

FIRST NEWS
The Newsletter of
First Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ), San Marcos, Texas

a place to belong

December 2005

a place to become

DECEMBER 2005

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING RECAP

Greetings,

Church was a great place to be on Sunday, November 20th. There were a lot of smiles and hugs during the service and throughout the Thanksgiving luncheon that followed. Thanks to everyone for the awesome feast and the Stewardship committee for its hard work.

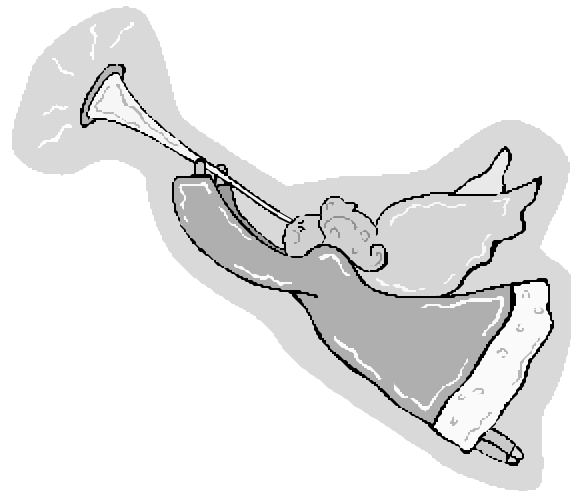
We had a good turn out for the congregational meeting. The constitution, the budget, deacons, elders and treasurer were voted on and approved. We also appreciate everyone who participated in the congregational survey. Initial results were very positive and there was some feedback that would indicate we have room for improvement. Billy Windham will be working to tabulate the results and present them to the board in December.

I've learned a lot about the church and the people in it the past few months by serving as board chair, a member of the personnel committee, the constitution committee, a deacon, and a future member of the vision committee. I'm not sure I'm qualified professionally or spiritually to be in these positions of leadership, but I'm here.

I would like to encourage those of you who may think you're not qualified for whatever reason to go ahead and step across the line. Sign up for a committee, stay on a committee, become more active, or just give someone a hug --- we have some awesome folks in our church who deserve it.

Blessings,

Art Johnson, Board Chairman



From the Board

This is my favorite time of year. The leaves are falling, the wind changes direction, it's a little cooler. Sometimes I'm thrown in a melancholy state where I long for the past and wonder about the future. It slows me down, just a little, to think about life from a bigger perspective. Life seems to be an unsolvable mystery with enlightenment at the end and everything before a struggle.

At our October board meeting Charles Blankenship updated us on the church finances. We had predicted to end the 2005 calendar year in the hole. As of our October board meeting there is still a red number at the bottom of the page. Thanks to the generosity of our congregation that number has steadily decreased over the last six months and we are hopeful that it will be black when we look at the December report in January. Charles and Chris Carson both have communicated the goal is not to be in the black but to be well into the black so we do have a cushion for unexpected expenses. Thanks to Charles and Chris for their continued leadership in this critically important area.

We approved the congregational survey to be used at the congregational meeting. We approved the constitution for congregational vote, after lively debate and a few changes. The constitution is simply written and gives us the skeleton around which we can manage our affairs for years to come. It certainly is not a perfect document and there are provisions for making changes in the future when needed.

For those deacons and elders that are rotating off the board I want to give you my deepest gratitude of thanks. You served during an incredibly stressful time with a rookie (me) as captain. You gave me a lot of grace and I appreciate your kindness.

Although it's been 7 months, it feels as if we're just beginning. I'm committed to serve as board chair through 2006, if the board agrees, and would like to encourage everyone who is currently serving on a committee to continue through 2006. Of course if things have changed and you need to excuse yourself, we understand.

I hope everyone enjoyed the Thanksgiving holiday and has a wonderful Christmas!

Art Johnson



**FROM THE DESK OF JAMES
INTERIM SENIOR MINISTER**

Christmas 2005

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.
This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger.
(Luke 2: 11) NIV

I have often thought what it might have been like on the night of Christ's birth not knowing the "rest of the Story". How would I have responded to this "Heralding Event"? Who is this born in a manger? A Joshua, God saving a people, an Emmanuel, God with us; who is all powerful, all knowing, present everywhere, and unlimited power to create being. "How can this be?" This is a familiar Biblical question asked by the mother of this "Holy Infant"! (Luke 1: 34b)

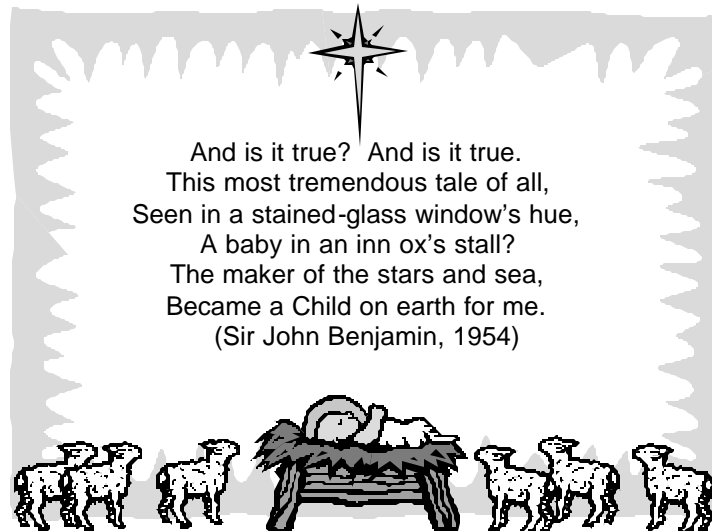
The very Image of God born in a manger in a barn with cattle! How absurd? Why not, in a royal palace among dignitaries? How about a powerful military general's quarters? And, who shows up at the baby shower? A group of low life shepherds and high brow astrologers arrive from the east to welcome the New Born. No political or religious VIP's! No CNN, 60 minutes or 20/20 to validate and provide on the spot coverage and commentary! No, this was just another night in a small village called Bethlehem. Everyone was waiting for the painful and fateful taxation to begin.

My thoughts and adoration for the "Story" have been distorted by all of the charm associated with pageantry and commercialization. The modern era and I have lost or maybe never looked for the bottom line or "The Real Message" other than the one at the bottom of a bank statement. My memory has been programmed to look for tall trees, bright lights, elegant wrapping paper, stylish ribbons, expensive gifts, sumptuous dinners, melodious carols, cheerful parties, ornate candle light services, and large bonuses. This remembrance about "The Greatest Story Ever Told" may well be irrelevant and irreverent.

What is the real Story? Maybe it is hidden in antiquity? No, wait. Don't be too hasty to write it off! There is something to be said for a Promise, a Star, Angels, two faithful women named Elizabeth and Mary, a man of integrity called Joseph, an elderly man of faith named Simeon and a world in conflict. God has come to a manger. He could choose the place because He is God. He could choose the people because He knows their hearts. He could have "touched down" anywhere, anytime or any place. It is in His Time, His Pace, His Place, and His People. God does not choose the mighty, the powerful, the politically correct, the affluent, the socially elite or the religiously sanctioned. He chooses the faithful for their authenticity in Him, regardless of their status.

That is the story! A gift from God to change the discrimination, the inequity, the imbalance and the inequality among people! What better way than a baby in a manger, in a small town, in the center of the known world to attract the attention of people. Reorganization through the "Miracle of Birth"! A Gift from God to the world!

It is a plan which would totally change the perspective of power, fame and status. It is a way to provide people with the chance to be equally yoked in an effort to affect "Real Change" in the way for which people are to be cared. No question, it is a Great Story. "The Greatest Story Ever Told." Revisit and review the "Event" for your personal spiritual growth.



James

Christmas Visitors 2005

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

San Marcos, Texas

December 11, 2005

10:30AM

Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, will present his story about God's intervention in his life. He will present the historical and spiritual significance of traditional values regarding the Messiah coming to earth. He will verbalize how his comfortable and ordered life was interrupted by a visit from God. God's visit prepares Zechariah to be attentive and responsible to His Personal Presence.



December 25, 2005

Christmas Day

10:30AM

Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus, will tell his story. A story of humility, love and integrity! He will reveal his feelings about the birth of Jesus. He will tell How God can make "all things work together for good". His story will give you a new appreciation for God's intervention when life is in "shocking turmoil". You will recognize the value of Joseph's contribution to the Christian Faith which is often disregarded and underrated.

December 24, 2005

Christmas Eve

7:00 PM



A Shepherd from the field will tell how the star and angelic choir led him to a manger in Bethlehem, where the Christ Child was born. He will tell how the awesomeness of the evening changed his life.

His future had been hopeless and his existence meaningless. The enchantment of the evening brought new hope and new meaning to his life. Hallelujah, new life in a manger and now--- new life in a shepherd.

January 1, 2006

New Years Day

10:30AM



Caspar, a wise man from the East, will tell his story. This is a remarkable account involving an unbelieving astrologer, who followed a star to assess its location and meaning. Caspar

will remind us that what he found was precisely what the prophet Daniel had told his predecessors years earlier in Babylonia. This is a riveting legend enhancing the meaning of "The Greatest Story Ever Told".

Evacuee Dinner



A huge thank-you to all those who contributed food, time and effort for the "Evacuee Dinner" hosted by FCC on Thursday, November 10th. Thanks to the generosity of our church, Fellowship Committee members and others served over 80 people a delicious meal. Thank you for sharing your resources with our newest community members.

Jeanne McCaffrey

There was an outpouring of love and compassion at First Christian on Thursday, November 10th!

Fifty plus evacuees were served a fried chicken dinner with all the trimmings and a gorgeous dessert offering. There were desserts to take home. Thanks to all the saints who brought food, set up tables and cleaned up.

A special gift was presented of gently loved Bibles and assorted children's books. Evacuees were invited to take what they wanted. Thanks to all who gave to this 5-day book drive.

Thanks also to those who sorted and marked the books according to age. I'm sure that was helpful to the recipients and it looked very welcoming. I believe we extended true hospitality to the evacuees and the volunteers who are facilitating them.

Margaret Jordan

Kidz Korner

Information from the children's Ministry Team

Children's Christmas Program Dec. 4th



Our children, along with the youth and Adult choir, will be presenting a wonderful Christmas pageant at the 10:30 worship service. Mark your calendars to attend now.

Psalm Kids

Thanks so much to everyone for pitching in for our Food bank drive. The food was delivered to the Hays County Area Food Bank.



Breakfast With Santa Dec. 11th at 9:00am



Come have breakfast and a hay ride with Santa. There will be a special treat for all the children attending. Thanks to the Fellowship Committee for providing the breakfast.

Children's Church

Have you been wondering what's happened to Children's Church? Well, we need a few volunteers to sign up to help coordinate parent volunteers so that we can get this special time for our K-2nd graders up and running again. If you are interested in helping, please call Steve at the church office.

Adventureland SS Update

Our kids are at it again... they are now collecting unwrapped children's gifts for needy children in our community. Please feel free to join them and place a child's gift in the cradle under the tree in the Fellowship hall or the Sunday School wing.

Children's Worship



The 3rd Graders are finished for this year. We will be beginning the class again in Jan. for all 4th and 5th grade children during the Worship service. Please watch your mail for additional details coming your way.



Hey everyone,
Can you believe the Christmas season is here already? It's been a great, fast semester with everyone and we'll be

winding down the fall program pretty soon. We'll have two D-Groups in December for both Chi Rho and CYF. Chi Rho's last one will be on the 14th and CYF's is on the 11th. (CYF students: bring some cash to that last gathering and be ready to take a little

field trip!) To round out the semester, we'll do progressive dinners on the second weekend of the month. CYF on Friday, December 9, meet at church at 6:00. Chi Rho, your progressive dinner will be on Saturday, December 10, also at 6 p.m. Be ready for a great last month to 2005!

Blessings, Andrew

HELP WANTED

The membership ministry is working on a "Family Album" to be housed in the narthex. This will be an up to date pictorial record of our membership for reference and enjoyment of the membership and guests. It will also contain "Scrapbook" pages of all our activities and programs here at First Christian. We need photographers to take photos of "New" members after the 8:30 and 10:30 worship. The church digital camera will be used. The qualified servants will be willing, available and have good eyes. Please leave your name in the church office. Thanks!

Margaret Jordan, Membership Ministry

MIKE'S MUSIC NOTES ??



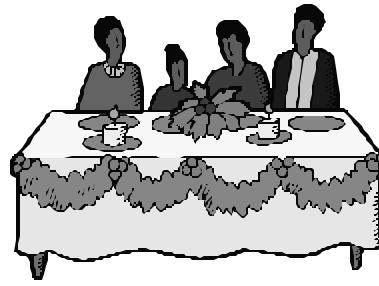
Hello all. I just have a couple of things to pass along this month.

First: Please put Sunday, December 18th on your calendars as one of those Sundays you will not want to miss. The choir has been working very hard on the Christmas cantata that we will be performing at the 10:30 service. It is a glorious piece! You won't want to miss this one.

Second: The church needs several people to work the sound board once-a-month on a rotating basis for the 8:30 and 10:30 services. Training on the board operation will be provided (it's really quite simple). If you are interested, see me as soon as possible so we can set up a training time. This is a very important part of the service that we have been winging for the last couple of months. The system is working wonderfully now. We just need some people to step up to the plate and help with this portion of the services. If you have any questions, please see me and I'll answer your questions and address your concerns.

Help Wanted

Office help needed - for specific days or specific projects. If you would like to make volunteer office work a part of your ministry at First Christian Church, please call Char. 396-1926



**We'll
MISS you
Andrew!**

In the hurry of Christmas preparations, DON'T miss the FELLOWSHIP Dinner scheduled for December 18 following the 10:30 service. This will be a traditional POT-LUCK meal - so check your ol' family recipes, fix something "tasty", and plan to attend this special dinner as we share a meal and take time to let Andrew Chapman know how much we've appreciated his work with our youth at FCC.

Wednesday Night Programs

We will continue Wednesday evening meals through December 14th. On November 30th we will begin a 3 week Advent series for our adult study which will include the Annual Christmas Bible Challenge on December 7th and a little tip toe through the genealogical grave yard on the 14th. The 2006 Wednesday Program will begin January 11th.



Welcome!

**Welcome to our newest FCC
Members!
Please add this information to your
directory**

Jay & Kelly Roberts
Wimberley, TX
Joined November 20, 2005

Welcome back!
Erma Marbach
San Marcos, TX
Joined November 20, 2005

Dear Friends at First Christian Church,

CASA of Central Texas would like to thank you for including our training information in your website announcements. With your help, we are able to recruit and train more volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children. We feel it is important for the community to take an active role in advocating for these children.

This Holiday season, CASA of Central Texas would like your help in providing Christmas gifts for abused and neglected children. CASA is a non-profit organization that trains community volunteers to become Court Appointed Special Advocates for children. Advocates are then appointed by a Judge to advocate for children who have been removed from their homes because of severe abuse or neglect. Volunteers represent the children's best interest in court, supervise visits with parents, take the children to the doctor and therapy appointments, get clothing vouchers and help find the children a safe foster or adoptive home if reunification with their parents is not possible. These are just a few examples of what CASA volunteers do. At this time, CASA is serving 202 children in Hays, Caldwell, Comal, and Guadalupe counties. Many of these children have been placed with relatives who are financially struggling and receiving no help from the state. They will be the first priority of our Christmas project.

If you are interested in helping a child this holiday season or if you have been looking for a way to reach out to the community, this is your opportunity! CASA is looking for several churches in the community to help us. CASA would like to provide you with first names, ages, and a few gift ideas for the children in our program. We will write this information on a small star shaped paper and put all of them on a Christmas tree (or other visible area) in your church. People can select a name, purchase a gift and drop it off at your church in a box that we will provide. CASA staff will then pick up the gifts and distribute them to the children. We hope your church will join us in our mission to provide a Christmas gift to all of our children involved with CASA. If you are interested or have any questions please contact Ali Zamora at 512-392-3578.

We appreciate your constant support in the ongoing fight against child abuse in Hays, Comal, Caldwell and Guadalupe counties. Thank you again for your generosity toward the CASA program.

Sincerely,
Erin Taylor, LMSW
Volunteer Coordinator

Walk to Emmaus Information

Attention: If you have been on a Walk to Emmaus, there is a website which will keep you informed of the various events going on in the community – www.hayspraise.org. Also – a copy of the Walk to Emmaus – San Marcos Community Calendar of Events is posted on the bulletin board by the office. Keep informed!

Fun Facts About Christmas

Christians know Christmas means Christ Mass, the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. But did you know these other facts about this most holy of all holidays....

☞ Use of Xmas as an abbreviation is not, as many believe, a derogatory manner of designating Dec. 25 as a day to celebrate the birth of Jesus. In fact, in the Greek alphabet X is first known as the letter chi. In that alphabet, Chi is the first letter of the proper name, Christ.

☞ The Puritans in America believed that Thanksgiving, a time set aside for thanking the creator for his gifts, should be a more important day than celebrating the birth of his son.

☞ In 136 A.D., Telephorus, the second bishop of Rome, first declared that public church services should be held to celebrate the birth of Christ and in 320 A.D. Pope Julius 1 declared Dec. 25 as the date of Christ's birth.

☞ Alabama was the first state to declare a legal holiday on Dec. 25 and, in 1907, Oklahoma became the last state to declare Christmas a legal holiday.

☞ In 1856, President Franklin Pierce decorated the first White House Christmas Tree.

☞ In the 1860s, the first commercial cards were printed in the U.S. and, in 1870, the U.S. Post Office printed a special one-half cent stamp for mailing those cards.

☞ At midnight on Christmas Eve 1914, firing by German and American soldiers ceased and for two days they exchanged greetings, played music and even held a soccer game before they went back to shooting at each other.

☞ The first American Christmas carol, "Jesus is Born", was written in 1649 by a minister named John de Brebeur.

☞ Tinsel is traditionally a Christmas tree decoration in honor of an old myth about a woman who chopped down a tree for her children, but then couldn't afford any decorations. According to the myth, the next morning the tree was covered with spider webs. When the Christ Child saw the sad little tree, he turned the webs to silver to make the children's celebration a happy one.

Book of Devotions.....

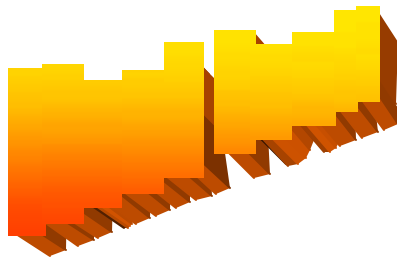
I received a small book of Daily Devotions on my birthday, and I'd like to know who gave it to me so I can properly thank them. Please let me know!

Audrey Player

THE END IS NEAR!!

(The Tax Year!)

Please consider your church as you do your year-end planning. We need to replenish our reserves; reserves that were seriously depleted in early 2005. Thank you!



A great big

To all the office volunteers who continue to come in to help answer telephones, log attendance, stuff bulletins, provide coverage and help get the newsletter out. Your assistance is soooo appreciated – by me and everyone at First Christian Church and me! Thank you for serving!

Char

Fall Festival Proceeds go to Outreach

The FCC Fall Festival Committee again wishes to thank everyone for your support and assistance in making this year's Fall Festival a huge success! They would also like you to know, that due to your generosity, our after expenses outreach donations were as follows:

\$2,500 to the Inman Christian Center

\$2,500 to the local Salvation Army

\$5,000 to DCCI Camp in Gonzales

Thank you again for your help!!

"First News"

Published by

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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Church Staff:

James A. McKibbin, MA/M.Div, PSY/D _____ Interim Senior Minister

Steven Thaler, M.Div. _____ Associate Minister

Andrew Chapman _____ Youth Director

Char Wood _____ Office Manager

Charles Blankenship _____ Treasurer

Mike Wood _____ Interim Chancel Choir Director

Connie Burke _____ Handbell Director

Margo Gregory & JD Elshoff _____ Contemporary Music Coordinators

Mabel Hall _____ Pianist

Cecilia Pena _____ Organist / Accompanist

Rosie Smith _____ Nursery Supervisor

Lola Bell _____ Nursery Caregiver

Jennifer Flores _____ Nursery Caregiver

Fred Villanueva _____ Groundskeeper

December Lectionary Readings & Liturgical Color

Sunday, December 4

2nd Sunday of Advent
Violet

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

Sunday, December 11

3rd Sunday of Advent
Violet

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalms 126

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Sunday, December 18

4th Sunday of Advent
Violet

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Luke 1:47-55

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

Sunday, December 25

Christmas Sunday

White

Psalms 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14, 15-20