you end up spending your weekends there a lot and it is not uncommon for Donna or I to wake up and ask the other what day is it - is

this a weekend day or a week day. The days kind of all run together. We spent a week of vacation at the beach in July at our time-share in New Smyrna, Florida. The boys always enjoy our week there and they usually each bring a friend. We also made a trip or two to Largo, Florida where my parents, brother, sisters and Donna's brother lives. I have to say the year went quickly as it only seems like last month that I was writing last year's Christmas letter.

As I reflect back on our children's ministry over this year, we have seen some changes with our programming, temporary moves with construction going on and also some new faces come along side to work with our children. Our Sunday School attendance continues to grow with an average attendance of 135 on any given Sunday. Likewise, our Wednesday Awana is running stronger in attendance than last year with a high attendance of children and workers of 239 and an average attendance on any given Wednesday of about 215. Our normal weekly programs require dedicated workers and we have the best.

We also enjoyed some great children's activities including Awana Fun Fair, VBS, Celebrate Kids day, a family night of bowling, a great week of summer camp in St Pete, Florida, Community Fest, two campouts and Awana Grand Prix.

All of the children's activities including our regular Sunday and Wednesday classes and special events require a lot of dedicated and resourceful workers and I got to tell you that I am very lucky to have the crew that I have in place. As I mentioned to our children during Children's Church a couple of weeks ago, our children's worker's including myself are here for one purpose and that is to help each child to have a personal relationship with God. You are a piece of this purpose and your work as a weekly children's teacher, VBS worker, preparing food for kids, pulling kids from the drainage ponds before the gators get them., gathering wood for a kid's campout, Awana worker, making props - (and the list goes on and on), all provides the seeds for future children's salvations. It is a great feeling to know that dedicating your time and resources towards our children fits into God's purpose and plan for us at fulfilling the great commission.

In closing, I want to personally thank each of you for your time and dedication with our kids at East Pointe. Christmas season is the time for wonderful things and nice gifts and you should feel excited that you have played an important role for those children who have received salvation, the best gift of all.

May you and your family have a warm and wonderful Christmas

God Bless,

Ken, Donna and boys

