

# FIRST *words*

TO REACH PEOPLE FOR JESUS CHRIST & TOGETHER BECOME MORE LIKE HIM

**advent:** {ad·vent} *noun*  
the period beginning four Sundays  
before Christmas, observed in  
commemoration of the coming of  
Christ into the world.

To me the Advent season represents not only the celebration of the first coming of Christ, but also His return through the 2nd coming which we all eagerly await and anticipate. It is a time when I am reminded to have a givers heart and to love others just as they are.

Mark Edwards

Advent reminds me that God never forgets nor forsakes us, and that His promises are steadfast and true. He provides the answer to our every need in every circumstance, and I find this in Jesus. This remarkable event, when God put on human flesh to reveal Himself to the world, proves He will go to any length to reach out to me.

Jim Jones

Most of the formality and color and legend have been drained from life by the modern world's preference for the ordinary. The last great festival left is Christmas...so to it we pin every unrealistic hope for perfection. If things are bad now, we feel betrayed. The poor may feel poorer, the lonely, lonelier.

But Christmas is a beginning, not an end. God did not send his Son to a warm house and a life of ease. Christmas reminds us that Jesus lived a brief and often bitter life, as we may. Even so, His victory was complete -- as ours can be through Him. We can see God's fearless, giving heart clearly in the star gleaming in the winter darkness and take courage for the winter before us. Isaiah 9:2

Rose Williams

"Come, O Come . . ."

to us who fall upon our face  
fearful in the night,  
its sudden light,  
and rise, cradle a lamb and walk  
the path that leads to a stable,  
gentle creatures we understand,  
and kneeling, cry out for sight,  
flesh made whole, our demons  
cast down like chains broken  
at our feet  
and return to the flock,  
fellow shepherds  
keeping watch, and try to voice  
what we have seen and believed.

Bob Fink

For me, Advent is the season of anticipation. While it seems the Christmas displays have been in local retail stores for several weeks, the anticipation begins with Advent. There are so many special events and moments which help me celebrate Christmas during this time. This feeling never gets old...it is never "stuff of the ordinary," it is, for me, the fabric of the eternal. That glorious woven tapestry that grows into a beautiful picture of the gospel that can be born in us each and every day.

Todd Wilson



FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH • ABILENE

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FBCABILENE.ORG

# words

## FOR THE JOURNEY

### HOLDING IT TOGETHER DURING THE HOLIDAYS... OR WHAT HAPPENED TO HOLY DAYS?

**Dr. Phil Christopher**  
*Senior Pastor*

Recently, I preached on holding it together during the holidays. I prepared a list of ways we can cope, but sermons need to be more than a list. A list will not provide lasting peace. We need the “good news” which Jesus Christ, who created all things, maintains all things, and holds all things together, left His throne in heaven to enter into the mess of our lives. The God who placed the stars in the sky with His fingers will dwell in the straw, wiggling His fingers as a baby.

I understand we need suggestions to guide us through the minefields of the holidays. How sad these sacred days of God’s coming to earth bring such stress and turmoil. The next four weeks of Advent change the “holidays” into “holy days,” reminding us the God of surprises can show up anywhere. Anything is possible.

For those who are left brain and list-makers, here is a list. I pray you will include this list with all of the lists you are “checking twice.” These suggestions are not new or inclusive, and if we are totally honest, they have not been fully tried.

- I love the movie, Christmas Vacation. Avoid the Clark Griswold syndrome of the perfect family Christmas. Remember you do not have to be perfect. God’s favor, which cannot be earned, rests on you. Trying to be perfect, or in control, can be exhausting.
- Watch your expectations. The first Christmas was not perfect. Relationships or people do not suddenly change.
- It is OK to have a hard day during the holidays, where you feel like a “Grinch.”
- You can grieve over some loss. Jesus Himself was a person acquainted with grief.
- Worship fully, spend less, give more, and love all.

- Each week, light a candle and focus on the weekly promises of Advent – hope, peace, joy, and love and put them into practice.
- Read the Advent devotions that will be sent to you by email each day.
- Holding it together during the holidays is someone else’s job description – not yours. Colossians 1:17 promises, “He is before all things and holds all things together.” Good news – you’re off the hook.

Last, trust that God is always there in the joys and hassles of these holy days, which goes beyond any list. We don’t always see Him or look for Him in our busyness.

Mary Catherine and I play the game of “peep-eye.” I let her cover her face and say, “Where is Mary?” Then in such joy she pulls down the cloth and I shout with joy, “There she is!” But she had always been there.

Then I play “peep-eye” with her as I hide behind a corner or a plant. Natalie says, “Where is Papa?” Then I pop out and we shout with great laughter and joy, “There he is!” But I had always been there.

Sometimes we can wonder where God is..., but then we stop to see God Almighty hiding in a manger of straw who came to hold life together. We shout with such great joy and hope, “There He is!”, the God who has always been there for you. God Himself, with great joy and laughter, also shouts, “Here I am!” Colossians says, “For God was pleased to have all of His fullness dwell in Him.” This Advent season, I pray you will have a moment to say with great joy and laughter, “There He is!” He is the one who holds everything together.

“Peep-eye,”  
Phil

Advent means:  
"The coming of a new person."

The four Sundays preceding Christmas motivate believers to eagerly anticipate the coming of a new person, to wit: Jesus Christ.

Lynn Ingalsbe

At this time of Thanksgiving, I pause to be thankful for some basic things: My wife, Patsy; our children; their families; our friends in Abilene and other cities who have contacted us to assure us of their prayers and concern for us during our multiple trips to Houston and to our oncologist here who directs my infusions. Most of all, however, I am most thankful for the God of love who sent Jesus to walk with us through good days and bad days. I am thankful that God doesn't take days off, but is with us always!!

Palmer McCown

This week, I have had cause to think about vulnerability: my own, my family's, Texas, and the world. I know that everything I have and am is by God's hand, and for every gift I am most grateful. I need to approach this Advent season like a vulnerable child, because when I allow myself to become open to the miracle of Christmas and all the possibilities, I will be sure not to miss it!

Deborah McFarland

The holidays always bring a sense of hustle and bustle. Remembering to celebrate Advent can get lost in the chaos. Being a mom, I try to think of Mary during her last days of pregnancy waiting for her son to be born. Those last few weeks of pregnancy are full of anticipation and excitement, but also a calm and peace like nothing I've ever experienced before. The fact that we are also anticipating the birth of a baby girl this spring makes this Advent season all the more special!

Erin Poindexter

I'm thankful for Advent and I come to it eagerly.

Advent worship stakes out the season for the Child born in Bethlehem and stands guard against tides that would squeeze its soul from it. During Advent, worship takes on a different flavor. You can see it in our worship center, freshly decorated with red, green, gold, white – the colors of the season. You can feel it in the music, now punctuated by hymns of anticipation and carols of celebration. You can hear it in the Scriptures at the center of worship and sermon. You can see it in the lighting of the Advent Candle standing front and center in the sanctuary.

In other times, Advent has refreshed my spirit as demanding and draining years wound down. Advent has sent me year by year to fresh looks at the Scriptures and biblical faith. I have felt fresh winds blowing across my spirit. Some of the fruit gathered during my Advent pilgrimages have refreshed me. I look for that again and I pray the same for you!

Larry Baker

The many expressions of love, encouragement, thoughts and prayers that have come to our family after my mother's passing are a reminder of God's ultimate expression of love for His creation, sent to each of us "at just the right time...." Romans 5:6, in the birth of His Son. Thanks be to God. Come Lord Jesus.

Allan Frizzell

If I am not careful, the word Advent will blur into all the thoughts I have associated with Christmas. A little research about the origin of the term Advent brought some new meanings to me. Advent means the unexpected arrival, the especially important event, the Incarnation, "when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son" to be our SAVIOR and LORD! (Galatians 4:4)

Julian Bridges



The Advent season for me is a time of anticipation for what's to come. Time with family and friends, good food, parties...but more than anything, it's a time to anticipate the coming of our Savior. Wow, how can we not be overcome with joy and excitement during this time of year!

Candy Rains

# thank you!

How do you say “Thanks” to Anonymous?

Recently, the church received a very generous check that was given specifically for “missional activities or programs that FBC has to help and witness to the hurting, disadvantaged, lost, hungry, addicted, abused, suffering or homeless people in our city.” It was sent via a cashier’s check in an unmarked envelope and signed “A blessed, grateful and anonymous FBC member.” So, back to the title. How do you say thank you to anonymous? Obviously I am trying by writing this and hopefully it will be seen and read by this anonymous person, because we truly want this person to know two things. First of all, we really appreciate the gift, which will enable us to help countless numbers of folks through City Light, the Counseling Ministry, and many other encounters here at the church. The second thing that needs to be known is that we take very seriously the request submitted in the letter and will use the funds for those exact purposes. Financial integrity is something that we pride ourselves on.

But, this has also caused me to think about all of the “anonymous” gifts that are given each week to support the ministry budget. You see, I do not know what people give. Sure, I somewhat know who gives because we send statements and try to include a word of thanks each quarter, but as to what people give, I have no clue. So in a sense, all the tithes and offerings that come to the church are anonymous. But it is those anonymous gifts that allow the church to operate by paying the electric bill, the water bill, salaries for the employees who keep things running, and the upkeep of the buildings and grounds.

So, I say thank you to anonymous,  
each and every one of you!

## YEAR-END GIVING

As the year draws to a close, so does the 2017 Ministry Budget. Historically, First Baptist has received a significant portion of the yearly budget through year-end gifts. This year is no exception and we have budgeted with that in mind. The December budgeted receipts are \$474,431. The 2018 budget will not be approved until February, but it will reflect how we end 2017. All gifts must be in the office by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 29, given during morning worship on Sunday, December 31, or postmarked by midnight December 31.

## MEET DESSA AND WILLIAM

*By Paul Schnitman*

I left at 5 a.m. Friday, November 3 because I was anxious to get down to Houston to start helping someone recover from the damage left by Hurricane Harvey.

John Moore scheduled some trips down there and this was the only time I could go, so I signed up. Initially, I was told we would be working on a church. Then, the week of the trip, I was told we would be working on two houses. Previously, I told John I had no experience taping and bedding, but I could hang sheetrock or do demo work or pretty much anything else but taping and bedding. The week of the trip, he told me to start watching some taping and bedding videos!

I arrived at 11:15 a.m. at a house owned by Maryland. A crew from Oklahoma was finishing up hanging sheetrock. Kyle Berry was also on our team and he had been there since 8 a.m., so he and I started taping. The rest of our crew arrived sometime after 1 p.m., and we all worked on Maryland’s house. There were 11 of us working on this house. I know this will come as a shock to those that know me, but I am a little bossy...okay, a lot bossy. I tend to work better by myself, so I told John that I would like to go to the other house and take Mackenzie and Amber with me.

The other house was owned by Dessa and William. I immediately went to work taping, and Amber and Mackenzie were making sure all the screws were recessed and filled them with mud. Kyle came over later. He apparently is way more fun than me, because they were laughing and singing to the music he was playing on his phone.

William was following me around, so I put him to work. I couldn’t understand much of what William said because he was so soft spoken. I was jacking with him all day. At one point, he accidentally punched a hole through the sheetrock, and I blurted out loudly, “Dang it, William, now I have to fix your screw ups!” He said something I couldn’t hear and we started laughing. Dessa said, “Mr. Paul, I want to show you something,” and she took me back to their bedroom.



Continued from page 4.

Then, she whispered, "William can't do anything like this, and I don't want him messing things up." I leaned close to her and said, "Dessa, he's doing just fine and we are having fun, so don't worry about it. I can fix anything he messes up!"

On one of my breaks, I told Dessa, "I bet you can cook a really good breakfast can't you?" The next morning I arrived to eggs, bacon, sausage, biscuits, and cantaloupe. And I was right...she CAN cook a really good breakfast!

At one point, I told Dessa and William that I appreciated them letting us work on their house, and she said, "Oh no, we appreciate YOU." She said she was all cried out and was just praising God for all the people that have come to help them. The crew from First Baptist Abilene not only helped renovate two houses, but they ministered to three individuals who have gone through, and are in the middle of, a very difficult time in their lives. We brought laughter and relief into their lives. I was tremendously blessed to be a part of this ministry. I've never gone on any mission trips our church has done, and that was my loss. I'm sure every trip our church does blessed those that go just like this one did me. This is just one more thing that our church does really well. This is why we need to give back to God in our tithes.

At the end of the first day that I worked on their house, I extended my hand to William to shake. He grabbed my hand and pulled me close to hug me. That is what we did at the end of each day. We became close. Dessa didn't know how to take my jabbing most of the time, but she kissed me on the cheek before I left the last day. We exchanged phone numbers, and I invited them to both come to Abilene and stay with Donna and me and come to church with us. She said, "I'd like that." I told her I'd give them some gas money, buy them plane tickets, or come pick them up when they are ready. Because...I want our church to meet Dessa and William.



## CITY SIDEWALKS HOT CHOCOLATE BOOTH

This past Tuesday night, we had a great time serving 125 gallons of hot chocolate at the annual Abilene City Sidewalks. We want to thank all those who came out and helped us serve. A huge thank you to Paige, Kathryn, & Jerry Clark; Hannah, Sarah, Timothy, & Jecilly Varghese; David Hall, Steve Davis, Ronnie Mason, Chance Rains, Britney Tucker, John Moore, Mike Greenfield, C.V. Blake, Todd Wilson, Cody Favor, Candy Rains, Phil Christopher, and the FBC custodial staff. What a wonderful way to kick-off this special season of celebrating our Savior's birth.





# ACTING IN *love*

## MISSIONS: SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Mission's Committee of FBC Abilene is happy to announce a new partnership and support of CBF field personnel Mary and Hunter serving in Southeast Asia. Mary and Hunter serve among a minority people group in their country through education, resourcing, Bible translation, and outreach. For 19 years, Mary and Hunter have formed relationships within this minority group which is feared and misunderstood, and with partners who wish to share the good news with these people.

In a country where less than one percent of the population is Christian and Christian resources are written from a different perspective, much of the ministry is outreach and, creating and providing resources with the appropriate terminology. Mary and Hunter provide this support alongside partners (both local and not) in a variety of ways including:

- Secondary Educational Scholarships – providing educational opportunities for underserved and/or at risk youth from the minority people group, who face heavy discrimination, especially in regards to education.
- Resource Center – this is a broad reaching project that provides a wide range of resources such as training, network meetings, and support for church planters. This has helped bring leaders together to accomplish greater things than they could by themselves and helps to strengthen the body of Christ.
- Bible translation – Where Mary and Hunter serve, the Bible has been written from a Buddhist perspective, or for Buddhists to understand, so non-Buddhist populations must filter through this terminology, which can be offensive to certain people groups. This Bible project is providing books of the Bible in terminology that is familiar to the minority people group.
- Media and internet – the development of resources in media on the internet, which can be more readily accessed in private.
- Street Children – providing education and a healthy living environment for street children among this people group.

Your gifts through the Unified Missions Offering and your gifts given through the Faces and Places campaign, help support Mary and Hunter and their work which transforms lives. Please be in prayer for Mary and Hunter as they continue to seek support for this important ministry.

# HABITAT HOUSE:

Thank you to our volunteers for your hard work on the Habitat project! Future build days are December 9 and 16 starting at 8:00 a.m. at 4317 Congress Street.



Please contact Rebecca Hunt in the missions' office at (325) 675-8112 or [rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org](mailto:rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org) if you would like to sign up.



The December LLL luncheon will be held on Tuesday, December 19, at Noon in the FAMILY LIFE CENTER CAFÉ for this meeting only. Instead of a speaker this month, we will have a game day with various domino games (chicken foot, triominos, Mexican train, spinner, and 42). If you have dominoes to use for the games, please bring them to the luncheon.

Masonya will provide lunch at the cost of \$5 per person, followed by our game day. Please make plans to attend for an enjoyable lunch and fellowship.

## CITY LIGHT CHRISTMAS STORE

Thank you to everyone who donated toward this year's City Light Christmas Store! Our store opens Tuesday, December 7 and we are still needing donations! For more information, please contact Rebecca Hunt in the missions' office at 675-8112 or [rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org](mailto:rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org).

Wow, what a year for Operation Christmas Child! As a collection center, we were able to collect 7,499 shoeboxes, 403 more than we collected last year! We loaded 445 cartons into the trailer and they are now on their way to Dallas to the processing center. All of this was made possible because of the generous giving of each person who filled a box, manned the collection center, and by the 15 men (and one woman) who helped load the trailer on Monday. Those include: Johnny and Beverly Warren, Bob Bein, Steve Clemmer, Alan Wartes, Kelly Utley, Paul Schnitman, Keith Post, Sandy Utley, Tom Cunningham, John Weeks, Hunter Huff, Stan Chapman, Roy Jones, and Zachery Gustafson. Because we had such a great turnout, we were able to load the trailer in just under 19 minutes! Thanks guys! But the whole process would not have worked without the excellent and hard work done by Debra Clemmer, who as always kept everything running smoothly and accurately. We will be taking a group to the Dallas processing center to work an afternoon shift on December 15 if you would be interested in helping with the next phase of the operation. So, thanks again for making Christmas a joyful experience for 7,499 children around the world.



## STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

**December 10, 3 years**

**Masonya White**

*Wednesday Night Cook*

**December 12, 1 year**

**Sly Butgereit**

*Custodian*

**December 16, 15 years**

**Todd Wilson**

*Pastor for Music & Worship*

**December 20, 16 years**

**Robin Roberts**

*Finance Ministry Assistant*

**December 21, 25 years**

**Tony Martinez**

*Custodian*

# EVENT CALENDAR:

## DECEMBER

3	Parade of Flags Blessings of Christmas Personnel Committee Meeting Chrismon Making Party HSU Concert Choir Concert (pm)	17	Youth Christmas Caroling Let Heaven & Nature Swing (pm)
5	ACHS Band & Choir Concert Women's Gathering	19	LLL Finance Committee Meeting Clack Orchestra Program Deacons' Meeting/Party
8	Parent's Night Out	20	No Activities
10	The Promise of Messiah (am) ACU Vespers Service (pm)	22	Offices Closed
11	AHS Choir Christmas Concert	24	No Sunday School, Coffee & donuts at 10 a.m. Morning Worship CLCM Meal
12	Craig M.S. Choir Christmas Concert		Christmas Eve Services 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.
13	Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting Grant-in-Aid Ministry Team Meeting	25	Offices Closed
17	Children's Choirs Christmas Music (am) Missions Committee	26	Offices Closed
		31	No Sunday School, Coffee & donuts at 10 a.m. Morning Worship

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

November 2017

<b>Budget</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>Year-to-Date</b>
Required	\$214,500	\$2,815,311
Given	\$255,923	\$2,745,557



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