



Flour-powered Church Computers

By James Curtis

Introduction

FLOUR POWERED CHURCH COMPUTERS is directed to the Silver-haired generation and the Toddlers to Preteens.

Its mission is to teach Jesus love, computer responsibility, and missions opportunities at the earliest ages; using cardboard, hugs, crayons, and flour (for paste).

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Chap 1 “Ya Need ‘Nother Computer!”

“**This is no way to fish,**” the young pastor said to himself. Even before he and his silver-haired friend Sam climbed into the boat with the tackle box and bait, Pastor Tony was already having a struggle in his soul.

Like so many times before, Sam knew he was invited along for no reason that had to do with catching fish. Sam was a genius at listening. If you wanted him to, he could listen to your woes all day long and not say a word to you. And if you told him not to say a word to anyone about your conversation – he could clam up like a lawyer. However... Sam was awful good at talking things over with the Lord.

Most folks don’t know it but Sam was a great ‘knee listener’. He loved to frequently get on his knees in his quiet place. With his head bowed and sometimes fingers resting on his oldest Bible, he’d say, “Dear Lord, You’ve showed me how much You love me. Tell me how to show you today how I can love you back.” Then for a half hour or more, he’d let God’s heart speak to his heart far better than two computers can talk to each other.

As Sam fished from the front of the boat he was totally aware that his young pastor friend was in mental deep water with no sight of shore or a lighthouse. Sam remained silent.

Tony cleared his throat and in troubled tones said, “Sam, I don’t know what the answer is. This would be a lot easier if I at least knew what questions to ask.” Almost in a begging gesture, he held an open hand palm up toward his silver-haired fishing friend. “It’s like I’m trying to put together a church building and one of the steel beams is missing. And I don’t know where it’s at or even what it looks like.” Sam remained quiet while waiting for an explanation.”

Tony continued. “Our Pastor’s Conference last week gave some very unsatisfying data showing that the church as a whole is loosing ground with each generation. Our church is too. Everyone worked hard to show we have all the latest tech tools to analyze our progress...and...decline. Sam, I know that ‘sin in the camp’ can certainly distance God’s working. But I don’t see that clearly as being the specific need. I just don’t know the right questions to ask God.”

There was a long long silence in the boat. Maybe Sam was doing some of his knee listening. Then without knowing exactly why, he told Pastor Tony, with a bit of sarcasm – “maybe ya need ‘nother computer.” Silver-haired Sam was old school – but with indoor plumbing, you understand. Maybe he was looking through bad glasses. Somehow it just seemed to him like all that technical talk and stuff crowded out what church services were REALLY about.

But he’d said it and was not a bit sorry he did.

“Maybe ya need ‘nother computer.”

Sam wasn’t all that great at putting his thoughts and feelings into words. In his mind’s eye he could clearly see, and almost hear, the ‘singing and sounding’ of long ago services.

Little 4 year old Nancy would be setting beside the piano player to turn the hymnal pages. Around them and the old upright piano everyone gathered as close as they could to watch those dancing fingers and praises to the Lord for all His goodness. It didn’t matter if you were hurting on the inside or out, your toes would get to tapping and with smiles and hugs throughout.

[Note: Unless you’re in a terrible rush, you’ll enjoy one of Sam’s down-home piano stories.]

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With so many watching, little Didi was ever so careful to hold the hymnal pages in place but was captivated with the other pair of hands that moved so gracefully over the keys. Little Didi also had for her month of hymn-helping; the "responsibility" to count all the "blood" and "Bible" words, as they'd appear in the hymns that were played.

But those captivating fingers.... Didi decided an appropriate name for them would be Smiling Fingers. Yes, it had to be Smiling Fingers because every time they played, and Didi looked up, the worshippers in the little country church wore big smiles and seemed to forget their troubles for a time; joining in praises to the Lord. Little Didi felt kind-of important in doing her part because the pastor would start his message with all the people smiling.

Before service, one Sunday, Mrs. "Smiling Fingers" used some phrases from an old-favorite gospel hymn to help explain to her little helper that Jesus loves little hands, especially ones that have trusted Him as their Savior. The word counting responsibility was just a bit of reinforcement of foundational pieces of the Gospel message.

Didi's desire more than anything, was to acquire her own smiling fingers and be able to use them at home. How smiles were lacking at home. Daddy just splits wood all day long in the back yard with stooped shoulders and a "what's-the-use" long face. That started just after the coalmine her daddy worked at, closed down. The ribbon in mamma's hair disappeared about the same time the smiles did.

The next month's hymn-helper was Shawna... A camcorder was definitely needed a few weeks after Shawna began her month tour with Mrs. "Smiling Fingers." At an after service "Linger-Longer" (down-home name for a pot luck dinner) it was easy to hear someone playing the piano in a way only small children trying to imitate an adult, can do.

The scene to be forever cherished was Shawna holding a hymnal open with one little hand, and pretending she had smiling fingers with the other hand. "Benny! You get up here this instant and start counting the bloods and Bible's like you're supposed to," she chided.

Now her little brother Benny, still in three-cornered pants having just mastered crawling figured he'd concentrate on the pedals for now. Why not? No bloods and Bibles to count down here!

Pastor Jeff was taken back a bit seeing the Shawna-Benny duet. His lessons on 'discipleship in all things' was manifested by a brother and sister not even knowing the meaning of discipleship, plus... dedicated Smiling Fingers.
(end of story.)

Sam thought about the new fancy piano the church got last year. It had a computer in it to automatically put the playing in a different key or sound, and synthesize it or something. The piano had a digital display that showed the hymn music without paper. No pages needed to be turned. Little Nancy wasn't needed anymore. How tragic.

Another computer system projected the words and fancy background images on a super sized wall screen. Somehow it was like services these days were becoming more of a spectator sport. You didn't even need to pick up a hymnal or Bible from the pew. Is there some way a 'couch potato' can also become a 'church potato'?

Chapter 2 – ANOTHER WORLD

A strange feeling went all through Pastor Tony last Tuesday Morning. Most every Tuesday about 6 am before his church staff arrived, the young pastor would quietly walk through the

whole church. He'd begin in the gymnasium, then sanctuary plus balcony, children's church and then the 19 Sunday school rooms, most of which were downstairs.

He'd finished his rounds and returned to his office. Sitting on the sofa instead of his office chair, his heart was still searching for that critical steel beam – that missing question to ask; the question of how to keep children excited about church and God's Word as they mature. His questioning eyes panned across his many shelves of books and printed reports – none of which seemed to offer any help just now. The bright window drew his gaze that stopped at his laptop computer and printer in a prominent position on his desk.

In a moment he remembered Sam's sarcastic statement, "maybe ya need 'nother computer." Young Pastor Tony got the urge to go back downstairs to check out a hunch he had. The upstairs served most all the adult functions while the lower level was mostly youth focused.

He walked through each of the children's church and classrooms looking for something in particular. He had covered most all the children's rooms not finding even a hint of the thing for which he sought. In one of the toddler classrooms he almost fell trying to sit in a chair too short for him. His first question came to him.

1. Why can I walk throughout most of the adult service and office areas upstairs and technology abounds? We even treat them as critical tools. But as soon as we walk down the stairs, any reference or images of technology disappear. Pastor Tony's question he asked out loud, "Why does this seem to be another world for smaller humans?"

And why is it most every grandchild can work a home computer mouse? Public kindergarten classes use hands-on computer teaching tools throughout each day. Yet I see no indication that the children's classes and curriculum of our church (and others) even recognizes that technology exists.

Tony urgently grabbed his cell phone to set up an appointment with his Sunday school superintendent for an evening discussion about these matters. He opened the cell phone, took a breath, and was about to voice dial the needed number, when he saw something strange on the shelf in the corner.

It seemed to be fashioned out of cardboard but not like anything he'd seen in church before – at this lower level world or the adult one upstairs. Holding the cell phone camera toward the cardboard thing he stored the digital picture in his phone and headed back to his office with his new found questions and a picture of that cardboard thing.

2. What is that thing I just took a picture of?

In his office he spent the rest of the day working on his message for Wednesday. It included one of his all time favorite references for building vision and hope in his people.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

Chapter 3 – Flour Power

Pastor Tony tapped the steering wheel with a bit of impatience and disgust in being caught in traffic here at the notorious Henderson and 23rd. He should have guessed this would happen in this 6pm going-home flood of cars. He was almost grateful that his cell phone rang to get his mind on other matters. His little caller ID screen said it was his hardworking Sunday school superintendent calling.

The phone was flipped open with a cheerful “Hi Mark. How’s my banker buddy?” “I’ve had a full day of meetings and just got home. It continually amazes me how people can have so much to say about things to be done, but don’t seem to get at it. Well... anyhow, Peg said you wanted to talk to me.” With a bit of a chuckle, “Am I in trouble again?”

The young pastor countered with, “No – absolutely not. Mark, is there any chance you and I can do lunch tomorrow? It’s my treat.” “Pastor I can meet you at Ben’s Bagels about 12:30. Would that work?” “Sounds great. That’ll work for me... 12:30 at Ben’s.” And the phone clicked off.

Pastor Tony made some morning visits and made sure to print out the picture of the cardboard thing he saw in Dan and Barbara’s Primary Sunday school class, the day before.

At Ben’s the waitress took the orders for sandwiches, banana nut muffins and iced tea. Tony asked the Lord’s blessings on the meal and also on the discussion. He then said, “Mark I want to thank you again for all your help in putting together our Pastor’s Conference. I’m truly proud of you and all our people.”

“An object I saw in Dan and Barb’s primary class room has me puzzled and I hope you can shed some light on it. Here’s a picture I took of it. Where’d it come from? What’s it do?” He slid the photo in front of Mark. The cell phone camera didn’t do a very good job capturing the image but Mark recognized the cardboard thing that puzzled Pastor Tony.

Mark smiled big at Tony and slid the photo back to him and said, “That’s the beginnings of ‘Flour Power’.” Pastor asked, “What is this then... a Daisies and Dandelions Project for Primaries?” scratching his head to understand. “No... no... It’s Flour... F.L.O.U.R. Power. You know, like baking flour. Flour Power... Let me explain.”

Mark continued the conversation with details and good eye contact with the young pastor across from him. “About a week before the conference I met with Dan and Barbara discussing an idea they felt would help spark interest in their class and be a great method to help teach spiritual truths from God’s precious word. They both convinced me that we should move the cowboy and dinosaur themes toward the back burner and carefully integrate a computer flavor.”

“Dan was adamant about the change not sending signals that we were to change our message or mission at all. They both are very sensitive to not offending anyone or their style. Barb mentioned that churches today have moved away from the opaque projector and overhead projector without changing their message or mission.”

Mark continued, “Barb went on to say, ‘Technology has allowed us to create and update our presentations tailoring them to the audience we’re reaching at any given moment. And I’m so glad we also keep a sharp eye on not watering down God’s message of Salvation and the God honoring life.’ Dan then told me that it is likely the church will give serious consideration to us using a computer theme to supplant some of the cowboy and dinosaur themes.’ Pastor, I suggested we work on developing the idea a bit, while keeping a close eye on the direction we’re taking. Do you agree?”

Pastor said, “Well it sounds good so far. But you still haven’t told me what the Flour... that’s F.L.O.U.R... stands for. I’m dying to know.” Mark asked, “Tony, if you’ll allow me, I want to

explain that with a short story I ran across. I think we have time.” A nod from the pastor started the story.

A Hymn Cake ?

Little Judy could hardly keep up with the small group of other children from the church nearby. The determination in their step reminded you of a group of soldiers on a mission. The children had come on their mercy mission to the nursing home several times before and the residents loved each and every visit. Most of the children brought small trinkets that could easily be held by some of the residents.

But today was just a bit different in the gifts they had brought.

Judy’s older brother Ben had printed the words to several very old hymns he knew the nursing home residents loved and loved to sing. Ben had used his computer program to print the words extra large so those with poor vision could even read the words.

Tina came up with a wonderful idea when she had Ben print an extra copy of each of the hymns. She immediately took her copies of the hymns to the kitchen, and got a mixing bowl out of the cupboard. Little Judy was always interested in learning new things that are done in the kitchen. But in all her seven years she’d never seen a recipe that used hymns. This she had to witness for herself.

Since Tina has a wonderful talent for recruiting anyone anywhere, Judy was given an apron a big wooden spoon to go with the mixing bowl. Tina carefully got a cup of flour from the flour bin and poured it in the bowl. Judy became more confused than ever. Some water was added to the flour and directions were given to mix the water and flour until all the lumps were gone. While the seven year old stirred dutifully, she would glance at the stack of hymn sheets and ask herself, “Am I making a hymn cake?”

All questions were answered when Judy’s mixture became the paste that glued the hymn sheets to thin cardboard like that found in store bought shirts, and on the back of paper tablets. Tina recruited her brother Ben to cut the “hymn boards” into varied shape pieces and the result being hymn puzzles for the nursing home residents.

So now you understand the reason for the great pride in little Judy’s step as she followed the other kids into the nursing home.

After all the gifts and puzzles were distributed, Judy walked over to old Mrs. Beemer. Without saying anything Judy pulled out one of the computer hymn sheets Ben had discarded at home. Little Judy handed it to the silver haired lady. Mrs. Beemer saw the misspelled words and the reasons Ben had trashed the page, but then she noticed at the bottom of the page a row of X’s and O’s ending with a heart surely drawn by a little girl.

Old Mrs. Beemer pointed at the X’s and O’s and then pointed at little Judy. Judy countered with pointing at her own chest and shaking her head yes. Across the room the rest of the kids couldn’t figure out why an old sheet of computer paper would cause an 83 year old lady and a seven year old lady to hug real big.

God’s message of love, hope, and Salvation is so rich and simple we can even use throw away sheets of paper to spread the love that began on the Cross of Calvary. (end of story)

“So you see, Pastor? Flour Power refers to objects created with cardboard, flour and water paste, computer flavoring, little hands, and often silver hair. And what you took a picture of is Larry the Laptop Computer – Flour Powered.”

Pastor Tony had a smile from ear to ear and his insides were revved up too. “Mark, you’re not going to top that today. How about you asking God’s leading and provision for this new ‘Flour Power’ and we’ll get to work. Both men could hardly keep their cool as Mark prayed.

Now you just know before saying amen, he quoted:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Chapter 4 – Dewey and Larado

Dewey placed three clear knocks on Pastor Tony’s office door and waited. When pastor opened the door he saw two older men in clean worn clothes. One of the men only stared at the floor. The other man looked at the young pastor and said, “Mister Reverend, I’m Dewey and this here’s Larado. He hasn’t talked since the flood of ’72 took his wife and little daughter. We want to ask your permission.”

Tony put on his best smile and gestured the men to come in his office. Dewey glanced in the office door. Neither man took a step inside. Dewey held his hands up shoulder high in a stop position. He said, “Beggin’ yer pardon sir but we’ll not go in your office. Larado doesn’t cotton to any office fancier’n a pot-belly stove or a shade tree.”

In a cheerful tone Tony said, “Hey that works for me. Come with me, I got just the thing.” As the three walked toward a courtyard shade tree, Tony noticed Dewey never moved his left arm. It seemed to just hang free. Larado still never made eye contact with Tony.

The young pastor put a small red handkerchief half way into his sport shirt pocket. This was his sign to all his staff even from day one – ‘do not disturb me’. As the three sat on the ground in the shade Tony asked Dewey, “Fellas, I have a favor to ask. Will you both call me Tony if I call you Dewey and Larado?” The agreement was made.

Somewhere in the conversation a little walked up to Larado and started to lick the very quiet old man’s face. Larado began to caress the plain little dog that a flea wouldn’t give a second glance. Obviously the dog had never learned Tony’s ‘do not disturb’ sign.

Pastor spoke first with, “Dewey you said you wanted my permission... ask away.” “Mister Reverend...er...I mean Tony... Larado and me aren’t any good at doin’ most things you need done. And our mamas raised us doers and no excuses. Well, we heard one of the Sunday school classes for youngin’s was going to start making some stuff out of cardboard. We’re here to volunteer to help with the cuttin’ ‘n pastin’.”

“I’ll tell you right up front, Larado doesn’t even know what a computer is, and I’m half afraid of the fool things. But me and my best friend here figured that anything made out of paste and cardboard is as harmless as that little pup-dog. With my one game arm I’d have to have one of the little hearts hold the cardboard while I cut it. ‘Course I’m great at one armed huggin’”.

The three stood up as Tony promised he’d think and pray about it. They’d get heir answer in a few days. Dewey and Larado walked away with the dog taggin’ along. The young pastor leaned against the shade tree slowly rotating a leaf in his fingers. In his mind he asked the leaf, “Is this what flour power is? It bonds two pieces of paper together and also bonds silver-haired people wanting to do something important with children needing someone to care?”

As he began walking back inside the church he shook his head. He thought, “Boy oh boy. College never taught me about Flour Power.” He stopped past the kitchen, made himself a cup of tea and picked up a brand muffin just beggin’ to be shown some attention. The office area was unoccupied as he went in his office, closed his office almost all the way and took a seat in his high back chair.

His eyes scanned his shelves of books and said to himself, “Maybe I need to start a diary that says, “My life with Flour Power...” No sooner had he got the words out of his mouth than his eyes rested on his sermon notes and the red penciled words at the bottom of the paper:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into
the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9

The pastor turned his cell phone off, got out of his chair, went to the door, and quietly closed it all the way. He knelt at the sofa and folded his hands. What a perfect time for knee listenin’.

Chapter 5 – Makin’ a Darla

Sunday evening Pastor Tony stood in the foyer warmly greeting the families and folks coming to worship the Lord and enjoy down-home style fellowship. To stress the point, last year he put an honest-to-goodness rain barrel right next to the podium and preached about rain barrel rejoicin’ his grandpa would’ve been proud of. It must’ve been just about that time that Dewey and Larado started attending.

One of the smaller children came through the door and shot right past him – with a box in his hand, headed for Sunday Evening Children’s Church on the lower level.

Every so often other children scooted past him with empty boxes in their hands and faces all lit up and laughing.

Tony’s curiosity just couldn’t stand it another second. He decided he was going to question the very next kid he saw with a box. The greetings continued and shortly the door opened and in came Dewey and his best friend Larado. Pastor almost did a double take when he saw them both carrying an empty cardboard box. The young pastor asked Dewey, “What are all these boxes for? I’ve just seen quite a number of kids bringing them in and I sure would like to know what gives.”

In a hasty tone Dewey told pastor, “Me and Larado are going to make a Darla with the kids in Jr. Church. Beggin’ your pardon pastor but we don’t want to be a minute late. See ya!” Tony thought to himself, “OK they’re all making a Darla... so what’s a Darla? Does she talk or sing or cook or clean? What’s a Darla do? What’s she look like?” As he headed for the sanctuary with all his questions and no answers, he switched off his cell phone, straightened his tie in the mirror and set his mind on all the needy folks he’d be facing in a minute.

As the offering was being taken up, pastor quickly glanced at his message notes and the text he wanted to plant deeply in the hearts and souls of all those before him. He read them to himself again for focus:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and

bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

As the time for the message was at hand, Pastor Tony stepped to the podium as the sound booth video recorder was focused in on his first statements. Tony looked into the eyes of all the young families, the young adults, and a large group of silver haired folks, most of who had trusted Christ as Savior even before Tony was born. He felt so inadequate, so unqualified to advise these precious worshipers with all their burdens and bruises.

Almost without thinking, Pastor Tony blurted out in a stern tone, “WHO’S RUNNIN’ THIS PLACE, ANYWAY?” Like a little child running home he opened God’s precious word and with great tenderness read for all to hear: I’m reading in Isaiah 55:8-12:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

After the closing of the service and thanking the many folks for joining the service, Pastor Tony headed for the Jr. Church room where the kids were putting finishing touches on their Darlas before taking them home. Tony hadn’t noticed it before now that the group of excited youngsters included several children he was just sure had never been here before.

It took just a minute to see what they were doing with their Darla boxes. With a few quick answers from some of the builders it started to come together. Darla is the fictitious name of the cardboard desktop computer the children were making. So now it comes to light. Each box is a homemade Darla Desktop Computer. The small children will be learning next week how to use the computer to do fun things with their neighborhood friends and siblings.

Darla is no more fancy than Larado’s four-legged tongue and tail friend. It’s a tool. It’s a tool with a computer flavor to turn grade school and preschool children into missionaries. It is created with almost no cutting or other dangerous operations.

Darla’s Design

1. Obtain a cardboard box preferably about 18 inches on every side. Place the cleanest largest side toward you with the flaps (closed) on the top and bottom. This clean side will become the computer screen.
2. Take one BOTTOM flap and open it toward you. This will become the keyboard.
3. On the top of the box there should be two INSIDE flaps on your left and right. These should be pushed down so they are resting against the inside of the box.

- The two OUTER flaps front and back will become a sort of printer. With the back flap staying in its regular position, depress the front flap just a bit so that a sheet of paper can be pushed up through the gap between the two flaps like a printer would do.

As the excited kids were gathering up their tools and scraps the teacher was putting little sticky labels on the back of each one of the Darla boxes. It said, “Build a Darla Desktop Computer. Bring a box and friend.” The label then gave the church address and phone number.

Just before the children left the leaders told them to bring their Darla Computers back next week to finish it up. They also needed to bring with them a small flat rock so they could add their Rock ‘n Roll Darla Mouse.

As Dewey was asking if he could bring a couple of his fishing buddies to help with the Darlas, Pastor Tony saw Larado looking up just a bit at the children. Tony almost missed seeing one little girl come up to Larado and hug his leg as strong as she could.



Healing is often done with medicine, doctors, and hospitals. But some of the best healing is achieved by a little one in Patton leather shoes and a powder blue ribbon in her curly hair.

In the following weeks the boys and girls learned how to mix flour and water to make paste. The paste got used to stick pictures of things on the Darla Computer box one of the most important was the picture of a computer keyboard. The keyboard showed the alphabet in its proper sequence across the rows from left to right, rather than like the typewriter arrangement. The numbers were all in sequence too. The arrangement was perfect for teaching young ones their ABCs and counting too.



Pictures colored on paper could be stuck to Darla’s front side (screen area) above the keyboard. The picture might be of a missionary that a pretend email is being typed for. Or it could be a picture of themselves and typing in what they’d like to do for Jesus with their Darla computer.

Chapter 6 – Cinnamon Flour Mice

Pastor Tony stopped in front of his secretary’s desk, “Megan, I’m headed to the kitchen to make some herbal tea. Can I bring you some back?” “Uh, no thanks pastor, maybe next time. I’ll have this newsletter page three ready for you to look at first thing in the morning.” “Sounds good.”

About half way to the kitchen Tony stopped walking and jotted a couple key notes on his pocket computer. His sermon ideas for Sunday week were starting to come together. As he shortly walked into the kitchen he saw his Sweetie (that’s Kathryn his wife) seated at one of the large dining tables working on a paper mache project.

Three of the Super Sixties ladies were helping with tidiness not a top priority. A fourth lady came for her first time to help with the strange project. Her job was to mix the flour, water, salt, and cinnamon mixture for the whole mache work. She also cut heavy twine into two foot lengths putting a fat knot in one end. [Note: paper mache recipes include many variations that are best researched at the library or on line.]

While brewing his herbal tea, Tony learned the ladies were making some paper mache computer mice to be used by the Sunday evening children with their Darla Desktop Computers. He saw the knotted end of the twine put in the center of the cinnamon mache mouse.

The mice would later be painted to show two mouse buttons and some personalized initials for its owner. Using poster paints some of the girls painted a little Daisy flower on their flour mouse, while a couple boys painted simple wheels on the sides of theirs.

The children also pasted a colorful sign on the side of every Darla that said, "My Missions for Jesus." The teachers stressed over and over that Darla is far more than a toy. It's a tool for teaching friends about God's love.

The Bible says that God gave us computers and that we should use them to please Him. On the white marker board was written, "Computer Grace". A Sunday or two later the children had pretty much finished their Darla Desktop Computers with Cinnamon Flour Mouse. With the help of Dewey and Larado, the leaders taught the children about Computer Grace. It's a lot like our table grace at dinner time. The difference is that before we touch our Darla computer and mouse, we need to always ask God to guide and guard us in our computing; whether it's pretend or real. Satan is always looking for ways to turn our thoughts and actions ugly and dishonoring to God.

We should all act as though the most important part of our computing is what we do before we touch the mouse and keyboard... pray, plan, posture, and protect.

Chapter 7 – Palmer Pocket PC

Thomas Kincaid stood in front of the Sunday night group of boys and girls that had made Darla Desktop Computers with the cinnamon mouse. He started with, "Computers are so much fun to make and learn to use. At my job I use a computer all day long but I could never use a big desktop computer."

"I use an electric scooter to travel all around a great big warehouse. I have to count these parts and those parts and then add them all up. So I have to use a smaller computer. In fact my computer is so small I carry it in my shirt pocket. Here, I'll show you." He pulled out a small computer that didn't look anything like a computer. It had no mouse, no keyboard, and certainly didn't have any monitor.

He continued, "This is my Palmer Pocket Personal Computer. This stick looking thing is called a stylus; it's like a special pencil. Since Palmer is so small there's no place to put a keyboard so I talk to Palmer by writing on his face...er...screen. Now Palmer is pretty persnickety. He'll tell right quick if you write sloppy. Palmer doesn't do sloppy. When I first got Palmer I decided he'll take sloppy and like it. Well, in just two minutes Palmer turned himself off. I looked all around me at this monster warehouse and all things I had to count with Palmer's help. I figured I'd better shape up and quit the sloppy way I was writing words and commands on Palmer's screen."

"I also realized that I couldn't ask other PEOPLE to help me if I wrote sloppy on paper too. Boys and girls, I heard Pastor Tony teach us that God's Precious Word even tells us about not doing things sloppy. It surely does! In 1 Corinthians 14:40 it clearly says, 'Let all things be done decently and in order.' Can you say that with me?" They did. "Here in this New Testament verse it tells us to not be sloppy, do things decently and that also means doing things in the right order too."

Mr. Kincaid continued, “I’ve heard a funny name I want to see if you can say it. The name is Habakkuk. Can you all say that with me?” They did. This is the name of a small book in the Old Testament of the Bible. Most people think that little things and little people aren’t very important, especially if they’re kind of old.”

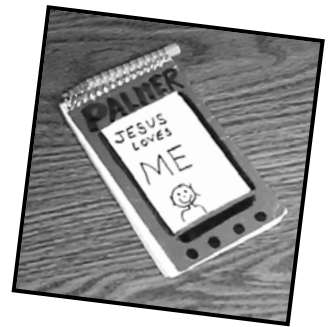
“Well anyhow, God knows better. So God is going to show Habakkuk something very important and tells him: “Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.’ Isn’t that neat? God says important things like this I want you to write it down. More than that, I want you to write it on tables or really a tablet so it will be super clear and easy to understand by anybody. He then tells Habakkuk the reason for all this... so that anyone can read and understand and then rush to share this important news with others.”

“So boys and girls, my Palmer pocket computer tells me not to be sloppy when I write on it. The New Testament tells me to write things decently and in the right order. And then the Old Testament of God’s precious word says I’m supposed to clearly write things down so I can help God spread the word that He is in control and expects each of us to honor Him by always doing our best.

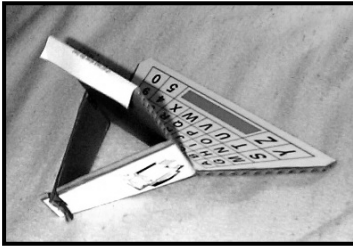
Palmer PC Construction (CAUTION! Sharp tools required!)

A super simple pretend Palmer Pocket Personal Computer can be constructed starting with a very inexpensive pocket tablet. Have a responsible adult use a sharp utility knife to cut out a window in the tablet’s front cover. Add pretend buttons and a name on the remaining portion of the front cover. Put the owner’s name on the back of the tablet and insert a portion of a pencil into the spiral binding.

(Be sure to read the disclaimer at the front of this book.)



Chapter 8 – Computer Programming with Larry



The Flour Power Computer resources included Larry Laptop foldup pretend computer that is wonderful for the same portability provided by a real laptop. Larry is a missions tool for preteens to disciple younger children.

Larry is a 'programmable' computer in that smaller children are helped to spell out 'programs' that are hung on the screen. The 'programs' are really no more than short Bible verses or phrases of which the preteen help the younger 'programmer' to find each letter or number on the keyboard.

Unlike a typewriter keyboard the numbers and letters are in their natural order and therefore can be used to rehearse their dictionary order.

This project does require some adult construction help because cardboard will have to be cut.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Trim around the outer edge of the Laptop template.
2. Either use the cutout as a template to cut the shape in cardboard and then use a marker to Draw the keyboard etc. or,
3. Glue the entire cutout onto the cardboard.
You may have to cut along the fold lines.



LET GROWNUPS HELP WITH THE CUTTING!!

CAUTION!

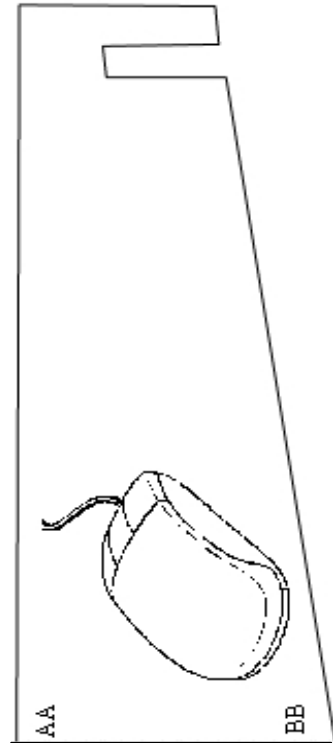
Let Grownups do any cutting of cardboard etc.

**Larry
Laptop
Screen**

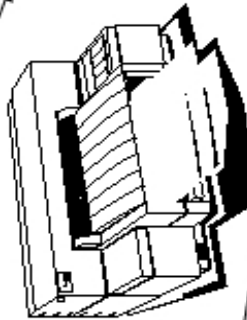
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MEMORY

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Fold along dotted line (2 places)



MOUSE is little but powerful.
SCREEN shows what is going on inside.
MEMORY remembers good things (and bad too.)
KEYBOARD sends commands for good deeds.
PRINTER helps us share what we produce.

Being a missionary by telling others of the joy and peace of accepting Christ as their Savior is not reserved just for grown ups. The Gospel message is so simple and straight-forward that even preschoolers can teach others of God's matchless love that starts at the Cross.

A	B	C	D	E	F	1	6
G	H	I	J	K	L	2	7
M	N	O	P	Q	R	3	8
S	T	U	V	W	X	4	9
Y	Z				5	0	

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Chapter 9 – Flour Power Computer Missions Fair

Just as sure as water runs down hill the Flour Power kids, silver haired helpers and leaders started talking about having a computer missions fair; Flour Powered that is. Though Pastor Tony had never heard of one he gave his permission and the date was set for the next month.

The fair exhibits were to be exclusively kid made, flour powered cardboard construction. With that in mind the leaders made it clear to Pastor that this is to be a missions fair and not a computer fair. Its purpose is to teach children of all ages how they can and should be missionaries starting in their own back yard.

In the same way there are different Flour Powered computers that are better at certain things, God calls different children to honor Him with their talents and time.

It's the job of adults and church leaders to cultivate those talents using love and God's Word. Some children bond especially well with silver-hair smiles and lots of well-seasoned hugs.

While snacks were served in the activity room the fair exhibits were arranged in a large circle around the gymnasium. The whole Super Sixties Seniors group showed up and even with a couple visitors scratching their heads wondering when church became all this exciting and how they had fit right in so easily.

Just to show you how really out-of-this-world exciting the fair was, even Two-Thumbs Jackson was giving his complete attention to the variety of exhibits. You have to know that Two-Thumbs got his nickname from his fellow 4th graders because he ALWAYS had both thumbs going on some video game every place you saw him at or walking to. But today was different. Today he was learning some things about God's style of computing... with flour, cinnamon, and cardboard.

The flour kids even made their own Salvation tracts showing a computer and the ABCs of Salvation. Granny Simms was there and is she a character. She was a 'Rosie-the-Riveter' that helped build B-17 bombers for the air force during World War II. She could be real determined when she believed in her mission. Faster than a speeding bullet she stuck a Salvation tract in Two-Thumbs Jackson's hand and ushered him down to the next table before he could decline or hardly know what happened.

No one knows exactly whose idea it was but Karen Tipton started taking a picture of each student and putting it next to their exhibit. It was well received and also helped the exhibitors to really be identified with their exhibit and testimony.

- 1) Four exhibits grouped together to make a **Computer Grace Exhibit** showing how important practicing Grace before touching the computer. It's a lot like table grace.
 - a) The first of the 4 computer grace Darla displays emphasized that we start by **THANKING** God for giving us computers, cardboard or otherwise. We must be careful to not think of them as evil. They are just God given tools that sometimes are used by evil people.
 - b) The second item in Computer Grace is to ask God to **GUIDE** us in the amount of time we spend on it and to focus us on His work to be done.
 - c) The third is to ask God to **GUARD** us against going to ugly places on the Internet and maybe even giving out our private information. Sometimes our feet can take us to dangerous places. Well at the keyboard and muse our fingers can also lead us to the quicksand of sin.
 - d) The fourth item in Computer Grace is to **ASK** that He use our fruits of computing to His honor and the Salvation of souls.

- 2) Good Posture and Lighting
 - a) One of the Darla Desktop displays showed a stick man sitting up straight in a chair in front of a computer. Above him was a bright light. A bit X was over the bright light.
- 3) Palmer Pocket PC's
 - a) One Palmer was suspended from a string that was shown to be coming down through the clouds. The young person would tell the onlookers that God gave us computers and we need to use them like they belong to Him.
- 4) Email
 - a) One Darla had a picture of an envelope with a Cross on the front of it. Behind the envelope was a ball that tried to look like the earth. This exhibit reminds us to use our email efforts for honoring God and encouraging missionaries.
 - b) Another Darla exhibit showed a large ship with one of those big containers that carry missionary supplies to where they are needed. Next to the picture of the ship and container is a database list that suggests it is an inventory of all the precious supplies.
 - c) One more Darla exhibit had John 3:16 typed out and then under each word was some scribble letters that makes you think the user is probably using his/her computer to translate God's precious promises into languages so hungry to hear the words of eternal hope.
 - d) A Palmer showed two stick figures one larger than the other. Between them was a box that kind-of looked like a Bible. The little artist couldn't spell discipleship or probably even pronounce it, but has undoubtedly already had a taste of the joyful process.
 - e) Megan, that's Tony's secretary, touched him on the arm and asked if he would take a look at this particular Darla Desktop exhibit. He followed her. Megan described the exhibit as best as she could. It was a report, sort-of, of Pastor Tony's sermons. The young person had cut over a dozen pieces out of past church bulletins. The pieces were the titles of Pastor's sermons. Megan said, "Tony, do you see what's on her heart? With her Darla pretend computer she's typing your sermons. She's not thinking of serving the Lord with her keyboard in some far away country. She's set her heart on typing your sermons, maybe to take to folks that have no computer...or electricity for that matter. Tony, her mission is her own local church...doesn't that just bless your heart?"
- 5) The honorable mention award
 - a) If there were one, would have to go to the exhibitor that drew a picture of an Internet Web Browser. Whether on purpose or by accident, where the word "GOOGLE" is supposed to be, the word "GOSPEL" was clearly written. In its appropriate position just to the right of the large letters was the click button "Search". Tony got a lump in his throat as his eyes saw the word "GOSPEL" and then the word "Search". He wondered how many souls within a short distance of the church are searching for the very hope and peace that comes in simply saying yes to the GOSPEL.

The fun thing about Flour Powered Darla Desktop Computers, Cinnamon Flour Mice, Palmer Pocket PCs, and Larry Laptop Computers is that they can be used in all sorts of displays. But above all they are great at being built by children at no cost, and they are incredibly powerful missionary tools to be used in Africa, Australia, Austria, or your very own backyard.

The greatest messages of Flour Powered Church Computers is that God wants to use His tools for His front lines soldiers and students in the Great Commission. What a powerful way to bond the oldest and youngest generations under Heaven.

In Flour Power this silver-haired senior finds fulfillment of Ps 71:18:

Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

Salvation Question:

If you died tonight, do you KNOW if you'd go to heaven?

Salvation Steps:

== A == Acknowledge you are a sinner	ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23
== B == Believe the shed B lood of Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved.	The wages of sin is death* but the GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23
== C == Confess to God you know you are a sinner and call upon Him to come into your heart.	For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Romans 10:13

Salvation Assurance:

According to the above, we are not saved or kept according to our feelings or "believer's" water baptism. Our assurance is in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is our act of obedience in a ceremony that shows others what has happened inside our heart and soul.

*This death is far worse than ceasing to breathe. It actually means 'separation from God', which would be the real Hell.

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