

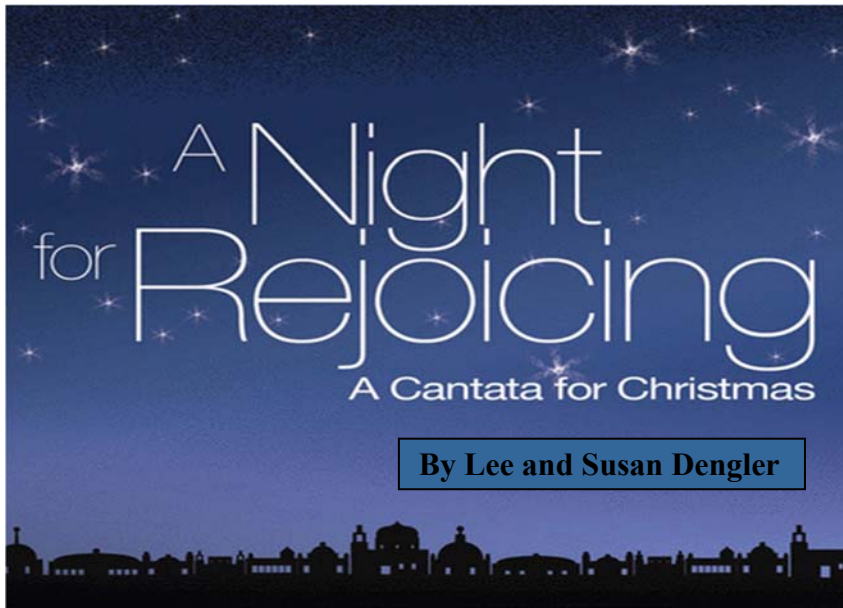


Christian Challenger

Vol. 65

December 5, 2018

No. 25



Join us this Sunday, December 9, at 10:45 as the Chancel Choir presents their annual Christmas cantata. This year's cantata features many of your favorite Christmas carols as well as new Christmas anthems and a carol sing-a-long. Our MSU music students will be featured in solos, and an ensemble of flute, oboe, clarinet, cello, and percussion will accompany the choir. We hope you can join us as we celebrate this Sunday of JOY!



It is almost time for our Children's Christmas Pageant! Mark your calendar for Wednesday, December 19th at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Come enjoy beautiful music from the Chancel Ringers and a delicious potluck dinner while watching the Christmas story through carols and tableaux. Children preschool age and up are invited to participate. A rehearsal will be held on Sunday, Dec. 16th at 9:45 am in the Fellowship Hall. Contact Claire for more information.

During this rehearsal parents are invited to join Dr. Bender for coffee and conversation!



Christmas Goes to the Movies at The Neighborhood

Come worship at The Neighborhood on Wednesday nights at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall as Christmas Goes to the Movies. On Wednesdays, December 5, and December 12, Christmas movies will inform our thinking and our discussion of the Advent/Christmas season. So, bring a friend and come see how Christ and culture intersect this Advent season at the Neighborhood!

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

We will have two identical Christmas Eve services at 6:00 pm and 11:00 pm in the Sanctuary. Both services will have the 49th annual performance of Herbert Burtis' *CHRISTMAS EVE*. We ask that no flash photography be done during the performance, thank you. Communion will be served at both services and each service will conclude with a service of candle lighting. We invite you to attend one or both services!

Make Your Mark

Dr. Mark R. Bender
Senior Minister



First Things First

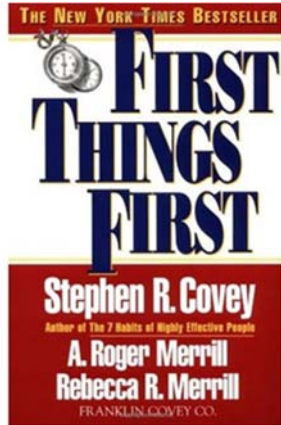
It's been almost 25 years since Stephen Covey wrote the book *First Things First*. This book was a deep-dive into the third habit described in his previous book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Simon and Schuster, 1989) - the habit of *putting first things first*. Putting first things first is an issue we confront every day. And as Covey rightly illustrates, for most of us, the day-to-day and moment-by-moment decisions we make about how to spend our time are not usually decisions between "good" or "bad," but between the "good" and the "best."

The result of this decision quandary that Covey describes is that some of us are addicted to the adrenaline rush of urgency. We like the sense of excitement and energy that crises or rush deadlines provide. These challenges bring stress, pressure, tension, and exhaustion. But, sometimes, they also bring exhilaration...we feel useful...successful...validated. Putting out the fire in front of us brings instant results and instant gratification.

In *First Things First*, Covey provides an Urgency Index - a tool to help people determine the extent to which they are looking at life through a paradigm of urgency. For each of the sixteen questions of this Index, the reader is invited to mark on a continuum from "never" to "always" what most closely represents their normal behaviors and attitudes. As I looked over that list, it got me thinking - what would our Urgency Index look like as Christians during this Advent season? What has our attention right now?

So I created an index for us. Based on how you feel right now in the midst of this season, how would you respond to the following questions (0=Never, 1=Sometimes, 2=Always):

1. I always seem to be rushing between places and events. _____
2. I wait to shop for Christmas gifts until Christmas Eve. _____
3. When I come to church during Advent, I want to sing Christmas carols _____
4. I'm often frustrated by the slowness of people and things around me. I hate waiting. _____
5. I blame the rush and press of external things for my failure to enjoy the anticipation associated with Advent. _____
6. I associate Santa Claus more prominently with this time of year than Jesus Christ. _____



So add up your score. Was your score higher than "8" - addicted to urgency? Or did you find yourself somewhere in the middle?

This silly and completely unscientific index is designed to make a point. There are lots of good things to do during this season. There are parties and concerts to attend, shopping to be done, carols to sing, traditions to maintain, people to see, decorations to hang, and trees to be fluffed. Oh, and we also have to work, eat, and attend to all of our usual responsibilities. Feeling overwhelmed and focused on the cultural demands of the season almost seem like the norm.

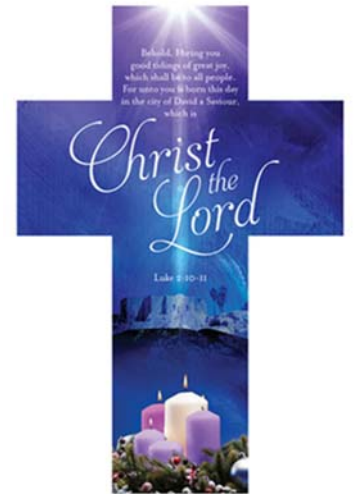
Yet, it's to these realities that Advent speaks. In the midst of urgency and pressure - sometimes self-imposed - Advent is a season of expectant waiting and preparation. It's a season designed to remind us of all those things we need saving from - the expectations of others, the heartbreak of loss, the anxiety of conflict, the hopelessness of sin...and more. It is a season designed to focus us on the salvation that was brought to us in Jesus Christ.

As the urgent demands of this time of year overwhelm us, sometimes, we wish for it all to pass; to quickly move on to "after Christmas." But to that, let me give you this thought from Fleming Rutledge:

In a very real sense, the Christian community lives in Advent all the time. It can well be called the "Time Between," because the people of God live in the time between the first coming of Christ, incognito in the stable in Bethlehem, and his second coming, in glory, to judge the living and the dead.... Advent contains within itself the crucial balance of the now and the not-yet that our faith requires... The disappointment,

brokenness, suffering, and pain that characterize life in this present world is held in dynamic tension with the promise of future glory that is yet to come. [*Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ* - Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (2018)]

If despair, enmity, sadness, indifference, and overwhelm describe your feelings at this time of year, or at any point in the year, let this season of Advent put your life back in balance. Use these days leading up to Christmas as an opportunity to leave behind the urgency of "cultural Christmas" and find in the coming of the Christ child what really is best.



Mark

FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS



Feed My Flock

is cooking at 9:30 am on Saturday, December 8th. The Elders of our church have expressed that our help is needed once again! We hope you can join us for our fun, fellowship & service. If you have any questions, please call Rick Appling, 733-2874, or email him at rapping52@yahoo.com. Hope you can join us!

The **Challenger** is biweekly, so NO Challenger next week!
FCC Ministry News is sent by email every Monday.

Christmas Fellowship Dinner: This year's Christmas Fellowship Dinner will be held on Wednesday, December 19th, at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

The program for the evening will feature the children of our church in their annual Christmas pageant. Children ages Pre-K and up are invited to participate in the pageant. Rehearsal will be next Sunday, December 16th, in Fellowship Hall at 9:30 am during Sunday School.

You are asked to bring your favorite Christmas vegetable, salad or dessert. The church will provide the meat. Cost is by donation. Bring your food to the Scout Hall before 6:00 pm. The dinner line will begin in Stratten Hall, continue through Scout Hall, then into the Fellowship Hall. Be sure to make your reservations in worship this Sunday or by calling the church office.

A certain special gentleman may make his annual appearance during the evening.

From the Mailbox. . .

Please join Bud & Betty Rafuse at 2770 Maverick Trail on Sunday, December 9, for their Annual Christmas Open House from 5 pm to 8 pm.

December Meetings:

- will be as follows:
- Tuesday, Dec. 11th: **Property** at 6:00 pm, Rm 310
 - Outreach** at 6:00 pm, Library
 - Sunday, Dec. 16th: **Church Board** at noon, Sanctuary
 - Tuesday, Dec. 18th: **Education** at 6:00 pm, Rm 402
 - Stewardship** at 6:00 pm, Rm 310
 - Worship** at 7:00 pm, Rm 222

If you will need childcare, please RSVP to the church office, 692-2282, by noon on Mondays, Dec. 10th & 17th.

Christian Women's Fellowship

The December CWF Luncheon will be Monday, December 10th, at 11:45 am in the Fellowship Hall. The speaker will be Lisa Pettijohn with P.E.T.S. The devotional will be given by Patt Giddings and the service offering will go to P.E.T.S. Reservations are not required and guests are welcome. Cost is \$5.00 per person. The CWF Board will meet at 10:30 am in Room 310 prior to the luncheon.

Group Meetings will be as follows on Monday, December 17th: **Group 1** will meet at 1:30 pm at Patt Giddings' home, 2806 Mill Valley. **Group 2** will meet at 5:30 pm at El Tapatio, on Southwest Parkway to celebrate Christmas with our annual Christmas Dinner and guests are welcome. **Group 3** will meet at 1:00 pm in the Parlor.

Christmas Special Offering... Christmas is the time of giving! The Christmas Special Day Offering will be collected on December 16 and 23 Our church participates in the six Special Day Offerings of the Christian Church: Week of Compassion (February), Easter (April), Pentecost (June), Reconciliation (Sept), Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The Christmas Offering supports the office and mission of the Southwest Region. That office has helped our church a great deal in the last year as it helped us look for a new senior minister and certifies credentials of Disciples ministers. Josh deSteiguer's steps towards his 2019 ordination are overseen by that office.

Member News:

♥**Hospitalized:** at the Gables is Ruth Beyer; at Hospice is Madra Marrs (Susan's mom); at Senior Care Rehab is Lou James. Released and back home is Tres Ward.

First Time Guests! We are excited to report that the following persons visited for the first time on Sunday, November 25th: Buddi Throneberry, Nicole Worthy.

Stewardship Campaign Update for 2019

As of Monday, December 3rd, we have received 128 estimates of giving totaling \$681,341.00....with an average pledge of \$5,323.00. That represents an average pledge increase of 15%.

If you haven't had the opportunity to make your estimate of giving, we invite you to join us in our commitment for 2019 to begin another year of mission and ministry at First Christian Church. There is still important work to be done, needs to be addressed, hearts to turn, and good news to be shared.

Estimate of giving cards are available at our welcome center, the church pews and the church office.

Please don't hesitate to call Tina Williams or Cheryl Appling if you'd like more information.

FOR THE RECORD. . .

CGRM: (Tues., Nov. 27)	21
The Neighborhood (Wed., Nov. 28)	22
8:40 Worship . . . 40	10:45 Worship . . . 226
Total Worship 288	
Sunday School	121
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week	\$16,215.67
Sunday Receipts for 12/2/18	\$23,870.00
Through Dec. 3: Income \$705,196.53	Expenses \$708,757.55

This Sunday:

8:40: "In Your Midst" (Zephaniah 3:14-20)
Dr. Mark R. Bender
10:45: Chancel Choir Cantata

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, December 9, 2018

8:40 Worship (Chapel)
9:30 Sunday School
9:45 Journey Through Scripture Bible Study (Parlor)
10:45 Worship "Choir Cantata" (Sanctuary)
3:45-5:00 Chancel Ringers (Adults) (Stratten Hall)
5:00-5:45 Grow in Grace Choir (Grades K-5) (Stratten Hall)
5:00-7:00 Chi Rho & CYF (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
5:45-7:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402)

Monday, December 10, 2018

7:30-6:00 Children Come First "CCF" (M-F)
9:00-12:00 Young Ages School "YAS" (M-F)
9:00 CCF Music (Rm 220)
10:30 Christian Women's Fellowship "CWF" Board Meeting (Rm 310)
11:45 CWF Luncheon (Fellowship Hall)
7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, December 11, 2018

10:00 YAS Music (Rm 220) (Tues. & Wed.)
6:00 Property Ministry Meeting (Rm 310)
6:00 Outreach Ministry Meeting (Library)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups
Anger Management (Rm 309) Parenting (Rm 305 & 306)
Rebuilding Your Life (Rm 307)

Wednesday, December 12, 2018

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 405/Chapel)
9:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
10:30 Sheri Sutton's Advent Bible Study (Rm 310)
5:30-6:00 The Neighborhood Meal (Fellowship Hall)
6:00-7:00 The Neighborhood Worship (Fellowship Hall)
6:00-7:00 First Kidz (Grades Pre-K-5th) (Rm 402)
7:00-8:00 Youth Activities (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
7:00-9:00 Chancel Choir (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)

Friday, December 14, 2018

7:00 Men's Breakfast & Bible Study (Hwy Café, 2808 Jacksboro Hwy)

Sunday, December 16, 2018

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL OFFERING

8:40 Worship (Chapel)
9:30 Sunday School
9:45 Children's Christmas Pageant Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)
& Parent's Coffee (Rm 220)
9:45 Journey Through Scripture Bible Study (Parlor)
10:45 Worship (Sanctuary)
12:00 Church Board Meeting (Sanctuary)
3:45 Chancel Ringers (Adults) (Stratten Hall)
5:00-5:45 Grow in Grace Choir (Grades K-5) (Stratten Hall)
5:00-7:00 Chi Rho & CYF (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
5:45-7:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402)

Monday, December 17, 2018

7:30-6:00 Children Come First "CCF"(M-F)
9:00-12:00 Young Ages School "YAS" (M-F)
9:00 CCF Music (Rm 220)
1:00 CWF Group 3 (Parlor)
1:30 CWF Group 1 (Patt Giddings' home, 2806 Mill Valley)
5:30 CWF Group 2 (El Tapatio on SW Pkwy)
7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, December 18, 2018

10:00 YAS Music (Rm 220) (Tues. & Wed.)
6:00 Education Ministry Meeting (Rm 222)
6:00 Stewardship Ministry Meeting (Rm 310)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups:
Anger Management (Rm 309) Parenting (Rm 305 & 306)
Rebuilding Your Life (Rm 307)

Wednesday, December 19, 2018

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 405/Chapel)
9:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
10:30 Sheri Sutton's Advent Bible Study (Rm 310)
12:00-2:00 YAS Staff Christmas Party (Rm 402)
6:00 Christmas Fellowship Dinner & Children's Pageant (FH)
7:30-9:00 Chancel Choir (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)

Thursday, December 20, 2018

9:00 CWF Group 3 Birthday Breakfast (IHOP on SW Pkwy)
1:30 Knit Wits (Parlor)
5:45-8:30 CCF Staff Christmas Party (Rm 403 & 405)

Friday, December 21, 2018

9:00 CCF Spanish (Rm 220)
8:00pm Youth Christmas Lock-In Begins (Rm 403/Gym)

Saturday, December 22, 2018

8:00am Youth Christmas Lock-In Ends (Rm 403/Gym)

SERVING SUNDAY

ELDERS

12/9: Craig Reynolds, Debbi Schmidt; Rick Appling, Presiding
12/16: Cheryl Smiley, Cal Edgemon; David Collins, Presiding

DIACONATE COMMUNION VISITATION

12/9: Karen Burross, Braelyn Crowe, Sandy Hay
12/16: Ashley Burross, Buddy Edgemon, Terry Burross

DIACONATE COMMUNION PREPARATION

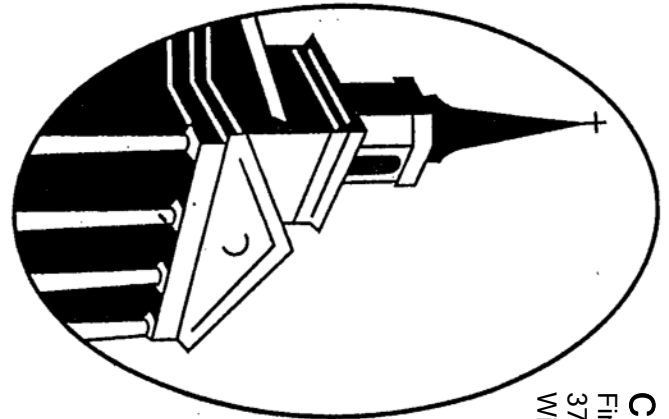
12/9: John & Ainslee Burross
12/16: Lynette Gill & Scot Hafley

DECEMBER DIACONATE SERVERS

Cheryl Caraway & John Buckley, Co-Captains
Bob & Mary Carlton, Jill Griffin, Colleen James, Karen & Terry Burross, Sandy Hay,
Chris Showalter, Ashley & Kyle Burross, Buddy Edgemon, Lynette Gill, Scot Hafley,
Ainslee Buckley, Braelyn Crowe..

THE CHURCH STAFF...

Church Number	940-692-2282	FAX Number	940-696-3085
Web Page:	www.firstchristianwf.com	Church e-mail:	susan@firstchristianwf.com
Dr. Mark Bender, Senior Minister			692-2282
Josh deSteiguer, Director of Youth Ministries			692-2282
Claire Baer, Director of Children's Ministries			692-2282
Jeanette Showalter, Director of Music Ministries			763-8515
Cheryl Appling, Business Administrator			691-7265
Heather Dickerson, Director of Children Come First			687-2231
Alisa Gardner, Director of Young Ages School			692-3640
Rev. Margaret Scales, Common Ground Recovery Ministries			337-1712
Susan Marrs, Executive Secretary		Tina Williams, Financial Secretary	
Ann Hunter, Receptionist		Debbie Watson, Organist	



CHRISTIAN CHALLENGER
First Christian Church
3701 Taft Boulevard
Wichita Falls, Texas 76308

THE CHRISTIAN CHALLENGER
Pub. No. (USPS 559-820) Published
biweekly by First Christian Church, 3701
Taft Blvd., Wichita Falls TX 76308-2315.
Periodical postage paid at Wichita Falls
TX. - POSTMASTER: Send Address
Changes to Christian Challenger, 3701
Taft Blvd., Wichita Falls, TX 76308-2315.