



Pastor's Perspective – Let Your Expectations Soar

By Dr. Ron D. Lindholm, Senior Pastor

"And what do you want for Christmas?" From our earliest days we are trained to have high expectations at this time of year. Unfortunately, the holidays seldom deliver all the happiness and love we've come to expect from them. Advertising images of romantic couples and laughing families may sell a lot of merchandise, but they often mock the heartache felt by so many people at this time of year—perhaps even some of you.



*Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art,
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.*

What should we do? Shove our expectations deep down like cold hands in a winter coat? Put our hopes on long-term layaway? Pretend we don't really care?

I have a suggestion. Instead of trying to temper our expectations, why not let them soar toward the highest desires kindled by this season? That hope is echoed in Charles Wesley's great hymn:

No holiday can deliver what we long for, but we can find it in Christ Himself. When Simeon saw Jesus, he praised God saying: "My eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel (Luke 2:30-32).

This Christmas, watch your expectations, and see them wonderfully fulfilled in Jesus.

Ministry Uses the Holidays to Tell of Jesus

We started by introducing the food first: turkey, stuffing, potatoes and gravy, sweet potatoes, cranberry salad, rolls and the pies—pumpkin and apple. Then, while everyone tasted this very-American tradition, we showed slides of the first Thanksgiving Day and the Pilgrims. We talked about the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and football. Then, we re-introduced the One to whom we give thanks and His most precious gift to us: His Son Jesus Christ.

Thus, the English as a Second Language (ESL) classes held at Fellowship Baptist Church integrated the November holiday with the students attending the classes on Thursday nights. On November 17, and for the second year in a row, the ESL teachers had a "Mini-Thanksgiving" for their students. It is one of the ways Brian Platt and Mary Ann Monk try to incorporate the everyday life in the USA with the students that come from 19 different countries and five continents. There are more than 35 students who have enrolled to take the free classes at the church: four separate classes with students that span skills from knowing hardly any English to those who are accomplished in the language but want to improve their writing or speaking skills.

This is the eighth year of the ministry, with the goal of not only helping the students with their English, but introducing them to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The classes are structured with a basic ESL course for the first half of the evening. A break then occurs with light refreshments and a chance for students to have conversations with one another and church volunteers. The second half of the evening involves a continuation of learning English, but with the Bible as the textbook. The classes start with Genesis and the Creation and God's authority, the year progresses with the message of the Bible, culminating with the sacrificial death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and then the establishment of the church.

Students are also invited to attend a special Sunday School class on Sunday mornings with Brian and to stay for the worship service. Some students have been coming faithfully to that morning service, with one student coming since the first year ESL classes began. "I keep thinking, with Pastor's messages, that this is the week they will walk up during the invitation," Mary Ann said. Certainly, the Gospel has been presented to those attending this ministry many times.

Not only do the students have the opportunity to attend Sunday services, but the volunteers at ESL make efforts to connect and meet needs of students throughout the year. Several times people have volunteered to help work on resumes for the students or help them prepare for their citizenship tests. Driving lessons, tours of the area, game nights, baby showers, signing up for aid and even helping one student while she went to the hospital in labor have been opportunities of love the church members have had to communicate God's love to the ESL students.

During December, the class teachers will continue to teach students about American holidays, with a Christmas party on the 15th. The whole church is invited to come and minister to the students. And please remember to pray that the event will give us the opportunity to really connect with the students, to build friendships and, best of all, to use the work for His glory and for many to trust Him as their Savior.

Shoe Box Ministry



Fellowship Baptist Church filled 41 shoe boxes for *Operation Christmas Child*, a program by Samaritan's Purse that delivers boxes of gifts to children in need around the world. The gifts offer comfort and joy to the children, as well as the Gospel in every box.

White Elephant Gift Exchange

The church family will be gathering together again this year to celebrate the holidays with a White Elephant Gift Exchange. The idea with the gathering is to have a fun, pressure-free evening in giving gifts that are unique and, sometimes, regifted from previous years. Although there is a price limit of \$3, the better option is to simply find a "special" item around your house... something a great aunt gave you a long time ago, and you have been too afraid to get rid of it. Now is your opportunity! Wrap it up in the prettiest paper you can find, put a wonderful bow on it and hope someone loves it more than you ever could.

The fun starts at 7:30 p.m. in the church's Fellowship Hall on Friday, December 16. Bring snacks to share and enjoy during the evening.

Money Matters



November Giving Per Week (General Fund)	\$6,461
Weekly Need	\$5,291
Year-to-Date General Fund Giving	\$237,676
Year-to-Date General Fund Need	\$253,968

We praise the Lord that during the month of November weekly giving to the General Fund exceeded the budgeted need by \$1,170.

A Gift for Our Missionaries

Fellowship's annual Christmas missionary offering is received throughout the month of December for the purpose of providing each missionary family a gift equal to their monthly support provided by our church. This year our goal is \$4,550.

In giving generously to this offering we show our love and support for our missionary families. The needs of these servants of the gospel are especially great this year in these trying economic times.

Please plan to help us encourage our missionary families through this Christmas gift. And please pray for the Lord's provision for them in 2012.



December Memory Challenge

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:
The virgin will be with child and will give birth
to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

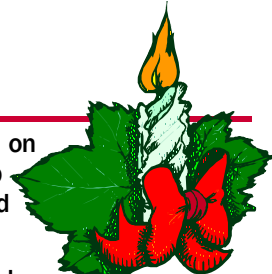
Isaiah 7:14

Women's Tea



Several of FBC's women enjoyed a morning of fellowship with tea at the historic Silas Burke House in November. The morning was graced with stories of old, warm tea, delicious treats and a tour of the house—as well as the encouragement of being together. The next women's function will be the Christmas party, Friday night, December 2, at 7:00 p.m.

Calendar



The ESL Christmas Party will be held on Thursday, December 15, in Fellowship Hall. The entire church family is invited to participate.

Our Awana Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, December 17. Please pray that both of these gatherings will be used to open doors for the gospel among the families we are seeking to reach through these ministries.

A Celebration of Christmas: The evening worship service on Sunday, December 18, will feature a Christmas choir concert as well as Scripture reading and special music from several individuals and groups.

Candlelight Service: A candlelight service will be held on Christmas Eve at 6:00 PM to celebrate our Savior's birth with songs, hymns and Scripture reading.

There will be no Sunday School, evening service or Awana on Christmas Day or New Year's Day. Also, there will be no mid-week ministries the week of December 28.

Dec. 2	Women's Ministry Christmas Party (7:00 pm)
Dec. 3	Leaf Cleanup (9:00 AM)
Dec. 9-10	Men's Retreat
Dec. 13	Nursing Home Ministry (2:00 PM)
Dec. 14	December Annual Meeting (7:30 PM)
Dec. 15	ESL Christmas Party (8:00 PM)
Dec. 16	White Elephant Gift Exchange (7:30 PM)
Dec. 17	Awana Christmas Party (11:00 AM)
Dec. 18	Christmas Choirs Program (6:00 PM)
Dec. 24	Candlelight Service (6:00 PM)

Fellowship Baptist Church

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