

Advent is a season in the church year when we remember the birth of Jesus the Messiah. Advent comes from the Latin word meaning “arrival” or “coming.” Advent means that the Lord is coming. During this season we remember that the people of Israel waited expectantly for the coming of the Messiah. Advent is also a season when we look forward to Christ’s return. We look forward with hope to the return of Christ, when God establishes his kingdom among us. Advent reminds us that Christ has come, and Christ will come again.

The Advent wreath tells the story of Christ’s arrival. The circle of evergreen in which the candles are placed represents everlasting life. The light of the candles represent the Light of Christ coming into a darkened world. On Christmas Eve, the white center candle is traditionally lit and represents the light of Christ that has come into the world.

First candle (purple): The candle of HOPE

Second candle (purple): The candle of PEACE

Third candle (rose): The candle of JOY

Fourth candle (purple): The candle of LOVE

Fifth candle (white): The CHRIST candle

2017

ADVENT

HOPE + PEACE + JOY + LOVE

REST

*Worship and Devotional Guide
for the journey to Christmas*

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....3

Advent Calendar at a Glance.....4

Advent Opportunities.....5

Hanging of the Green Order of Worship.....7

Order of Worship, First Sunday of Advent.....9

The Longest Night: A Service of Hope and Healing.....11

Week of Hope Devotionals.....13

Order of Worship, Second Sunday of Advent.....20

Week of Peace Devotionals.....22

Order of Worship, Third Sunday of Advent.....29

Week of Joy Devotionals.....31

Order of Worship, Fourth Sunday of Advent.....38

Week of Love Devotional.....40

Christmas Eve Order of Worship.....41

Christmas Day Devotional.....44

Rest (Melody).....45

Advent Calendar at a Glance

November

- 26 Hanging of the Green Service- 6:00 p.m., Sanctuary
- 29 Hope Market, MPB

December

- 1 Christmas Offering -Water For All
- 3 The Longest Night: A Service of Hope and Healing
6:00 p.m., Sanctuary
- 3 Hope Market, MPB
- 4 Advent by Candlelight for Women-6:00 p.m.
- 6 Hope Market, MPB
- 6 Last Wednesday Night Ministries
- 10 Jingle Jam- 5:00 p.m. supper, 6:00 p.m. show, MPB
- 10 Hope Market, MPB
- 16 Greg & Janna Long of Avalon Concert- 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary
- 17 Great Joy! A Celebration of Christ- 9:45 a.m., Sanctuary
- 17 Youth Choir Caroling & Supper- 4:00 p.m.
- 24 Worship Service— 9:45 a.m. (No Sunday School)
- 24 Christmas Eve Carols, Candles and Communion
5:30 p.m. (with nursery); 7:00 p.m. (without nursery),
Sanctuary

The Hanging of the Green

This Worship service is in preparation for Advent and Christmas in which the sanctuary is adorned for the season. It will be followed by Sights and Sounds of the Season fellowship in the Multi-Purpose Building.

Sunday, November 26th at 6:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Tree of Remembrance

We invite you to bring an ornament in memory of family or friends and place it on our Tree of Remembrance in the foyer. Please put your name on the back of your ornament if you would like us to return it or it will be a treasured ornament for the tree each year.

The Longest Night: A Service of Hope and Healing

This worship service recognizes the realities of despair, brokenness, grief, and loss in life. The heaviness of grief, the challenges of illness and aging, the loss of a treasured relationship, these are just a few of the real life challenges that hold our hearts captive during this season. We gather not to forget our pain but to remember it with honesty, and to seek God's beauty in our brokenness, and to reclaim the light that is found only in God's Grace.

Sunday, December 3rd at 6:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Advent by Candlelight for Women

The evening will be full of worship, inspirational speakers, music, fellowship and delicious desserts! It's the perfect evening to begin preparing our hearts for Christmas and the coming of our Lord! Contact Kim Floyd for general information and Angi Wilke for reservations.

Monday, December 4th at 6:00 p.m. (fellowship in the MPB) and 7:00 p.m. (service in the Sanctuary).

Jingle Jam

Bring the whole family for a dynamic evening of music, dancing, games, and a live telling of the Christmas story. This Christmas party celebrates the true meaning of Christmas with families in our community. There will be a catered meal beginning at 5:00 p.m. Cost is \$5 a person for the meal, with a \$20 max for all families. The show starts at 6:00 p.m. and is free for those not eating dinner. Rather than getting wrapped up in just "stuff" this season, let's celebrate the generosity God showed us by giving His Son, Jesus. Sign up for the meal at www.southlandbaptist.org.

Sunday, December 10th in the Multi-Purpose Building.

HOPE Market

Give a gift of HOPE this year for Christmas! Southland's Annual HOPE Market offers you a Christmas shopping alternative with gift selections that will be more meaningful for your family members and friends and will give the gift of hope to those who need it most. Your monetary gift in the name of a loved one and your purchase of handmade and Fair Trade items will benefit Christian missions that share the love of Christ and provide aid, relief and economic and educational opportunities to neglected and marginalized people in our world. The HOPE Market will be set up in the Multi-Purpose Building on November 29th, December 3rd, 6th, and 10th.

Water for All Christmas Offering

A mission of Terry and Kathy Waller and Southland Baptist Church, provides the technology and training for poor families around the world to drill, operate, maintain, and duplicate their own clean water wells. Our church's Christmas missions offering goes directly to fund WFA missions around the world. We will be taking this offering throughout the Christmas Season. Please prayerfully consider what God would have you to give. Our church goal is \$80,000.00.

Christmas Concert

Greg and Janna Long, members of the group Avalon, will present a Christmas concert with a message of hope and love in Christ. Greg and Janna are recipients of American Music and Dove Awards. Tickets are available in the church office or online.

(\$20 VIP; \$15 general admission; 12 & under Free; Childcare for infants-4years with reservation)

Saturday, December 16th at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Great Joy! A Celebration of Christ

This worship service will be led by the Music Ministry of Southland Baptist Church. It will feature the Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra alongside soloists Greg and Janna Long of Avalon.

Sunday, December 17th at 9:45 a.m. in the Sanctuary.

Christmas Eve Carols, Candles, and Communion

The service celebrates the birth of Christ.

Sunday, December 24th 5:30 p.m. service (with nursery provided) and 7:00 p.m. (no nursery) in the Sanctuary.

HANGING OF THE GREEN

Sunday, November 26, 2017 6:00pm

Prelude	
Call to Worship	Dr. Matt Walton
Here in this place we prepare for the coming of the Lord. Here we remember His Advent, His birth in Bethlehem, weak and helpless as an infant. And here we rekindle our prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus” as we await his coming as the bright and morning star.	
Arise, Your Light Is Come	Hymn 83
Welcome	Jill Fulghum
Responsive Reading	Jill Fulghum
We wait and we long for you, O God. Yet, we question whether we are worthy of your coming. We wait and we long for you, O God. But we grow restless in the waiting—impatient with your sense of timing. We wait and we long for you, O God. Yet we fear the majesty of your return—for truly the heavens would break open, and the mountains quake in your presence. And we, we would see ourselves as we truly are. Yet, we wait and we long for you, O God. For we dare not miss the day, the hour, the moment. And while we wait, we trust—for you are a loving creator who touched the earth, and consecrated the ground of our being. You hold and mold us gently, so gently, at times, that we are unaware. Yet the work continues as we wait and long for you. Loving God, may your faith in us lead us to faith in you, help us to accept the darkness, to believe what eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and to sense our hearts in the hollow of your hands—that we might not grow weary or discouraged as we wait and long for you. Amen.	
Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus	Hymn 77

Scripture Reading	Luke 1:26-33	Dale McDonald
Keep Your Lamps		Youth Choir
Lo How a Rose E’er Blooming (stanzas 1, 2)		Hymn 78
O Little Town of Bethlehem (stanza 4)		Hymn 86
Scripture Reading	Luke 1:46-50	Rebecca Crouch
Magnificat		Youth Choir
Instrumental Meditation		
Responsive Reading	Isaiah 9:2, 6-7a	Jamie Highsmith
The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor. The Mighty God. The Everlasting Father. The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. He is the true light which lights everyone that comes into the world.		
Shine Down		Youth Choir
Reading		Sheli Branch
Lord, Thank you for the ways you continue to speak to a world in need. Through both prophets and angels you declared the message of hope, the way of healing, and the coming of a Savior. As you spoke in the days of old, so we know you continue to speak to us today.		
O Come, All Ye Faithful		Hymn 89
Recession of Christ Candle		Galban Family
The Christ Candle exits today, only to return on Christmas Eve. Its disappearance from the Advent wreath stands as a symbol of remembrance that he will one day return. Even so, Lord Jesus, quickly come!		
Emmanuel		Hymn 82

Prepare, for this is a week of hope!

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday, December 3, 2017 9:45am

Call to Worship I Wonder as I Wander
Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus Hymn 77
Welcome & Greeting Dr. Matt Walton

The Lord be with you,
And also with you.
Why have we come?
We have come to worship Him.

Choral Praise Pre-K Choir
Rest Edwards

(see page 45 for melody)

Rest, Rest. Your redemption is at hand, be still and know the wonder.
Wait, Wait. Bring your weary, wounded hearts to Christ upon the hay.
Holy light shines all around in common things, in small unlikely places.
Rest, Rest. Trust God's promise, do not fear,
Emmanuel is near.
Rest, Rest, Rest.

Litany of Hope

Leader: Pause. Rest. Make yourself ready.
People: We enter your stillness, God, and wait for your song.
Leader: Let those who love you have rest;
People: Let there be peace in the walls of your house.
All: O God, we rest in you, for you are our hope.

The Lighting of the Candle of Hope Barry Family

Scripture Reading Romans 8:22-25
We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all.
Who hopes for what he already has?
But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.
This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Prayer
Children's Sermon
Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence (stanza 1) Hymn 80
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (stanzas 1, 2) Hymn 76
The Coming of the Lord Sanctuary Choir & Orchestra
Sermon Dr. Todd Still
Arise, Your Light Is Come Hymn 83
Offertory Prayer
Offering & Announcements
For He Alone Is Worthy Hymn 427

Advent Missions Focus: The Wallers

Terry and Kathy Waller serve as the directors and founding missionaries of Water For All, a missions ministry of Southland Baptist Church that helps bring both clean water and good news of the Living Water to some of the poorest places on the planet. The Wallers currently live in Paint Rock, TX on the WFA training farm where they conduct training courses for missionaries and indigenous church leaders. They also oversee WFA drilling programs in Bolivia, Ethiopia, and Uganda. Thanks to their leadership, over 4,000 WFA water wells have now been drilled in 26 countries. The Wallers have five children, Matthew, Melissa, Marcelina, Margarita, and Marilu.



The Longest Night: A Service of Hope and Healing

Sunday, December 3, 2017 6:00pm

It is a divine gift that our Christmas celebrations are given to us in the deep of winter. Our sacred traditions have evolved wisely to grant us a winter’s grace during these times when nights are longer and darkness deeper. Our spirits can sometimes bend at the weight of life and its harsh realities. The heaviness of grief, the challenges of illness and aging, the loss of a treasured relationship, these are just a few of the real life challenges that hold our hearts captive during this season of the year. Against the cheerful backdrop of sparkling lights and festive music, there are many for whom this time is a tearful reminder of the harshness of life. And so, we gather at this sacred time to worship, acknowledging our sorrow and embracing our grief: Lord, we are wounded and weary. Our hearts are an empty manger waiting for a promise. Tonight, we gather not to forget our pain but to remember it with honesty, and to seek Your beauty in our brokenness, and to reclaim the light that is found only in Your grace.

Prelude

Welcome Dr. Matt Walton

Responsive Reading

O come, O come, Immanuel,
And be light for our darkness.
Be comfort in our grief,
A guide for our path.
Be a friend for our loneliness,
An oasis for our searching.
O come, O come, Immanuel,
Restore our joy, heal our wounds and bring us peace.

Narration/Scripture Reading Dr. Matt Walton

Be Still and Know

Narration/Scripture Reading

O Come, O Come Emmanuel (stanzas 1, 2) Hymn 76

Narration/Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

He Shall Feed His Flock

Narration/Scripture Reading Shane Taiclet

The Healing Place

Call for the Light of Christ Jill Fulghum

In this darkness we call for Light.
This Light brought forth from the beginning of creation to shine in the shadows of our souls.
We yearn for this gracious Light to warm us, to nourish us, and to give us strength.
We call on this brilliant Light to show us our pain,
so that in seeing it more clearly we might have the courage to bring it to you.
And we ask you, O Holy One, to be with us here in our healing walk on this darkened earth.

Lighting of the Candles

*You are invited to come to the table and light a candle in memory or honor of your loved one.
As you light the candle, we invite you to say their name and pause for a moment of
thanksgiving to God for the life of that person.*

I Thank My God for You

Benediction

This service is a combined effort between Southland Baptist and Harper Funeral Home

December 3, 2017

Distant No More

The book of Genesis tells us about how God created the earth and all that dwell therein. The Bible goes on to teach us how God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and how He spoke to His people through the prophets. The God of The Old Testament was a God that was distant and unseen; even though Moses was very near to His presence on Mount Sinai.

The Christmas story changed all that. Matthew 1:23 recalls the words of the prophet when he said, *“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.”*

A TV commercial that we have all seen more times than we care to, says, “This changes everything.” I cringe every time I hear that, because in my mind, nothing that mortal man does changes everything.

Christmas, on the other hand, did change everything and changed it once and for all. When the Christ child came to earth, it was not just the birth of a baby; it was no less than God himself taking the form of a child to reveal Himself to the world.

The baby born in a manger grew and matured. He began His ministry and taught people about The Kingdom of Heaven. What happened as he lived, died and rose again changed things forever.

No longer was God distant and removed from His people. No longer did people have to worship a God that was unseen and hard to know.

Jesus showed us the very face of God. He walked with us and talked with us and told us we are His own. He shared love everywhere he went, with the sick, the lame and the unclean. He lived the words of the scripture: *“God is love.”*

Thanks be to a God that is no longer far away. Thanks be for God with us.

~Tim Edwards

December 4, 2017

The Christmas Divinity Candy

My brothers and I had the privilege of being born to a Baptist minister dad and a school teacher mom. Our home was always warm and welcoming--but never more so than during the Christmas holidays. Mother was a lady of many talents, and candy making was one of them. Her specialty, Divinity candy, was our dad’s all-time favorite. The annual candy-making day was scheduled well in advance; far ahead of the chosen day, all needed ingredients were purchased. Mother made Divinity perfectly, every time. She knew the exact amount of time to cook the mixture and then the exact amount of time to let it mix in order to achieve fluffy perfection. Each piece of beautiful white candy was then dropped by spoonful with precise skill to form individual works of art. The making of several batches of this sweet treat was an all-day event for Mother; she filled many beautifully decorated tins to give as gifts for family and friends. Until the Divinity-filled tins were delivered, they were kept in a closet on the north side of our home, deemed to stay cool at “just the right temperature,” as the house was too warm and the refrigerator too cold. As one could imagine, this candy-making process was a carefully orchestrated labor of love from beginning to end. Oh, the joy each tin of candy brought to those who were fortunate enough to receive one! There was joy, too, in the anticipation of savoring each bite of that wonderful, sugary sensation.

As we embrace the advent season, we are filled with joy at the knowledge that we have a Savior who painstakingly tends to our formation in much the same loving way that Mother tended to her candy. Similarly, the Savior works within our hearts, knowing just the right “recipe” for each of us and molding us into His special works of art. He intends for us to share our joy with others and to enjoy the blessings of a life spent following His will. *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the Holy Spirit.” --Romans 15:13*

~Jamie Highsmith

December 5, 2017

Christmas Carols

I was blessed to grow up in a tiny church in West Texas where Sunday worship service attendance averaged 40-50, adults and children included. Once I reached Junior High, I was able to join the choir. This was a common goal among my friends in my church. The rule in the choir was that there be three members present in order to have a choir seated in the choir loft.

Being a member of the choir allowed me to feel I was contributing something to the worship service but it also allowed me some seating distance from my parents, if you know what I mean. No matter where I sat in that tiny church, be it with my family, with a friend or in the choir loft, my dad could always speak to me through his eyes and facial expressions. I knew when he was looking at me and “telling” me to quit talking or stop rustling my papers or just be still. Dad was also known for making funny facial expressions, especially while I was singing in the choir.

I fondly remember one particular worship service in early December where our minister tried to inject some visualization into the service. While announcing the congregational hymn of “We Three Kings”, he encouraged us to pretend we were among the three wise men. Our first verse found us carrying our gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. We were to ride up and down on our camels as we sang the second verse. And while carrying our gifts and riding our camels, verse three found us shielding our eyes from the gusty winds and blowing sand. Now put on top of these actions the fact that there were only three choir members present that Sunday of whom I was one. The three choir members were simply mortified as we complied with Rev. Garlington’s request – we gathered our gifts, we rode our camels and we shielded our faces. Now imagine the facial expressions my father added to this situation. My mom certainly couldn’t control dad and the situation quickly got out of hand. Before the end of that hymn, the entire congregation was rolling in laughter – some uncontrollably as I recall. Needless to say, I have never sung “We Three Kings” without an inner giggle.

Oh how I miss my dad’s facial expressions during worship services and I consider my memories priceless. But I learned a lesson that December, Sunday while Rev. Garlington tried to spice up a Christmas carol. Not only are these familiar tunes but they are stories of the birth of Jesus and the people that played a role in the Christmas story. Do we sing them because they are familiar and seasonal? Do we really focus on these words set to music? How discouraged was Joseph when he was told there was no room at the inn? Imagine the look on Mary’s face when she was led to a stable to give birth to our Savior. How frightened were the shepherds by the angels? What conditions did the three kings really endure to deliver their gifts to Jesus? May we each find the true meaning of Christmas this year through our favorite Christmas carols but may we not take the messages they hold for granted.

~Judy Zwaschka

December 6, 2017

Ribbon Candy and Licorice – Yuk!

Every Christmas my sister and I would tear through presents like a pair of piranhas ripping through a chuck roast. Once new dolls were diapered and batteries inserted, we would be reminded of our stockings, thumb-tacked to the wall (no chimney).

We’d dutifully trudge over and pull down those felt-and-glue stockings, already knowing what would be inside: an apple, a toothbrush, ribbon candy and licorice – oh yay ...

We never tried the licorice again after that first time we tasted it, and the ribbon candy? Well, it had about as much taste as a real ribbon, but year after year until we were almost grown, it was the same thing: an apple, a toothbrush, ribbon candy and licorice.

One Christmas the ribbon candy and licorice disappeared. Later, I asked my mother why she waited so long to ditch those dreadful candies. She just smiled and told me of when she was a little girl and they didn’t have much, but there would always be an apple, an orange, licorice and ribbon candy in their stockings. So, I asked my maternal grandmother about this, and after waiting a moment, she told me the story of a poor farmer, his wife and 17 children (yes, 17) who struggled to provide “extras” at Christmas during the ‘20’s in North Texas.

“We were lucky to get ribbon candy or licorice,” she said, “but there was always an apple and sometimes an orange in our stockings. And when we did get that licorice ... it was so *good!*”

Suddenly, it all made sense to me, except the comment about the licorice tasting good. At this advent season, I thought of this story and how God sometimes gives us gifts we don’t like and we may feel as if He is out of touch with our needs. The truth is, there is a difference between *wants* and *needs*. The greatest gift from God is the gift of Jesus Christ, sent in the form of a baby, then man, then savior of the world. This gift of salvation fills our greatest *need*. All we must do is *accept* His gift in faith, and He will save us. “*Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!*” 2 Corinthians 9:15 ESV

Giving up a life of sin might seem distasteful to some. Friend, don’t discard the gift, pushing it aside and opting for the shiny things in life. Truthfully God’s inexpressible gift is the most important one you will ever receive and I promise you will not miss the sinful life. Instead, you will be filled with joy, peace and contentment beyond your imagination. And just think: this life is but a *foretaste* of glory divine!

Now, the perfect ending to this story would be that I carried on the tradition of ribbon candy and licorice, but *licorice*? *Really*? That horrific candy was replaced with chocolate years ago. The apple survived only because it filled the toe of the sock much better than a candy bar.

Merry CHRISTmas!

~Teri Deweber

December 7, 2017

Light of Hope

It wasn't just exciting, it was over-the-top-glorious! We had just turned on our first Christmas tree lights, highlighting shiny balls and dangly silver "icicles"; their warmth coaxing forth a cedar-y fragrance from the tree. My kid senses absolutely tingled! At last! Electricity! No more cleaning soot from lamp chimneys for ME!.....no more trimming wicks for ME!...How great to flip a switch!

A child in the 1930's, I thought less about Jesus as Light of the World, than about tree lights, presents, Mother's chicken and dressing, coconut pie, white fruit cake, and Aunt "Boodie's" fudge and divinity with pecans! True, Jesus WAS CENTRAL in the play at church, wrapping us with warmth as within the manger Baby's blanket. And the carols, presents of oranges, apples, nuts and ribbon candy in orange mesh bags for us kids, PLUS the tall glittery Christmas tree!....things were near perfect!

But not quite! Our Light of the World penetrated a personal darkness within, only gradually. And thankfully, ultimately, with an enlightening flip-of-the-switch decision, I invited Him as Lord and Savior to come into my life, to clean away the soot of my own little chimney.

Throughout those early years, then college, training and work as medical technologist, marriage, twenty-three years in Japan where our family served at the Baptist University Seinan Gakuin, and nearby church and mission points, our Light of the World never failed. Years since then, Jesus continues to enlighten and redo remarkably-clueless-at-times me, ever more to His liking!

In Japan, my husband, Gerald, was taking a group of his economics seminar students on a retreat. Darkness fell on the treacherous mountain road. Their inn wasn't far ahead but fog closed in. "How can we possibly....?!" Then three students got out of the vehicle, joined hands, and walking in front of the headlights, with their paths illuminated enough to move ahead step-by-step, led all safely to the welcoming lighted inn.

At breakfast the next day, Gerald explained that Jesus as Savior and Lord guides those who will follow, step-by-step throughout life. Later, two of the students, Watanabe San and Kubo San, made decisions to follow Jesus. Since then, Gerald (with multiple myeloma) and Kubo San (with brain cancer) have gone to be with Jesus, both kept faithful through God's grace.

This year again, I hope to read the names and greetings of Japanese women friends on their yearly church Women's Group Christmas card, and locate again the name of Kubo San's widow, also a believer, while thanking Jesus who leads through all circumstances bringing Hope, Love, Joy and Peace to those following step-by-step!

"This makes us more sure about the message the prophets gave. It is good for you to follow closely what they said as you would follow a light shining in a dark place, until the day begins and the morning star rises in your hearts." 2 Peter 1:19

~Jo Beth Fielder

December 8, 2017

Waiting for Christmas

This is one of my favorite pictures of my daughter, taken two years ago in the weeks leading up to Christmas day. The picture hangs in our kitchen where it warms my heart each time I consider it. Often I will stop what I am doing and gaze at it for a few moments, and when I do, the phrase "waiting for Christmas" lingers in my mind. Honestly, I smile in part because this is a moment I want to freeze in time. I am washed in sentimentality, my little pig-tailed girl in her bright colored socks full of wonder and excitement for the holiday season. This is for me a memory that lingers, like a good song from yesterday or a smell wafting in the air so vivid I can almost taste my late grandmother's apple pie.

Advent has a way of drawing me into the nostalgia of days past. Advent, though, is no mere memory, nor is this sacred season mere sentimentality. No, waiting for Christmas is a revolutionary act of hope. Waiting for Christmas is marked by a hope that transcends the past and looks toward God's future. Advent has a way of reminding us that the full life to which God has called us has come, a foretaste lingering on our tongues; and yet, this full life is still to come, a feast awaiting us in the fullness of God's promises in Jesus.

Christ has come, and Christ will come again.

Waiting for Christmas reminds me that we who trust in Jesus live within the pause between these promises. *Christ has come, and Christ will come again.* There is a great intake of breath between these two clauses, an anticipation along the comma.

In this anticipation we wait expectantly, peering out the windows of our lives for the advent to which we hope. This pause between the promises is no passive intermission. It is instead participatory, so that even our waiting is doing for Christ's Kingdom. And in our doing for Christ's Kingdom we demonstrate our waiting as hope and joy, the twin realities of God's future that we taste on the tips of our tongues. Now in part. Now in memory. Now in hope. But then, then in full.

Christ will come again.

"Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

~Matt Walton



December 9, 2017

Light after Loss

I was fine. Everything was fine. It was the morning of my father's birthday. The first birthday since his passing a few months prior. I motored through the routine of the morning and readied for the day. On the way to school, my daughter began talking about her favorite things about Nepa. She listed her favorite memories; picking flowers, listening to his stories, and learning from him. My heart melted and I felt the hot sting of tears brim to the surface. I smiled through the glassy veil and chimed in. We had a precious trip down memory lane full of joyful recollections and heartfelt assurances that we would see Nepa again in due time. I dropped her off, stole a hug and a kiss, and watched her smile her way to the playground. It was then the glassy veil was no more and the tears fell unashamedly in a mixture of pure joy and extraordinary heartache for this loss. Thankfully, as I crept my way to my classroom, dodging any passersby that might be unsure of my seemingly unstable appearance, a sweet friend intercepted me. She gave me a sincere hug, prayed with me, and read Scripture over me. She strengthened me. This was the first of many firsts as I navigate this first year of my father's passing.

This Christmas will be another first. I imagine the night of our dear Savior's birth. The anticipation and waiting finally coming to fruition as the Angels spoke to the shepherds instructing them to go see the Savior (Luke 2:8-20). What a glorious night! As I sing "O Holy Night" this season, the words ring truer for me than ever before. 'Long lay the world in sin and error pining, 'til he appeared and the soul felt its worth.' Long had troubles waged terribly, and here the promise of newness of life had come! Just as the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God (Luke 2:20), so ought we to hold true to his promise of return. Though we may be experiencing heartache or loss, His promises are true. He has gone to prepare a place for us that we might be with Him for eternity, basking in the glory of Heaven (John 14:1-3).

If you are walking a road of loss or heartache this season, hold fast to His promises. Sing "O Holy Night" with a little more fervor this season. Surround yourself with loved ones and friends who will strengthen you in times of difficulty. What a mighty God we serve- the Creator and Sustainer. We will see our loved ones again, friends. And what a day of rejoicing that will be. Until then, may we fix our eyes on the opportunities each day affords to make our choices count for the Kingdom, honoring the legacies that have gone before us. May you feel the warmth of the Holy Spirit and be wrapped in His presence.

~Angie Everton

Rest, for this is a week of peace!

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday, December 10, 2017 9:45am

Call to Worship

Arise, Your Light Is Come

Hymn 83

Choral Praise

It's Christmas

Rouse

Children's Choirs, Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra

Welcome & Greeting

Jill Fulghum

The Lord be with you,

And also with you.

Why have we come?

We have come to worship Him.

Rest

Edwards

(see page 45 for melody)

Rest, Rest. Your redemption is at hand, be still and know the wonder.

Wait, Wait. Bring your weary, wounded hearts to Christ upon the hay.

Holy light shines all around in common things, in small unlikely places.

Rest, Rest. Trust God's promise, do not fear,

Emmanuel is near.

Rest, Rest, Rest.

Litany of Peace

Leader: Pause. Rest. Make yourself ready.

People: We enter your stillness, God, and wait for your song.

Leader: Redeem your people from oppression and violence.

People: Let your righteousness flourish and your peace abound.

All: O God, we rest in you, for you are our peace.

The Lighting of the Candle of Peace		Sybil Dodson
Scripture Reading	This is the Word of the Lord. <i>Thanks be to God.</i>	Isaiah 11:1-10
Prayer		
It Came Upon a Midnight Clear		Hymn 93
O Little Town of Bethlehem		Hymn 86
Water For All Testimony		The Rossers
Choral Praise	The Healing Place <i>Sanctuary Choir</i>	Martin
Sermon		Dr. Todd Still
I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day		Hymn 98
Offertory Prayer		Dr. Matt Walton
Offering & Announcements		Dr. Matt Walton
For He Alone Is Worthy		Hymn 427

Advent Missions Focus: The Rossers

Colin and Ronnie Rosser serve in Obule, Uganda. This year they helped families drill over ninety water wells bringing their five year total to over 350! This year a severe famine struck Uganda. The Rossers helped organize a relief effort that fed 600 families for a month. Colin and Ronnie regularly teach at the church in Obule. As many as one hundred children often show up to Ronnie's Sunday School class. This year, the Rossers officially adopted Silas and Aggie and welcomed newborn, Corrie, to the family. Pray for the Rossers.



December 10, 2017

Expecting a Child

“How would you like to be pregnant?” were the words that Dr. Hall said to my husband and me on that April day in 1976. With tears of joy rolling down my face, I answered, “YES!” It seemed like I had been waiting for years to hear those words. It had finally happened to me. We were going to have a child around Thanksgiving – our own little turkey. I was overjoyed, nervous, and scared, but I couldn’t wait to share our happiness with family and friends.

After spreading the joyful news, I looked forward to life’s new adventure. The months of waiting for our baby’s birth passed quickly. We moved from Mount Pleasant, Michigan, to Lubbock, Texas, and prepared for our child’s birth. There were plans to make, things to buy, morning sickness to conquer, doctor visits to schedule, a nursery to set up, curtains to make, clothes to organize, prenatal classes to attend, vitamins to take, books to read, a boy’s and girl’s name to choose, toys to purchase, financial questions to answer, and more! It was both exciting and overwhelming.

At this time of year, I often reflect on what Mary must have thought when she realized that she had been chosen to bear the Son of God. Was she awed at the thought of being a parent? Was she concerned about how to take care of a baby? Did she question whether she would be a good mother to this child? Did she worry about the pain of childbirth? Did she dream about what her child would look like? Did she wonder how her perfect son would succeed in an imperfect world?

Although Mary may have had many questions, she knew one thing for certain: God would take care of her Son. As Christians, we have that same assurance. We know that God will take care of us, His children. While we cannot always know His plan for us, we can take comfort in that He will care for us in good times and in bad, the ever-loving parent during our worldly journey.

But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” Luke 1:30-33 NIV

~Harriet Lewis

December 11, 2017

In education, there is a theory of interaction for helping to communicate concepts (Three Types of Interaction by Michael G. Moore). The three types of interaction are also easily translated to our communication as Christians.

First, learner-content interaction is the interaction between the learner and the content. I see this as the interaction between the Bible and us. Moore even states that this is a defining characteristic and it is the process that results in changes in the learner's understanding and the learner's perspective. *"All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" 2 Timothy 3:16-17.*

Second, learner-instructor interaction is highly desirable by learners, as this is the relationship with the instructor. In a Christian relationship, this is God and us. We are the learners and He is the ultimate instructor. Moore relates that instructors provide counsel, support, and encouragement to each learner. How true also is our relationship with our Father! "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" Revelation 3:20.

Finally, learner-learner interaction is the relationship between one learner and other learners. This is the relationship that we have with others in our church. Moore stresses that interactions among members is an extremely valuable resource for learning and is sometimes even essential. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this all people will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" John 13:34-35.* Each of these interactions is essential in our growth and in our relationships with Christ and with each other.

~**Lesley Casarez**

December 12, 2017

We were on a long-awaited trip traveling with family and friends, cruising the St. Lawrence Seaway from Montreal, Canada to Boston. The scenery was beautiful, the people gracious, and the food excellent. Then on the third morning our Brother in law knocked on our cabin door. We were expecting Judy and Wayne to come get us so we could go to breakfast together. Their faces said something serious had happened. Wayne said, "there has been a mass shooting in Las Vegas!" My heart stopped! My brain stopped!! I had a hard time breathing. Our daughter and her husband were to travel with friends to Las Vegas for a short vacation! When were they supposed to be traveling? Were they already there? What day is it? What date is it? I literally could not think! I went out on the deck and texted my daughter. "Sandra, where are you?" At home she replied! "Are you still planning to go to Las Vegas?" "Yes." She said. "We talked about it and decided we would still go. Do you think it is safe for us to go?"

My reaction went away-for the day. That evening after we were in bed and I was praying over the day-my heart brought fear out. The fear was huge, mean, compelling and it gripped my heart and mind! What if... What if...??? I felt lost in the fear! I went out on deck to text Sandra and Ross came and found me. I began to sob. He held me and listened. We went back to our cabin and sat on the end of the bed. "Oh Ross, what if Sandra and Brandon had been there?" We felt the only thing we could do was to pray and give our fear to God. The only thing we could do was to once again give our children and grandchildren to God for safe keeping. We determined we had no power to keep them safe. We decided to trust God. We decided to choose faith. Sounds simple. Right? No- not simple. Choosing to stand firm and to choose faith when circumstances overwhelm is an act of the will. Isaiah 41:10, 13 paraphrased, "Don't panic I am with you. There is no need to fear for I am your God. I will give you strength. I will help you. I, your God have a firm grip on you and I will not let go!"

I depend on God alone; I put my hope in him. He alone protects and saves me... Father enable our hearts to learn to turn towards you in times of distress and may we feel the hope that is in you alone. Psalm 62:5-6a

~**Debra Dawkins**

December 13, 2017

Luke 1:5-38

Your Appointed Time

Christmas is filled with parties and family gatherings. These events and the planning they entail fill our calendars. Somewhere in the midst of all these events, Christmas is also a time to reflect on how good God is and the greatest Gift He has given. During the holiday season, the seeming shortage of time and our desire for more time seems to be amplified. We often feel there is no time to lose. The Jewish people waited for the coming of the Messiah with the same level of anticipation as a child waiting to open their presents on Christmas morning. Just as the Jewish people waited and prayed for the Messiah to come and save them, we often must wait for God to answer our prayers. Although we try to wait patiently, we sometimes wonder “Why is God waiting? We have things to do.” God’s timing, however, is not necessarily our desired timing.

In the Greek language, there are two words for time. One is *chronos*, which refers to chronological or sequential time, and the second is *kairos*, which signifies a proper or opportune time of action. In the Bible, *kairos* is used to refer to God’s appointed time. The first Christmas is an example of a *kairos* moment. Mary and Joseph were not planning on having a baby at that time. It was not the proper order of events according to their timeline, but God had another plan, a better plan. As we face periods where God is not answering our prayers in a manner or time that we want, we must trust that God also has a better plan for us.

If you are celebrating the season of Advent, there was appointed time in your life where you met the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ! I believe the advent season is a time to rekindle the flame of Christ in our lives and to reflect on that moment when you made a decision to follow Christ. It really doesn’t matter where it happened, in a church, on the street, or in a prison cell. What matters is that there was a time in your life that the Holy Spirit convicted your heart and you acted on that conviction. In that moment where you recognized that we are all sinners and realized we all need a savior, you accepted the first and greatest Christmas gift, God’s saving grace come to earth as baby Jesus. During this busy holiday season, take time to reflect on the time you met Christ because that was God’s *kairos* time for you.

~**Andrew Lester**

December 14, 2017

Anticipation - Friend or Foe?

I like knowing what lies ahead. I am put together in such a way that I feel most secure when I know what is coming. While I love a pleasant surprise occasionally, I do not like to be constantly walking into the unknown. Anticipation does not always result in the outcome we expect.

My Mom was a widow with three kids in the 60’s. We did not go on elaborate vacations, but one summer, we were going to go to Six Flags Over Texas. Oh my goodness, I remember being so excited that we were going to get to go to an awesome amusement park! We loaded up the car and traveled from Houston to Arlington and got checked into our hotel. Once there, we heard a weather report that a flash flood warning was in effect for the Arlington area. The threat of bad weather frightened my mother so much that she loaded us back up into the car and we drove straight back to Houston without even walking through the front gate of Six Flags. The bubble of excitement burst, utter disappointment.

As a young adult, I was scheduled to have minor surgery. A pre-op chest x-ray revealed something on my lung. My doctor cancelled the scheduled surgery and referred me to a general surgeon to evaluate what needed to be done about the spot on my lung. There was anticipation for sure, but I would characterize it more as dread. I had to wait over a weekend before seeing the surgeon, so, of course I spent the weekend thinking the absolute worst. Surely, I had a terminal illness and would not live to see my children grow up. My anticipation got way out ahead of any reasonable thought. Turned out I did not need surgery at all and the problem was totally treatable. Needless worry, complete relief.

Two dates stand out in my mind - April 27, 2005 and December 30, 2013 - the birthdates of our two grandchildren. The sheer joy of anticipation on each of these two days defies description. Nine months of waiting, then finally the big day. There was much celebration as family gathered at the hospital to welcome new life. The miracle of life, the dreams of what will be. Wonder, indescribable joy.

Life on this side of eternity is constantly pushing us to anticipate the next thing . . . the next cell phone, the next pay check, the next house, the next car, the next whatever. All of these things distract us from what should be the focus of our attention. The Scripture passage from Hebrews 12 read last Sunday hangs in my memory:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

May our anticipation in this Advent season be totally and completely fixed on Jesus, and may our prayer be, “Come, Lord Jesus!”

~**Suzy Mears**

December 15, 2017

Stargazing

“After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.’” Matthew 2:1-2 NIV

One of my favorite childhood memories is that of gazing at the stars. Summer nights in Central Texas could be warm and humid and, in the absence of air conditioning (an unknown relief for my depression-era family), the grassy slope of our front yard was the perfect place to lie flat on my back and gaze into the starry sky. On the quilt our mother spread for us, my sister and I let our minds run wild as we saw all manner of figures and faces in the constellations and tried counting, then guessing, the number of twinkling lights we saw, all the while amazed at the vastness of the heavens spread out above us. My childish mind could not grasp the mystery of it all.

I wonder if the Magi, learned men from afar, might not have felt something similar as they studied the star-studded skies from their vantage point in what had been the land of exile for the Jews in times past. Scholarly men of a priestly class committed to a search for truth, they were likely influenced by the Jewish hopes of a Messiah. A sign in the heavens would herald the coming of such a one, according to these astrologer-philosopher-priests. Thus the “star of Bethlehem” grabbed their attention and sent them journeying to find the one they called the newborn “king of the Jews.”

The King James version refers to these ancient travelers as “wise men,” and indeed they were. While not fully understanding the nature and mission of the child they sought, they exercised holy wisdom in following the brilliant new light in the sky that led them to Jesus. The Scriptures say that, having worshiped him and left their gifts, their hope fulfilled, they went back another way. And “the star of Bethlehem,” having fulfilled its purpose, faded from the sky.

A bumper sticker sometimes seen in this season simply reads, “Wise men still seek him.” If so, how may they find him? Jesus said to his followers, *“You are the light of the world...let your light shine.” Matthew 5:14, 16* Let us then, like the “star of Bethlehem,” point the way to him.

~S.L. Harris

December 16, 2017

The Light of the World

“The One who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God” John 1:9-12

I love these verses and all the wonders they hold. Verse nine is stating that God is the true light. He had given his only son who was the light to everyone, and his son became flesh in the world. Verse ten says Jesus came to the world he had created, but none of the world knew who Jesus was. Jesus had been with his own people, and they did not want him. In verse twelve we get hope because whoever believes and accepts Jesus will become a child of God. This hope is still strong in our life and with our faith, because if God had not sent the light into the world, guild of sin would consume us. Here is the good news: Jesus has washed our sins away. He also came into this world to bring us joy, peace, love, and hope. The way to him is accepting and believing he is the true Messiah. When doing this you then carry out the rest of your life as a child of God. God’s grace is an amazing gift to us.

In my life, I had turned away from God, but at sixteen years old, God ignited a fire in my heart to come back to him. Through a special song, He told me that I was never alone and I will never be alone.

The light came into the world so his people will never be in the darkness; we will never be alone. He is in our heart to light our path where he wants to guide us. It is our decision to accept him, and our decision will make a difference in this world. By accepting God, we become the light to go out and shine on to others. Thanks be to God. May the light shine through your life on to others.

~Justin Perrine

Rest, for this is a week of joy!

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday, December 17, 2017 9:45am

Masters In This Hall	Goeller
Manger Song	Clydesdale
Angels We Have Heard on High	Goeller
The Coming of the Lord	Choplin
Angels, from the Realms of Glory	Hymn 94
Welcome & Greeting	Dr. Matt Walton

The Lord be with you,
And also with you.
Why have we come?
We have come to worship Him.

Rest	Edwards
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(see page 45 for melody)
Rest, Rest. Your redemption is at hand, be still and know the wonder.
Wait, Wait. Bring your weary, wounded hearts to Christ upon the hay.
Holy light shines all around in common things, in small unlikely places.
Rest, Rest. Trust God’s promise, do not fear,
Emmanuel is near.
Rest, Rest, Rest.

Litany of Joy	Leader: Pause. Rest. Make yourself ready. People: We enter your stillness, God, and wait for your song. Leader: Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob. People: For the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. All: O God, we rest in you, for you are our joy.
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The Lighting of the Candle of Joy	Holik Family
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Scripture Reading	This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.	Luke 1:46b-55
Prayer		
Good News		Greg and Janna Long
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing		Hymn 88
Scripture Reading		Jill Fulghum
Offertory Prayer and Offering		
Festival Gloria		Courtney
Gloria In Excelsis Deo		Goeller
Angels Medley		Greg and Janna Long
Joy to the World Video		
Away in a Manger		Hymn 103
We Are the Reason		Greg and Janna Long
Scripture Reading		Dr. Todd Still
Joy to the World		Hymn 87
O Come, All Ye Faithful		Hymn 89
Hallelujah Chorus		Handel
Announcements and Benediction		

Advent Missions Focus: The Glahns

Rob and Almaz Glahn, serve as WFA missionaries in Tulubolo, Ethiopia. The Glahns partner with a group of Ethiopian church leaders to share the gospel with their neighbors. They also teach villagers how to dig their own low cost water wells. This year, The Glahn’s team is on target to drill over 90 new wells. Almaz has also started a village elementary school for children who did not have easy access to government schools. The Glahns have done this in the midst of political unrest throughout the country. Pray for the Glahns and their two daughters, Sophie and Lisa.



December 17, 2017

The Word Became Flesh

John 1: 6 – 28

This scripture is one of the Lectionary Readings for Sunday December 17th this year. It is unique that as our church is reading this Advent thought during this season, I will be preaching from this exact text during the worship service at the Gateway RV & MH Park where Miwes and I are serving as Park Chaplains.

This is a familiar text to followers of Christ who have worshipped before during this season of the year. The story line is this: John the Baptist had appeared earlier; he came from the wilderness; he was strangely dressed; his food preferences and diet were weird; he appeared with a message that he was a precursor for one coming after him; the one to come was greater than him; John called people to repentance; he baptized them with water; the one after him would baptize them with the Holy Spirit. Our text picks up from there.

The “Jews of Jerusalem” in the scripture for today were almost certainly from the Sanhedrin, the ruling council. It was their responsibility to assess the genuineness of those claiming to be prophets or the Messiah. Therefore they sent the priests and Levites to question John.

They didn’t know who or what he was or what he represented. He strongly disclaimed being the Messiah. Next, could he be a prophet like Elijah. No, he wasn’t him either. They gave up. What were they going to tell the others when they returned? What would their report be? They finally asked John the Baptist to give them an answer...something to say about him!

John said he saw himself as Isaiah 40:3 said, as a voice telling people to prepare for the Lord. Today, our world is still listening for and looking for the authoritative “voice”. It’s such a tragedy.

We hear and see the aftermath of the followers of unauthoritative and demonic voices. The radical Islamic followers who bomb and kill indiscriminately...male, female, adults, children. The voices of groups yelling “pride” and then launching into hate and destruction...indiscriminately injuring other human beings and property.

The voices of modern talk show hosts and newscasters and other public personalities afraid of the fallout for mentioning the wrong word or concept having to do with Christian faith or religion.

The voices of people still busying themselves with predicting the exact time for the end of the world and the coming of Christ...even when Christ said he himself didn’t have a clue about that, only the Father knows.

The voices of all kinds of references and implications negative to Christ, divorcing themselves from any identity with Him or His Church.

As did the representatives of the Sanhedrin who interviewed John the Baptist, our world still can’t / won’t accept the truth about Christ.

Such a tragedy...when all this... John had the answer and proclaimed the truth: Jesus is the Messiah...the Savior...the Son of God.

~Dick Baggett, Chaplain

December 18, 2017

Old MacDonald Had a Laugh

“Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy” Psalm 126:2 (ESV)

Being new parents, we loved those occasional weekend mornings when we could sleep late without our new son crying out for breakfast, a diaper change or attention from his sleep-deprived parents. This particular Saturday morning three-month-old Scott seemed particularly content so Harriet decided to take a shower before attending her maternal duties.

As for me, I lingered in bed, then decided to fetch Scott and bring him to our room to surprise Harriet when she emerged from the bathroom. I went into his bedroom where he rested in the same crib that had been my bed as a baby. Of course, we had made the crib Scott’s by attaching an “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” mobile with a horse, a pig, a cow and a sheep that would occupy him when he was restless.

When I bent over to pick Scott up, I bumped my head against one of the arms of the mobile and all the animals clattered together. Scott laughed. A first! I hit my head against the mobile again and got a big belly laugh. Then I hit my head a third time, and he laughed even harder. Ecstatic at Scott’s first laugh, I ran to the bathroom and told Harriet to get out of the shower, put on a robe and come see this. She feared something was wrong, but I calmed her down, grabbed her hand once she had put on her robe and pulled her to Scott’s room.

As soon as I reached the crib, I nodded at a wide-eyed Scott, bent over and bumped my head against the mobile. Silence! I did it again. Nothing. Scott just lay there staring solemnly at us. I banged the toy again. Not even a grin from you know who. By then, Harriet was glaring at me like I was crazy and wondering why I had gotten her out of the shower for this display of marital stupidity. I tried to explain how he had laughed, then swatted at the mobile and, bless his heart, he erupted with a belly laugh that proved to his mom, at least for the moment, that I wasn’t crazy. Then she banged the mobile and extracted a huge laugh of her own from our son.

I realized I had been witness to our son’s first laugh. Later it struck me that I had been the victim of his first prank. Well played, Scott! The memory of that Saturday morning decades ago still brings a smile to my face as no sound in the world is prettier than the sound of your own child’s laughter. It is pure joy. Even today, the sound of Scott’s and our daughter Melissa’s laughter delights my heart. Now the only joy greater to me than the sound of our son’s and daughter’s laughter is that same sound coming from our five grandchildren. To me, the laughter of children in awe of the joy of Christmas is what makes this season so special.

~Preston Lewis

December 19, 2017

When our son, Joel, came home for the holiday one Thanksgiving, he told us a story of an incident in the airport as he was leaving California. While in a security conscious huge long line (with an hour and a half wait), he suddenly realized that he still had his Leatherman in his pocket...he carries it all the time! Knowing he could never pass security checks with a Leatherman, he motioned to a nearby security officer, asking her what he should do. She said he only had two choices....to go put it back in his car then get back at the end of the long, long line, or just throw the Leatherman away. Starting at the end of the line would make him miss his plane, yet he was certainly not wanting to throw this favorite "tool" away. Seeing his dilemma, the officer added one more possibility, "I guess you could hide it in a planter in the airport, then when you return to California, go dig it up and see if it's still there." Joel knew that was a huge risk, but feeling that he had no other options, he stepped to the side of the line near a planter, dug a hole and buried his beloved Leatherman. Seeing what he was doing, a motherly looking middle aged lady just arriving from a flight to California came over to him, and asked if he would like for her to mail it to him. Again, there was certainly a risk of losing his Leatherman, but being a trusting person by nature, Joel thanked her, handed over his Leatherman and his business card with his work address. He didn't even have cash to give her for postage!

All during the Thanksgiving holidays, we talked about his Leatherman and whether he would ever see it again. This had taken place, after all, in California, of all places!! Too soon, our time together was over, and Joel returned to California.

He works out of his home, primarily...only going into the office every week or two. Halfway between Thanksgiving and Christmas, we got a call from him, saying he had gone to the office that night and...no Leatherman. We were all so disappointed. Not only had he lost his Leatherman, but our faith in our fellow man was a little shaken. Trying to comfort ourselves, we reasoned that perhaps the lady had good intentions, but lost his address. Sybil especially had a hard time accepting that, and kept saying, "I just still believe she's going to return it!" Joel, our trusting, but realistic son, replied, "Mom, the only thing you know about this woman is her approximate age!"

The very next day, Joel called again, and began by saying, "Mom, I thought you'd want to know that our secretary called today and she said, uh...she said, uh...." By now, Sybil assumed that Joel must have lost his job in the economy strapped Silicon Valley! But he finished his sentence by saying, "....the secretary said that the lady has been calling all week trying to make sure I got my Leatherman!" The secretary checked for him, and sure enough, the package with the Leatherman was in his mail cubicle. There was much rejoicing, with renewed faith in mankind.....what a great Christmas gift that was. A few hours later, we got the following e mail message from Joel: I called the lady who had my Leatherman. As I said, she had been calling all week to make sure I had gotten it. I offered to pay her back postage, but she would have none of it. "Pass it on," she said. I haven't been in to pick it up yet, but I hope there's a return address for me to send a thank-you note. I didn't make a big deal about it before, but remember that Dad gave it to me as a Christmas present after I left San Angelo to find my own way, so there is a certain sentimental attachment (besides just being a really good tool). By the way, her name is Grace. Love, Joel

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

~Sybil Holveck

December 20, 2017

Pictures of the Nativity

When I was a teenager our small church each year presented a Christmas program that told the story of Jesus's birth. One year my mother directed the production and presented me with a Christmas memory that lingers to this day. She decided to present the story as "pictures" of the important events that tell the story of the incarnation. She carefully picked scenes, wrote the narration, and selected the special music that would complete the pageant. She supervised the costume construction and make-up, including beards for the boys. Church youth were the actors. One church member built the large shadow box that served as the set. Two spotlights illuminated each scene. My role was to ask children to come forward to see the infant Jesus with Mary and Joseph when the nativity scene was the picture in view. I had a special song of invitation to sing – *O Come Little Children*, a familiar German carol. We had several rehearsals, including one with the children, though there was nothing in the manger during those practices.

On the night of the performance, my mother placed her precious antique "Bye-lo" baby in the manger as Baby Jesus. Cloyce, the doll's name, had played this role many times before, and needed no rehearsals. At the appropriate time, I came forward, stood at the edge of the picture frame, and began to sing my request to view the baby.

"O come, little children, O come one and all,

To Bethlehem haste, to the manger so small,"

The children began to come forward by twos and threes at the sound of my voice and made their way to the shadow box.

"God's son for a gift has been sent you this night

To be your redeemer, your joy and delight."

My one regret is that the only ones who saw the "joy and delight" in the children's eyes when they caught sight of the baby in the manger were the actors, back stage personnel and me. The song I sang came to life in the faces of those precious children.

I have participated in many Christmas programs since that one. Each has a place in my heart and recollections, but none can match the memory etched in my mind of the expressions on the countenances of those children when the birth of the Savior came alive for them.

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Luke 2:11-12 (NIV)

~Harriet Lewis

December 21, 2017

I often wonder if we need extremes to truly understand emotions and experiences of life. I reflect on this dichotomy when thinking about Joy. Can we truly understand Joy if we have not experienced pain, grief, or sorrow? Does our perception of Joy become clearer as we are shaped by life's challenges?

I think sometimes Joy is an afterthought. By that, I mean we realize Joyful times in life once we have experienced sorrow. When we lose a loved one, it's in the midst of that grief and sorrow that we recall joyful experiences with that person, and we retroactively appreciate them more—even more than we did in the moment.

This is how I feel after Easter, and I can imagine the disciples felt that way also. Even year after year, I find that I don't completely appreciate the Joy of the coming of Christ, his birth, and his ministry until the days after his death. I imagine myself as a disciple and friend of Christ, and I struggle with his death and the sorrow in those moments.

At Easter, I think back to his birth and the Joy and excitement that I neither completely appreciated nor cherished. As the resurrection story unfolds, Christ blesses me once again with Joy, as he walks among us and then gives us the Holy Spirit as a guide and ever-present source of Joy, no matter the severity of the pain, grief, or sorrow.

As I anticipate the coming of Christ this season and view his birth through the lens of the cross, I can more fully understand the Joy of the season.

Through this advent season, take time to acknowledge the Joy in your life and the Joy that comes from Christ. If you find yourself in a place of pain, grief, or sorrow; rest in God's Love; call on the Holy Spirit for comfort, Peace, and Joy; and lean on members of the Body of Christ who are here to walk with you through times of struggling.

~**Paul Hamilton**

December 22, 2017

Joy in the Family

"While they were there in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth to her baby.

Her first son was born" Luke 2:6-7 NLV

Consider that birth in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. Did Mary's family welcome her son joyfully? Did Joseph's? Did everyone feel joy?

Like most families nowadays, my family was scattered everywhere. Once in the 1960's my sister and her family were first in Germany, then in Japan where her career Air Force husband was stationed. We didn't see them for years. More years passed, and my nephew Erick, also career military, was stationed in Italy with his wife Corrine, when their first child, a daughter, was born. My parents were so anxious to see their first great-grandchild.

At that time, my husband and I lived near Canada in Rochester, New York, 2,000 miles north of West Texas. I tried to come down at least once a year. I would see family, eat *real* Mexican food (all we had was Taco Bell), get warm, then go back to the snowy north. I understood the need for family.

My siblings and I were female, and I was the only child until I was almost six. Dad worked hard giving me skills to overcome my gender. They named me after him, and I spent lots of time with him. I can remember helping him work around the house. We played softball, though I threw like a girl. When I got my first car, Dad gave me lessons on changing tires, the oil, etc. He gave me a set of tools. I was the son he never had. Erick was the first grandchild, even more welcomed because he was male.

Corresponding with Erick and Corinne, I learned her family was also yearning to see their grandchild, but no one could afford such a trip. With family members contributing,, we raised the airfare for Corinne to bring Kristen, the newest family member, to Texas for Christmas. After much writing back and forth, and talks with travel agents -- it would have been much easier with today's internet and smart phones! -- everything was worked out. I would fly to meet Corinne and Kristen at DFW, rent a car, and drive first to Eastland where my parents lived, then on to Big Spring to visit Corinne's parents. Tickets were bought, a car reserved.

The day finally came, and amazingly the plan worked! I met Corinne as she came through customs, carrying five month-old Kristen. We picked up the rental car and drove west to Eastland.

I will never forget when my Dad first saw baby Kristen. I didn't realize then how that experience affected me, but I have thought of it often as time has passed. It had such an impact because my Dad wasn't a demonstrative man, rarely showing emotion. He was definitely the strong, silent type.

Corinne carried Kristen up on the porch and Dad reached for her. He held her up high, grinning widely. He looked like Kunta Kinte's father in *Roots*, presenting his child to the world. Undemonstrative Dad then said, "Ho, ho, ho!" First we all copied his Santa Claus laugh. Then I cried as I realized the significance of it all. Remembering it many years later, I still tear up.

We can't know, but it's easy to compare Jesus' family's joy to the emotion my Dad showed in December, 1985 in Eastland. We can assume it when we think how important that Bethlehem birth is today. As the carol says, "Joy, joy joy!"

~**Jimmie Wilson**

December 23, 2017

“If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him” Matthew 7:11

I turned five years old on Great-grandma Sarah Goode’s farm near Trent, west of Abilene, Texas. Daddy had been back from World War II for a few years, and he decided to try to raise cotton on the land that was so different from the Mississippi Delta land where he grew up. Grandma Goode had reared my mother, who was six when her mother died. It would be an opportunity for Mama to look after her beloved aging Grandma.

The days were filled with chores of milking, feeding chickens, cooking, churning butter, planting and harvesting the garden, canning vegetables for the winter, and sewing clothes by hand for me and my younger sister from colorful flour sacks. Some days Grandma Goode would carefully sweep the dirt front yard neatly between the large shrubs and trees. A dirt path led to the yard gate at the front.

Occasionally, on Saturdays, Daddy and Mama and my sister and I went into Trent for supplies and groceries. I enjoyed the hardware store because it was full of interesting tools and appliances and toys --and one special blue tricycle. One day Mr. Weems told me to ride it. I looked at Daddy, thinking I mustn’t touch such a beautiful thing. But Daddy nodded his permission, and I spent glorious minutes riding the trike around the store that day and on several subsequent trips to the store.

The winters at Trent were harsh, and the high-ceiling old house felt colder than the inside of our ice box, which kept the milk only cool. My bedroom was closed off from the warmth of the fireplace in the sitting room. When I went to bed, I snuggled into layers of cold sheets and heavy quilts that took forever to become warm from my body heat.

It was a happy time for me. We didn’t buy many things because you didn’t make much money on a dry land cotton farm. I don’t remember asking for things; even then I understood my parents loved me but couldn’t buy “things.”

On Christmas Eve, Daddy went into town by himself. When he came home, he got settled in front of the fireplace, then remembered he had left something in the glove compartment of the car and sent me out to retrieve it. I followed the dirt path to the yard gate. I opened the gate and completely forgot my reason for being there.

There in front of me was the beautiful blue tricycle from Mr. Weems’ store. I rode it up the path and got it in the house. I rode that tricycle all over the house, into every room that wasn’t closed off from the heat. Finally, I got so tired that I needed to go the bed, but I didn’t want to get off the tricycle yet. So, I rode it up to the side of my bed and lay my head over on the bed.

I’ve had many wonderful gifts through my life, but none has made me any happier than that blue tricycle from the hardware store. Now, as an adult, I know that Daddy must have paid for it over several months. And I now understand how happy he and Mama were that I was so glad to get it.

If our loving parents give us gifts we treasure, how much more does God love to give us gifts that give joy and meaning to our lives.

~*Cecelia Sessom*

Rest, for this is a week of love!

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday, December 24, 2017 9:45am

Call to Worship

The First Nowell

Hymn 85

Welcome & Greeting

The Lord be with you,

And also with you.

Why have we come?

We have come to worship Him.

Rest

Edwards

(see page 45 for melody)

Rest, Rest. Your redemption is at hand, be still and know the wonder.

Wait, Wait. Bring your weary, wounded hearts to Christ upon the hay.

Holy light shines all around in common things, in small unlikely places.

Rest, Rest. Trust God’s promise, do not fear,

Emmanuel is near.

Rest, Rest, Rest.

Litany of Love

Leader: We have paused. Our rest is nearly done. We have readied ourselves for your coming.

People: The stillness is ended with joyful song!

Leader: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things.

People: Let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord.

All: O God, our resting complete, we sing with the angels at the coming of the Christ child.

Hosanna in the highest!

The Lighting of the Candle of Love

Christo Family

*Advent / 2017 / hope + peace + joy + **love***

Scripture Reading

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or

persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things

we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Prayer

Angels We Have Heard on High

Hymn 100

He is Born

Hymn 112

Good Christian Men, Rejoice

Hymn 96

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Hymn 95

Sermon

Dr. Todd Still

Emmanuel

Hymn 82

Offertory Prayer

Offering and Announcements

For He Alone Is Worthy

Hymn 427

Advent Missions Focus: The Masons

Hana and Aaron Mason are our newest WFA missionaries. They currently serve in Soroti, Uganda. They are preparing to move north to the South Sudan border to open a new WFA program. This area is a very needy area with numerous refugees from the conflicts in South Sudan. The majority of people in the area follow a folk form of Islam. The Masons will partner with a local Christians who have started a church and school. While Aaron focuses on the well drilling clubs, Hannah will help in a local hospital serving special needs children. Pray for the Masons.



*Advent / 2017 | hope + peace + joy + **love***

December 24, 2017

Love

2017 was a HARD year for our family. We lost my 98 yr. old grandfather and 87 year old great uncle in the same month. My kids have had a very hard time dealing with the loss of their great-grandfather. They were with him often and miss him so much.

I'm trying to use the loss of our precious Granddad to teach our kids the meaning of LOVE. How did he live his life? Waking up at 4 am as a teen, he delivered bread. WHY? Because he LOVED his family and wanted to help earn his keep, even at a young age. Shortly after completing Texas A&M, he was called up to serve in WW2. During his time of service, Granddad was awarded the Bronze Star, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, and twice awarded the Purple Heart. WHY? Because he LOVED his country and fellow man. After the war, he moved to San Angelo and taught Sunday School for more than 50 years. Could you imagine teaching every Sunday for 50 years! WHY?

Because he LOVED the Lord and wanted to help spread the good news of Jesus Christ! What's the one common denominator here? You guessed it—LOVE. His deep rooted love for Jesus was exemplified in every facet of his life. This legacy of love is what he leaves his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."
1 Corinthians 13:13

As we celebrate this Advent season, the birth of Jesus is a reminder of the legacy God was leaving for us, his Son who is the very definition of love.

~Elizabeth Chambers

Christmas Eve Carols, Candles, and Communion

December 24, 2017

5:30pm and 7:00pm

The Light Revealed

Prelude Rhonda Partusch & Debra Pruett

The Carol Sung

Joy to the World

Joy to the World! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing, And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns;
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.

The Greeting

The Lord be with you,
And also with you.
Why have we come?
We have come to worship Him.
O come, let us adore Him,
Adore Him, Christ the Lord!

The Scripture Read Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Procession of the Christ Candle

The Carol Sung

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels!
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning,
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!
O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

The Light in Our World

The Scripture Read Luke 2:1-12

Testimony in Song

The Scripture Read Luke 2:13-20

The Carol Sung

Away in a Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head;
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes;
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven to live with Thee there.

Christmas Reflection Dr. Matt Walton

The Light Observed through Communion with Him

(We invite anyone who is a Christian to receive Communion)

The Light Shared with the World

Responsive Reading

And God said, "Let there be light!" And there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good.

God is light and in Him is no darkness.

***The people who sat in the darkness saw a great light;
and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death,***

Light is sprung up.

Light is come into the world, but men loved darkness
rather than light because their deeds were evil.

***Arise, shine, for thy light is come,
and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.***

And His name shall be called Wonderful! Counselor!

Mighty God! Everlasting Father! Prince of Peace!

***May our lights so shine before men, that they may see our good works,
and glorify our Father in heaven.***

Instrumental Meditation

Candle Lighting

The Carol Sung

Silent Night, Holy Night

Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright

Round yon virgin mother and child!

Holy infant so tender and mild,

Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light

Radiant beams from Thy holy face,

With the dawn of redeeming grace,

Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

Silent night, holy night, Wondrous star, lend thy light;

With the angels let us sing

Alleluia to our King;

Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.

Benediction

World Hunger Offering will be received at the end of each service

December 25, 2017

TAKE TIME TO PONDER

Luke 2:1-21

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,

and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,

*establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.*

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. Isaiah 9:6-7

Can't you hear the gentle humming of the new mama as she rocks back and forth cradling
her first born son?

Exhausted and exhilarated.

Blessed and bewildered.

Proud and humbled.

Can't you smell the stable; the sweet smell of hay mixed with the poignant aroma of cattle
and sheep and goats? Can you see the tiny, baby, savior, wrapped in cloths and lying in a
manger...the same manger that only a few hours before served as a feeding trough for
livestock?

Can you hear the Angel choir singing to the lowly shepherds?

Don't be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor
rests.*

Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Today, may you have time to treasure and ponder.

For unto YOU a child is born.

He is Christ the Lord.

May today be a day of glorifying and praising God for all the things you
have seen and heard.

Merry Christmas!

~Jill Fulghum

Rest

Rest, Rest, Your re - demp-tion is at hand, be

still and know the won - der. Wait, Wait. Bring your

wear - y wound - ed hearts to Christ up - on the hay. Ho - ly

light shines all a - round in com - mon things, in small un - like - ly plac - es.

Rest, Rest. Trust God's prom-ise, do not fear, Em - man-u - el is near.

Rest, Rest, Rest.

Randy Edwards
Arranged by C.L. Bass



A CHRISTMAS PARTY BIG ENOUGH FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

Bring the whole family for a dynamic evening of music, dancing, games, and a live telling of the Christmas story. This Christmas party celebrates the true meaning of Christmas with families in our community. There will be a catered meal beginning at 5:00 p.m. Cost is \$5 a person for the meal, with a \$20 max for all families. The show starts at 6:00 p.m. and is free for those not eating dinner.

Rather than getting wrapped up in just “stuff” this season, let’s celebrate the generosity God showed us by giving His Son, Jesus.

Sign up for the meal at www.southlandbaptist.org.

Advent / 2017 / *hope + peace + joy + love*



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