



The Connection

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A Monthly Newsletter of Turner Christian Church

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Dear Church... from Pastor Matt

When does the Christmas season start for you? These days there are three common answers: the “orthodox” answer is the day after Thanksgiving; the “heretical” answer is the day after Halloween; the “legalist” answer is, at sundown on December 24th. Of the three, the last one is the least common. Technically, however, the Christian calendar marks December 25th as the first day of the Christmas season, which lasts until January 6th (hence the twelve days of Christmas). In the Christian calendar, the season leading up to Christmas is Advent, and it begins four Sundays before Christmas (which is usually, but not always, the Sunday after Thanksgiving).

On technicality, the legalist position is the correct one. In practice, I don't think there is a right answer—there are much more important questions than when we start listening to Christmas music and putting up decorations. One of those important things, however, is the message of Advent. This season is all about waiting for the coming of Jesus. We look back to the stories of God's people waiting for the birth of Jesus in order to learn how we should be waiting for Jesus to return again. It may not matter when you start preparing for the Christmas holiday, but it matters very much whether you are preparing for the return of Jesus!

What does it mean to be prepared for Jesus to return? Rather than answer that question, I want to ask you to ponder it on your own. Peter tells us,

In the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” (2 Peter 3:3-4)

It is easy for us to live our lives assuming that the sun will keep rising every day, just like it has every day since the beginning of the world. We bet our lives on the expectation that the sun will rise again. But how would you live differently if you knew that Jesus was going to return at some point? What would you want to be doing when he showed up? How would you want to have spent your life when he returns?

If we really believe that Jesus is coming back, then that belief should affect how we live every day. This is what we will focus on in our Advent sermon series. We are all waiting for Jesus to come back, but are we *expecting* it? Are we betting our lives on the expectation that the Son will return again?

I pray that God may bless you and yours this Christmas season, that he may bring joy to your hearts, that he will fill you with the sure and certain hope of the coming of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

God bless you, and Merry Christmas!



I've been thinking... From Pastor Rachel

I was wearing my new sport swimsuit and my swim cap. I was in the water swimming. I looked like a water polo player. But I had no idea what I was doing. It was my first water polo game and no one had bothered to explain the rules to us.

In the middle of the pool there was some action going on. A few girls on my team were familiar with the game or had played before. I paddled around at the edge, trying to look busy and productive. The splash of the water got in my ears, eyes and mouth. At one point I asked my opponent if she had any idea what we were supposed to be doing. It was her first game too, and she did not. Parents and coaches were yelling from the pool's edge and stands. Directions and encouragements were shouted over the splash of the water.

I just wanted it to be over.

Despite my disastrous first game, I ended up playing water polo for three years in high school. I spent hours and hours in the pool every week, coached and corrected constantly. I reeked of chlorine all the time, but I enjoyed myself. I knew the game, I liked the game, and while I was never going to be a polo star, I became a decent player.

Things in life change when we understand the parameters and we have people helping us learn how to reach the goal.

I've been thinking about this in terms of emotional health and emotional maturity. Some of us have had great coaches, helping us learn how Christians engage with and express their emotions. Some of us had bad coaches, or no coaches, and have tried to learn emotional maturity from the thick of it, occasionally catching a word or a phrase yelled at us from the stands. Sometimes it can feel like we're read the soccer manual, and are trying to make that work for a water polo game.

Emotions are a gift from the Lord. He who made us, gave us this good gift. And with it, we can *feel* love, we can *feel* happiness and joy and contentment. We can *feel* righteous grief and righteous anger at the brokenness of the world, the sin nature expressing itself, injustice and loss.

We also know, as believers, that emotions are not a good barometer of truth. Like everything else in this fallen world, they are out of whack from what they should be. If emotions are what we are building our lives on, they can lead us left and right, to and fro, and anywhere but to God. But they are a good barometer of what is going on inside of us. They might indicate to us that we're afraid, happy, angry or grieving. They might feel out of control, or inaccessible. Those are all pieces of information, that when carefully considered, and appropriately expressed and prayed over, can lead us to a deeper relationship with God and healthier relationships with those around us.

But how do we get from that first, confusing game to a place where we have a sense of what is going on with our emotions? For the next few articles, I'll be looking at various emotions and suggestions for engaging with them in God-honoring ways. In the meantime, perhaps bring your emotions before the Lord. Ask Him for guidance in engaging with them. Ask him for the strength to be honest with Him about how you're feeling and the wisdom to not be led astray by those feelings.

If you are could use extra support, or are experiencing debilitating and long-term emotional distress, please reach out to a licensed Christian mental health counselor. In all emergency situations, call 9-1-1.



With Sympathy

Dorothy Sargent passed away and went home to the Lord on November 28th. A Celebration of Life will be held at TCC on January 18, 2025. Time will be announced later.



TCC
foodbank

Holiday Food Drive

On behalf of many of our community families, the Food Bank volunteers would like to thank you for your generous donations to our recent food drive. We had over 70 families sign up to receive a Holiday Food Box this year. The TCC family, along with Turner Elementary School, provided most of the needed goods to fulfill that need. Thank you!



Family Building Blocks

Hope for the Holidays

It's almost that time of year again! In the month of December we will be collecting presents to give to families through Family Building Blocks. FBB is a local non-profit organization committed to keeping children safe and families together. They work with families experiencing exacerbated life stressors who have children aged 0-5. FBB has a very high success rate (99%) in keeping families together in an improved home environment.

Want to participate? Starting **Sunday, December 1st**, you can grab a gift tag from the lobby Christmas tree. Go shopping for that item and return it to the church by Dec. 22nd. Most items will be board games, activities, and warm clothes for the winter. Let's pray that these gifts will be a great blessing and encouragement to these families experiencing hardship.



On the evening of Monday, November 25th, a truckload of 10,286 Shoebox gifts departed from Salem to head to the processing center in Denver, Colorado. These Shoeboxes were collected from throughout Marion and Polk counties during the week prior. What a joy to witness this blessing! We now rest in the knowledge that God is preparing the hearts and minds of these 10,286 children (and many more) to receive the Good News of Jesus Christ and His love and offer of salvation. Please continue to pray with us that these children can then share what they've learned with their families and friends.

Our Salem Area Team was able to fill 1317 Shoeboxes this year, and our faithful supporters at TCC had a big part in that. Your donations of money and goods and time helped so much and for that we are very grateful. Thank you!

Our Shoebox Work Shoppe here in Turner on the Turner Homes campus has become a huge blessing in so many ways. Not only do we have a space in which to prepare items for the Shoeboxes, but it's also a set time and place for a weekly fellowship of dedicated Shoebox volunteers. It's a place of sharing with and praying for and supporting not only this ministry, but also each other. We're open most every Tuesday afternoon at noon for a few hours and you are welcome to join us anytime.

Congregational Meeting Results

All the Candidates and the Budget for 2025 were approved by the congregation on November 24, 2024.

Christmas at TCC

Blue Christmas Service

Sunday, December 22nd at 3:00 pm

This service is designed for those who face feelings of grief and loss during the Christmas Season—for those who need space to remember their loss and their lost loved ones in this season of hope. All are invited to join in singing carols, reading scripture, remembering, and hoping in the coming of Christ.

Turner Christmas Lights Bus Tour

Monday, December 23rd at 6:30 pm

Sparkle, Sparkle, Twinkle, Twinkle! it is Christmas in the town of Turner! Sponsored by the Seniors group, everyone is invited to come and enjoy Christmas light displays in Turner. The bus and carpool will leave the Church parking lot at 6:30 pm and return to the church building to enjoy some hot chocolate and good fellowship with one another.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

December 24th at 3:00 pm & 6:00 pm
(Identical Services)

Join us for a service of readings, carols, and candlelight as we celebrate the birth of Christ!

Winter Sunday Classes

December 8 — March 2

Bible Study for Everyone

Carol George

Talking With God

Frank Musgrave

Restoring Spiritual Passion

Frank Loyd

Ministry With Children

Rachel White

Seniors Events

Oregon Spirit Chorus Holiday Show

December 7th at 2:00 pm

Come join the Church Family and enjoy a day of celebration of the Christmas season. Rachel White will be singing in this program so let's support her and enjoy a great afternoon of music. The cost for a ticket will be \$15.00. See Virginia Musgrave for tickets. We will carpool from the Church at 1:30 pm to Day-spring Fellowship in Keizer.

Christmas Movie and Lunch

December 11th at 11:30 am

Come join the fun as we watch a Christmas movie and have lunch together. This activity is sure to get you in the holiday spirit! Be sure to wear your Christmas sweaters and clothing. Lunch will be served at 11:30 am with a movie to follow.

Bowling at Northgate Bowl

December 20th at 2:30 pm

The Turner Christian Church Bowling Team is at it again! Strikes, Spares, and Gutters it doesn't matter come and bowl or cheer our team. The cost is \$5.00 if you bowl and FREE if you just want to be a cheerleader. The team is growing so please join in on the fun.

New Years Eve Party—Jerusalem Style

December 31st at 1:00 pm

Happy New Year! It is 12:00 midnight in Jerusalem and we shall celebrate the new year. Come to the Church and join in the fun and games. Yes, there will be snacks and of course some games and entertainment. THE FUN WILL START AT 1:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall at the Church. You might even want to bring a friend—the more the merrier.