

# Engaging Pop Culture While Sharing the Gospel

By Eric Metcalf

In my mind's eye I can see it. I can see a life that is seamlessly filled with the love of Christ. I can see myself living out my hobbies, mowing my yard, enjoying the relationships around me. It's a vision I've had for my life and others for a very long time—what I call a life-integrated ministry—where I'm engaging popular culture while sharing the Gospel. But what are these communities and where can we engage in them?

This kind of culture is all around us: bicycle clubs, LAN parties, Texas Hold'em parties, sports leagues, work-out gyms, book reading clubs; subculture after subculture after subculture. Wikipedia defines subculture as a group of people with a culture (whether distinct or hidden) that differentiates them from the larger culture to which they belong. We are a part of one as Christians and sometimes find ourselves so immersed in our subculture to even realize the other social networks around us.

A few years ago I purchased an XBOX just so I could own and play a game called HALO (you may have heard of it). It was shortly after playing this game that I quickly realized I needed to play this with friends—so I invited them over and we had a blast! After a couple of months of mayhem, my friends invited their friends and then their friends invited their friends to where we had about 18 people showing up on a weekly basis to play HALO—we were creating a subculture and in some ways we were actually engaging subculture that already existed. I knew this to be true because many of the guys (and a gal) who were showing up to play already played HALO online and we had simply brought those two subcultures together.

After about nine months of us playing weekly, I had the urge to show the guys I was a Christian. I wanted to open the gaming night in prayer or something, but for some reason it just didn't feel right, so I waited. Actually some of the guys who

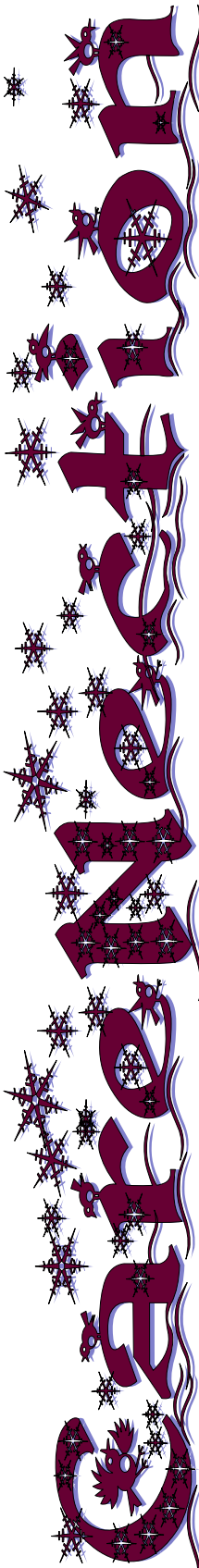
played weekly were Christians and one night one of them asked if we could pray for his cousin who he had just learned committed suicide—and of course we did. After we finished praying, we started up the XBOX's and began the video game madness and then God took our simple community and brought gamers to Jesus.

One by one, guys started turning their life to Christ; baptisms, attending celebration services after being away from church for years, serving in ministry, leading small groups, and giving sacrificially. How did all this happen? One answer: God's grace. We were there to just play video games but God had other plans—and I'm glad He did. He is teaching us about how to be more intentional in creating opportunities for spiritual conversations:

- Pray – pray that God gives us the right spiritual moment for us to be a part of
- Hang out – do something other than shoot each other in video games: go to a bar, catch a movie, play darts – something that allows conversation.
- Keep it real – a lot of the guys who we played HALO with are now Christ-followers and we talk about church because we love it; so we're not afraid to keep it real
- Have fun – most people think Christians are boring and don't know how to laugh – we make sure there is plenty of that

It has almost been five years since we first played HALO and here we are five years later playing HALO 3 in a finished basement at that same friend's house. Guys are still showing up who don't know Jesus because someone who played decided to invite them. We'll see what happens, but I'm really excited because God is using what could be a mindless gaming experience as a mission field and I look forward to who is going to win the next game tomorrow night.

From [smallgroupexchange.com](http://smallgroupexchange.com)



# Life group prayer and praise

- I have been unemployed for a month and need prayer that I get a job, my rent is overdue. I am a caregiver and would love to help someone. ~**Ruby Lewis Altman**
- Please pray for **Ivy Howland** who is 14 yrs old , and was diagnosed in Oct. with 3 brain tumors. One they operated on, one is inoperable and the other they can operate on but are using radiation to shrink it. She has a good attitude, but a long difficult time ahead. When you think of her, please lift her up. ~ **Jill Kinsman**
- My son **Stephen** is in Harbor View hospital waiting for surgery to take care of a bile duct blockage, which seems to have been the problem. Please pray for quick healing and for the doctor's skilled hands. ~ Praise God my youngest son, Paul is employed! ~**Robert Johnson**
- I just found out one of my friends **Beth's** 3 year old nephew **Nolan** is in the hospital with pneumonia. He has been battling a 104 degree fever for the last week and they can't seem to get it under control as his little lungs are filled with bacteria. ~ **Sherra Ellis**
- Please pray for my sons **Shaun and Nathan**, they are lost souls. ~ **Margit McCowan**
- My **brother Brian**, and **sister-in-law Sheryl**, are having marital problems, he is abusive and needs God's help. Please pray for him, they both need salvation. ~ **Jane Rodriguez**
- My middle son, **James**, needs some lifting up, he lost his children thru separation and in June was sent to jail for domestic violence. ~ **Pamela Dehnhoff**
- **My daughter, Kristi** may have breast cancer, she sees the surgeon on the 10th to discuss the treatment. She loves the Lord and has 3 small children, please pray for her. ~ **Carole Petersen**
- Please pray that God will give me the gift of forgiveness, I'm having a hard time with hurts. Please keep praying for my lower back pain. ~ **Carolyn Kelly**
- **My mom** has been diagnosed with advanced lymphoma and given weeks to live. Please pray for peace for her and for our family in this difficult time. ~ **Kim Edwards**
- **Please pray for Karla Signs**, she is having some medical problems, lots of headaches from blood on the brain, please pray that God will heal her and relieve her headaches. ~ **Sandra Signs**
- Please continue to pray for Keith and Sandy's granddaughter, **Alina**, she still has moles that are changing colors. We know God is working through all this. ~ **Sandy Porter**



**It's A Wonderful  
Improvised Life**  
by Taproot Theatre Comedy Improv

**Sunday  
December 13th  
4:00 and 7:00 pm**

**Tickets \$5.00 each or 4 for \$15.00**

Presented by First Baptist Church  
1616 Pacific Ave  
Everett, WA  
425.259.9166

## Pray for our Military

- Jonathan Michaels Estrella— son of Sharon Boswell.
- Jason Bjazevich—Megan Owenby's husband—Army Special Forces— Stationed in N. Carolina.
- Joel Ellis—son of John & Midge —Serving in Iraq.
- Scott Harpell—son of Brian & Lynne— Stationed at Fort Bragg.
- Aaron Weston—nephew of Ken and Kathy—Stationed in San Diego.
- Eric Schmidt — son of Gene and Pat Schmidt — Camp Fallujah, Iraq.
- Benjamin Lagonia—dear friend of the Naylor family—stationed in Manitoba.
- David Coyle—son of Karen Mark— residing in Seattle, member of the National Guard.
- Adam Flynn—a young Marine safely home and out of military.
- Brett Love—grandson of Wilma—Army National Guard-Serving at home.
- Robin Swartz - Serving in the military - currently home in Everett.
- Christian Chmielewski—nephew of JoAnn Couturie' - in the Marines.
- ENS Andrew E. Timpner (fiancé to Christin Suthard) on deployment with USS Momsen.
- Devin Abbitt—nephew of Paul Abbitt - Marine, stateside.
- Doug Baer—a teacher at Kamiak HS heading to Iraq in the Army Reserves—thru Sept. 09.
- Duane Neyens—brother to Kathy Chapman—Nat. Grd. Afghanistan.
- Philip Ankney-LCPL Afghanistan Cousin of MaryAnn Peterson.
- Jeffrey Lillard—son of Barbara Lillard — Srg. In Army, Stationed in Afghanistan.
- Aaron Chmielewski— joined the Marines. Nephew of JoAnn Couturie



# Life Group Happenings

## All in the Family

by *florence miller*

**Sara Mae Zell** had shoulder surgery on December 4th and is now recuperating in Mount Vernon with a close friend. She will be there for at least two weeks and then has an Everett, Dr's appointment on the 17th. Perhaps then she will be able to be on her own - with help from friends, of course. She is in understandable pain, but that would be more easily handled if she still had the inserted pain pump. Unfortunately it was removed, inadvertently when she was transported from one place to another. Sara Mae says the pump is rather precariously positioned anyway so after it was removed, the incision for the pump was surgically closed and there is no further option for it to be inserted. However the plan was for it to be still there, helping her through the first few weeks. But Sara Mae says that she "is hanging in there." Let's all pray that her time of hanging in there will become increasingly pain free.

A note from **Brian Harpell**: Friday Dec. 4th "Just returned from Bethany on Pacific, room 309-B to see **Esther Friesen** who was transferred from General on Thursday after successful hip surgery. Esther will be there over the next few weeks and I want to encourage her friends, SAM members and class members to encourage her during this Christmas season. Please pray, send cards and find time to visit her. You'll be blessed in doing so! God bless you all and Merry Christmas!" The phone # for the nurses station is 259-5508.

**Sandy Jodock** is in the hospital with multiple serious infections. She has H1N1 (swine flu), pneumonia, a strep infection in her blood and her white cell count is high. They also think she has a staff infection as well and is on three different antibiotics in order to cover all the "bases". Jim asks for prayers for her quick recovery and for the doctors to identify the exact cause of the problem. She is in isolation, so no visitors. UPDATE: Praise God! She is now on just one medication, is walking and feeling good enough to go home. Her white blood count was still a little high, but the doctors say she is doing well, and her appetite has returned. Thanks for all your prayers!

A note from **Pam Elkins** reads: "Just received an email from **Lois Caldwell** with good news. She said she received a good report from her doctor and does not need to return for a recheck until April. After all she had been through, that must feel like a real blessing and an answer to prayer."

An email from **Pastor Brian Harpell**: "Connected with **John Van Dalen** this morning. He should be out of surgery and heading home around 5 p.m. today. I will follow up with him afterwards. Let us continue to hold John up in our prayers today." John had hernia surgery on Wednesday. Our prayers go out to him.

**Don't forget December 13th** and our church's Christmas outreach event of Taproot theater's performance of It's a Wonderful Improvised Life. Times of 4 pm and 7 pm. \$5.00 or 4/\$15.00

We received this thank you from **Loye Kramer for Lois Hudspeth**: "I can't thank you enough for dad's Memorial Service. It was beautiful and befitting of my dad. Thanks to all the others who made the memorial so special. I certainly felt dad's presence. I hope mom will be able to catch the bus from Washington Oaks next week and attend church again. Dad was just too frail in the past couple months to make that trip. On Christmas Eve, we will bring mom to Bellingham. She's agreed to move in with us. She will miss First Baptist and all her friends tremendously. Please pray for the three of us. We hope it's the right decision for mom, we asked her if she wanted to wait and she said, 'I think that Christmas will be fine.'"

**Sheri** received a phone call from **Oneita Owenby** on Wednesday with a great report on her leg. Her leg is growing new bone and she can now walk and drive! Praise God, it's been a long 11 months and she sounded really happy. **She and Marc** are leaving for North Carolina to visit their daughter and her family for Christmas, they will be back on the 30th of December, so they are finally getting a much needed vacation.

Last Sunday, we had a few special visitors on Wednesday, **Jeannie Iversen** was able to bless them with a fully decorated tree. They were overwhelmed and extremely grateful. There remains a need: a single bed in good condition with sheets and all the stuff that goes with it (sheets, pillow, spread and blankets), what about it church, can anyone help? Please contact Jeannie Iversen at 425-229-7539.

A very special thank you from **Ruelyn Nelson** to our wonderful team that helped decorate the church for this Advent Season. They did a terrific job and we all appreciate the time they spent during Thanksgiving weekend. Please give them a personal thank you when you see them, they are: **Janet Duardo, Dave Pearson, Eva LaStrange, Darcy Stanyo and her daughter Nina, Pat and Lou Alvarez and grandson Jesse, Tom Willadsen, Sara and Jim Naylor plus Barb Olson** and a special thanks to her for the Advent wreath. If you couldn't help put up the decorations, maybe you could plan to spend some time with us when they time comes to take them down. Watch for the information on putting things away in January

Thank you to our wonderfully caring congregation for the generous contributions to Friday Night Outreach Ministries at the Thanksgiving Eve Service! We were able to bless over 100 people in our community with hats, scarves, gloves, socks and toiletries on the Friday after Thanksgiving and are prepared to gift them again at Christmas and beyond due to your generosity. Thank you for partnering with us in truly *caring for our community*. ~ **Chris Frizzell and the Friday Night Team**

# Lifegroup Contributing Opportunities

## Update December 6th

Adult attendance: 304

Children: 9 am: 23+10 10:30 am 58+19

Youth Small Group: 11 + 3 Middle School 18+2



**December 11th,** Kayla Ann Ayers,  
JoElla Beesinger,  
Clara Borg,

Dolores Eckstrom

**December 12th,** Jamin Weller

**December 13th,** Richard Smith

**December 15th,** Bret Paddock

Belated birthday to Tom Hahne, **Dec. 4th**

### **USHER CAPTAIN 2009:**

December—Darrell Olson  
Marc Owenby

January—Pete Sontra  
Luckey Elkins

### **COFFEE HOUR 2009**

December 13th  
Marty Visser  
Sunday AM

December 20th  
Florence Miller  
Women of Purpose

December 27th  
Kay Olson  
Home Fellowship

January 3rd  
Frank Riddell  
Lake Stevens LG

January 10th  
Dan Clark  
Life Group

## Lela Meadows Scholarship

**ATTENTION ALL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, COLLEGE STUDENTS, POST GRADUATE STUDENTS:** Application for the 2010 Lela Meadows Scholarship are available, beginning January 4th in the church office. To be eligible to apply you need to be a current and active member in our church. Application deadline is Wednesday, **March 31st, 2010 at 4:00 pm**

Tithe envelopes are  
now available in the  
Pacific Room

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

Christmas Eve Service, Thursday, December 24th 6:00 pm—please join us as we usher in the Birth of Jesus with a candle light service “Finding Joy”.

4th thru 8th Grade Avalanche Retreat is coming soon! Register now with either Pastor Nathan or Pastor Alex—cost is just \$70.00 and they will be going to Cascade Meadows Camp in Leavenworth on January 29th, returning on the 31st. You won't want to miss this exciting time, playing in the snow, inner tubing and having fun and fellowship with your pals. Experience God in the snow.