

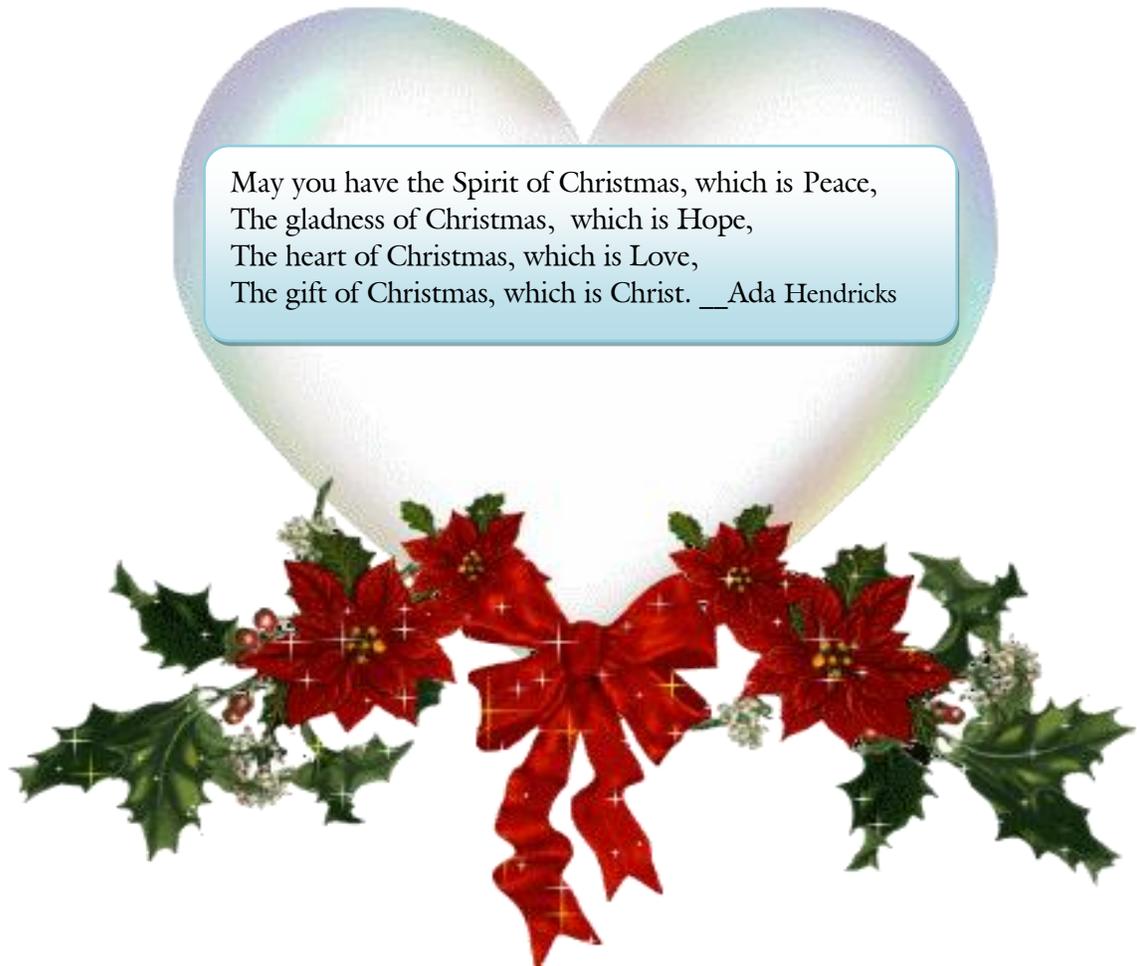
THE NEWS
of
East Washington Heights Baptist Church

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May you have the Spirit of Christmas, which is Peace,
The gladness of Christmas, which is Hope,
The heart of Christmas, which is Love,
The gift of Christmas, which is Christ. __Ada Hendricks

Season's Greetings from the Staff of East Washington Heights Baptist Church

THE NEWS

More isn't always better



“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” — Exodus 20:17

The corporate retailer drumbeat to shop until we drop will grow louder and louder as Christmas Day approaches. The commercials will tell us that we shouldn't be satisfied with what we have. We will be told that if something is bigger, newer or flashier that it is better, and that if we can just get it under our Christmas tree we will find true happiness and satisfaction.

Often we find ourselves giving in to these tempting messages and lusting for that brand new smart phone or Audi SUV. The problem with this, however, is that when we passionately long for something that someone else has we are coveting and the Bible says (Exodus 20:17) that coveting is sin.

Indeed, Jesus warned about coveting. He said, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (Luke. 12:15). What Jesus was saying is that more isn't always better.

Yet we live in a society that misbelieves that more is better and that things can make us happy. In this regard, sometimes we find it hard to rejoice in what others have; we want what they have ourselves. Sometimes we envy the rich who seem to have it all. But the problem is, many don't have it all! Often they are missing that special something called peace and contentment.

We can covet and we can possess, but there's a better way. Jesus said, “See ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.” (Mat. 6:33, 34).

When you're content, you won't covet – and it is possible. Paul says it's true: “I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances...And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in Glory.” (Phil. 4:11,19). This Christmas let us do our best to be content with what we have and let us remember that more isn't always better.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Pastor Kip Banks, Sr.

Happy Birthday to all who were born in December!

Happy Anniversary to all who were married in December!

“At Bethlehem, God demonstrated that to love is to give.”

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Hold High the Torch

Hold high the torch!
You did not light its glow —
'Twas given you by other hands, you know,
'Tis yours to keep it burning bright,
Yours, to pass on when you no more need light.
For there are other feet that we must guide.
And efforts that we think are not worthwhile
Are sometimes the very help we need,
So that in turn they'll hold it high and say,
I watched someone else carry it this way."



Hold high the torch!
You did not light the glow —
'Twas given you by other hands, you know.
I think it started down the pathway bright
The day the Master said, "Let there be light."
And He once said, who hung on Calvary's tree —
"Ye are the light of the world ... Go! Shine for me."

Author unknown

Lynne Wiggins-Lindsey Newsletter Editor

Lynne Wiggins-Lindsey is the new editor of this EWHBC Newsletter. In 2002, Lynne wrote several Youth News articles for our newsletter. Thank you Lynne for coming forward to continue to publish this newsletter for the church and to continue to glorify our Lord, Jesus the Christ.

Special December dates

- Second Sunday of Advent, December 4,
- Baptist Women Christmas Tea, December 8, 12:00 Noon
- Annual Christmas Family Night Dinner, Saturday, December 10, 6:30PM
- Third Sunday of Advent, December 11
- Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18
- First day of winter, December 21,
- Christmas Eve Service, December 24, 6:30PM
- Christmas Day, December 25
- New Year's Eve/Watch Night Service, December 31, 2016, 10:30PM

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Let the rejoicing begin

We may begin now to rejoice in the marking of 2,000 years since the birth of Jesus Christ. The calendars will note that this is still the year 1997 and fast approaching 1998. But centuries ago the calendar makers made a mistake in counting the years since the birth of Jesus. We have probably already reached the 2000th anniversary of his birth in a little town called Bethlehem.

Two thousand years-later we may ask, "What difference has the coming of Jesus Christ made on this planet?" Is this earth any better because he has come into this world?

Those who would be incline to pessimism might sigh deeply and say in the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow written over 100 years ago.

*And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth, "I said,
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men. "*

Human ugliness and meanness is still present today. And sometimes when society and culture have embraced a policy, an action, a way of thinking that fits in with our self-serving notions, we have dared to invoke the name of Christ for actions that are despicable in the sight of God. Slavery has been justified, wars have been fought, and economic greed has run rampant, all in the name of "God wills it" or "for the sake of Christian values." Earnest Christians have been tortured for daring to dissent in an effort to "keep the faith pure." Too often human evil has sought to hide behind the banner of Jesus. But for those who have listened to Jesus to discern what his will would be and how he would have us change and turn around the direction of our lives and society, there is a record that sings praises to the God who gave us Jesus 2,000 years ago.

For 2,000 years, those who have been ignored and despised by the religious establishment have found a welcome seat at the banquet of the Messiah. For 2,000 years those who have been imprisoned by human tradition and intimidated by complicated religious ritual have found that the grace of God is all sufficient to bring them peace with the Creator. Human suffering at the hands of despots, families facing famine, children enduring malicious teasing, the elderly looking at the disintegration of disease and inevitable death have been able to not only endure these hardships, but to face them with a spirit of triumph that Jesus Christ has handed to us through his resurrection.

All of the above refer to positive changes that have taken place in individuals because of the birth of the Baby. But beyond these individual transformations, there have been changes in the way we treat each other because of the birth of Jesus. Bitter enemies have been reconciled, broken families have been reconstructed, debilitating personal habits have been left behind.

Disciples who have taken Jesus seriously have turned their backs on ease and have chosen to minister to the disinherited of the earth. The followers of Jesus have elected to embrace those whom the world called untouchable, to anoint the festering wounds of lepers, to provide educational opportunities for those who were shut out. The homeless have been housed, children without parents have been cared for. Some who bear the name of Christ have chosen to speak out against the evil that society has been willing to tolerate. Martyrs have offered the witness of their lives against slavery, against racism, **(Continued on Page 5)**

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(Continued from Page 4)

and against sexism. Citizens who loved their country but loved God more, have cried out against the cruelties of war, even when it was their nation that was the offender. Economic practices have been criticized with the forthrightness of the Apostle James. Prophets have risen to speak the word of the Lord when the religion of the prevailing culture was owned and manipulated by that culture. All because a Baby was born 2,000 years ago.

Kenneth Burke, *The NEWS*, December 1997

Editor's Note: Christmas can be a difficult time for people who are hurting or grieving. In the 1860s, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had reason to despair: America was at war with itself, his son was severely wounded in battle and his wife died in a fire. The first Christmas after his wife's death, Longfellow wrote, "How inexpressibly sad are all holidays." Three years later, on Christmas Day 1864, Longfellow penned a poem that later became the song "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." The lyrics move from despair to hope. And thanks to Jesus, so can we.

Gift-giving solutions

Trying to find gifts for certain people or letting others know what *you* want can be quite challenging. After all, most of us don't need anything.

Realizing that the best gifts aren't material items offers a new perspective on giving and receiving. Consider these insights from author Charles Swindoll:

"Some gifts you can give this Christmas are beyond monetary value: Mend a quarrel, dismiss suspicion, tell someone 'I love you.' Give something away — anonymously. Forgive someone who has treated you wrong. Turn away wrath with a soft answer. Visit someone in a nursing home. Apologize if you were wrong. Be especially kind to someone with whom you work. Give as God gave to you in Christ, without obligation, or announcement, or reservation, or hypocrisy."

Where's your security?

When *A Charlie Brown Christmas* debuted in 1965, religious references were unheard of on television. Yet the show's climax features the Christmas story verbatim. As Linus begins reciting Luke 2, he's clutching his ever-present blue blanket. Yet, as pastor Jason Soroski points out, Linus drops it right as he utters the words "*fear not*" (Luke 2:10).

Soroski believes the timing is intentional and that "Peanuts" creator Charles M. Schulz sends a simple, brilliant message. "The birth of Jesus separates us from our fears," Soroski writes. It "frees us from the habits we are unable (or unwilling) to break ourselves. The birth of Jesus allows us to simply drop the false security we have been grasping so tightly, and learn to trust and cling to him instead."

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What's so amazing about Christmas?

Consider this: God loved the world so much that he came visiting. God slipped into the world as a helpless baby, without fanfare or heraldry. Think of it: The baby, born of humble parents, the man a carpenter, the woman still in her teens, scholars say. Jesus was born in a backwater town called Bethlehem, in a stable reeking with animal smells.

It took years before people fully comprehended God's self-revelation. Even John the Baptist, sitting in Herod's prison, sent a message to Jesus asking, "*Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?*" (Matthew 11:3, NRSV). Jesus then explained that he was working miracles and bringing good news to the poor.

That became even more clear when Peter concluded that Jesus was "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16, NRSV). What's amazing about Christmas is that it began in a manger. And today more than 2 billion people around the world celebrate Jesus' birth.

Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is a symbol of watchfulness and increasing joy as we anticipate Jesus' birth. The wreath's circular shape symbolizes eternity, or life without end. The candles remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World. He brought light and life to a dark world (see John 1:4-5). On each of the four Sundays of Advent, we light a new candle. As the light grows, so do our hope and joy.



More than words

Abraham Lincoln apparently didn't have the voice of a great orator. Some people said his voice was squeaky; nevertheless, Lincoln's messages were invariably insightful and meaningful.

A teacher who once heard him speak later said Lincoln's presence wasn't notable but his earnestness, vigor and logic were impressive. Everyone was awed by Lincoln's speech, and the teacher rode home on his horse greatly exalted from hearing it. The teacher recalled hearing not so much a speech as "a message in the form of a man."

People who took time to listen to Jesus could say the same thing. God's greatest message to us came in the form of his Son, Jesus. And as meaningful as Jesus' words were, it's his life, death and resurrection that left the biggest "impression" of all.

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Border crossers

A retired minister often relaxed by sitting on his deck and letting his mind roam while he fed peanuts to squirrels. He named one particular squirrel Squeak because it often squeaked as if to say, "Bring out the nuts!"

Although there were many squirrels that came for the picnic, Squeak was the only one courageous enough to reach out for a nut held between the man's fingers. The pastor realized that it took bravery for Squeak to cross the unseen border between the yard and the hand holding the nut. Squeak was willing to do what other squirrels would not — take a risk to gain a reward. Squeak was a brave border crosser.

The preacher thought, "Shouldn't Christians be daring border crossers as well?"

He thought about the Christians throughout history who had put their lives on the line for the cause of Christ: the apostles, most of whom were martyred; the countless missionaries who established churches, schools and hospitals in lands where the name of Christ was unknown. Church history is full of stories about Christians who crossed borders to tell the "old, old story of Jesus and his love." Are you willing to be a border crosser for Christ's sake?

A world invaded by love

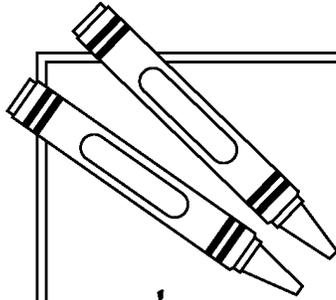
We live in a world that is desperately in need of a love bath. It has had its share of blood baths, starvation, epidemics of fatal diseases and every imaginable plague across the centuries. Many years ago the world was invaded by love. That is what Christmas is all about. __Bill Ellis, (Quoted by permission of Assist News)

The church with the low door

The Church of the Nativity is traditionally considered the site of Christ's birth. Christian pilgrims who have visited it can tell you that the door into the church is quite low. It is so low that only short people can enter standing up; tall people have to duck their heads and shoulders to enter. The reason? Well, the old church has had to withstand many insults over hundreds of years. For example, invading soldiers carrying swords and spears sometimes rode their horses into the sanctuary.

The original doorway was made lower and smaller to keep the horses out and to remind the soldiers that they were treading on holy ground. The low place of entry prompts one to remember that humility and reverence should be the stance of everyone who is in the presence of the holy.

Wise men still seek Him.



Just for KIDS

The Star that Led to the King

The wise men from the East saw a bright star. They followed it to the place where the child who would be King of the Jews was born. When they went inside, they saw baby Jesus with His mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshiped Him. (Read Matthew 2:1-11.)

Help the wise men follow the star ✧ path that leads to baby Jesus.



A 15x15 grid of symbols used for a path-finding game. The symbols are crosses (+) and diamonds (◇). A path of diamonds starts from a star in the top right corner and winds through the grid. The path sequence is: Row 1, Col 15 (Star); Row 2, Col 14 (◇); Row 3, Col 13 (◇); Row 4, Col 12 (◇); Row 5, Col 11 (◇); Row 6, Col 10 (◇); Row 7, Col 9 (◇); Row 8, Col 8 (◇); Row 9, Col 7 (◇); Row 10, Col 6 (◇); Row 11, Col 5 (◇); Row 12, Col 4 (◇); Row 13, Col 3 (◇); Row 14, Col 2 (◇); Row 15, Col 1 (◇).

↑
START



Use the code to fill in the blanks and find out what gifts the wise men brought.

♥ = A ✿ = E † = I ⊙ = O * = Y

G_⊙LD FR_♥NK_†NC_✿NS_✿ M_✿RRH

Answers: GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, MYRRH