



# Christian Challenger

Vol. 62

November 11, 2015

NO. 40

## GIVING THANKS

It is the season for gratitude. Since this has been our anniversary year, we are especially aware of the blessings that God has poured out on First Christian Church for 125 years. How do we say thanks for all that God has done? By loving our neighbors!

This month FCC has two opportunities to be a blessing to our community. We have collected and blessed more than 500 coats for boys and girls in our elementary schools. Next week we will deliver them. And for the growing number of Wichita County residents who wrestle daily with food insecurity, FCC gathers and delivers the ingredients for Thanksgiving dinner to 75 households.

Yes, we are busy in November. We are busy blessing others. Thanks to our Outreach Ministries who have invested so many volunteers hours in getting us organized. Now it's our turn. We need all who are able to get involved as we demonstrate our gratitude by giving back to our community.

### Coats for Kids

**Sunday, Nov. 15, at 3 pm:** Meet in Room 306 to organize coats for distribution.

**Monday-Friday, Nov. 16 -20, 9 am 'til noon:** Meet in Room 306 to fill & deliver requests to schools.

### Thanksgiving Baskets

**SIGN UP EARLY** to be a delivery volunteer by calling Judy at 766-0491 or Diana at 723-5203.

**Wednesday, Nov. 18:** Deadline for returning filled bags.

**Friday, Nov. 20, at 4 pm:** Assemble baskets in Room 306 and organize delivery routes.

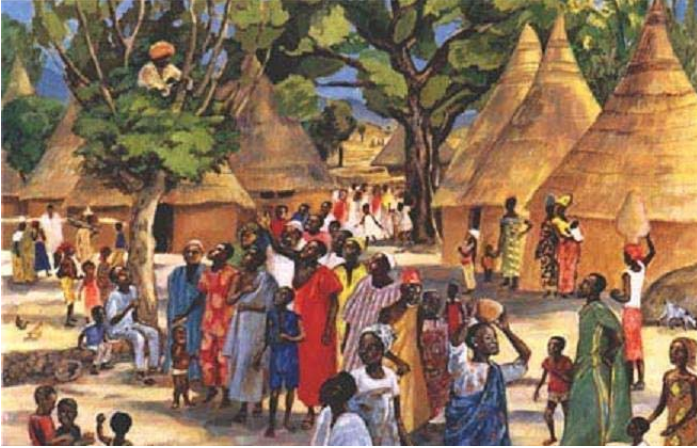
**Saturday, Nov. 21, at 10 am:** Deliver Thanksgiving baskets.



Texas Governor Greg Abbott presents the Alumnus of the Year Award to our own Bill Thacker at the annual gathering of the Northwest Texas Council of Boy Scouts of America on November 10. Bill grew up in the scouting program, first in Austin and later in Wichita Falls. All three of Bill's sons—Billy, Ty and Jeff—achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. Because of his years in scouting, Bill has given back by serving on district, council, regional and national boards for Boy Scouts of America. Bill was President of the Northwest Texas Council from 1980-1981. He has been recognized with numerous awards including Distinguished Citizen by the Boy Scouts in 2004 and was inducted into the Circle of Honor in 2010. Bill, with his son Ty, were involved in the creation of Hands to Hands Community Fund which serves eight local agencies including the Boy Scouts.

# Reflections with Renee. . .

## Fruitful



*You will be enriched in every way  
for your great generosity.*

2 Corinthians 9:11

In his book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, author Robert Schnase describes the best of the best—congregations with life and hope who transform the neighborhoods in which they are planted.

These churches are “all in” when it comes to five practices:

- Radical hospitality
- Passionate worship
- Intentional faith development
- Risk-taking mission and service
- Extravagant generosity

Let's talk a bit more about that last quality. Here's how the author defines it: “The practice of *generosity* describes the Christian's unselfish willingness to give in order to make a positive difference for the purposes of Christ. *Extravagant generosity* describes practices of sharing and giving that exceed all expectations and extend to unexpected measures. It describes sharing, sacrifice, and giving in service to God and neighbor.”

Can you think of an example from scripture that reflects extravagant generosity? How about the story of Zacchaeus? When he climbs out of the tree and escorts Jesus to his home, everything changes for this tax collector. “Today salvation has come to this house!” Jesus declares. Immediately Zacchaeus exceeds all expectations by promising to give half his possessions to the poor and to pay back four times what is owed if he has defrauded anyone. The Law of Moses (Numbers 5:7 and Leviticus 5:16) requires in matters of restitution that one-fifth be added to the sum. When Zacchaeus encounters Jesus, extravagant generosity becomes the order of the day.

Generosity is a fruit of the spirit. Extravagant giving changes both the giver and the church. May God bless the decisions we make in the days ahead as we prayerfully complete our Estimate of Giving cards.

Renee

## Thanksgiving FEAST Potluck Dinner

November 18th, 2015  
@ 5:30 during  
Wednesday Night FEAST



**Turkey will be provided!**

**Bring your favorite  
Thanksgiving dish to share!!**

**Come enjoy fellowship with  
others as we celebrate the  
Thanksgiving holiday!**

### WANTED: KITCHEN MINISTRY



We need YOUR help to serve our Common Ground Recovery Ministries participants!

We are calling on Sunday school classes, families, ministry teams, and individuals who would like to prepare and serve a meal following our

CGRM programming. For many of our participants, a warm meal is a luxury and often not guaranteed. For those relying on meal assistance, CGRM classes often conflict with dinner at the local shelters thus prohibiting our participants from having a much needed meal. As people of the Table, we are called to nourish and sustain all who are hungry, weary, and in need of the Bread of Life. Will you please help to feed our honored guests just as Christ has fed us?

We currently have the Discovery Class & the Youth committed to serve one Sunday of the month each and would love for our CGRM participants to be able to join together each week for food and fellowship. If you are interested in helping, please contact Rev. Erin Taylor, Director of Common Ground Recovery Ministries. Details are: Time Commitment: Sunday Evenings from (roughly) 5:30 pm - 8 pm; Dinner beginning around 7:00 pm. Approximate Number: 25 - 40.

Contact: Rev. Erin Taylor - [penelopeerin@gmail.com](mailto:penelopeerin@gmail.com) or (337) 304-3038. *There is also a sign up sheet outside of the CGRM office (Rm 307).*

## NOVEMBER MINISTRY MEETINGS

Sunday, November 15, 2015

5:00 pm

Evangelism - Rm 222

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

6:00 pm, Fellowship & Scout Halls

Education, Membership, Stewardship & World Outreach

7:00 pm, Fellowship Hall

Worship

**If you will need childcare, please RSVP to the church office, 692-2282, by noon on Monday, November 16th.**

## CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

CWF Group Meetings will be as follows: on **Monday, November 16**, **Group 1** will meet at 1:30 pm at Peggy Fitts' home, 2836 Mill Valley. **Group 2** at 12:00 noon in Room 405; **Group 3** at 2:00 pm in Room 402.

There will be a Service Day on Monday, November 23, to prepare the wreaths for Advent.

## 2015 THANKSGIVING SPECIAL OFFERING

The Thanksgiving Offering benefits the Colleges, Universities, Seminaries, and Divinity Houses affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These learning communities are an extension of the church, challenging students to understand and respond to God's call to serve.

From the very beginnings of the movement, Disciples have founded institutions of higher learning, encouraging students in their intellectual pursuits. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is still committed to higher education. Your gift to the Thanksgiving Offering helps underwrite the education of students attending one of our fourteen undergraduate institutions and our seven seminaries or divinity houses.

Please consider giving generously to this year's Thanksgiving Offering which will be received on Sundays, November 8 & 15.

## This Sunday:

8:40 & 10:45 Services:

"Greater Than We Imagine"

Luke 6:32-38

Dr. David B. Hartman, Jr.

5:14 CGRM Worship Service:

Rev. Erin Taylor

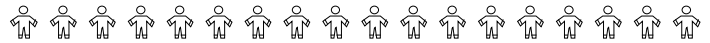
## MEMBER NEWS

♥**Hospitalized:** at Promise Hospital is Inis Dudenhoeffer; at Senior Care Rehab is Corliss Wyatt & Peggy Nunn-Hill; at Windmill Rehab is Sherrie Phillips; Released & back home are Amanda Opela & baby, Hannah Ward, Betty Etoch.



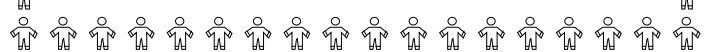
♥Congratulations to Amanda & Cesar Opela on the birth of their son, Christian Elijah Opela, on November 4th. He weighed 6 lbs and was 20 1/2 inches long.

*We want to be as inclusive as possible with our Member News, so if you know about an honor someone received, an important event in someone's life, or about illness or death, please call the church-692-2282. Thanks!*



## FIRST TIME VISITORS

We are excited to report that the following persons visited for the first time on Sunday: Von & Allison Gray, Ron & Samantha Preston, David & Cora Tucker.



## Sign Up Now For Our Monday Morning Ministry Update

Photos of weekend events, ministry calendar for the week ahead, everything you need to participate in and pray for FCC. All we need is your e-mail address sent to [susan@firstchristianwf.com](mailto:susan@firstchristianwf.com).

## "The Gift of Christmas"

### CWF Christmas Brunch & Bake Sale

Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, Fellowship Hall

The twelfth biannual CWF Christmas Brunch and Bake Sale will be held on December 7<sup>th</sup>. The doors will open for the bake sale at 10:30 and a delicious brunch will be served at 11:30. A former member and Priscilla of our church, Rev. Judy Brock, will provide the devotion and The Encore Choir will entertain guests with beautiful Christmas music. The bake sale will include yummy home baked items from church members. Tickets may be purchased from CWF members or through the church office. The cost is \$10.00 and seating is limited. Your check will be your reservation. Tables of eight may be reserved for persons buying a block of eight tickets.

Proceeds from this fundraiser will be divided between our community and church projects. Please mark your calendars and invite friends to attend this festive event!

Melissa Hogan & Cathy Biggs



***More Than We Deserve  
Greater Than We Imagine***  
Stewardship Campaign for 2016

***Sunday, November 15th***

**Dr. David Hartman, Preaching**

**“Greater Than We Imagine”  
Luke 6:32-38**

***Commitment Sunday, November 22nd***

**Rev. Renee Hoke, Preaching**

***Thanksgiving Fellowship Luncheon @ Noon***

**With Fried Chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy,  
green beans, salad & dessert.**

***Program: History of  
Highland Heights Christian Church***

**We hope you'll join us for a great meal and fellowship!**

**Please make your reservation today!**

**Psalm 107**

*First Christian Church (DOC), Wichita Falls, Texas*

*Rev. Dr. Katie Hays, November 8, 2015*

There is a time in your life when they're just stories. Goldilocks lost in the woods, hungry and sleepy, needing nothing more than a bowl of porridge and a soft, warm bed to get her through the night. Hansel and Gretel, abandoned and endangered by sinister adults, their clever trail of breadcrumbs eaten up by forest creatures. Israelites on the loose from Egypt and its hard-hearted pharaoh, weary from wandering the badlands east of the Jordan, east of Eden, wishing at times they'd never traded the certainty of slavery for the liability of freedom.

They're just stories for a good long time in your life if you're lucky. Life has been good for you, and so those are just stories. That is **the Time Before**.

Sometime later, many years later if you're lucky, you look back at yourself in the Time Before as if you are watching a movie of yourself. You see the day or the series of days during which everything changed. You see the day the ultrasound technician said, "We'll have to get a doctor in here," and you realized that whatever she saw or didn't see in your womb was beyond her pay grade to tell you. You see the night the phone rang and it was your kid, calling to say he's in the kind of trouble he can't get out of by himself. You see the morning your boss called you into her office and closed the door, always a bad sign, and explained that it's not you, it's the budget, and she'd be happy to give you a good reference when the time came.

Because this is for you **the Time After**, you join with the Israelites in remembering how it felt to wander in the desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainting within them. And you remember along with them how you cried to the Lord in your trouble and he delivered you from your distress, and led you by a straight way until you reached an inhabited town. And how he turned your desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water.

**"O Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good. God's steadfast love endures forever."**

But now here is the hard part. The hard part is, sometimes the church is ready for Psalm 107, and you are not ready, because you are in the Time In-Between. You are still in the desert, still in the parched land, still hungry, still in distress, still crying to the Lord in your trouble. The hard part is that sometimes the church is ready for Psalm 107 and the world is not ready, because so much of the world is in the Time In-Between.

And so, church, reading the 107<sup>th</sup> Psalm comes with a responsibility. When we remember together the redemption of our lives from trouble, let us not forget those who have not yet been gathered. Let us offer truthful testimony about how it is to live in the Time After, which requires that we tell the truth about the Time In-Between, which requires also that we listen to the truth from those who are still there. And if we are strong enough, if we are recovered sufficiently from our own desert wanderings, then let us not cocoon ourselves in complacency. Let us join the Lord in the sowing and harvesting of sustaining love, good food for the body and soul and mind and heart. Let us join the Lord in the work of rescue, redemption, the rebuilding of lives so that the chorus of those who *can* sing Psalm 107 will swell the sound, sending our praise to the stars, thrusting our thanksgiving beyond the boundaries of the cosmos.

**"O Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good. God's steadfast love endures forever."**

That would actually be a pretty good reason for a church to exist, wouldn't it? Kind of a mission statement, actually: "First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Wichita Falls, Texas, growing the chorus of those who can sing about the Lord's steadfast love and mean it."

A few Sundays from now you're going to have the opportunity to make clear one piece of your commitment to this project by making your financial pledge to the ministries of this church for the coming year. I'll say this with confidence, without knowing the details of your particular congregational finances: that it is a crazy time to expect to find more money for ministry. It's absurd. Nothing about it makes any sense, except for this:

**"O Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good. God's steadfast love endures forever."**

We can let that be the last word for this morning. We raise our voices with the voices of God's faithful servants over too many generations to count, raising our praise to the heavens:

**"O Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good. God's steadfast love endures forever."**



125 Years of Service

1890-2015

REMEMBER our past. RENEW our commitment.
REJOICE IN OUR LORD.

SERVING SUNDAY
ELDERS

Marjorie Parker, Mike Spiller Jr.; Kenn Hill, Presiding

DIACONATE COMMUNION VISITATION

Debi Ballard, Larry Ballard, Shirley Craft

DIACONATE COMMUNION PREPARATION

Shirley Craft & Ben Sabine

NOVEMBER DIACONATE SERVERS

Debbi Schmidt, Captain; Billy Thacker, Vice-Captain; Robert & Sally Hastings, Gidget & Michael Pettibon, Debi & Larry Ballard, Shirley Craft, June Lemmon, Robinsue & Wendi Miller, James Poole, Larry & Linda Carr, Kathleen Lauck, Sandra Whatley, Ben Sabine, Luke Ward..

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, November 15, 2015

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN / THANKSGIVING SPECIAL OFFERING

8:40 Worship (Chapel)

9:30 Sunday School

9:45 Journey Through Scripture (Parlor)

10:45 Worship (Sanctuary)

3:00 Sort Coats (Rm 306)

3:45 Chancel Ringers (Stratten Hall)

5:00 Evangelism Ministry Mtg (Rm 222)

5:00 Grow in Grace Choir (Grades K-5) (Stratten Hall)

5:00 Come As You Are (Grades 6-12) (Room 403C)

5:14 CGRM Evening Ministry (Fellowship Hall)

5:45 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 309 & 311)

6:00 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups:

Anger Recovery (Rm 304)

Chemical Addictions Recovery (Rm 305)

Parenting (Rm 306)

Women's C.A.R.E. (Rm 307)

Family Challenges (Rm 310)

Monday, November 16, 2014

7:30-6:00 Children Come First (M-F)

9:00-12:00 Young Ages School (M-F)

9:00 Fill & Deliver Coat Orders (M-F) (Rm 306)

10:15 FCC Staff Meeting (Office)

12:00 CWF Group 2 (Rm 405)

1:30 CWF Group 1 (2836 Mill Valley)

2:00 CWF Group 3 (Rm 402)

7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

2:00 Library Committee (Library)

5:00 Prayer Team for Persecuted Church (Rm 310)

6:00 Ministry Meetings (Fellowship & Scout Halls)

(Education, Membership, Stewardship, World Outreach)

7:00 Worship Ministry Meeting (Fellowship Hall)

Wednesday, November 18, 2015

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 402/Chapel)

12:00 Young Ages School Staff Meeting (Rm 217)

5:00 Mid-Week Communion Service (Chapel)

5:30-6:00 Feast Fellowship Meal (Fellowship Hall)

6:00-7:00 Feast Small Groups:

Young Disciples Group (Grades K-5) (Rm 309 & 311)

360 (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403C)

Adult Bible Study: "New Testament Writings" (Rm 305)

7:00-7:15 Feast Communion & Prayer (Chapel)

7:00 Chancel Choir (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)

7:15-8:00 Feast Open Gym

Thursday, November 19, 2015

9:00 CWF Group 3 Birthday Breakfast (IHOP on SW Pkwy)

1:30 Knit Wits (Parlor)

6:00 Nominating Committee Meeting (Rm 402)

Friday, November 20, 2015

4:00 Assemble Thanksgiving Baskets (Rm 310)

Saturday, November 21, 2015

9:00 Leave on Chi Rho/CYF Mystery Trip

10:00 Deliver Thanksgiving Baskets (Fellowship Hall)

THE CHURCH STAFF . . .

Church Number 940-692-2282
Dr. David Hartman, Senior Minister 692-2282
Rev. Renee Hoke, Associate Minister 692-2282
Cheryl Appling, Business Administrator 691-7265
Jeanette Showalter, Director of Music Ministries 763-8515
Justin Dickey, Director of Youth & Children's Ministries 936-645-1215
Rev. Erin Taylor, Director of Recovery Ministries 337-304-3038
Heather Dickerson, Director of Children Come First 687-2231
Karen Bivona, Director of Young Ages School 692-3640
Susan Marrs, Executive Secretary Tina Williams, Financial Secretary
Pam Poulos, Receptionist Debbie Watson, Organist
Web Page: www.firstchristianwf.com Church e-mail: susan@firstchristianwf.com
FAX Number 940-696-3085

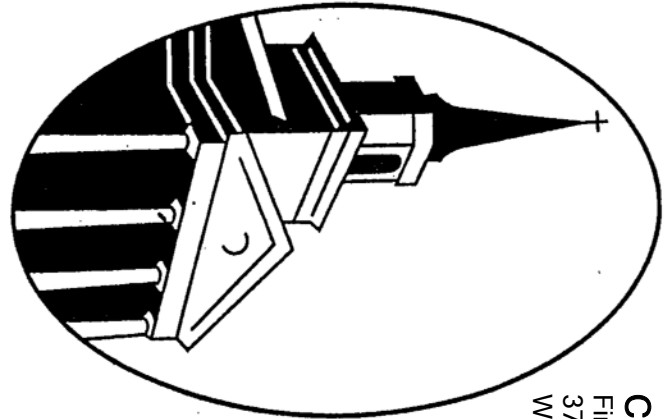
Home Phone Number:

FOR THE RECORD . . .

Sunday School . . . . . 99
8:40 Worship . . . 40 10:45 Worship . . .180
Total Worship . . . . . 220
CGRM Evening Ministry . . . . . 26
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week \$16,698.52
Sunday Receipts for 11/8/15 \$14,109.63
Through Nov. 9: Income \$638,447.67 Expenses \$665,897.85

PERSECUTED CHURCH PRAYERS
THIS WEEK ARE FOR:

Pray for Pastor Zhang and 23 others who were arrested from an approved church in Henan province in China.



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