



December
2016

The News

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Newsletter Team

Bodil Overtree and Deb Gardner, Acting Editors

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Contact us at thenews@firstprestexas.org

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Equally Sinful and Lost, Equally Accepted and Loved

by Pastor Rich McDermott

Surprisingly, there are not very many books about Christmas that I find compelling, interesting, and edifying. But this year, that has changed. I just discovered a little book called *Hidden Christmas*, by Timothy Keller. It is well worth your time. As we begin the season of Advent (which means “coming”), we should consider the variety of ways that Christ comes to us. Timothy Keller helps us with that task. Let us take a moment to consider one part of Jesus’ birth narrative (and a way he has come to us) that we mostly ignore and that we very rarely read closely. It is called the genealogy of Jesus. It is really his family tree. In ancient times, it also functioned like a résumé, giving important background information of a person’s life.

Matthew’s genealogy (1:1-17) of Jesus is fascinating. He produced one that totally shocked his readers. First of all, there are five women listed there, which virtually never happened in a genealogy. Matthew is indicating the importance of women, all of whom were “the mothers of Jesus.” Not only that, but three of the women mentioned were Gentiles (or non-Jews), emphasizing that the Messiah, Jesus, is related to the whole world. And if you know the stories behind the names listed, you will be shocked and reminded that Jesus was born into a greatly dysfunctional family just like you and I have. He knows our frame. He understands our pride and our shame.

Keller points out that Jesus’ family tree has people who were moral failures, people who were cultural outsiders, racial outsiders, and gender outsiders. The Law of Moses excluded these people from the presence of God, and yet they are acknowledged as the ancestors of Jesus. We begin to see that, in Keller’s words, “In Jesus Christ, prostitute and king, male and female, Jew and Gentile, one race and another race, moral and immoral - all sit down as equals. Equally sinful and lost, equally accepted and loved....

“God is not ashamed of us. We are all in his family.... There is another side to this. All cultures encourage their members to look down on some people in order to congratulate themselves for their own superiority. It may be people from another race and class. Maybe you look down on those snobs with so much education, or maybe it’s those ignorant ones with no education. Maybe you despise the people whose political views you think are ruining the country. In all of these examples, you have been taught to see some people as unclean, beyond the pale, unholy - while you are okay. Jesus Christ’s values are radically different. The world values pedigree, money, race, class. He turns all that upside down. These things that matter so much outside

Jesus' church must not be brought inside. He says, in a sense, 'In my family, those things that are so important out there in the world must not be so important.' ”

These words were written by Tim Keller many months before the last election. It seems he was incredibly prescient in seeing where our national conversations seem to be going. As part of Jesus' family, it is time for us to cease “look[ing] down on some people in order to congratulate [ourselves] for [our] own superiority,” regardless of the commitments we think we are defending. It is time for us to sing with conviction, “No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in. O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray, cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.” Amen, and amen.



An Advent Festival
a service of worship in song
celebrating the coming of the Savior
with choir and chamber orchestra
featuring **Benedictus**
by Dan Pinkston
Sunday, December 11, 11:00 a.m.
in the sanctuary
First Presbyterian Church
1200 S. Collins St
Arlington, TX 76010
www.FirstPresTexas.org

We will have **one** – very special – worship service on Sunday, December 11.

Don't miss this wonderful worship opportunity!

Thank You

Thank you for all your kind words, cards and support during this time.

We are very blessed to have the love and comfort of FPCA.

We appreciate you all,

Mitzie Duke

December Special Offerings

A Presbyterian tradition for almost 70 years, the Christmas Joy Offering is one of four special offerings supported by our church. Three of these are designated by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church to provide congregations direct ways of supporting specific causes that help those in need.

The receipts from the Christmas Joy Offering are distributed equally to: 1) the Board of Pensions for the Assistance Program, a means to provide financial assistance for current and retired church workers in need; and 2) the National Ministries of the General Assembly Council to support Presbyterian racial ethnic education and leadership development. To view a brief video about the Christmas Joy Offering, visit www.pcusa.org/cjoffering.

Also, continuing a local tradition of many years, the offering received at our Christmas Eve services at FPCA will go to benefit the wonderful ministry of Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (PCHAS). FPCA members have been supportive of PCHAS for some 75 years, both individually and as a congregation. All offerings on Christmas Eve, unless otherwise designated, support PCHAS. Besides the group homes in Itasca and Waxahachie, PCHAS has expanded its services with 6 other core programs in 18 locations throughout the state of Texas:

- A Child and Family Program to preserve family units
- Adoption and foster care services that include training, support, and counseling
- A Single Parent Family Service where PCHAS acts as a "safety net" during times of crisis
- Transitional Living and Advanced Education Support Services to ensure youth from the group homes are well prepared to make life-long decisions as young adults



....he helps widows and orphans, but takes the wicked to their ruin. (Psalms 146:9b)

Offering envelopes for the Joy Offering can be found outside the sanctuary and chapel.

The Dove Tree



The Dove Tree stands in the hall outside the choir room. Each dove bears the name and address of one of our homebound members. Please take a dove from the tree and visit one of these wonderful folks.

Advent is a great time for us to spread love to those who cannot get out easily. A small gift, a card, a poinsettia, etc., will brighten his or her holiday season, and you will be blessed in return.

The Mitten Tree

As winter arrives, remember the people who do not have basic necessities to keep them warm. During the month of December, the congregation can extend the joy of sharing by bringing mittens, gloves, hats, new socks and FPCA, books, games, small toys, and other gifts to be placed on the mitten tree. These items will be given to children and adults who need them this winter at the Life Shelter and Arlington Charities. This year the need is greater than ever!



The mitten tree will be located in the hall across from the choir room, or you can place items in the SOS boxes. As always, the Mission and Evangelism Team thanks you for all your wonderful support in helping our local outreach to the community.

Gifts of Hope

FPCA is launching a new opportunity called "Gifts of Hope" for the 2016 Advent Season. Gifts of Hope is an alternative gift market that offers a creative and caring way to honor friends, family members, colleagues, etc., by donating to a wide range of outreach organizations.

"Shoppers" choose an organization and donation amount from the list and in turn receive a card to give as a gift. The card, which is specific for each donation, reads:

In the spirit of Christian love, the value of _____ has been given in your honor to _____.

This program not only is a wonderful opportunity to show Christ's love by supporting outreach organizations, but it also seeks to combat the materialism of Christmas.

Note: because the donation will not be a direct contribution to FPCA, the donation is not tax deductible and will not appear on your yearly contribution statement.

Stop by a table before or after both worship services between Sunday, November 27, and Sunday, December 18, to purchase your Gifts of Hope! You may also turn in order forms in the church office.

Feel free to email Laura at Laura.Farnell@gmail.com or call or text (817) 478-5676 for more information.

I'm Not Ashamed

One of my favorite Christian music artists goes by the name of Lecrae. Lecrae is part of a Southern Christian hip hop group of artists that call themselves the 116 Clique. The 116 Clique is named after Romans 1:16: “**For I am not ashamed** of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes - the Jew first and also the Gentile.” Through his music and life, he has definitely shown that he is not ashamed about his faith and because of it he has been able to share the Good News about Christ in such a powerful way.

Now, if I can be honest, I can attest that in my life I haven't always been great at living out Romans 1:16. There have been times where I have been ashamed about my faith and sharing it with others. This was especially the case as a new believer during my teenage years. As I work more and more with youth, it has become evident to me that nothing has changed from when I was a youth. It is a struggle to be a Christian in their schools and communities just as it was for me growing up. The temptations and struggle to fit in at their age is a daunting task. It is easier for them to be more ashamed than not ashamed. It's not that they don't love the Lord with all of their hearts, but the pressure of wanting to fit in causes their faith to stumble from time to time. Again, this was the case for me as a youth as well. I know that in their hearts they truly are not ashamed and desire for their non-Christian friends to know Christ.



You might be wondering, how does all of this tie into this month's newsletter? Well I'm glad you asked! Recently the youth, their adult leaders, and I had a chance to go to the movies and see a movie titled ***I'm Not Ashamed***. The movie speaks of a Columbine High School student Rachel Joy Scott. Here was a young lady that grew up knowing God but struggled with her relationship with Christ. She had many moments where her faith was strong, but at other times

her faith was weak. But her life and her faith took a drastic turn for the better when she experienced a difficult breakup with her non-believing boyfriend. What was meant to destroy her life and does to many youth caused a renewed commitment to Christ in her life. Rachel began living out her faith in her school and she truly became not ashamed. Rachel was one of the many students killed in the 1999 school shooting at Columbine High School.

Rachel's story has touched many lives and it very much touched the lives of our youth here at FPCA. Many of our youth had tears in their eyes as we watched Rachel go from a young lady that struggled with her faith to a young lady who went out and shared Christ to an entire school. She was in my eyes the first member of the 116 Clique and even after her death is showing us how to truly be NOT ASHAMED! But, honestly, this is exactly what I see from our youth here at FPCA. They may have moments where their faith is weak, but they also have moments where their faith is strong. I see that they truly are trying to live out Romans 1:16 in their schools. They remind me every day that we should not be ashamed. So, I am forever grateful for their hearts and desire to make Christ known in their schools.

Blessings in Christ,
Adrian Rodriguez

December Puzzle

BIBLE-CRYPTOVERSE (Scripture verse in code)										No.10															
K X F	A V R R	A N R O	V U	H Z D	A N K G	X L																			
Q X X B	M D U	N U B	O D D E	H X	H Z D	E N H Z G																			
X L	H Z D	I V Q Z H D X F G .	L X I	H Z D																					
F E I V Q Z H	A V R R	R V T D	V U	H Z D	R N U B																				
Letter used:																									
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Answer is on page 10.

A Note from Josh Lang



Wow, my first few months here at FPCA have been overwhelmingly wonderful! I am so glad to be here to serve and work with all of you. The congregational singing at both services has truly surpassed my expectations, and I am deeply moved that you all are so passionate about singing praises to our Lord! I must thank the entire congregation for your very warm welcome of my arrival; I have had numerous hugs from all of you, compliments, suggestions, and an overall sense of belonging. It is so encouraging as a church musician to come into a new place, a new position, and to see all of the excitement about music ministry. The choir here is of outstanding excellence, the level they achieve is of utmost high quality, and I have been moved to tears in several of the pieces we have sung. How blessed is our congregation to have such a dedicated, and talented, choir and choir director! I have thoroughly enjoyed the rehearsals with them, as they have all encouraged, moved, entertained, and inspired me. My new office is also a huge blessing, I finally have a place to store my ever-growing-out-of-control music library; it was getting crowded in our apartment with all my stuff there. I am really looking forward to serving the Lord through music ministry with all of you!

Here's a little news on the status of the Reuter pipe organ in our sanctuary: Dan Garland was out on November 10 to tune and do routine maintenance. We are looking at a major repair/overhaul and probable replacement of the swell shutter engine. This is the device that controls the shades (or "blinds") in the swell division that enable me to give the instrument expressive qualities. We are considering rebuilding the current swell engine, or purchasing a new electric one. Dan will be in touch with us soon and will give us his best advice. I am very thankful that our congregation cares about the quality of its organ, and am grateful that we have funds to update these types of things. A new swell engine is guaranteed to last another 50 years; the original one lasted about 60 years and is on its last leg.

Just so you all know what is going on in my educational life, I have completed the 2 years of coursework at TCU for my Masters in Organ Performance. I am currently just working on the second recital, which will be in the spring of 2017, and I am preparing for my oral examination that is on November 28. It will be a very busy and studious time for me until I complete my degree, so if you don't see me very often, you'll know why.

I look forward to meeting more of you and hopefully remembering your names. Feel free to give me ideas some time or just have a small chat!

May the Lord be with you and bless you,

Josh Lang
Organist



December News from Children's Ministries

Preschool Sunday School

MERRY CHRISTMAS! I just love December! The sights, the sounds, the smells (my favorite) - all these things fill the days as we count down to the MOST important day of December, the day we celebrate Jesus.

That's the plan for our preschoolers this month. We're going to count down to Christmas with them as they learn the different parts of the Christmas story. First,

they will hear how the angel came to tell Mary that she was going to have a special baby. The next week, Mary and Joseph will travel to Bethlehem, and a special baby will be born! During week three, the children will pretend they are shepherds as they hear how the angels came to tell the shepherds in the field that Baby Jesus had been born.



Elementary Sunday School

Joy is a response to the character of God.

When God created the world, He made it to be a place of peace and contentment. In the Magnificent Paradise, God provided fruit trees that were pleasing to the eye and good to eat. And He personally walked with His creation! But when sin entered the world, so did greed and jealousy. As circumstances changed and life presented more challenges, people found it harder and harder to be happy. However, even now in this broken world, God wants us to have joy.

Even though we try to find joy through our stuff, or our vacations, or our relationships, joy isn't dependent upon any of those things. Joy is about being content beyond our circumstances. We can have joy when we recognize that God's plan is greater than our own. Joy is a response to our trust in God.



Jesus is the reason we find joy.

God sent His only son as a baby, born in humble circumstances. Jesus wasn't what anyone expected, but this was how God wanted to rescue the world. God made good on the promise He made hundreds of years before. This December, we pray that through the story of Jesus, kids realize that God loved them so much that He sent His Son to be here on this earth. The story of Christmas can remind us through every season, regardless of our situation, there's a reason to celebrate what it means to have a relationship with God.

That's why it's important for us to help our kids and families discovery more about joy—finding a way to be happy even when things don't go your way.

Our memory verse for December comes from Philippians 4:4. When Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi, he wasn't saying to have joy only when it's easy. Paul was writing from prison and learned the secret of having joy no matter what his circumstances looked like. Paul's faith in God made him strong and gave him the ability to find joy, even in the difficult times.

In Philippians 4:4, we read, *Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful!* (NIV) As kids memorize this verse, we hope they remember that their joy is not tied to their circumstances. Instead, we find joy when we realize that we belong to God. When we trust God no matter what, we can find joy knowing that whatever happens He is in control.

We will spend the month of December taking a closer look at the way joy shows up throughout the Christmas story.

Kids Night Out and Strengthening Your Family

Kids Night Out and Strengthening Your Family - December 2 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Kids Night Out - December 9 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Seen Around the Building



Answer

You will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will live in the land

Proverbs 2:20-21 NIV





This Month



Bible Studies

Men's Bible Study

The Men's Bible Study group meets every Wednesday morning at 7:00 a.m. in the parlor. Men of all ages meet to study the book of Genesis along with great fellowship and a prayer session. All men are invited to join this study.

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Monday Night Bible study is open to all women. The next meeting is Monday, January 16, at 6:00 p.m. in the parlor.

Tuesday Morning Bible Study

Men and women of all ages are invited to meet in the Bride's Room every Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m. The current study is *Twelve Ordinary Men* by John MacArthur.

Music Ministries



Chancel Choir

This is the primary worship leadership ensemble for the 11:00 service. The choir also sings for special services around Christmas and Holy Week. It is more than just a great choir, it is a caring fellowship. Rehearsals are on Wednesdays from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. *Nursery care is provided during rehearsals.*

Ring of Praise Handbell Ensemble

This intergenerational handbell group rehearses Wednesday evenings from 6:15 until 7:15 p.m. If you are interested in ringing, please contact Russell Farnell (fpcamusic@yahoo.com or 817-274-8286).

Agape (Youth) Choir

This group of youth in grades 6 to 12 meets on Sunday, 4:30 to 6:00 p.m., in the choir room. This year the focus of our youth choir is to engage singers at Carter Junior High by inviting them to participate in the YouthCue Choir Festival in Waco. This is a combined choir of 300+ singers from all over Texas and surrounding states. The festival is February 24 to 26, and ends with a grand concert on Sunday, February 26.

Children's Music Ministries

The children's choirs meet Sundays, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., during the school year. These choirs strive to impart God's love through His gift of music. The focus is on ministry to children rather than on performance. Children ages 4 (when school starts) through grade 5 participate in activities including music/singing and bells/chimes, instruments, and listening activities. There are two sections, divided by age, and both participate in the 11:00 worship service twice per year, usually in December and April.

Church Leadership



Deacon Meeting

Thursday, December 1, at 6:00 p.m., the Diaconate meets in the parlor to oversee the Congregational Care, Hospitality, and Fellowship ministries.

Team Meeting Night

Thursday, December 1, at 6:45 p.m., all teams meet for worship in the chapel with subsequent gathering into respective teams for ministry planning and coordination.

Session Meeting

Thursday, December 15, at 7:00 p.m., the Session meets in the parlor to oversee the ministry of the church. The work of the Diaconate, church administration, and all Discipleship, Worship, Facility Management, and Mission and Evangelism ministries will be discussed.

Discipleship

Library Team

The library team works the first Wednesday of each month, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Anyone interested is welcome. No particular skill is required, the work is easy, and we always have a good time as we process books to be added to our inventory. If you would like to be involved in library work but cannot come at that evening time, please contact Sandy Thomlinson and special daytime work sessions can be arranged.



Fellowship

Happy Quilters

This group meets Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. to quilt, sew, knit, crochet, embroider, and just enjoy being together. Bring your project and join in!

Saints Alive!

Church seniors will meet for a potluck lunch on Thursday, December 15, at 11:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Bring a casserole, salad, or dessert and enjoy a fun and interesting afternoon.

Contact Bev Koch (817-261-3202) for details.

First Presbyterian Church
1200 S. Collins Street
Arlington, TX 76010



Deadline for the January issue of The News is December 15!

Prayer Ministry

Prayers for those with health and other concerns: Esther Albright, Chona Pacot Anwar, David Boice, Shirley Bragg, James (Andrew) Bridges, Carl Carpenter, Crystal Castaneda, Kevin Chin, Jerry Colleps, Lee Carol Copeland, Dorothy Curtis, Ted Dysart, Ken Floyd, Bobbie Fowler, Nadine Freeman, Lila Glenn, David Goff, Susan Graham, Dick Haney, Margery Harrant, Edna and Ken Harris, Brandon Hay, Bill Hayden, Doyle Malone, Allen Miller, Mary Ellen Miller, Pat Mingle, Barbara Mooers, Ruth Moore, Bill Moulton, Bill Olsen, Jim L. Quick, Albert Ross, Eulabel Sheldon, Linda Smith, Al Smithson, Bob Spriggs, Brooks and Connie Taylor, B. J. Thomas (Rev. Larry Thomas' wife), Jerry Thomas, Allen Underwood, Jessica Villarreal, and Mary Jane Wright.

Prayers for our family serving in the armed forces: Aaron Alonso, Ben Boughton, Riley Curnutt, Austin Curran, Eric Dill, Jeff Grimes, Nathan Haerer, Damien King, Mike Mancini, Jack Murtha, Colin Peden, Jason Polk, Ryan Powell, Ryan Regalado, Christopher Young, and Robbie Wallace.

Pray for our homebound members.

Pray for those who do not know Christ!

Please contact Pastor Rich McDermott at the church office at 817-274-8286 if you have any congregational care needs. For questions about specific concerns of those listed above, please contact Juanice Young at juanicey@gmail.com or 817-794-5626.