



Christian Challenger

Vol. 65

December 19, 2018

No. 26



*Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year
From Your Church Staff!*

Mark Bender

Claire Baer

Josh deSteiguer

Jeanette Showalter

Cheryl Appling

Susan Marrs

Tina Williams

Ann Hunter

Heather Dickerson

Alisa Gardner

Lynn Haskin

Debbie Watson

Shelley & Jason Barker

Preston Sonntag

Shaun Spaulding

Chris Staley



First Christian Church
Disciples of Christ

December 24th

CANDLELIGHT SERVICES

3701 Taft Blvd, Wichita Falls, TX 76308

Christmas Eve: 6PM & 11PM

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



Personalizing Advent

Last week, Jodi had to attend a work conference in New Orleans, so I decided to tag along. While she went to seminars and workshops, I explored a few of the city's attractions. There were certainly lots of interesting things (and people) to see in the French Quarter. But, the highlight of my "free" time was going to the National World War II Museum.

Prior to heading to New Orleans, several people suggested that I check out the WWII Museum. And I was glad I did. I was there for more than six hours (and could have stayed longer), walking through exhibits, taking in multimedia experiences, and reading thousands of accounts of World War II. Every theater of that war was covered in detail, and I learned numerous things that had not been in my history textbooks.

Perhaps the neatest part of museum is the digital Dog Tag. When you purchase your ticket at the museum, you are given an electronic keycard (Dog Tag) which is unique to you. Then, you board a "train" where, during the ride, you setup and activate your Dog Tag. During this setup process, you are also assigned a WWII service member. As you traverse through the museum, you are able to scan your Dog Tag to learn about your service member's role (if any) in that particular theater of the war.

My service member was Jack Bradley from Brownwood, Texas. Jack was a fighter pilot with the 353rd Fighter Squadron, where he was became one of the first pilots to fly the P-51 Mustang - an aircraft that proved to be advantageous for the Allies. As I followed Jack through the timeline of the United States' involvement in the European theater, I learned more about the missions he flew, and about why he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. I learned that he finished the war as the commanding officer of the 354th Fighting Group, the most successful in the entire European theater of operations.

I also learned that after the war, Jack took command of the 1st Fighter Group in California, eventually retiring as a Colonel in 1962. He then went on to work for several aerospace companies before returning to a ranch in Brownwood in 1984. In 1999, Jack was inducted into the American Combat Airmen Hall of Fame. He died the next year (July 2000) at the age of 82.

These digital Dog Tags served as more than just a clever way to help you learn about the war. They served to personalize the history you were reading about and

viewing. I wasn't just learning about American operations in Germany. I was learning about what Jack from Brownwood did and thought about during his time in Europe. It added an emotional layer to the historical facts presented throughout the museum.

As I was reflecting on my experience at the National World War II Museum, I began to wonder if we sometimes view Advent solely through the lens of history, rather than as something personal. It's easy to think about prophets as simply historical figures who spoke of the coming Messiah hundreds of years before his coming. It's easy to think that the issues facing God's people in the years before Christ were so different from today's issues. It's easy to think that Jesus was the Messiah for people back then, without considering our need for a Messiah now.

The four weeks of Advent are not designed to weave us through the "highlights" of a particular time period as though we are walking through a museum. Instead, Advent is a time for preparing ourselves personally and spiritually to celebrate the birth of the Savior. And we must always keep in mind that the word *advent* comes from a Latin word that means "coming." Throughout Advent, as we remind ourselves of the hopeful expectations of God's people more than 2,000 years ago and prepare to commemorate Christ's first advent, his birth in Bethlehem, we also prepare for the day when Christ will return, in glory, to usher in a new heaven and earth.

Episcopal priest and author Fleming Rutledge points out that Advent celebrates three "advents":

Adventus redemptionis: the incarnate Christ "born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate"

Adventus sanctificationis: the presence of Christ in Word and sacrament

Adventus glorificamus: the coming in glory to be our judge on the last day

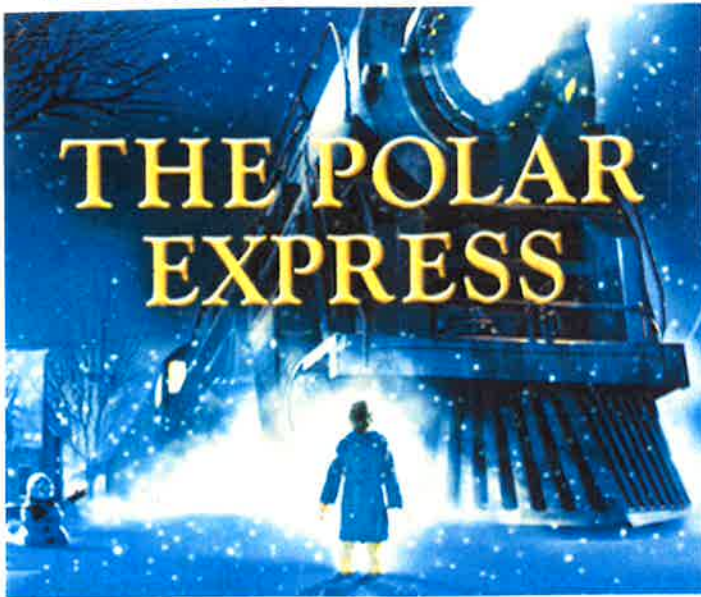
She goes on to note that "all of this is part of the Advent message. However, what has been largely lost to us since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment is the primary focus on the second coming of Christ, who will arrive in glory on the last day to consummate the kingdom of God. That is the special note of Advent—its orientation toward the promised future." (*Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ*, Eerdmans, 2018)

So, as this Advent season draws to a close, I invite you to "personalize" the story. To remember what God in Jesus Christ did for you personally in history 2,000 years ago. To open your eyes to what God in Jesus Christ is doing, and calling you to do, personally in your life and in the lives around you today. And, to humbly look forward to what God in Jesus Christ will come back to personally do for you on that last day. It's only by personally seeing ourselves in the timeline of these Advents that we fully understand what we are hoping for when we celebrate Christ's birth again this Christmas.

Mark



FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS



Young Disciples Movie Night! This Sunday, December 23rd, from 5:00-7:00 pm in the FCC Theater Room (Room 300). Bring a pillow and blanket and come enjoy food, hot chocolate, and a Christmas favorite!

Youth Christmas Lock-In! All 6th-12th grade youth are invited to the Christmas Lock-In Friday, Dec. 21-Saturday, Dec. 22. The festivities begin Friday evening at 8:00 pm. Invite a friend and come join the fun! Contact Josh at josh@firstchristianwf.com for more information.

Christmas Special Offering... Christmas is the time of giving! The Christmas Special Day Offering will be collected on December 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. The Region also certifies credentials of Disciples ministers. Josh deSteiguer's steps towards his 2019 ordination are overseen by that office.

Church Office Closing Reminder: All church offices will be closed from Tuesday, Dec. 25 to Sunday, Dec. 30. The church office will also be closed on Tuesday, Jan. 1st. If there is an emergency and you need to get in contact with someone in the office, please call the church and the answering service will get in contact with a minister ASAP.

Pantry Sunday for Interfaith Outreach Services will be on Sunday, January 6th. Items for collection will be boxes of macaroni and cheese and cans of Spaghettios. Also, if you travel and have any unopened hotel toiletries, Interfaith Outreach Services would love to have them for their care sacks. Thank you for the 104 pounds of items delivered for the month of December!

Prime Timers Luncheon will be on Sunday, January 6th, at 12:00 noon in the Fellowship Hall.

New in 2019: Coming Monday, January 7th, is a new stretch class! If you are feeling stressed from the holidays or everyday life, join us in the gym every Monday at 6 pm for an hour. This class is open for everyone....men and women. Lora Vailes is teaching the class. She has taught classes in spin,

sculpt, pump, Pilates, yoga and has been training since 1999. She will guide us through some easy stretches to relieve the stress on our muscles. It will cost \$5 a class. Yoga mats and stretch bands are available but you are welcome to bring your own. Please come and bring a friend. If you have any questions ask Cindy Hernandez.

Member News:

♥**Hospitalized:** at the Gables is Ruth Beyer; at Hospice is Madra Marrs (Susan's mom). Released and back home is Emily Clements, Lou James.

♥**Congratulations** to Payton & Travis Heilman on the birth of their daughter, Clara Elizabeth Heilman, on December 10th. She weighed 6 lbs and was 20" long. Proud grandparents are Lynn & Rick Haskin, and great-grandfather, Bud Love.

First Time Guests! We are excited to report that the following persons visited for the first time on Sunday, December 9th: Mary Beth Cleverdon, Stephanie Mundine, Julian Vargas.

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

Stewardship Campaign Update for 2019

As of Monday, December 17th, we have received 133 estimates of giving totaling \$696,181.00...with an average pledge of \$5,234.44. That represents an average pledge increase of 13%.

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., Dec. 11)	23
The Neighborhood (Wed., Dec. 12)	26
8:40 Worship... 39	10:45 Worship... 192
Total Worship	257
Sunday School	92
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week	\$16,215.67
Sunday Receipts for 12/16/18	\$6,278.47
Through Dec. 17: Income	\$735,981.10
Expenses	\$769,603.66

This Sunday:

"Going Before"
Luke 1:57-58, 67-80
Dr. Mark R. Bender

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, December 23, 2018

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL OFFERING

8:40 Worship (Chapel)

9:30 Sunday School

NO Journey Through Scripture Bible Study (Parlor)

10:45 Worship (Sanctuary)

NO Chancel Ringers (Adults) (Stratten Hall)

NO Grow in Grace Choir (Grades K-5) (Stratten Hall)

3:00 Chi Rho & CYF Delivering Cookies (Grades 6-12)

5:00 Christmas Eve Rehearsal (Sanctuary)

5:00-7:00 Young Disciples Movie (Grades K-5) (Theater Room)

Monday, December 24, 2018

Children Come First "CCF" Closed Until January 2

Young Ages School "YAS" Closed Until January 8

6:00 Christmas Eve Service (Sanctuary)

11:00 Christmas Eve Service (Sanctuary)

Tuesday, December 25, 2018

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Church Building, Offices & All Programs Closed

Wednesday-Friday, December 26-28, 2018

Church Building, Offices & All Programs Closed

Sunday, December 30, 2018

8:40 Worship (Chapel)

9:30 Sunday School

NO Journey Through Scripture Bible Study (Parlor)

10:45 Worship (Sanctuary)

NO Sunday Evening Activities

Monday, December 31, 2018

Children Come First "CCF" Closed Until January 2

Young Ages School "YAS" Closed Until January 8

NO Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, January 1, 2019

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Church Building, Offices & All Programs Closed

Wednesday, January 2, 2019

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 405/Chapel)

9:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)

5:30 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)

Thursday, January 3, 2019

NO Knit Wits (Parlor)

Friday, January 4, 2019

9:00 CCF Spanish (Rm 220)

SERVING SUNDAY ELDERS

12/23: Ricky Scales, Alice Gordon; Woody Gossom, Presiding
12/24 6:00: Polly Tonemah, Sally Hastings; Ricky Scales, Presiding
12/24 11:00: Robert Hernandez, Howard Morris; Cathy Gately, Presiding
12/30: Dwight Ross III, Emily Wilson; Ann Hunter, Presiding

DIACONATE COMMUNION VISITATION

12/23: Chris Showalter, Norma Hill, Lynette Gill
12/30: Scot Hafley, Ainslee Buckley

DIACONATE COMMUNION PREPARATION

12/23: Braelyn Crowe, Karen & Terry Burross
12/30: Sandy Hay & Chris Showalter

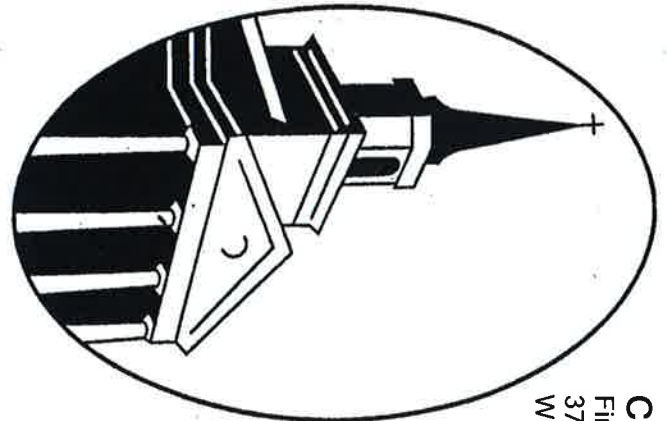
DECEMBER DIACONATE SERVERS

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	



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FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

2018 FCC Thanksgiving Basket Recap

FCC Members and Friends did the following:

- First Christian Church families helped to fill **110 sacks of food** this year;
- FCC members contributed **\$2,125.00** toward purchasing the turkeys this year.
- At least **12 people** from Outreach Ministry helped move the filled sacks from Room 310 to the Fellowship Hall;
- More than **20 people** helped 'sort' the sacks in the Fellowship Hall during The Neighborhood - to ensure correct food items;
- In addition to the foods we provided, the filled sacks also contained "The Light of Christmas" Advent Devotions, by Sheri Sutton, as well as the FCC November/December list of information/activities pew cards;
- At least **5 families** volunteered to keep additional turkeys in their home freezers, and brought those turkeys to the church on delivery day;
- Approximately **76 people** helped on Saturday, November 17. These volunteers unloaded turkeys from the church freezer and sorted them according to weight; carried the filled grocery bags to tables outside for easier pickup; assisted with loading cars with turkeys/grocery bags/roasting pans; helped carry foods to cars as needed; and delivered the Thanksgiving baskets out into the community;
- Approximately **28 teams of two (or more) persons** delivered turkeys, sacks of food, and roasting pans to 105 needy families in our area;
- Counselors from Lamar Elementary, Zundy Elementary, and Fain Elementary provided the majority of names of needy families. Approximately **50 families** from Lamar, **47 families** from Zundy and **8 families** from Fain had foods delivered to their homes;
- Thanksgiving baskets (food/turkey/roasting pan) were also provided for several FCC families this year;
- FCC provided food items for at least **594 people** living in the households (grandparents, parents/guardians/adult relatives, and children in each family);
- Discovery Sunday School class again provided large roasting pans for each delivery;
- Red canvas bags with the FCC logo on them, purchased by the Discovery Sunday School class last year, were also used for each delivery. There are quite a few of these bags left, and they could be used for other outreach activities, as needed.

Prior to delivering the Thanksgiving baskets, the large group of volunteers gathered in the Fellowship Hall for donuts and coffee. Mark led everyone in prayer prior to heading out to deliver.

Thanks to the overwhelming support from so many FCC members, we were able to provide a Thanksgiving meal to many families in our community who needed extra help this year.

Great Job, First Christian Church!

2018 Fain Sock Tree



Sharon & Kerry Roach delivered all of the donated socks, hats, scarves, and gloves to Fain Elementary on Monday, December 17th.

MSU Mustang & Neighborhood Meal



CMF fed 60 MSU athletes plus 20+ from the Neighborhood on Wednesday, December 5th.



Wish These Friends a
"Happy Birthday!"

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Kerry Roach | 12 Beverly Bumgarner
Mac Cannedy Jr.
Delane Gibson
Lauren Loskot | 26 Alice Gordon
Joy Robbins
Marilyn Vaughn |
| 2 John Buckley
Hannah Earley
Jack Murdock | 13 Allie Stewart | 27 Richard Barker
Phil Hollabaugh
Sue Nunn
Kaitlin Raber |
| 4 Don Milligan
Sal Ramirez
Chris Showalter
Sharon Winn | 14 Peggy Shelton | 29 Sarah Tonemah Lester |
| 5 Linda Tole | 15 June Jennings | 30 Alisa Ratzlaff |
| 6 Addi Cobb
Dan Craig | 16 Abigail Thompson | 31 Jody Brannon
Abigail Clements
Gayle Salazar |
| 8 Cherry Medina
Cavett Winn | 17 Rene Brock
Julie Day | |
| 9 Zoey Brunson
Gary Bryant
Curtis Dolberry
Grayson Freeman
Ruth Terry | 18 Diane Spiller | |
| 10 Dan Davis
Frank Tate | 22 Sherry Tucker
Liam Warton | |
| | 23 Isabell Murphey | |
| | 24 Robinsue Miller
Luke Ward
Vickie Young | |

& ANNIVERSARIES

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 2 Debbie & Dennis Carlton | 25 Lynette & Paul Gill |
| 3 Vicki & Doug Kunkle | 31 Kristin & H.P. Schuele |
| 4 Jeanette & Chris Showalter
Sharon & Paul Stradley | |
| 10 Ivonne & Keith Wineinger | |
| 12 Paige & Blaine Schroeder | |
| 14 Dana & Shane Givens | |



If we are missing your birthday or anniversary, please help us complete our records by calling the church office, 692-2282. We want to include all our members on this list!