



# Christian Challenger

Vol. 59

January 4, 2012

NO. 42

## PRIME TIMERS LUNCHEON

This Sunday, January 8th,  
at 12:00 noon  
in the Fellowship Hall.

## Continuing in Colossians

with Don Anderson  
Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.  
beginning January 24  
Hosted by Tres and Julia Ward  
4414 Weeks Park Ln.

Please join us for 6 weeks as we continue our study of Colossians. Don Anderson will lead us once again via video conferencing. Tres and Julia Ward, our gracious hosts, are inviting us to the comfort of their home as we grow in faith together. Please call the church office, 692-2282, or 696-3211 to participate or for more information.

## Religious Sign Language

with Billy Thacker  
Sundays at 5:00 p.m.  
Beginning January 15  
Rm 402

Billy Thacker would like to share his beautiful language with you. Billy is hearing impaired and experiences worship through the assistance of a sign language interpreter. Many have observed the beauty and grace of signing. Join him Sundays at 5:00 p.m. and learn a new language.

## CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The January CWF Luncheon will be on Monday, January 9, at 11:45 am in the Fellowship Hall. The program will be Jean Payne from Interfaith Ministries. The Service Offering for January will go to "Interfaith Ministries." Luncheon cost is \$5.00 per person, guests are welcome, and reservations are not required.

The CWF Board will meet in Room 310 at 10:30 am prior to the Luncheon.

## OFFERING ENVELOPES

If you requested offering envelopes for 2012, they are located in the Church Office.

*You are invited to a...*

*"Come & Go" Reception*

*Honoring*

*Reverend Judy Brock*

*Upon her retirement*

*Sunday, January 15, 2012*

*1 - 3 p.m.*

*Chalice Hall*




*First Christian Church*


*214 N. Ave D*

*Burkburnett, Texas*

*Refreshments will be served*

*(940) 569-2062*

  

**FIRST TIME VISITORS**
  
 We are excited to report that the following  
 persons visited for the first time on Dec. 25th were  
 Ida Cobble & Dr. Barry Jackson; and on Jan. 1st  
 were Alvin Graham & Todd Terry.



## This Sunday:

**8:45 & 10:45 Services:**

*"What Kind of Baptism Did You Get?"*

Mark 1:4-11

Dr. David B. Hartman Jr.

**5:14 CGRM Worship Service:**

Rev. Jordan Gary

## Across Dave's Desk...

### MY FAVORITE ATHEIST IS DEAD

A number of notables passed on in 2011. Some, like Osama bin Laden, Kim Jong Il, and Muammar Kaddafi, contributed to human suffering in ways beyond reckoning. Others, like the technological visionary Steven Jobs, the noble poet and statesman Vaclav Havel, and the great travel writer and war hero Patrick Leigh Fermor will be remembered with affection and gratitude for their contributions to human dignity and knowledge. A lengthy reflection could be written about each of them, or for that matter for celebrities like Elizabeth Taylor, Andy Rooney, Geraldine Ferraro, Bubba Smith, James Arness or Amy Winehouse. Each life is unique, filled with its own share of happiness and sorrow, of comedy and tragedy. Famed or not, every person who ever dwelt upon the earth has a story worth telling.

But I want to talk about Christopher Hitchens. Some of you may remember that I wrote about him 14 months ago, in an October, 2010 column entitled "My Favorite Atheist." I said that I admired him for his brilliant writing, his personal courage, and his commitment to truth, except when he was "frothing at the mouth" about religion. In screeds like *God Is Not Great*, he was frequently vicious and indifferent to facts, especially when it came to the spiritual giants Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II. Despite that, Hitchens was admired and appreciated by many Christians who knew him personally. His friends included Francis Collins, the current Director of the National Institute of Health, a former atheist who, as head of the Human Genome Project, was moved to faith by his study of human DNA and wrote about his conversion in *The Language of God*. Another was Michael Gerson, an evangelical Christian who presently writes for *The Washington Post* and previously served as chief speechwriter for President George W. Bush. Still another was Ross Douhat, former editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* and presently a columnist for *The New York Times*, and the 2011 winner of the prestigious Dave Hartman Prize for Most Brilliant Christian Apologetics (an award whose emoluments need to be seen to be described). I think we all thought that Hitchens' ferocity was a sign that the Holy Spirit, whom the poet Frances Thompson called "The Hound of Heaven," was on his tail; for someone who claimed he didn't believe in God, he certainly spent a lot of time being angry at Him (an anger precipitated in part, perhaps, by his mother's death in a suicide pact with a defrocked Anglican priest). Of course, ferocious animus to the Christian faith, followed by conversion, is an old story in Christian history: St. Paul, Augustine, and C.S. Lewis all traveled that well-trod trail. And there were numerous indices that this might yet be the case for Hitchens as well: his own children were baptized, he served as godfather for a friend's child (one wonders what promises Hitchens made in that ceremony he felt unmoved to keep), he revered the language of the King James Bible, and his brother Peter became an evangelical Christian who tried to argue his brother into the faith. And while Hitchens professed to be an atheist to the end, he also, in the final months of his life, expressed humble gratitude for the Christians who had been praying for him.

In the last interview I heard with him, he said that he wished his suffering had been for some redemptive end; that he could have stood it better if he knew he was suffering for some great cause. Here, Christian faith could have been a consolation: Christians believe that God wastes no pain, and that undeserved suffering can, in and of itself, prove redemptive, as the Cross of Christ was and is (on this theme, I heartily recommend our own Marjorie Parker's wonderful, life-enhancing new book, *Shaken to the Core*, as well as Landon Winstead's brave and touching *Re-Defining Success*, both of which I will write about next week). But Hitchens also said, "Suppose I ditch the principles I have held for a lifetime, in the hope of gaining favor at the last minute? I hope and trust that no serious person would be at all impressed by such a hucksterish choice." Still, even the doughtiest atheist must flinch at the prospect of his

own extinction, as Philip Larkin chillingly described in his poem *Aubade*:

I work all day, and get half-drunk at night.  
Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.  
In time the curtain-edges will grow light.  
Till then I see what's really always there:  
Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,  
Making all thought impossible but how  
And where and when I shall myself die.  
Arid interrogation: yet the dread  
Of dying, and being dead,  
Flashes afresh to hold and horrify.  
The mind blanks at the glare. Not in remorse  
- The good not done, the love not given, time  
Torn off unused - nor wretchedly because  
An only life can take so long to climb  
Clear of its wrong beginnings, and may never;  
But at the total emptiness for ever,  
The sure extinction that we travel to  
And shall be lost in always. Not to be here,  
Not to be anywhere,  
And soon; nothing more terrible, nothing more true.

This is a special way of being afraid

His friend Ross Douhat grasped the nettle when he raised the question of Hitchens' immortal destination in a December 20 blog called *Hitchens and Hell*. Christians in the Protestant Reformed tradition believe that God's grace is proffered until the last instant of life, and that no one can know for certain the conversation that goes on between God and those near death. We may, with faithful certainty, joyfully proclaim that someone is in heaven because of our knowledge of their acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior; but we dare not say that *any* specific person is in hell because to do so is to circumscribe the powerful grace of God. It is possible that in the last instant of his life, even Osama bin Laden made such a conversion. I seriously doubt that he did, but with God all things are possible. To say that everyone *may* be saved by God's grace is to bear witness to hope; to say that everyone *is* saved is presumption. Catholic doctrine teaches the difference between *invincible* ignorance and *vincible* ignorance. *Vincible* ignorance is based on a willful refusal to accept the truth, and thus can be imputed as sin; *invincible* ignorance says that someone is simply incapable of learning a particular thing, and to such impermeable cluelessness no sin can be imputed. Catholics also believe in praying for the dead, and in the existence of Purgatory, a post-death state in which it is still possible to expiate one's sins. For Protestants, the doctrine of Purgatory is Biblically dubious: the passage most cited in its justification is in the Apocrypha, in II Maccabees 12: 39-45, though Matthew 12:31 and I Corinthians 3:11-15 are also said to infer it. In Matthew 25, Jesus describes the Last Judgment, in which the saved are the ones who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, tended the sick and visited the imprisoned, while the lost were those who did not. Of course, most of us, at some point in our lives, do one or more of the above; by the same token, most of us, at some point in our lives, fail to do them. So could Hitchens—a man many admired, and whose conversion many prayed for—have been saved because he accepted Christ as Lord and Savior in the last instant of earthly cognizance? Could he have been saved because he was invincibly ignorant and incapable of grasping the proffer of the Holy Spirit? Could he have been saved because of his commitment to social justice? Or is he damned eternally because he seemed to take such relish in behaving like an enemy of God?

To the above, I can only say, "I don't know," "I don't know," "I don't know," "I don't know." But God does. All those of us who admired Christopher Hitchens and hoped for his



conversion can do is pray that God Almighty will have mercy on his soul. After all, as Christians, we are forbidden to despair. Jesus said, "No one comes through the Father except through me" [John 14.6]. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, we perpetually dwell in the hope (*hope*, not presumption) that God's mercy is from lasting to everlasting. Even for those—perhaps especially for those—who say they don't believe it.

**Dave**

*Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, the comfort of the sad, the strength of those who suffer, let the prayers of your children who cry out of any tribulation come to you. To every soul that is distressed, grant mercy, grant relief, grant refreshment; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. The Liturgy of St. Mark*

### MEMBER NEWS

♥**Hospitalized:** at Health South Rehab is Pat Stout. Released and back home are Gerald Beavers, Bob Puckett, Liz Thomas, & Pat Wearth.

♥**Military Deployed:** are Wade Bouldin, son of Mike & Candy Bouldin & grandson of Betty Crane; Nathan Hainline, grandson of Anna Hainline; Michael Jenks, husband of Michelle Jenks (former visitors); Jim Medley, husband of Wendy Medley; Jason Moen, brother-in-law of Karen & Mike Murdock; Bob Smyth, husband of Angela Smyth; Christopher O'Francia, a Marine adopted by Dolly Sloan. Please keep them in your prayers.

♥Our sympathies are extended to the family of Edna Coleman. Mrs. Coleman passed away on December 27th. Services were held on December 30th.

♥We extend our sympathies to Bill & Carol Robison on learning of the death of Bill's sister, Anne Huffman, on December 23rd.

♥Our condolences are also extended to Anna Hainline, Carol Moore & James Hainline on learning of the death of their son and brother, Joe Hainline, on December 23rd.

♥We extend our condolences also to Scott & Cherie James and Family on learning of the death of Scott's father, Bobby James, on December 26th.

♥Congratulations to Ruthi & Vince Hernandez on the birth of their daughter, Elena Maria Hernandez, on December 25th. She weighed 7 lbs 1 oz. Proud family members are grandmother Sherri Webb-Burns, aunt Mary Burns, and great-aunts & uncles, Melissa & Jim Hogan, Robin & Mike Street, & Mimi Miller.

♥Congratulations to Gregory Pettibon & Blanca Cabrejos, who were married on December 30th in the Chapel. Gregory is the son of Cathy & Tom Pettibon and brother of Michael Pettibon.

*We want to be as inclusive as possible with our Member News, so if you know about an honor someone received, an important event in someone's life, or about illness or death, please call the church—692-2282. Thanks!*

- **The Life** meets every Sunday from 6-8 in the gym. Grades 6-12. Join us for a time of fun, fellowship, worship, and discipleship. We will have gathering worship, then break into small groups for deeper discussion and learning, then come back together for fellowship and communion.
- **Check In** every Wednesday from 6:30-8:30 in the gym. Grades 6-12. This is a time to "check in" with one another in the middle of the week. Games, chill time, worship, and communion. Come support each other as we continue to do life together.
- **CYF Mid Winter Rally** is January 6-8. We will leave at 5:12. Bring money for food on the way down and on the way back.

### SUNDAY NIGHT YOUTH GROUPS & CHOIRS

- 3:00 – Chancel Ringers (Grades 9-adults) (Stratten Hall)
- 4:15 – B.L.A.S.T. Choir (Grades K-5) (Rm 10)
- 5:00 – B.L.A.S.T. Youth Group (Grades K-5) (Rm A2)
- 6:00 – The Life (Grades 6-12) (Rm A3)



### RESULTS AS OF MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2011

#### TOTAL ESTIMATES OF GIVING

**TOTAL FOR 2012**

**FINAL TOTAL FOR 2011**

189 CARDS = \$643,583.50

202 CARDS = \$689,402.00

**MOVIES WITH A MESSAGE**  
 Tuesday, January 10, 1:00 pm, Theatre Room  
 Movie: "Invictus"  
 2009 (PG-13) 2 hours, 13 min. Morgan Freeman channels Nelson Mandela in the film centered around South Africa's run at the 1995 World Cup Rugby matches. Matt Damon is the captain of the national team, under great pressure because of the games' importance to the newly democratic South Africa.

## SERVING SUNDAY

Patt Giddings, Bob Carlton; Linda C. Carr, Presiding

### DIACONATE COMMUNION VISITATION

Sarah Cook, Mary Carlton, Cal Edgemon

### JANUARY DIACONATE SERVERS

Larry Ballard, BJ Barrett, Cheryl Caraway, Sarah Cook, Cal Edgemon, Eric Hartman, Garrett James, Melody Jennings, Lauren Johnson, Michael Pettibon, Connie Ramsey, Dwight Ross IV, Kay Sabine, Bob Smyth, Cary & Doug Thompson, Alice & Mark A. Vallejo, Angela Vallejo, Mark E. Vallejo.

### SUNDAY ELDER COMMUNION VISITATION

The Elders will be happy to take communion to anyone who can't come to the worship service. Call the church office and your name will be added to our list.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Sunday, January 8, 2012

- 8:45 Worship (Chapel)
- 9:30 Sunday School
- 9:45 Journey Through Scripture (Parlor)
- 10:45 Worship (Sanctuary)
- 12:00 Prime Timers Luncheon (Fellowship Hall)
- 3:00 Chancel Ringers (Grades 9-Adults) (Stratten Hall)
- 4:15 BLAST Choir (Grades K-5) (Rm 312)
- 5:00 BLAST Youth Group (Grades K-5) (Rm 405)
- 5:14 Recovery Ministries Worship Service (Fellowship Hall)
- NO The Life (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403C & Gym)
- 6:00 Family Challenges Support Group (Rm 310)
- 6:00 Alcohol & Substance Abuse Recovery Group (Rm 306)
- 6:00 Women's C.A.R.E. Group (Rm 307)
- 6:00 Anger Recovery Group (Rm 305)
- 7:00 Recovery Groups Dinner (Fellowship Hall)

### Monday, January 9, 2012

- 7:30-6:00 Children Come First (M-F)
- 9:00-11:45 Young Ages School (M-F)
- 10:15 Staff Meeting (Office)
- 10:30 CWF Board Mtg (Rm 310)
- 11:45 CWF Luncheon (Fellowship Hall)
- 7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

### Tuesday, January 10, 2012

- 1:00 Movies with a Message (Theater Rm)
- 2:00 Library Cmte (Library)
- 4:00 Encore Choir (Stratten Hall)

### Wednesday, January 11, 2012

- 7:00am Elders' Breakfast (Rm 402/Chapel)
- 9:30 Encore Choir (Stratten Hall)
- 5:30 Respite Service (Chapel)
- 6:00 Chancel Choir Dinner (Fellowship Hall)
- 6:30-8:30 Check-In (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403C & Gym)
- 7:00 Chancel Choir (Grade 9-Adults) (Stratten Hall)

### Thursday, January 5, 2012

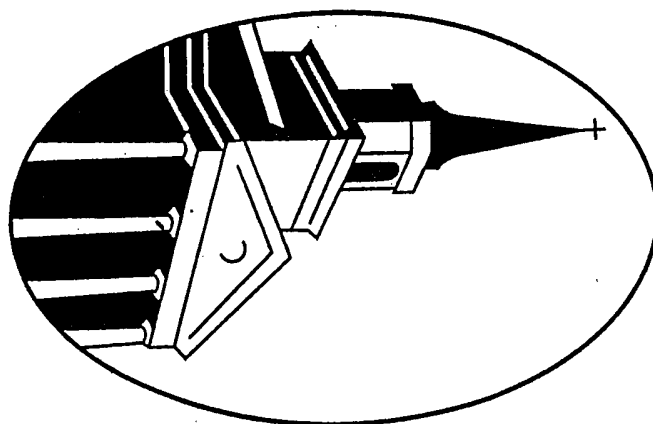
- 1:30-3:30 Knitting Group (Parlor)

## THE CHURCH STAFF . . .

Dr. David Hartman, Senior Minister	704-5099	Home Phone Number:
Rev. Brett W. Coe, Associate Minister	704-5856	
Jeanette Showalter, Director of Music Ministries	763-8515	
Rev. Dave Brummett, Director of Recovery Ministries	613-2112	
Julie Coe, Director of Membership Ministries	447-6475	
Catherine Earley, Children's Ministries & CCF	720-2665	
Valorie Massey, Young Ages School	692-3640	
Cheryl Appling, Business Administrator	691-7265	
Susan Marrs, Executive Secretary		Sherry Nelson, Financial Secretary
Pam Poulos, Receptionist		Debbie Watson, Organist
Church Number 940-692-2282		FAX Number 940-696-3085
Church e-mail: susan@firstchristianwichitafalls.org		
Web Page: www.firstchristianwichitafalls.org		

## FOR THE RECORD . . .

Church School . . . . .	90	
8:45 Worship . . . 39		10:45 Worship . . . 178
5:00 CGRM Worship Service . . . . .	did not meet	
Total Worship . . . . .	217	
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week		\$15,956.24
Sunday Receipts for 1/1/12		\$9,211.71
Through Nov.: Income \$710,973.71		Expenses \$747,971.65



**CHRISTIAN CHALLENGER**  
 First Christian Church  
 3701 Taft Boulevard  
 Wichita Falls, Texas 76308

**The Meeting Place**  
**A place for everyone between services**  
**A place for sharing love within the family**  
 Coffee is available for everyone in the hallway.  
 Get your first cup with us!  
 Running late to class or early to church?  
 Find rest at The Meeting Place

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