

What I Learned from EAC 2012

Introduction

Good evening. My name is Jim Fleming and my wife Julie and I have been members here at Stuart Heights for 12 years. We have served in different areas at Stuart Heights during that time, but Pastor Gary came to me before Christmas and asked me to pray about being the EAC coordinator for 2012.

Tonight, I want to talk about what God taught me about myself, what God taught me about Himself, and what God taught me about Stuart Heights during the process of coordinating EAC 2012.

Some of you may be wondering what EAC is. EAC is Easter at Coolidge. EAC is Stuart Heights' Easter service at Coolidge Park in downtown Chattanooga. EAC 2012 was held on April 8. [SLIDE] Public service announcement: EAC 2013 is on March 31—only 249 days away!

So, what is EAC about? Why go to all of that trouble? Because everyone needs Jesus. I thought I would share with you the invite list for EAC 2012:

We invite those who are single, married, divorced, gay, filthy rich, dirt poor, and no habla Ingles. We invite those who are crying newborns, skinny as a rail, and those could afford to lose a few pounds.

We invite those that can sing like Andrea Bocelli and those (like Darrell and me) who cannot carry a note in a bucket. You are invited if you are "just browsing," just woke up, or just got out of jail. We do not care if you are more Catholic than the Pope is, or if you have not been in church since childhood.

We invite those who are over 60 but not grown up yet, and we invite the young ones that are growing up far too fast. We invite soccer moms, NASCAR dads, starving artists, tree-huggers, latte-sippers, vegetarians, and junk-food eaters. We invite those who are in recovery and those still addicted. We invite those that are having problems, those that are down in the dumps, and those that do not like "organized religion"—we have been there too.

If you blew all your offering money at the dog track, you are invited. We invite those who think the earth is flat, work too hard, do not work at all, cannot spell, and those (who because grandma is in town) wanted to go to church.

We invite Democrats, Republicans, independents, liberals, conservatives, and Whigs.

We invite those who are inked, pierced, those who have both, and those who have neither. We invite those who could use a prayer right now, have had religion shoved down their throats as a kid, and those who got lost in traffic and wound up there by mistake. We invite tourists, seekers, doubters, bleeding hearts, believers, and you!

Everyone is invited—because everyone needs Jesus and we want to make sure everyone knows they are invited to meet Him. That is what EAC is about: one empty tomb that has made all the difference.

About EAC

Gary came to me in December and asked me to pray about being the EAC coordinator for 2012. After talking with Julie and praying through the Christmas holiday, I agreed.

I immediately began trying to find anything and everything that had been done in prior EACs (EAC 2012 was the fourth EAC). I reached out to the staff to find out their wishes, hopes, and dreams for EAC 2012. Then I found out the budget—then I started praying harder. However, in early January, I was lacking one critical component—a leadership team. [SLIDE]

I began praying about who should be in leadership positions. I laid out broad timelines for the execution of the critical components of this project. Therefore, we went to work. We had obstacles, successes, challenges, opportunities, and beat-my-head-on-my-desk moments. We had teams in the following areas (read the slide).

What God Taught Me about Me [SLIDE]

1. I am prideful

- Exposing of 'my way' mentality [SLIDE]
- I thought I was an excellent communicator (I'm not)

2. I am not the **body** of Christ [SLIDE]

- EAC forced a beautiful reliance on us
- **Nehemiah 4:6: So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.**

3. I only have the time to do well what God has called me to do well [SLIDE]

What God Taught Me about Himself [SLIDE]

1. Prayer **works** [SLIDE]

- Gary's voice
- 7,500 in attendance

2. God still does **big** things [SLIDE]

- Stuffing the eggs in one day and my lack of faith

3. His timing is **perfect** [SLIDE]

- My job transitions at TVA

4. The tomb is still **empty** [SLIDE]

What God Taught Me about Stuart Heights [SLIDE]

1. EAC 2012 service stats [SLIDE]

- Candy donated: 135,000 pieces
- Eggs stuffed: 102,000
- Attendance (egg hunt and service): ~7,500
- Number of bulletins: 4,000
- Julie Darling Donuts: 1,600
- Business cards: 1,000
- Cups of coffee: 800
- Stuart Heights members serving: at least 700
- Yellow EAC t-shirts: 300
- Runners and walkers in the EAC 5k and 1-Mile Fun Walk: 200
- Family photos: 125+
- 100-voice choir
- Number of yard signs: 100
- Baptisms: 17
- Number of billboards: three
- One empty tomb
- It was a good day. And the tomb is still empty. :)

2. Pastoral growth [SLIDE]

- Gary
- Zac

3. Testimonies of His servants [SLIDE]

- Ethan Anderson
- Monica Cramer
- Larry Stansell

Ethan because this is the first time he has been asked to lead a team (i.e., provides leadership opportunities), Monica because she was a visitor at EAC (i.e., provides behind-the-scenes opportunities), and Larry because the devil tried to kill him on his way home (i.e., serving God is always an adventure).

4. I love Stuart Heights [SLIDE] . . . so, with that, let me be the first to invite you to EAC 2013 [SLIDE]

Announcements

- SHU starts on August 22 (dinners begin that evening as well)
- Friend Day is August 19 (Chester Frost camping trip weekend—please sign up for the fish fry)
- A special time of prayer for Denny & Julie Brown's son Jonathon will be held at 7:30 tonight