



First Presbyterian Church

The Cross and Crown



January 2018

Extending God's Grace throughout Northeast Texas

PASTOR'S PEN: REV. DR. JULIE ADKINS

Now that we've got Jesus born, here's a story from early in his ministry ... a return to his home congregation, in fact:

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:14-21)

At one level, his new sermon is a very old message: after all, he is reading to them from "the scroll of the prophet Isaiah," which is stuff that happened 600-700 years earlier. He's giving them that old-time religion. Where he gets their attention is with what he says at the end, almost as a footnote: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Regardless of whether Jesus did or didn't think that Isaiah was referring to him personally and specifically ... the call is the same. He has been given the task of preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. He is to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, whatever that means. So far, so good. But notice, if you will, what he says nothing about. Here he is, in the synagogue, but he does not say, "I am here to teach you the Law." He does not say, "I am here to remind you of the stories from our past, in Egypt, in the desert, and in the glory days of King David." There's perfectly good justification for any of those messages in the Hebrew scriptures. But they are not the message Jesus chooses. He chooses instead the message of the prophet: a message which makes promises about the future and therefore makes demands on him – and on us – in the present. And those demands are: to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, etc., etc. His message is *not* "believe in me or you're going to hell." That may be the message that the church has proclaimed, more often than not, but it's not what Jesus thought was important. "Here's what God is about," says Jesus to the Sabbath crowd: "I'm not making this up, you know; it says so right here in Isaiah. God is about freeing the oppressed, and telling good news to the people around us who mostly only get to hear bad news. And I can't speak for the rest of you, but I'm telling you today that I'm going to be about seeing to it that this scripture gets fulfilled."

Guess what? That is, in a nutshell, the message he has left us to preach, and to teach, and to exhibit, and to live. The church as a whole has often gotten this wrong. Still does. We've historically been much more concerned about what people *believe* about Jesus than whether they *live* like he said we should. We spend more time worrying and gossiping about who sleeps with whom than we do wondering why some of God's children have no place to sleep at all. We flock to preachers who preach only good news to the rich, and blame the poor for being lazy, or single parents, or barely literate. The majority of the church today, at least in the U.S., wouldn't know "good news to the poor" if it showed up on Sunday morning dressed in rags. We're not interested in proclaiming release to any captives; we want to lock them up for even longer periods of time, in the name of our own safety and security, and "teaching them a lesson." And congregations like ours, which try *hard* to consider the interests of the poor, even though we ourselves are not poor ... well ... Not a popular message, is it? People don't beat down the doors to discipleship that is difficult because it asks us to take seriously the lives and the needs of people who are different from us.

Jesus' life is an object lesson for us that doing God's will doesn't always make us popular. Sure, he gained a lot of followers for a while; he also got killed. It's an important reminder to us when we feel frustrated because we're a small congregation, without some of the resources we'd like to have for doing ministry. "Small" doesn't *necessarily* mean "unsuccessful" or "unfaithful," at least by Jesus' standards. (Of course, it doesn't automatically mean "successful" or "faithful," either!) It does mean that each of us has an important part to play in seeing to it that God's work gets done. There's no place to hide, unlike in a larger congregation. The Lord has anointed *us* to do the work of the kingdom. Whom do *you* know that needs to hear the Good News today?

ATTENTION: NEW PRAYER REQUESTS MONTHLY

In order to keep our prayer requests current, our prayer list will start fresh at the beginning of each month. To keep your prayer request in the bulletin, write it on the back of an offering envelope, the attendance sheet or a piece of paper (please make sure your name is on it) or contact the church office, firstpres@peoplescom.net or 903-342-3011. We do not need the reason, unless it is death or an accomplishment, which go under a different heading. Also, please give relationship to you so others know who they are praying for. And PLEASE WRITE LEGIBLY.

As our prayers are answered, we give God thanks. For those with continued needs, we continue to pray.

Pastor

Session members:

Class of 2018
Rick Drennan and Becky Poe
Class of 2019
John Clark and Rhonda Thomas
Class of 2020
Louis Bond and Armel Crocker
Treasurer
Jerry Poe

Contact us:

Tina Hammer, Secretary
PO Box 493
301 S. Walnut St.
Winnsboro, TX 75404
Office: 903-342-3011
Fax: 903-342-3011
Email: firstpres@peoplescom.net
Office hours: M-Th, 9-noon

FPC Website:

www.easttexasgrace.org

Cross and Crown articles:
firstpres@peoplescom.net

Attendance:

December 3—32
December 10—25
December 17—25
December 24—33
Candlelight—40



Noisy Offering

**January: (WCRC) Winnsboro
Community Resource Center
February: W. Volunteer Fire Dept.**



From the Desk of Ruth Shelton

HE IS WISDOM

"Christ . . . is made unto us as wisdom. . . "

(I Corinthians 1: 30)

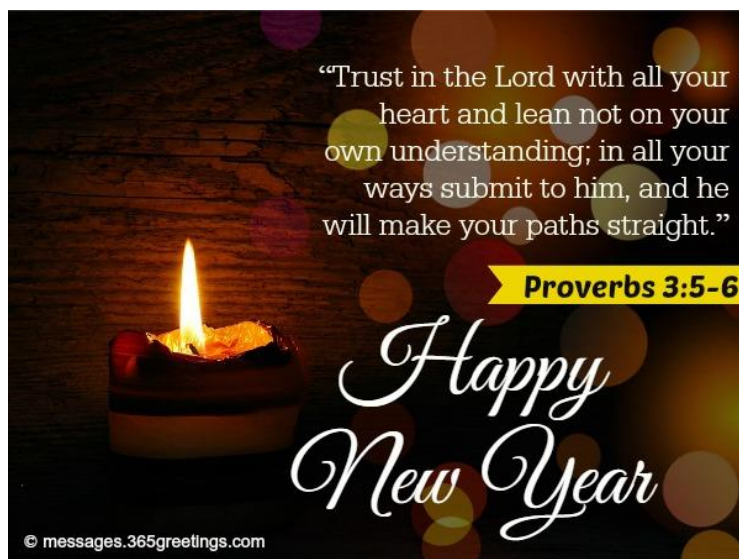
The earthly King and Queen of Hearts in Proverbs knew very well that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1: 7). The King of Hearts in heaven promises an ongoing revelation of wisdom because He is wisdom, and is a giving God. "Christ . . . is made unto us wisdom. . ." (I Cor. 1: 30), Paul tells us. That ongoing revelation will never stop. What's more, He promises that what we know of Him down here is only the beginning. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," He promises in I Corinthians 2: 9. That's why eternity will be so necessary. That's how long it's going to take to know all God's heart has planned for us to know about Him, as our wise and wonderful King of Hearts. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever . . ." sings the psalmist in 19: 9. Yes, wisdom lasts forever!

Taken from, *A Treasury of Wisdom*, by Jill Briscoe, pp 353-4.

REMEMBERING R. C. SPROUL, 1939--2017

R. C. Sproul, theologian, pastor, and founder of Ligonier Ministries, died on December 14, 2017, at the age of 78, after being hospitalized due to complications of emphysema. Dr. Sproul is survived by his childhood sweetheart and wife of fifty-seven years, Vesta Ann (Voorhis); their daughter, Sherrie Sproul Dorotiak, and her husband, Dennis; and their son, Dr. R. C. Sproul Jr., and his wife, Lisa.

For more information on Dr. Sproul, you may search the Ligonier website where you may read of his many accomplishments in the Reformed and Presbyterian churches, etc.



"Happy New Year"

**from your
Worship/Christian
Education Committee**

**Rick, Tricia, Patricia &
Rhonda**



Congregational Meeting Approves Suspending Search for Full-Time Pastor

Following our December 10th worship service, Pastor Julie Adkins called to order a congregational meeting to discuss the current financial status of the church and ask the congregation to vote on closing our search for a full-time pastor.

Armel Crocker, speaking on behalf of the Session, reviewed the church's current and projected financial status. According to his report, our financial resources have steadily declined over the last 5 years. Some of our income losses were from members who were extraordinarily generous to our church. Even though the Session has dramatically curtailed expenses, he added, the income shortfalls are affecting what we can do in the future.

For the church to operate with a full-time pastor requires us to have an annual income of approximately \$100,000. At the end of November 2017 our income was only \$64,558.40...this is approximately 75% of this year's projected budget. At the November Session meeting, the 2018 Budget was reviewed and approved at \$55,900. These funds, along with some 2017 carry-over money, will only be sufficient to fund either pulpit-supply ministers or possibly a part-time minister working less than 20 hours per week. (Note: The treasurer had reported to the Session during the budget workshop meetings that pledges turned in for 2018 were only slightly over half of what were turned in for the 2017 budget.)

Following Armel's report, Julie explained to everyone what it meant to "suspend the search for a full time pastor" and what was involved in searching for a part-time pastor. After the congregation was given an opportunity to ask questions, voting was conducted with paper ballots. The results were 19 in favor of suspending the search for a full-time pastor, 4 against and 2 abstaining.

Suspending the search for a full-time pastor automatically dismisses the Pastor Nominating Committee, but members of that committee have indicated they will continue to work to follow up on some potential prospects who previously indicated they would consider a part-time position.

J & J's Trip to Guatemala!

Please keep Pastor Julie and Jane Els in your prayers as they prepare for their trip to Guatemala from Jan 6th to the 12th. Thanks to everyone's generosity, they have FILLED the suitcase beneath our Christmon tree with crayons, colored pencils, construction paper and manila art paper to donate to the mission schools they will be visiting! The Presbyterian Women also provided funds for them to use for the Norte Presbyterian Nutrition Project and maybe a couple of soccer balls!

From Jane's email: *"Our church's generosity has warmed my heart...I can't wait to show Norte Presbytery how much one little East Texas church can do. They are used to this much bounty coming from nine big churches."*



Presbyterian Women

Nurture Faith, Support Mission, Work for Justice & Peace, & Build Community

Join us on Monday, January 8th @10:00 for Bible Study

Cloud of Witnesses: the Community of Christ in Hebrews
Lesson 5: In Community with the Tradition of the Past



The "Instead of Family Lunch" Food Drive was very successful ... we collected more food for the Blessing Box than we usually have at our lunches ... and no one had to cook or clean up!

Thanks to everyone for being so very generous!

Attention Singers and Ringers!

No chimes
&
no choir
in January!

We will announce when we
will begin again for Lent.

NOTE: For an updated calendar, please go to easttexasgrace.org

January

Sun 31	Mon Jan 1	Tue 2	Wed 3	Thu 4	Fri 5	Sat 6
New Year's Eve Noisy Offering	New Year's Day OFFICE CLOSED		● 6pm Supper & Bible basics: 'How to Ge			Epiphany ● 12pm AI-Anon
7	8 ● 10am PW ● 2pm Bible study	9 Kelly Holloman Vicki Bond	10 ● 6pm Supper & Bible basics: 'How to Ge	11 Don Kettleson secretary out of office Wayne Werner	12 Christian England	13 Patricia Clark ● 12pm AI-Anon
14 Communion	15 Martin Luther King Jr. Day ● 2pm Bible study	16 ● 9am Session reports due	17 Garrett Russell ● 6pm Supper & Bible basics: 'How to Ge	18	19	20 ● 12pm AI-Anon
21 Family Lunch	22 Laquita Kelm ● 9am Cross & Crown articles due ● 2pm Bible study	23 Committee reports due	24 ● 6pm Supper & Bible basics: 'How to Ge	25	26 Blossom Barnett Susan Brennan	27 ● 12pm AI-Anon
28 Noisy Offering ● 12pm Session	29 ● 2pm Bible study	30	31 ● 6pm Supper & Bible basics: 'How to Ge	Feb 1	2 Kelli Conradson	3 ● 12pm AI-Anon