



*For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:6-7

December
2018

The News

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An explanation of Xmas

Pastor Rich McDermott says, “While I don’t normally use the shorthand ‘Xmas’ for Christmas, my friend the Rev. Glenn McDonald has helped me to consider different dimensions of this handy nickname. See what you think from his article below.”

Xmas is a four-letter word. According to a number of Christ-followers, however, Xmas shouldn’t even *be* a word.

Never mind that earlier this century, the editors of Webster’s formally granted *Xmas* a place in their dictionary. The suspicion remains that it is a cheap, secular substitute for the word “Christmas” - an unwelcome addition to the symbols of the season.

If manger scenes can no longer appear on public property, and “Happy Holidays” has squeezed out “Merry Christmas”, should Christ himself be jettisoned from the word Christmas and replaced by the innocuous letter X?

In truth, the letter X turns out to be an X-cellent way of remembering some of the foundational realities of Christmas.

Of course, there are some negative associations with X. Remember the big red X’s that would appear from time to time on your math homework? Or how about the loud buzzer and the three big X’s that leap onto the screen whenever a family hits the wall on *Family Feud*?

For a long time X designated the kind of movie you shouldn’t even think about seeing. Then there’s XXX, starring Vin Diesel – which for entirely different reasons you shouldn’t even think about seeing.

But let’s look at the positive associations with X. In the world of equations, X represents something unknown that is worth finding out. On treasure maps, X marks the spot. X is the place where someone who has gone before can say with assurance, “This is where treasure can be found.” X stands for the chromosome (we presume) that Mary contributed to Jesus. We don’t know exactly how God supernaturally produced a child within the womb of a Jewish teenage girl. That lies in the realm of mystery, something we can describe, but can’t fully explain. The Incarnation (God choosing to take on human flesh) is undeniably one of the X Factors of Christian faith.

The letter X is relevant every year around Christmas because it is found at the bottom of credit card bills. Before we leave the store we have to add our signature. Until somebody signs, a debt remains outstanding. Followers of Jesus believe that our cumulative debt of personal failure was signed over to Jesus' account on the cross, which suggests yet another X. Tradition tells us that Andrew, one of the original twelve disciples, was crucified on a diagonal cross – which is why any time you see an X-like symbol in a medieval stained glass window you are no doubt looking at a memorial to St. Andrew.

Finally, where did the word Xmas come from in the first place? X is identical to the Greek letter *chi*, which happens to be the first letter of the word *Christos* or Christ. X, therefore, can hardly be said to accomplish the erasing of Jesus of Nazareth from Christmas. Instead, whenever you see an X, think of the unknown becoming known at Bethlehem. Think of the treasure of being loved by God. And think of the cross which is proof that he has signed off on the entire indebtedness of our broken lives. Seen from those angles, *Xmas* is no sellout. It's X-traordinary!

Christmas time is here...

I can just hear the Peanuts gang singing while ice skating in the snow. Children are making their wish lists and each year there is that one thing it seems everyone wants. I remember when the original Nintendo Entertainment System came out when I was in elementary school. That was a definite must have! I also remember helping my Dad bring something in from the house. I had to go out and pop the trunk and there it was completely unwrapped. There wasn't even a bag hiding it. I would like to think Chelsea and I have gotten better at hiding presents but I know we are going to have to get more creative in the years to come!

Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, what have you, are wondering what to get the kids this year. And yes while wrapped presents under the tree are lovely and appropriate, John Murchison shares three gift ideas to give kids this year. He serves as the Director of Children's Ministry at The Austin Stone.

The first one is the gift of yourself. "As parents, we are called to represent the heart of God the Father to our children. He doesn't simply give us gifts that we want because we enjoy them. What He wants is for us to enjoy Him, not the gifts He gives us... [Our kids] want to be known and loved by their parents, and to be secure in that love. And as you give them that gift of yourself, you are pointing them to their deeper desire to be known and loved by a heavenly Father."

Second is the gift of giving. While many children are generous and thoughtful when they make out their Christmas list, it is usually stuff for them – not to give to others. And that's pretty normal! "That means it's up to us, their parents, to lead them to experience and understand this great truth. Find ways for your family to give to others this Christmas. Talk to your local church about any needs in the community or simply make cookies to give out door to door to your neighbors."

Third is the gift of knowing God. That starts with you! For some of us, the greatest gift we can give our children this Christmas is a renewed commitment to pursue Christ. Perhaps our habits of regular Scripture reading and prayer have slipped in the holiday busyness. Pray that God would renew your passion to know Him, and then dedicate yourselves to growing in your faith. It will be good for your spirit and good for your kids too. I pray that all of us parents would be able to say with Paul, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Be sure your kids have an age-appropriate Bible. If not, wrap one up and put under the tree! These are the gifts that will last much, much longer than a toy run on a couple of AA batteries. This is doing our part in the Holy Spirit's work of making our children to be disciples of Jesus.

Merry Christmas y'all,
Pastor Chris Campbell

Advent Festival 2018



An Advent Festival
a service of worship in song
celebrating the coming of the
Savior with choir, organ, and brass

Sunday, December 9, 2018
11:00 a.m. in the sanctuary

featuring *Gloria* by John Rutter and
Glory to God by Russell Farnell

First Presbyterian Church
1200 S. Collins St
Arlington, TX 76010
www.FirstPresTexas.org

Other Important December Dates

- **December 2** Congregational meeting to elect new officers
- **December 4** Festival of Tables at 7 p.m.
- **December 16** Confirmation Sunday
- **December 24** Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7 p.m.



Gifts of Hope are coming!

It's that time of year again! Have you purchased your Gifts of Hope? The Gifts of Hope program is an alternative gift market opportunity offered by FPCA that offers a creative and caring way to honor friends, family members, colleagues, etc. through donations to a wide range of outreach organizations. "Shoppers"

choose an organization, donate the amount specified, and then receive a card to give as a gift to friends or family. This program not only supports outreach organizations, but also seeks to offer a less materialistic option for gift giving.

Gifts of Hope will be available for sale after both worship services between Sunday, December 2nd and Sunday, December 16th. If you have any questions or are available to help with the program (by selling Gifts of Hope before/after worship services, etc.), please email Laura Farnell at Laura.Farnell@gmail.com or call or text (682) 478-5676.

Two Special Offerings in December

Our church supports two special offerings during the month of December. One is the Christmas Joy Offering which goes directly to Presbytery. The other goes to Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (PCHAS). Offering envelopes can be found outside the sanctuary or chapel or designate on your check which offering you are supporting.



A Presbyterian tradition for almost seventy 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 Joy Offering are distributed equally to the Board of Pensions for assistance programs and to the National Ministries of the General Assembly Council to support Presbyterian racial ethnic education. To view a brief video about the Christmas Joy Offering, visit <http://specialofferings.pcusa.org/christmasjoy>.

Our church continually supports PCHAS but especially at Christmas. During the evening Christmas Eve services at our church, the undesignated offerings will benefit the Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (PCHAS). To find out more about PCHAS, visit <http://www.pchas.org>. You could also speak to Marge and Bob Dawson, PCHAS Ambassadors and volunteers, about this very worthy organization which supports many children and families in a variety of ways throughout Texas.

For additional information, contact Sheri Quick and/or Bob Dawson

Mission and Evangelism Team



Presbyterian Children's
Homes and ServicesSM

Christmas Trees around the Church

The Mitten Tree

Please help families during this Christmas season and during the cold winter months by bringing new warm gloves, hats, and scarves and hang them on the Mitten Tree! These will be given to Arlington Charities for children and adults in time for Christmas. The Mitten Tree is located by the choir room. Please stop by and make someone's Christmas happy...and WARM!

The Dove Tree

The Dove Tree will be up December 1 in the Westminster Hall. Each dove will have a name and address of one of our home bound members. Advent is a great time for us to spread love to those who cannot get out easily. Please take a dove from the tree and visit one of our home bound. A small gift, a card, a poinsettia, etc. will brighten their holiday season and you will be blessed in return.



Update on Mission Possible Dinner!

Thank you to everyone who helped to make the Mission Possible Dinner a success. We had a wonderful time of fellowship and greatly enjoyed having the Carter Jr. High Treble Choir join us. Together, we raised \$3,209 for local missions. We will be sending \$642 of the funds raised to support our neighbor - Carter Jr. High Choir.

Trunk or treat report

We had a very successful Trunk or Treat thanks to all the help from FPCA members. We had 18 trunks and about 100 bags of candy. The food donated by Dickey's BBQ on Ballpark Way was enjoyed by the families attending. We gave away about 225 books and toys with over 350 people attending counting our members. The children really had fun with the games, bounce house, and slide. What a great way to serve our community!

Important dates to remember

The Preschool will be closed Thursday, December 20 through Friday, January 4.

The Church Office will close at 12:00 noon on Monday, December 24. We will re-open the office at 6:00 p.m. for the Christmas Eve service at 7:00 p.m. The Church Office will be closed Tuesday, December 25 and Tuesday, January 1.

Children's Ministry

December Overview



MONTHLY OVERVIEW

Happy birthday, Jesus! Yes, we know that Christmas is all about Jesus' birthday, but do your preschoolers know? It will be a new idea to some of them. We have the best jobs in the world because we get to share with preschoolers for the first time that Christmas is all about Jesus' birthday! Jesus has a birthday? Yep! He sure does! And, we are going to celebrate it BIG!

We also want our preschoolers to know that the reason we celebrate Jesus' birthday is because Jesus is God's

Son. God's Son deserves a celebration as big as Christmas and a birthday bash as big as what we're going to give Him this month! He is that special!

So, gather up all the birthday celebration you can and prepare to party all month long! It's not just balloons and party hats. We are sharing the true story that God gave us His only Son, Jesus, and HE is worth celebrating!

WEEK	BIBLE STORY	STORY FOCUS
ONE	The Angel and Mary Luke 1:26-33, 38, 46	The angel told Mary she would have a special baby.
TWO	Jesus Born in a Stable Luke 2:1-7	Not everyone knew Jesus is God's Son.
THREE	Shepherds Luke 2:6-18	The angels tell about Jesus.
FOUR	Happy Birthday Jesus! Retell Entire Christmas Story	Happy Birthday Jesus!
FIVE	Wise Men Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11	The wise men come to see God's Son.

MEMORY VERSE	KEY QUESTION	BOTTOM LINE
"GOD LOVED THE WORLD SO MUCH THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON." JOHN 3:16, GNT	WHY IS JESUS SPECIAL?	JESUS IS GOD'S SON.

UNDERCOVER CHRISTMAS: MAKE OTHERS YOUR MISSION

GOD VIEW:

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN COMPASSION AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

COMPASSION IS A REFLECTION OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

WEEK 1

We kick off the month with the greatest verse in all of Scripture, **John 3:16**. God loves the world so much that He wants to spend forever with us. That was made possible through Jesus!

Bottom Line: **God did something about our greatest need.** Jesus was God's gift to the world. We pray that kids start to understand their need for a Savior and put their trust in Jesus.

WEEK 2

Next, we look at **Luke 1:26-56**, when Gabriel came and made a huge announcement to Mary. God was about to rescue the world through Jesus, and she had an important role to play. Mary was overwhelmed by God's love for the world and the part she got to play by fulfilling God's plan to send a Savior.

Bottom Line: **God can use anyone to meet others' needs.** For whatever reason, kids may feel like God can't use them to show others His love. We hope they see through the story of Mary, that God can use anyone to show His compassion to the world.

WEEK 3

In week three we head to **Luke 2:1-7** to the familiar moment when Jesus is born. Even though Jesus was born where the animals stayed, God took care of all the details. The Savior of the World was born, and

God's compassion for us was on full display.

Bottom Line: **God gave us the greatest gift.** God had been planning a rescue since the very beginning. Jesus was God's greatest gift to make it possible for all people to be with God forever.

WEEK 4

As we head into Christmas week, we head to **Luke 2:8-20** and find shepherds minding their own business and watching sheep in a field. Of course, we know what happened. Angels surprised them and announced that the Savior of the world was born. The shepherds were so excited they ran to meet Jesus and spent the rest of the night spreading the good news that Jesus was born.

Bottom Line: **Share the good news about Jesus.** This week we want kids to start thinking about how they can share the good news about Jesus. From the words they say to the life they live, they can point people to Jesus and show God's love to others.

WEEK 5

We finish our month on compassion in **1 John 4:9-12**, where we read about God's great love for us when He sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins. John reminds us that no one has ever seen God, but when we show love to others, people see God through us.

Bottom Line: **Love others because God loved you first.** This week, we want to help kids connect their compassion to the source of compassion. We show love to others, not just because it's a good thing to do, but also because it's what God did for us and what God calls us to do for others.

Children's Ministry Dates to Remember

December 2 Luncheon for families with children in 6th grade and younger

December 14 Kids Night Out from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Youth Ministry

Christmas Blessings

Family Reading and Remembrance Based on Luke 2:1-16

Introduction/Explanation:

Christmas morning is a special time with presents and surprises, but before you open the presents, take a few minutes to have a time of “Reading and Remembrance” of your family’s history and blessings!

Here is a helpful guide to go along with the reading of one of the traditional Christmas passages found in Luke. Each family member can take part in reading a section of the passage and then have a chance to share something related to the passage about your specific family, history, and experiences. It is a great opportunity to reflect in a new way on the Christmas story, while also connecting it to your personal family.

Dad

Reading (vs. 1-4) - *“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 and everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.”*

Sharing (Family Tree and History)

- Share one thing special about the family’s heritage and history.
- Who was someone that the family does not know much about that was a member of the family’s heritage or history?
- What is special about the family’s nationality or country/countries of origin?

Mom

Reading (vs. 5-7) - *“He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.”*

Sharing (Marriage & Family Story)

- Share a memory and a picture from your wedding day. Talk about dating, being engaged, and getting married. ***Note for Divorced Families:** while there may be personally negative feelings surrounding your former marriage, consider taking this opportunity to talk about the positives and good memories.
- Share about how you found out that you were having a baby and any fun or happy stories that surrounded your pregnancy.

Older Child

Reading (vs. 8-12) - *“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*

10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Sharing (Good News)

- Share your first memory of meeting your younger sibling(s).
- Share your favorite part of holding or playing with a new baby.
- Share a time you heard good news or were excited about something.
- Share something that gives you great joy or happiness.

Younger Child

Reading (13-15) - "Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." 15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Sharing (Praise and Thanks)

- Share something you can praise God for about each family member.
- Share one way that God has blessed the family.
- Share one place you would love to go on a mission's trip to share Jesus with others.

Child/Family Member

Reading (16-20) - "So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."

All Sharing (Meeting Jesus)

- Each person share how they first met Jesus and invited Him into their life.
- Share additional testimonies and faith journey stories.

Family Prayer Time

Take a few moments as a family to take turns praying for each other and praising God for His son, Jesus, and the other blessings He has provided over the last year.

Go Crazy and Open Presents!!!!

Blessings and Merry Christmas,
Adrian Rodriguez

October Finance Update

Budget

Income including funds released: \$ 106,981

Expense: \$ 79,180

Income - Expense for month: \$ 27,801

Income - Expense for 2018 Year to Date: (\$ 31,343)



Comments:

Total Income and Funds Released is over budget for the month by \$21,584 and under budget for the year by (\$6,753).

Donors - Over budget for the month by \$23,626 and under budget for the year by (\$27,807).

Temporarily Restricted Funds Used – \$11,248.

Total Expenses – Over budget for the month by \$1,519 and over for the year by \$33,162.

YOUR GENEROSITY IS APPRECIATED

We are grateful for all of you who give extraordinary gifts in December to help us eliminate our normal end of year deficit! Thank you so much for thinking of us and giving generously so that many people may hear of the good news of Jesus Christ at First Presbyterian Church at this holy time and throughout the year. We are so richly blessed with a wonderful staff, a great choir, and many faithful Christians with servant hearts to care for those who are in need. May the Lord bring us great hope, love, joy and peace in this Advent and Christmas season.

Seen Around the Church

Youth Movie Night



Thanks for those who supported our Trunk or Treat event



New Members Joining our Congregation



Thanksgiving Dinner



This Month



Bible Studies

Men's Bible Study

The Men's Bible Study group meets every Wednesday morning at 8:00 a.m. in the parlor. Men of all ages meet and enjoy great fellowship and a prayer session. All men are invited to join this study.

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Monday Night Bible will resume on Monday, January 26, at 6 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.



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

During the school year, this group of youth in grades 6 to 12 meets on Sunday, 4:30 to 6:00 p.m., in the choir room.

Children's Music Ministries

The children's choirs meet from 12:45 to 1:45 p.m. on Sundays during the school year. 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 6, at 6:30 p.m., the Diaconate meets in the parlor to oversee the Congregational Care, Facilities, Hospitality, and Fellowship ministries.

Team Meeting Night

Thursday, December 6, 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 20, 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, January 17, 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, Richard Ankele, Elaine Bahn, Jack Bos, Shirley Bragg, James (Andrew) Bridges, Kevin Chin, Frank Coburn, Edna Collins, Lee Carol Copeland, Mike Copeland, Michael Deardorff, Laura, Moses and Abe Duffney, Neal Estes, Don Farrell, Bobbie Fowler, Tom Fowler, Joe and Lila Glenn, Jack Gray, Andrew Hydock, Bob Johnson, Tim Karnes, Pat May, J. Fred Miller, Allen Miller, Barbara Mooers, Ruth Moore, Cosme Pacot, J.D. Paulk, Bill and Sue Perry, John Pittman, Nita Price, Jim L. Quick, Sara Rabb, Al Smithson, Kyle Terwilliger, Donna Vickers, Nancy Welborne, Richard Whitenight, Jake Winkler, Karl Winter, Mary Jane Wright, Bob Zakrzewski.

Prayers for our family serving in the armed forces: Ben Boughton, Riley Curnutt, Austin Curran, James Dailey, Eric Dill, Jeff Grimes, Nathan Haerer, Damien King, Mike Mancini, Amie Murtha, Jack Murtha, Stephen O'Neil Sosa, Colin Peden, Jason Polk, Ryan Powell, Ryan Regalado, Christopher Young, 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. For questions about specific concerns listed above, please contact Marge Dawson at mdawsonarltx@att.net or 817-980-6825.