

Hillcrest Encouragement

Elders

- John Barton
- Terry Brown
- Neal Coates
- Malcolm Coco
- David Copeland
- Ray Ferguson
- Duwain Houston
- Robert Marion
- Charles Perkins
- Don Pope
- C. D. Pruett
- Jack Stewart
- Phil Vardiman
- Cleddy Varner
- Gary Varner
- Odies Wright

Chairman of the Elders

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Christmas Grace

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

For years growing up, one of my family's favorite Christmas movies was *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. Chevy Chase stars as the dad who couldn't do anything right at Christmas; even getting the lights on the house to work becomes a pivotal theme in the movie. I know why my family (especially my dad) loved the movie. Amidst the outlandish comedy, it bears some truth about the stress of the Christmas season. The demands of activity and family commitment can create tension, frustration, and exhaustion when it becomes frenzied. As the years pass, I have become more and more convinced that when people gather together, for holidays or other, there is a need for grace.

For instance, I recall the story of the year my nephew Aaron "stole Christmas." He was about five or six years old when he was overcome by the excitement of the presents under the tree. When he woke early Christmas morning and saw the tree surrounded in packages dressed in shiny bows and ribbon he could not bear to wait and opened every single one. You can imagine the shocking disappointment his younger sister felt when she saw that he had opened her gifts as well. Even as decades have passed she still remembers that Christmas morning when her brother stole Christmas from everyone. I don't know how the rest of the story went, but something tells me grace was needed that year.

Turn away from the shopping, traveling, and presents and you will find another side of Christmas where grace abounds. Part of the joy of Christmas is the opportunity to tell again the old familiar story of the beginning of Jesus, God with us. From this angle, the carols we sing, the gifts given, the smiles and warm hugs are portraits of the grace God has shared with the world in giving His only begotten. It is impossible to tell the true story of Jesus' birth without putting grace front and center. Scripture does exactly that.

As John tells of Jesus incarnation, he reminds us that when the "Word became flesh" grace entered our world unlike any time before. The Law of Moses was holy and good, but "grace and truth" came with a heartbeat when Jesus was born (John 1:14, 17). Luke reminds us of the power of this grace when the angel Gabriel came to announce to Mary God's plan for her. His greeting and his call for her to have courage were grace driven (Luke 1:28, 30). The word for "favor" (charis in the Greek) is the same word translated "grace". There is no escaping this truth of Christ's coming; grace is here. He is for you! Part of our mission and longing as believers is to embody the grace of Christ. Let grace be the gift that we always have on our list to give and receive.

Nathan

Hillcrest Today

Welcome Guests

We are glad you are here! Please fill out a Welcome Visitor card and place in the collection plate. Go by our Information Area on the right side of the Worship Center for materials that will better acquaint you with Hillcrest.

For your convenience, the staffed nursery for children 2 months to 24 months is available. Check-in is in the foyer. The parents' nursery & training area is available to parents and children. Enter at the back of the Worship Center.

Bible Classes for All Ages

Baby Bunch in Nursery

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Age 2Room 100 | Gr 1.....Room 121 |
| Age 3Room 106 | Gr 2.....Room 117 |
| Age 4Room 107 | Gr 3.....Room 120 |
| Pre-K.....Room 110 | Gr 4.....Room 213 |
| K.....Room 118 | Gr 5.....Room 209 |

Young Adult Classes

| | |
|---------------------|----------|
| Middle School | Room 204 |
| High School | Room 200 |
| University | Room 17 |

Adult Classes

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Sonrise (all ages) (8:00) | Room 14 |
| Y/O (all ages) | Room 10/11 |
| Welcome (all ages) | Room 12 |
| Families for Christ (all ages) | Room 14 |
| Common Ground (30s & 40s) | Room 16 |
| H.O.P.E. (all ages)..... | Room 21 |
| Travelers (all ages)..... | Room 30 |
| Christ in Action (all ages)..... | Room 52 |
| Young Professionals (20s) | Room 212 |
| F.U.N. (all ages)..... | Room 219 |
| Generations (all ages)..... | Chapel |

Worship Times

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Morning Worship..... | 9 a.m. |
| Bible Classes | 10:30 a.m. |
| Evening Worship | 6 p.m. |
| Wednesday Bible Classes | 7 p.m. |

Glorifying God

December 11, 2016

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Worship Leader | Lynn Luttrell |
| Hymn: #167 | Hosanna |
| Welcome | Robert Kern |
| Hymn | Wonderful |
| Hymn: #163 | His Name Is Wonderful |
| Hymn | Wonderful, Merciful Savior |

Unlikely Ushers: Mary

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Isaiah 7:14; 9:2-7 | Marvin Whitt |
| Luke 1:26-38 | Marvin Whitt |
| Prayer | John Casada |
| Hymn: #745 | Humble Yourself |

We Celebrate the Lord's Supper

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Hymn: #382 | Why Did My Savior Come to Earth? |
| Communion Meditation | John Barton |

Offering

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Prayer | John Barton |
|--------------|-------------|

Songs of Praise

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Hymn: #996 | O Little Town of Bethlehem |
| Hymn: #1003 | Silent Night! Holy Night! |
| Hymn: #998 | What Child Is This? |
| Hymn: #997 | O Come, All Ye Faithful* |
| Hymn | Magnificat |

(Parents may escort children ages 2-4 to TLC during this song)

"Unlikely Ushers of the King: Mary"

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Message..... | Nathan Burrow |
| Hymn: #915 | Trust and Obey |

Responses

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Mission Blessing for Cassie White | Neal Coates |
| Family News | Cam Hurst |
| Hymn: #1018 | Joy to the World |
| Elder Blessing..... | Cleddy Varner |

(*Children's Song of the Month)

Hillcrest Family News

Today's Speakers

A.M. - Nathan Burrow

P.M. - Bible Class Fellowship (Care Group) - The Christ in Action class will lead the service in the chapel at 6 p.m.

Baptism

Congratulations to Collin Longoria on his baptism. Collin's parents are Manual and Julie Longoria.

Ladies Christmas Party - Today, 3-4:30 p.m., Living room

Bring a \$20 gift (for exchange) and a finger food to share. Come enjoy the fun!

Cassie White Reception - Today

Join the Missions Team in a send-off reception for Cassie White! After Bible class come to the foyer of the Worship Center and wish her Godspeed as she prepares to leave in January for Asia. We are also asking you to bring cash gifts to help Cassie buy a moped for transportation during her one year of work. The cost is \$600. Please help her buy a wheel, a mirror, the seat, the turn signals, etc!

Sybil Faubus Award - Submission Deadline Jan. 8

Each year the Sybil Faubus Memorial Award is given in her honor to a person or persons from Hillcrest who has exhibited outstanding qualities as a teacher. You may use a form provided in the entrance areas of the building to nominate a deserving teacher of children, teens, or adults, or go to Hillcrest's website in the events section to submit your nomination. This recognition will be presented at the Appreciation Lunch, January 22.

Teacher Appreciation Lunch - January 22, MPR

We will honor our teachers at lunch. All church members are invited! Please RSVP at www.hillcrestonline.com in the events section.

Hosts Needed - ACU will be hosting the Christian College Choral Festival in January. They have asked Hillcrest to provide housing for around 20 males and 30 female students from Freed Hardeman University on January 6 & 7. Two students share a suitcase, so they are asking hosts to keep an even number of students. They are also asking hosts to provide breakfast on the 7th & 8th and Sunday lunch on the 8th. If you would be willing to host these musically gifted students in your home, please call the church office.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who helped with the Single Seniors Christmas Dinner, Comfort and Hope bags and Breakfast with Santa. A special thanks to Sherry Vaughn and crew for decorating and Bob Hale for an eloquent reading of the Best Christmas Pageant Ever.

Baby Milestone Event

It's time to connect! Parents who have had a child born or adopted to them in 2016 are invited to have lunch with our elders after Sunday a.m. classes in the MPR on January 8. Please call the church office to R.S.V.P. We hope that your family will attend!

For Your Convenience

Electronic giving is now available on our website Homepage and Members Page to conveniently make ongoing contributions or one-time gifts. Log in to Hillcrest Connect to make a one-time or repeating gift through a bank draft, credit card, or debit card. Find out more at hillcrestonline.com/give.

Inclement Weather Closings

When winter weather prevents members from safely attending, our elders may choose to cancel services. When that happens, we will post information on the Hillcrest home page at www.hillcrestonline.com, our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/hillcrestabilene, the office phone at 691-4200, local TV stations and their websites, and through our Hillcrest Connect email message system.

Missions and Faith Sharing

The last Send the Light trip for 2016 is occurring this month. Matt, Cheryl, Tyler and Lanie Merritt will travel to India to work at Sanctuary Ministries.

Eastern Africa

Phil Palmer is home after spending nearly two weeks in Tanzania and Kenya for two weeks, working with World Bible School leaders and delivering equipment which will be used to fax WBS lessons.

Send the Light Applications

If you are considering leading or joining a Hillcrest short-term mission trip in 2017 and want to be a part of the April 2 Send the Light special collection, contact Neal Coates for an application. The applications are due to the Hillcrest Missions Team by Jan. 1.

Calendar of Events

December 11..... Bible Class Fellowship (Care Group)
 December 21 & 28 Devotional/Chapel
 December 25..... Worship Only at 10 a.m.
 December 26-30 Office Closed/Holidays
 January 1..... Worship Only at 10 a.m.
 January 6-7..... Host FHU Students
 January 8..... Baby Milestone Event
 January 22..... Teacher Appreciation Lunch

Hillcrest Ministries

Children's Corner

Nursery: 2-24 Months (TEAM #2)

Training and Learning for Children (Children's Church): (Ages 2-4) Parents may escort their child to the Children's Wing during the song before the sermon.

Bible Hour Tonight – No Bible Hour. Enjoy Care Group.

Feed the Pig - Children have the opportunity this Christmas season to raise money for the purchase of a sow for Jeremiah's Hope; a ministry in the Ukraine for orphans. The orphanage's farm provides jobs and helps with the income needed to keep the orphanage running. A piggy bank is on the desk of the children's wing. To learn more about this ministry, go to <https://jeremiahshope.onelinksites.com/> The deadline to contribute is December 18. \$100 is needed for the purchase of one sow. So far \$36 has been raised.

M.A.G.I. Boxes – Make A Godly Impact! Pick up a M.A.G.I box in the children's wing to fill with items for a needy child of Namwianga, Zambia. Directions about packing and what to give are attached to the box. Please deposit the box in the red receptacle in the children's wing no later than Sunday, December 18. Learn more about Namwianga Mission at <http://www.zambiamissions.org/>.

HYG – Youth

Tonight - 6 p.m. - Huddles

- Middle School meets in the youth room from 6-7
- 8th and 9th grade will meet at the Burton's
- Sophomores will meet at the Brooks'. Bring a white elephant gift and a snack or dessert to share.
- Juniors will meet from 6-8 for your Favorite Things Christmas Party!
- Seniors will meet at Rosa's

Wednesday – 7 p.m. Class

Thursday - Final Prayer Breakfast of the semester at 7 a.m. at Chick-fil-A.

Final TNT of the semester

MS TNT! - 6-7:30 p.m.

HS TNT! - 7:45-9:15

Sign up for Ski Trip! March 13-17.

For the Record

| Sunday Morning | Sunday Evening |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| A.M. Assembly 694 | Chapel 42 |
| Classes 689 | |
| Membership 883 | Wed..... 322 |
| Nov. Offering \$103,855 | |

Adult Education Corner

Sunday Morning Adult Classes – This morning we continue the 8-week series on the book of Isaiah. Today's lesson is the "Universality of God's love" taken from Isaiah 56.

Ladies Tuesday Morning Bible Class - Dec. 13 - Jan. 3 No Class Holiday Break. Class will resume again on Jan. 10.

Wednesday Night Classes

- Rm 10/11 – Rodney Ashlock concludes his series. "On the Mountain with God" - Exodus 32-34
- Rm 30 – ESL Class
- Rm 16 – Congregational Singing: Join Odies Wright for a time of worship in song!
- Rm 212 – Class for Young Professionals led by Caleb Callari
- Rm 219 – Women's Bible Class: Living Stones by Casandra Martin. Women of all ages are invited.
- Rm 51 – Class for Singles led by Glenn Tuttle
- Rm 52 – Divorce Care

Family Ministry

Wednesday Night Class - 7 p.m., Rm 14/15

An Unexpected Christmas

Let's face it; we all have an uncle or cousin we whisper about behind closed doors. We all have a relative or two we try to avoid at family gatherings. No surprise there. But here's something you may not know. Jesus had a few shady characters in his family as well. Actually, he had some relatives that make your most wayward cousin look like a saint. This series will look at how we see our families in a new light!

Hillcrest - U

Tonight - 6 p.m. - Dinner at Wholly Cow for those in town!

All regular weekly activities are canceled for the holiday season!

Holiday Calendar:

12/18 - Sunday - Class will meet with Young Professionals, room 212

12/21 - Wed. - No Class - 7pm Devotional Service, Chapel

12/25 - Sunday - No Class - 10 a.m. Worship

12/28 - Wed. - No Class - 7 p.m. Devotional Service, Chapel

1/1 - Sunday - No Class - 10 a.m. Worship

Classes will resume Wednesday, January 4.