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NEW RESIDENT churchguide



Topeka Bible Church

See inside back cover!

Salvation Army Kicks Off Red Kettle Campaign



The season of giving is upon us, and the familiar sound of bell ringing will announce the Salvation Army's annual Red Kettle Campaign. The campaign kicked off Friday, November 19, at Yager Stadium with the Washburn Ichabods Marching Band and Topeka High Drum Line performing. Gary Yager is the 2021 Red Kettle Chair. Bell ringing for 2021 began Friday, November 26th, at select locations.

The Salvation Army begins a new season of bell ringing in hope that this Christmas season the many that are in need in our community will not be forgotten for emergency assistance, food and shelter. The Salvation Army is there to "Rescue Christmas."

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are still needed for bell ringing for the Red Kettle Christmas Campaign. Individuals/groups can sign up for bell ringing at www.registering.com. The goal this year is \$260,000, and the money raised stays locally. It provides food boxes and toys for registered families through our

■ Please see BELL RINGING page 2

Does God Give a Rip About America?



By Dr. Michael Brown

In response to one of my social media posts stating that it was either revival or national collapse in our nation, a reader responded, "God doesn't give a rip about America." From what I could glean from the rest of the short reply, his point was that God cares about all the people on planet earth and that America was of no particular importance in His sight. But this is a misguided way of thinking for at least three reasons.

Jonah and Nineveh

First, there are more than 330 million Americans, every one of them created in God's image and every one of them precious in His sight, including the miscreants and the rebels. Of course, the Lord cares about America.

Over 2,500 years ago, God called the prophet Jonah to go and prophesy against Nineveh, but instead of obeying, he got up and fled in the opposite direction.

You know the story from there, highlighted by the disobedient

prophet spending three days in the belly of a large fish.

But why was he so reluctant to prophesy against Nineveh? It was most likely because he was a patriotic Israelite who realized that Assyria, of which Nineveh was the capital, was becoming a real threat to his nation.

Why warn the people of coming judgment and give them the opportunity to repent? Why give God the opportunity to forgive them? Better to stay home and let them be judged.

■ Please see AMERICA page 3

"Celebrate the Season" Holiday Show Announced



Topeka Acappella Unlimited Chorus announces its Holiday Show, "Celebrate the Season." The show will be held at Grace Cathedral at 2:00 p.m. on December 4. The Holiday music includes traditional Christmas Carols as well as popular tunes such as I'll Be Home for Christmas.

The show will feature musical guests, The Capitol City Chorus, a co-ed barber-shop Chorus. Jared Broyles from the WIBW news team will be the emcee.

Tickets may be purchased online at acappellaunlimited.com for \$20.00 or at the door of Grace Cathedral the day of the show. Children 12 and under get in free. Masks are required to be worn at the Cathedral and there will be lots of room to spread out.

Topeka Acappella Unlimited Chorus is Topeka's premier women's barber-shop chorus, ringing chords for over 50 years.

Consumers expect continued inflation, according to survey

Americans expect steep inflation to continue, according to the latest Survey of Consumer Expectations recently released by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

The median expectation is that the inflation rate will be up 5.7 percent one year from now, a 0.4 percentage point jump from the previous month, which also marks the highest level for the gauge since its launch in June 2013. The October increase marks the 12th consecutive increase and was most pronounced among respondents who have

at least a college degree and for people between the ages of 40 and 60.

"Median inflation uncertainty — or the uncertainty expressed regarding future inflation outcomes — increased at both the short- and medium-term horizons," the survey report said. "Both measures reached series highs in October."

Americans look set to pay steeper rents, with the median expected change in the cost of rent increasing by 0.4 percentage points to 10.1 percent, marking a new series high.

■ Please see INFLATION page 2



Pastors question if they'll unplug from online services after pandemic

Pastors Daniel Ying and Brad Bissell doubled as online TV preachers on YouTube during the coronavirus pandemic, preaching to video cameras and livestreaming into homes for months during the covid pandemic.

And like many pastors around the United States and around the world, Ying and Bissell are wondering how and when church life can transition back into real-life gatherings, with church members weaned off the safety and convenience of online church. Their decision on when to end online church is perhaps reminiscent of The Clash lyrics, "Should I stay or should I go now? ... The indecision's bugging me."

"Remote worship was instrumental in allowing our church to continue through a pandemic," said Ying, the senior pastor at Redeemer Montclair. "The downside is that it encourages a passive, spectator mentality over the long run."

Rev. Daniel Ying and Rev. Brad Bissell from Redeemer Montclair in New Jersey. Photo by Paul Glader.

The challenge is that church members — particularly evangelical protestants in the U.S. — seem to enjoy techno church. A recent report from Infinity Concepts and Grey Matter Research that surveyed more than 1,000 evangelical Protestants in the U.S. found that 75% have attended online church during the pandemic.

"We found that 45% of those who experienced online church services now believe that worship online is equal or superior to the in-person experience," said Mark Dreistadt, Infinity Concepts founder and president. And only 44% want to return exclusively to in-person worship, according to the report.

But some pastors know their parishioners are tempted to read the newspaper, check sports scores or play video games while listening to online church. Children might play with toys instead of attending Sunday school. And families might eat their breakfast while singing hymns and listening to the sermons in their pajamas.

Further worrying pastors, the report also found that many American evangelicals have used their homebound pandemic time to "digitally visit" churches other than their home church.

"One has to wonder whether this will ultimately lead to church nomads who surf the internet for new church experiences



rather than putting down roots and becoming part of a church community," said Ron Sellers, president of Grey Matter Research & Consulting.

Meanwhile, some churches fought back against forced online services, challenging now unconstitutional state mandates in court or ignoring such mandates altogether. Legal battles around religious exemptions continue around the U.S. including Kansas City where a suburban church successfully fought the county's mandate in court and won with the county paying damages.

Data from Pew Research and Gallup shows in-person church attendance gaining ground and online attendance receding this past summer compared to 2020. Pew found that one quarter of U.S. adults overall say their faith has become stronger because of the coronavirus pandemic. But that still doesn't help pastors know if and when they should turn off the webcams and streaming channels.

Bissell, the associate pastor at Redeemer Montclair, noted that online attendance for the church in northern New Jersey peaked at around 250 unique viewers via YouTube and settled to just over 100 for most of the pandemic. One online viewer who doesn't normally attend the church gave a five-figure donation to the church's building fund. The church also hosted small groups, prayer meetings and its youth group via Zoom. Even as state restrictions allowed in-person worship to resume, only 60% of the church members returned in person. And that concerns Ying and Bissell.

"Worship is something we do actively with our bodies — standing, kneeling, smelling, eating, drinking, singing — and

together with the church," Bissell said. "Screen entertainment is often done privately, on our sofas, with little to no physical engagement."

His concerns about the downsides of worship by screen are echoed by pastors around the world. ReligionUnplugged.com heard from nearly a dozen pastors in Africa, Latin America, North America and Europe, most of whom expressed concerns about the long-term efficacy of online worship. Some pastors in Latin America said their churches are booming during the pandemic, gaining more viewers and attendees. Meanwhile, church leaders in Africa tended to worry that online church will create "lazy Christians" and lead to declining attendance.

The Rev. Dr. Grace Lubaale of Church of the Resurrection Bugolobi, Church of Uganda, said his own information technology skills improved along with parishioners during the pandemic, and he saw some new converts join the church in that time. But he considers the online era a net negative, as he also saw some people leave church or slide in their faith. He also said only 60% of his church members had Wi-Fi connectivity, which limited participation.

"People should worship together as in Acts 2:42-47," he said, adding that virtual worship "cannot be a permanent position, or the church will end."

Innovation From Africa to Long Island

Meanwhile, Derrick Kaddu, a spokesman for the Anglican diocese in Mukono, Uganda, said only 40% of the 400,000 Anglicans in the rural area of 1 million people can afford some kind of internet service.

Kaddu said the Sts. Philip and Andrews Cathedral where he attends managed by streaming live on Facebook and broadcasting two Sunday services via a local radio station called Mukono Broadcasting Services 89.8 FM. He said his church also installed loudspeakers at every church in his diocese "to narrowcast the gospel to the nearby members of the community during the lockdown."

Yet his church's innovations still brought financial pain as offering revenues dropped, and the diocese may have to lay off staff members. He said only 30% of his flock has returned as the pandemic eases.

"We shall go on with the virtual church," he said. "The younger generation wants it. People don't want to go to church anymore. They want to remain online and attend services from their homes. But we need to find new ways of generating income for the church outside offertory."

Veronica K. Masinde, pastor of Bethel Covenant Connection Ministries, a Pentecostal church in Kampala, Uganda, said her church had never livestreamed before the pandemic but began posting

recorded videos online and on the church's WhatsApp group during the pandemic. It then started livestreaming its services via Facebook and YouTube and continues to do so.

Church staff also called people by phone to check on them and their families and shared inspirational messages and devotionals with church members via WhatsApp.

Technological church "takes away the effect of corporate worship and the joy of gathering together and physically connecting," Masinde admitted, noting that 90% of her church members have internet connections to watch the service live or recordings afterward. She said they miss out as online offerings "create detachment with time."

Even the New York Times found online worship was detrimental to faith.

Regardless, Masinde is emphatic that online church is too powerful an opportunity to shelve completely. "The virtual option shall remain until the world comes to an end," she said. "The pluses for us include expanding to a bigger audience. We are an international church, and we have to keep our congregants across the board well engaged."

Henry Fuhrman and Jerry O'Sullivan — pastors at Shelter Rock Church in Nassau County, New York, on the north shore of Long Island — said their church streamed messages via Facebook before the pandemic but started offering more robust online services in March 2020 using the Church Online platform and a livestream via Life Church. They prerecord their messages to avoid technical snags and added in live chat and live prayer support by fall.

Fuhrman, the senior pastor at Shelter Rock, said an average of 850 people attended the online campus between October 2020 and April this year before shifting back toward in-person church in the spring. He said roughly two-thirds of the church is now attending live services at its Long Island campuses. Yet more than 1,000 believers still watch services online each week. This isn't a uniquely American phenomenon.

The church saw online giving rise dramatically during the pandemic and remain strong ever since. Another bright spot was that some seekers "found the church online

■ Please see PASTORS on page 7

BELL RINGING

continued from page 1

Angel Tree Program that assists those folks in need. It also provides funding for assistance year-round through the Salvation Army's social service programs including emergency assistance in rent/utilities, food pantry, and the community meal program.

Those that wish to ring may go to: www.registertoring.com.

INFLATION

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Meanwhile, gas prices also are set to rise, with the one-year expected change in the cost of petroleum rebounding to 9.4 percent in October from 5.9 percent the previous month. Prices are up 50 percent since President Biden took office in January.

The cost of college education and food also are expected to rise in the year ahead, with the survey noting the median expectation for prices there jumping by 1.5 and 2.1 percentage points, respectively, to 7.4 percent and 9.1 percent in October.

"Inflation is elevated and will likely remain so in coming months before moderating," Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said. "As the economy continues to reopen and spending rebounds, we are seeing upward pressure on prices, particularly because supply bottlenecks in some sectors have limited how quickly production can respond in the near term."

"As the reopening continues, bottlenecks, hiring difficulties and other constraints could again prove to be greater and longer-lasting than anticipated, posing upside risks to inflation. Continued progress on vaccinations would help contain the virus and support a return to more normal economic conditions."

Inflation is highest in the central and upper midwest.

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But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream. - Amos 5:24

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Renaissance Festival Brings Back Knights of Lights

The Kansas City Renaissance Festival has announced the return of its Knights of Lights Holiday Celebration. Beginning on Black Friday, November 26th, at 5pm, the Festival grounds will become a wonderland of dazzling lights and scenes.

Patrons will walk through the King's Gate and Cotswold Common areas, enjoying food, beverages, vendors and performers. There will be activities for the kids and fun for everyone.

Tickets are on sale at kcrenfest.com and will be available at the box office. Advance tickets are \$14.95 for adults and \$9.95 for kids 5-12. At the gate, prices are \$18 for adults and \$13 for kids 5-12. Children 4 and under are always free! Even your dog can enjoy the show for \$5.

The hours are Thursdays and Sundays: 5-10pm, Fridays and Saturdays: 5-11pm, December 20th-24th: 5-10pm.

On New Year's Eve, the venue will be open for a special celebration from 5pm-1am.



The light show will be provided by Landers' Visions, a local, family-owned company with nearly 35 years of experi-

ence creating beautiful decorative environments. Information is available at landersvisions.com.

C5Alive Christmas Luncheon to celebrate with music, games

The December C5 POWER Luncheon will be held December 9, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Fairlawn Plaza Mall, featuring Christmas music and fun activities.

The cost to attend a C5 luncheon is \$10 for C5Alive members and first-time guests who RSVP, and \$12 at the door. Non-members and repeat guests pay \$15. C5 luncheons are open to the public and everyone is welcome to attend, organizers said. RSVPs and inquiries can be sent to info@C5Alive.org.

C5Alive "POWER" luncheons are held on the second Thursday of each month. The next monthly C5Alive "POWER Luncheon" will be held January 13.

For more details on these and other events, stay tuned to the C5Alive facebook page and website: www.C5Alive.org.

C5Alive is an organization founded in 2009, dedicated to

developing and uniting Christian Leadership in the community, involving businesses, non-profits and churches.

In addition to monthly "POWER" luncheons held on the second Thursday of each month, C5 also hosts periodic business fairs and other events, including EASTERFEST, the annual Topeka Easter Parade and Family Fun Fest, held on N. Kansas Avenue and in Garfield Park on

the day before Easter (cancelled for 2021).

The group also hosted a Fall Fest this year on October 9 at The Vinewood venue.

C5 members may also sponsor luncheons and other events as a way to promote their organizations.

For more information about C5, go to C5Alive.org, facebook.com/C5Alive, or call 785-640-6399.



AMERICA

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(Plus, if he prophesied destruction and no destruction came — as a result of the people's repentance — it would make him look bad.)

In the end, the people did repent at the preaching of Jonah and the Lord spared the city. And in the decades that followed, Assyria did become Israel's worst enemy, decimating Jonah's nation. Yet God still cared about Nineveh.

As He said to Jonah after the prophet bewailed the withering of a plant that had given him shade, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left — and also many animals?" (Jonah 4:10-11)

And 330 million is a lot more than 120,000. So, yes, God gives quite a rip about America.

God Has Used America Despite Her Flaws

Second, God has used America in some very exceptional ways, despite our many flaws, sins, and shortcomings.

He has used us to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth. He has used us to supply humanitarian aid in the midst of crisis and famine and calamity all around the globe. He has used us to help defeat evil powers that had already destroyed millions of lives, such as the Nazis, thereby saving millions more lives. And to this day, He has used us to stand against world tyranny and to provide a healthy check to aggressive regimes and terrorist organizations.

And in truth, many of our nation's greatest qualities are directly related to some of our Judeo-Christian roots. So, yes, God gives quite a rip about America.

For Better or for Worse

Third, as America goes, so goes the world, for better or for worse.

An article on the BBC website noted that, "With the world's most powerful

military, a huge economy, and a leading role in international institutions such as the UN and NATO, the USA is a superpower."

Additionally, "The USA's cultural influence extends across the world, for example over two billion people speak some English in the world today with the majority speaking an Americanised version of the language. [Alas, this must be a bitter pill for the BBC to swallow!] US TV programmes, films, video games and music have a large domestic market of more than 300 million customers, in addition to their influence on the rest of the world. The USA also has a social and cultural impact on immediate neighbours such as Mexico and Canada and on North/Central America as a whole."

Similarly, US News, which ranked the USA as the world's most influential country, stated, "The United States of America is a North American nation that is the world's most dominant economic and military power. Likewise, its cultural imprint spans the world, led in large part by its popular culture expressed in music, movies and television."

Having traveled outside the USA near-

ly 200 times, including to countries as far away as India, S. Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, China, Nigeria, Kenya, Australia, and New Zealand, there is no denying the cultural impact made by America, for better or for worse.


Let's Cry Out to God for Mercy


In light of the fact that we do much good and much bad, that we export the gospel and we export porn, that our culture influences cultures around the world, it is clear that God gives a rip about America.

All the more reason, then, that we cry out to Him to have mercy on our country, that we implore Him to bring us repentance, and that we seek Him earnestly to send an awakening — for the sake of each individual American; for the sake of the good that we can do; and for the sake of the rest of the world.

—Dr. Michael Brown (www.askdrbrown.org) is the host of the nationally syndicated *Line of Fire* radio program. His latest book is *Revival Or We Die: A Great Awakening Is Our Only Hope*. Connect with him on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube.

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FINANCIAL PLANNING

The Value of Work

Dear Dave,

What are your views on teaching children good work habits? Many of our friends don't require their kids to help out or work around the house, but we both strongly feel that instilling a strong work ethic early in life is one of the best things you can do as a parent for your children.

Deshay

Dear Deshay,

I'm so glad you both feel that way. Our culture has made many great advances to ensure the happiness and well-being of children. But too many parents today are so centered on what their children want that they have lost perspective on what their children need.

Perspective, or looking at life over time, demands that you teach children to work. Teaching a child to work is not child abuse. We teach them to work not for our benefit, but because it gives them dignity in a job well done today and the tools and character to win as adults in the future.

In my mind, children should be taught to work just like you'd teach them to bathe or brush their teeth—as a necessary life skill. An adult who has no clue how to tackle a job and finish it with pride is every bit as debilitated as an adult with body odor or green teeth. If your child graduates from high school, and his or her only skill set consists of playing video games, eating fast food and believing the world owes them something, you've set up your child to fail.

Another benefit of teaching a child the wonder of work is they may grow to lose a little respect for those who refuse to work. I'm not talking about folks who lost jobs due to unforeseen circumstances and are trying to get back on their feet, or someone who genuinely cannot work. I'm talking



DAVE RAMSEY

Financial author, radio host, television personality, and motivational speaker

davesays

about folks who refuse to look for, or accept, gainful employment.

My wife and I noticed that our kids, as they grew older, didn't pursue relationships with people who didn't understand the value of work and demonstrate the character traits of mature, hardworking people. And that was wonderful news to us!

— Dave

The zero-based budget

Dear Dave,

I have a good job and make pretty good money, but I'm tired of always worrying about my finances and being strapped for cash at the end of the month. I've heard you talk about getting out of debt and living on a zero-based budget, but what exactly is a zero-based budget?

Edward

Dear Edward,

The concept of a zero-based budget is simple: income minus outgo equals zero. If you bring home \$4,000 a month, you want everything you spend, save, give and invest to equal \$4,000. That way, you know where every one of your dollars is going. Not knowing where the money's going is what kills lots of people's financial dreams. They think they know how much they're spending and where it's going, but they really don't.

Here's how you do it. List all your income sources for the month. Your income should include paychecks, small-business income, side jobs,

residual income, child support and so on. If it's money that comes into your household's bank account, write it down and add it up.

Next, list every single expense you have each month. Rent, food, cable, phones and everything in between. Your expenses vary from one month to the next, and this is why you make a new budget each month. Your giving budget might be high in

December when Christmas rolls around. The car budget will spike during months when you pay insurance or renew your tags. Focus on one month at a time.

Now, subtract your expenses from your income. Ideally, this number will be zero. It might take a few months of practice, so don't worry if it doesn't balance out immediately. If it doesn't, it just means you need to do something to bring one of the numbers up, the other one down—or both. If you're spending more than you make, you need to make some cuts in your spending. If you need to

generate more money, get a part-time job or sell a bunch of stuff.

The deal with a zero-based budget is this: every dollar must have a name. That means every dollar has a designated job to do. If you fill out every item in your budget and come out \$100 ahead—meaning you have nothing for that \$100 to do—you haven't finished your budget. You have to find a job for that \$100. It's your decision what it does, but if you don't give it a name and purpose, you'll end up blowing it and wondering where it went.

— Dave

Getting The Taxman Out Of Your Retirement — Part 1

By Ryan Shumaker
Smartvestor Pro at
The Retirement Team



One of the most overlooked, but perhaps most important, aspects of income planning is taxes and how they relate to Social Security. Taxation on Social Security benefits works differently than other income sources; because of this far too many people unknowingly fall into a preventable tax trap with their tax-deferred retirement accounts such as 401(k)s, 403(b)s, 457s, IRAs, etc.

Even if you are in a lower tax bracket in retirement, you might end up paying a higher tax rate on withdrawals from these types of accounts. Even if Social Security seems like a distant worry, it's wise to begin mapping out a plan to neutralize future taxation on it as soon as possible.

To explain how you can end up paying a higher tax rate on retirement income while in a lower tax bracket requires a bit of a history lesson on how taxation of Social Security works.

Social Security and Taxes – a brief overview

In 1984 taxation began after Social Security amendments were passed the previous year. At that time, less than 10% of those who were receiving Social Security actually had those benefits subjected to taxation. That number has increased a shocking fivefold over the years. The reason lies in the unchanged formula called modified provisional adjusted gross income used to determine how much, if any, of one's Social Security is taxed.

This is calculated by taking half of what your Social Security benefits are then adding that number to all of your other income such as dividends, interest (including interest from municipal bonds), pensions, tax-deferred retirement account withdrawals, etc. If you're single and that number is under \$25,000, there's no tax. If you're married, you encounter a marriage tax penalty since the number is only \$32,000, which is a mere 64% of what it should be if the \$25,000 single number were doubled to \$50,000. Regardless, every \$1 of income you have over these amounts causes \$0.50 of your Social Security to be taxed.

Starting in 1994, a new additional tax

bracket was added. I call this the Al Gore tax since the senate was split 50/50 on legislation that would add this extra tax and as Vice President he cast the tie-breaking vote. This new bracket made it so once you hit \$34,000 single and \$44,000 married with the same formula, the taxation becomes far heavier. Every \$1 you are over these numbers causes \$0.85 of your Social Security to be taxed. This continues until 85% of your Social Security benefits become taxed. When you reach the maximum 85% limit will be different for everyone since it is contingent on how much of your income is Social Security and how much is from other income sources.

These thresholds made in 1983 and 1993 have never changed, unlike regular income tax brackets that increase each year to take inflation into account. Clearly, \$25,000 and \$34,000 in 1983 had a much different buying power than today. Because these threshold numbers have never changed, more and more filers each year have their Social Security subjected to taxation as income levels rise with inflation.

Tax-deferred accounts – a potential problem

With tax-deferred accounts, you don't pay any taxes when the money goes in or as it grows, but you have to pay taxes when you withdraw the money. Every dollar taken out counts as \$1 of income on your tax return.

If you're a married couple sitting right at the \$44,000 threshold and decide to take \$1 out of your IRA, 401(k), or other deferred retirement accounts, not only would you pay taxes on that \$1, but it would also cause \$0.85 of your Social Security to be taxed that otherwise wouldn't have been had you not taken that \$1 out of your account and raised your income by \$1. At current tax rates, this would mean you would pay a 12% tax on that \$1, which equals \$0.12, plus a 12% tax on the \$0.85 of your Social Security that was taxed because you took that \$1 out, which equals \$0.102 — taking that \$1 out of the retirement account cost a total of \$0.222 (22.2%) on that \$1!

Looking forward

As the tax brackets stand today, a single person taking standard deduction can have approximately \$53,000 in income before moving from a 12% tax bracket to a 22% tax bracket; for married couples, this number is doubled to

roughly \$106,000.

Conventional thinking suggests if you exceed these amounts and are paying a 22% tax rate, it may be beneficial to put your money into a tax-deferred retirement account like a traditional 401(k) or IRA to avoid paying this tax now. By doing so, you could wait until your income is lower in retirement and you're in a 12% tax bracket to pay taxes. As we've demonstrated, though, you might be in an unfortunate situation where you'll actually pay a 22.2% tax on that money when it comes out even if you're in a 12% tax bracket. If the current 12% and 22% tax brackets revert back to 15% and 25% in the future as they are set to do when the temporary Trump tax cuts expire in 2024, you could easily find yourself paying a 15% tax on \$1.85 for every \$1 you take out, which works out to be an alarming 27.75%.

If you want to avoid potentially paying over double the current tax rate later in life, check out part two next month where we'll explain a few strategies you can implement to possibly eliminate this scenario from happening regardless of if you've already started Social Security or not!

(Reprint from Forbes.com BrandVoice)

Other great articles about retirement, investing, and tax reduction can be seen at RetireTopeka.com/blog.

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Prepare for the Financial Side of the Holidays

By Jim Hanna

The holidays can push budgets past their limit as people do more entertaining, attend more events, dine out and participate in gift exchanges. Whether you're gathering in person or celebrating at a distance this year, it will be tempting to overspend. Here are some tips to help you plan for a less financially hectic 2021 holiday season.



Hanna

Create a holiday budget. The last month of the year offers many opportunities to splurge. Prevent unfettered spending by setting a "do-not-exceed" dollar amount for holiday-related expenses. Include all purchases tied to the season, from gift giving to refreshing your holiday wardrobe, buying decorations, entertaining and more.

Track your expenses. A budget is only useful when you track your expenses against it. Keep receipts for purchases and tally expenses at the end of each shopping excursion. Check your totals to make sure you're not exceeding your budget—and are prepared to make returns if you have.

Manage your expectations. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect global supply chains, causing disruptions in many different and surprising product categories. Merchants of all sizes will have product shortages and may offer less merchandise choice overall. Prices will be higher too, driven by increased demand, inventory shortages and higher than normal inflation. And don't expect fire sales as we get closer to the holidays. Retailers will be unlikely to discount product that's flying off the shelves.

Shop early. More than ever, this year you'll want to give yourself plenty of time to do your holiday shopping. Both brick and mortar and online stores will be affected by

the supply chain challenges. Be flexible. You might have to spend more time looking for what you want. You may need to switch gears if you can't fulfill your initial wish list. And if you need to ship your gifts, keep in mind that the holidays always cause shipping delays, but this season the slowdown is predicted to be greater than usual.

Plan for increased shipping costs. In addition to inflated prices on general merchandise, shipping costs are spiking upward as well. The U.S. Postal Service has announced price hikes, and other major shipping carriers are also raising their prices to counteract higher oil prices and staffing shortages.

Give differently. If the gifts you want to buy are in short supply or "things" aren't your thing, consider ticking off your gift list by giving experiences. Local restaurants are eager to make up for months of lost business. Likewise, theaters and sporting events are finally opening up and need to fill seats that have been empty too long. You could also consider giving financial gifts to your loved ones such as a partially funded savings account, Roth IRA, savings bond or an appointment with a financial advisor. And finally, charitable donations are becoming more popular as holiday gifts, particularly if the non-profit is meaningful to the recipient.

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Why it's important that taxpayers know and understand their correct filing status

By Peggy Beasterfield
Owner, Peggy's Tax and Accounting Service

As taxpayers get ready for the upcoming filing season, it's important for them to know their correct filing status. A taxpayer's filing status defines the type of tax return form they should use when filing their taxes. Filing status can affect the amount of tax they owe, and it may even determine if they have to file a tax return at all.



There are five IRS filing statuses. They generally depend on the taxpayer's marital status as of Dec.31. However, more than one filing status may apply in certain situations. If this is the case, taxpayers can usually choose the filing status that allows them to pay the least amount of tax.

When preparing and filing a tax return, the filing status affects:

- If the taxpayer is required to file a federal tax return
- If they should file a return to receive a refund
- Their standard deduction amount
- If they can claim certain credits
- The amount of tax they should pay

Here are the five filing statuses:

- **Single.** Normally this status is for taxpayers who are unmarried, divorced or legally separated under a divorce or separate maintenance decree governed by state law.
- **Married filing jointly.** If a taxpayer is married, they can file a joint tax return with their spouse. When a spouse passes away, the widowed spouse can usually file a joint return for that year.
- **Married filing separately.** Married couples can choose to file separate tax returns. When doing so it may result in less tax owed than filing a joint tax return.

selves and a qualifying person living in the home for half the year.

apply to a taxpayer if their spouse died during one of the previous two years and they have a dependent child. Other conditions also apply.

- **Qualifying widow(er)** with dependent child. This status may



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• **Head of household.** Unmarried taxpayers may be able to file using this status, but special rules apply. For example, the taxpayer must have paid more than half the cost of keeping up a home for them-

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Amazing Grace

By Joe Patton



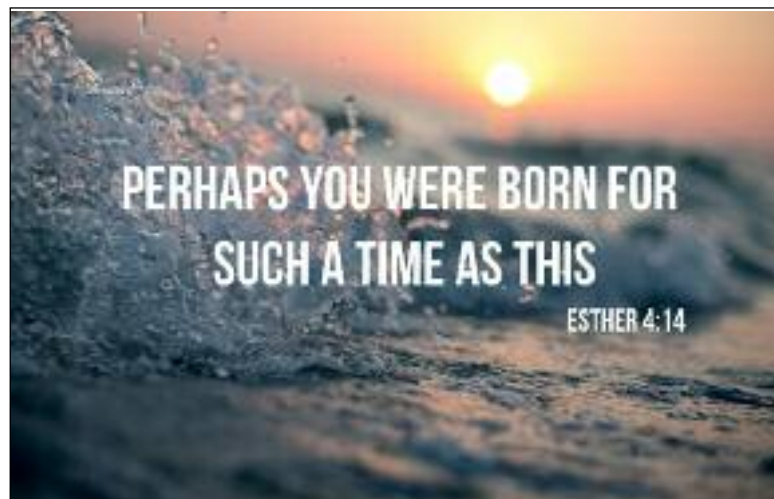
There is an ancient story about a young woman named Esther telling how she intervened in the operation of the government of her day, changing public policy and protecting her people. Esther's Uncle said, "Who knows but that you were created for a time such as this."

I think of this quote when I think of Eileen Deeter, who personally saved KNI. Here's the back story.

The year was 2011, and some bean counters decided to balance the Kansas State Government budget; they would close the Kansas Neurological Institute (KNI), which served about 150

residents, three-fourths had seizure disorders and couldn't speak, two-thirds didn't walk, one-third were unable to eat normally. The decision was made, the word came down from the powers that be, legislative leadership was on board, KNI would close. As a formality, the legislative delegation would board a bus and tour KNI before the floor vote on KNI's fate. As a backbencher in the legislature, I got on the bus and sat at the back.

After arriving at KNI, the legislators sat in a large conference room listening to executive staff drone about endless facts and figures. After the lecture, right before it was time to board the bus for the trip back to the Capital and the vote, the speaker concluded with, "Any questions?" One legislator at the back of the room raised his hand, asking, "Are we going to see any of the people who live here?" "No!" was the immediate reply, "that would violate their privacy." "Oh, ah, well, I have a friend that lives here can I go to visit her." "No, that would violate her privacy!" "Ah, ah, what if her guardian consented?" "Would you at least



call the guardian and ask?" Finally, the call was made, Gary Deeter consented.

The legislative delegation filtered into Eileen's ample room, large bed, photos, and knickknacks on the shelf. Eileen, surrounded by personal attendants, in her wheelchair by her bed, gazed across the room, looking concerned. We saw her smile as I walked in, hugged her, begging her forgiveness at the unannounced intrusion.

To this day, I do not know if Eileen understood the purpose of the visitors, or what was at stake, but she made a big impact on us. She lifted her head, continued her majestic smile, looking around the

room; it was a magical moment, a princess holding court for the most powerful men and women of the State of Kansas.

Eileen motivated the legislators to later engage in a victorious floor fight at the House of Representatives. Eileen had won the legislators' hearts and minds, changed public policy, saved the 500 plus jobs at KNI, saved her home and that of her friends, armed only with a smile.

(A few weeks ago, Grace Eileen Deeter, age 62, left her earthly family and friends to be welcomed into the arms of Jesus and experienced a new life where she could walk, talk, sing, and dance.)

Christmas Is Not About a Baby



CLINT
DECKER

President and
Evangelist
with Great
Awakenings, Inc.

hopefortoday

Is Christmas about a baby? A cute, cuddly little one that His mother held in her arms? If so, then why is Christmas offensive to many? Who could be turned off by an adorable baby? Why have schools changed from Christmas break to winter break? Why do people file law suits to stop Christmas celebrations? Why do most Islamic and atheistic governments either ban or strongly condemn Christmas? Because they understand perfectly, that Christmas is not about a baby . . . but a man. Not a fictitious man with a sled and reindeer, but the very real God-Man, who stands with nail printed hands opened wide to all humanity as their Supreme King and Savior.

The ancient Christmas story originates from the Bible and one quote in particular is the reason for Christmas opposition. It comes from Matthew

1:23, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us)."

The Christmas story characters Mary, Joseph, the wise men, the Shepherds, Simeon and Anna all saw baby Jesus. Each person recognized He was not a normal human infant boy. He was different. He was sent from Almighty God in heaven, and born with a divine mission. He was born with the titles of Christ, Savior, Lord, Son of the Most High, Son of God, King and Immanuel. Each person recognized but did not fully understand, the boy was clearly not just human, but deity in human form. And each recognized the baby was not going to fulfill any divine mission, but the God-Man He would grow into . . . would. King Herod, Jesus' arch enemy when He was two years old, understood this. That is why upon learning about Jesus, Herod made a failed attempt to kill the toddler, to try and prevent Jesus from growing up into a man and challenging Herod's title as King of the Jews.

Immanuel, God with us, was an offense to Herod and still is to many. The title communicates there is one true God. It means there is a Supreme ruler, a Sovereign King over humankind and the universe. It also



implies the King is Judge over all. The idea that God left His home in heaven and came to earth in the form of a man, angers the prideful, immoral and arrogant. "Leave us alone," they say. "We don't need you. We have education, science, our own laws, our own morality, and for some, even our own religion." To them, they scoff at Immanuel, "We don't want God with us."

For others though, Immanuel has come as Savior to rescue them from their slavery to sin. He was welcomed and worshipped. Followers believed in Him, repented of their sin and received His gift of forgiveness. They received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and will one day enter into their eternal home in heaven. To them Immanuel is hope, new life and redemption.

Christmas is not about a baby, but the God-Man, Jesus. To some He is an offense, while to others He is hope. What is He to you? This Christmas fix your eyes upon Jesus, the One who died and rose again for you. Today, receive His gift of forgiveness through faith and repentance.

A prayer for you - "Lord God, open our eyes to see Jesus, not as a baby, but the true and living God-Man. The One who came to Save us from our sins and one day judge the world. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Clint Decker is President of Great Awakenings. Hope for Today is a nationally syndicated column.

If God used one of Clint's columns to impact your life, share your story at cdecker@greatawakenings.org.

Decrease in Marriage Continues a Spiraling Wave of Problems, and Churches are AWOL

By Rachel Alexander

Over 60 years after the decline of marriage began in the 1960s due to the rise of the “free love” mentality, the results are more dismal than ever. In 1960, only 28% of adults were single. Now almost 50% of adults are single. Marriage rates are at their lowest ever in U.S. history. There are eight times more children born to unmarried parents than married.

This is a problem. While progressives love to tear down the traditional nuclear family, they can't argue with the increasingly negative facts coming out. Cohabitation arrangements break up around five times more frequently than marriages, and unplanned pregnancies occur three times more often with cohabiting couples than married couples. Unmarried couples with children are three times more likely to split up and have lower incomes. Children without fathers are more likely to suffer an “Adverse Family Event,” which is abuse, neglect or other trauma. Disregarding the old saying “Marriage tames men” is why we are seeing a spike in bad behavior by men.

Two authors with extensive backgrounds in marriage and the Christian church have written a book, *Endgame: The Church's Strategic Move to Save Faith and Family in America*, outlining the crisis and showing how the church has failed to address it — but also providing specific solutions to fix it. “Endgame” refers to the crumbling of marriage.

Co-author J.P. De Gance, a Catholic

who came from the political sphere working for Americans for Prosperity, pioneered a marriage relationship project called Culture of Freedom — later rebranded as Communion — which had tremendous results. He launched it in several cities, working with churches and faith-based organizations.

In Jacksonville, Florida, which had dismal marriage rates, divorces fell 24% after the three-year project, which focused on 58,912 couples.

Similarly, John Van Epp, an evangelical relationship expert, ran his own Christian marriage relationship service, Love Thinks. In one area in Indiana that he focused on, divorce rates dropped 20% over 10 years.

What the authors found is that churches are lacking in marriage ministry. Three out of four churches don't provide any substantive relationship courses or resources for married couples. And even though singles make up almost 50% of heads of households, more than 90% of churches don't have an adult singles ministry.

What should be most alarming for Christians is the decline of relationship health is now the most significant factor in disrupting a relationship with Jesus.

This is why church attendance is at its lowest rate ever on record in the U.S., 47%. In 2000, it was 70%. Church attendance is largely determined by one variable — parental marriage. Both children with unmarried parents and divorced parents were equally less likely to attend

most well-known atheists in the world had a defective relationship with their fathers.

Progressives may pretend that Christians are no better off than the rest of the population, but the authors found that churchgoing Christians have sex more frequently and are happier in their sex life than those who don't attend. While one quarter of couples in church have a struggling marriage, 39% of couples in general do.

Unfortunately, pastors don't realize they're not doing a good job in this area. While 93% of pastors counsel couples in crisis, 57% of them do

not believe they are qualified enough. A “marriage 911” is lacking in the church. Churches spend lots of money on youth programs, but that's not helping people stay in church.

The authors say we need to go out into the community to find couples to help, not expect them to come searching and find these services. It needs to be portrayed as something everyone needs, in order not to scare people away thinking it's only for couples who are on the verge of breaking up, otherwise people will be afraid of the stigma.

The authors reveal what works as successful techniques. They teach couples to

address problems early on in relationships. It's a myth that good relationships don't require work. The “balanced relationship” is an illusion. What is normal in a good relationship is this: About the time a couple feels that they have a routine that is working for them ... life comes at them fast. One of the most valuable tasks the authors have couples do is to make a top 10 list of what they think their spouse wants and needs from them.

Emotional intelligence, also known as emotional quotient (EQ) is key to a good marriage. This means both interpersonal, which includes communicating with your spouse, and intrapersonal, the ability to monitor your own emotions and actions. Studies of people doing tasks who have somewhat higher EQs but also somewhat lower IQs than others reveal that the former perform better, shattering our traditional views of IQ.

The authors also emphasize the importance of both skills and virtues. Secular counseling focuses on skills, whereas Christian counseling tends to focus too much on just virtues. Skills include discernment, appreciation and expectation, self-control and commitment.

The authors conclude by saying the church needs to make marriage ministry and relationship outreach normal. Marital problems shouldn't be left up to social agencies to handle. The secular world is going to continue to disparage marriage and continue the downward cycle that the misnamed, so-called “free love” brings, so the church has to step up and stop the leak in the dam.



church.

Marriage crumbled because of the decoupling of sex, romantic partnerships and parenting. Today, the majority of couples have sex before starting a relationship. The authors point to online dating as one of the culprits — it's made it easy to leave a relationship the instant a problem arises, because you can find a new romantic interest right away.

They found a correlation between atheism and lack of married parents. Millennials who were the least emotionally interested in attending church were also the least likely to report having a positive relationship with their parents. The 30

another's burdens, or encourage one another if we do not gather with one another?”

Yet he and Ying admit they haven't had any discussions of turning off the online services. The services have enabled parents who are home sick with children to tune in to church. Digital giving has increased dramatically.

Ying said he worries that families have a hard time retaining worship when viewing church from home. He's not sure how many, if any, people sing along to worship songs from home. He laughed, recalling what one child exclaimed to a parent when the church service came on YouTube: “Not this show again!”

The pastors at Redeemer Montclair have noticed that in-person attendees often mention the live music in worship is much more impactful and high-quality than when delivered via screen — no matter how good a surround sound system a home viewer may have.

The church serves communion in prepackaged, plastic-wrapped container kits that include a small cup of grape juice to symbolize Christ's blood and a wafer to symbolize Christ's body. Many in-person attendees still sit in socially-distanced fashion and wear face masks during the service. And the pastors have noticed that making their church bulletin available via QR codes and email links can save \$14,000 in printing costs each year.

If Redeemer Montclair ever does chose to turn off its YouTube livestream because viewership is low, it would be a decision of the elders. The Presbyterian Church in America, as a denomination, has encouraged its member churches to look for a silver lining in the pandemic, Ying said. And he has.

“The livestream is a lifeline for our church family,” he said. “It's become such a feature now, it would be hard to go back.”

—Paul Glader is executive editor at *ReligionUnplugged.com* and a professor of journalism at *The King's College in NYC*, where he directs the *McCandlish Phillips Journalism Institute*.

PASTORS

continued from page 2

and eventually made it to an in-person service who had not attended the church prior to the pandemic,” O'Sullivan said.

At the same time, he saw some church members struggling during the pandemic because they lacked “personal encouragement, accountability and community.” So the church hired an online pastor who could reach out to people in new ways.

“We are dealing now with many who are coming back to in-person services who are far from God and struggling in their marriages and relationships because of a lack of intimacy and connection with God and others,” O'Sullivan said. Yet his church won't give up on digital services.

This past Sunday, Shelter Rock's overall attendance of 2,300 was 40% higher than pre-pandemic levels, matching indicators that the church grew significantly during the pandemic, according to Fuhrman. “We have no plans of getting rid of online church,” Fuhrman said. “We are reaching people we couldn't reach before. I think it's the new front door.”

To Unplug? Or Stay Wired for Worship?

Ying and Bissell at Redeemer Montclair said their church plans to continue its livestream for the foreseeable future, albeit with hopes that more members and visitors will resume in-person attendance as the pandemic becomes history rather than present reality.

They reflected on the pandemic effects on a recent weekday, sitting in a clean, light-filled sanctuary in the upstairs of a new addition to the church that was completed during the pandemic.

“Opting for virtual worship occasionally for special circumstances can be edifying,” Bissell said earlier, in an email. “As a replacement for regular in-person worship, I believe it harms people. We are commanded to not give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:25). How can we love one another, bear one






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Christmas Memories

Remember the true reason for the season

What's Christmas without the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? He is the true meaning behind the reason we celebrate this special occasion. Now you can read the biblical account yourself.

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. Don't be frightened, Mary," the angel told her, "for God has decided to bless you! You will become pregnant and have a son, and you are to name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can I have a baby? I am a virgin."

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby born to you will be holy, and he will

be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's already in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to accept whatever he wants. May everything you have said come true." And then the angel left.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, filling with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "You are blessed by God above all other women, and your child is blessed. What an honor this is, that the mother of my Lord should visit me! When you came in and greeted me, my baby jumped for joy the instant I heard your voice! You are blessed, because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise

Mary responded, "Oh, how I praise the Lord. How I rejoice in God my

Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, And now generation after generation Will call me blessed. For he, the Mighty One, is holy, And he has done great things for me. His mercy goes on from generation to generation, To all who fear him. His mighty arm does tremendous things! How he scatters the proud and haughty ones! He has taken princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. He has satisfied the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. And how he has helped his servant Israel! He has not forgotten his promise to be merciful. For he promised our ancestors — Abraham and his children — to be merciful to them forever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

The Birth of Jesus

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, his fiance, who was obviously pregnant by this time.

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn.

The Shepherds and Angels

That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior — yes, the Messiah, the Lord — has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! And this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!"

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others praising God:

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, And peace on earth to all whom God favors."

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on, let's go to Bethlehem!" Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

They ran to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. Then the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary quietly treas-



ured these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their fields and flocks, glorifying and praising God for what the angels had told them, and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had said.

Jesus is Presented in the Temple

Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.

Then it was time for the purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents

took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord." So they offered a sacrifice according to what was required in the law of the Lord.

When Jesus' parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom beyond his years, and God placed his special favor upon him.

—Taken from The Book, Luke chapters 1:26-2:40.

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Celebrate the joy of Christmas during trying times

Christmas still comes when we don't feel like celebrating, and that may be the best part

by **Jenny Rapson**

I am a girl who loves Christmas. I love the day, I love the season, I love reveling in the wonder that God's Son came to earth to save us as a tiny baby. My third child was born on December 17, and when I cuddled him as a newborn, it made Christmas extra-special. I tried to imagine Mary cuddling and nursing her newborn child and trying to wrap her mind around the fact that this tiny baby whose life for nine months had totally depended on her would now be saving her. And all of us. The Messiah as a swaddled babe! Incredible.

I have never had a Christmas season that was not filled with joy. But I know, as life twists and turns, that one day there may come a December when I don't feel like celebrating. Where life will be hard. Where I will be in such turmoil that Christmas lights and tinsel might seem like an assault to my very being.

I've never celebrated such a Christmas. But I know someone who has.

Seven years ago, my sister-in-law's father was diagnosed with leukemia on December 5. It was a "do-not-pass-go, head directly to the

hospital to start chemotherapy" deal. By the time Christmas came along, he had been close to death several times. His family had said their goodbyes once even ... but he hung on. For our whole extended family, it was hard to feel exultant joy that Christmas. My niece who was nine at the time, wrote "Please, Jesus Please" on the chalkboard in my parents' home. My mother left it there for years, that sweet plea of a child to her Savior. It was a Christmas of intercession more than anything else.

Christmas evening that year, I arrived home weary after our multiple family Christmas celebrations. We had a wonderful day, but we were all "Christmased out." Then I sat down at the computer and read these words from my sister-in-law's mother. They are words I will never, ever forget.

She wrote:

"Our family Christmases have always been filled with traditions. That is not a bad thing. It helps bind families together.

This year all the traditions that were so important have been set aside. Nothing is the same. And yet, Christmas came. Quoting from Dr. Seuss, How the Grinch Stole Christmas, "It came without ribbons.



It came without tags! It came without packages, boxes or bags! He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming. It came! Somehow or other it came just the same."

We know the reason it came is because of God's indescribable gift to us. Jesus left the glory of heaven to come as a baby in a manger. His every physical need had to be cared for by another. What humility! He came to go through the ugliness of death on the cross so that we can have life everlasting.

We understand a little more this year about what Jesus did for us. Jerry's physical needs have to be met by others. It is humbling. We have seen physical death all around us in the Marrow and Blood unit at the hospital. It is ugly! All of which makes the birth and death of Jesus more dear to us as we focus on the hope (certainty) of heaven.

We are rejoicing with you this day that Christmas is so much more than what we usually make it. It really is all about Jesus, God's indescribable gift to each of us."

Christmas is so much more than we usually make of it.

We make it about presents and lights and amazing Pinterest creations.

But it is about Jesus, God's indescribable gift to each of us.

Maybe this year you are experiencing a trial at Christmas. Maybe you have lost a loved one, or are yourself fighting for your life. Maybe one of your children or your spouse has broken your heart.

My friends, what I learned from my sister-in-law's courageous family is this: It is the trying and devastating times in our lives that make Christmas all the more joyful, beautiful and wondrous.

Because of Christmas, all those trials will work together for good. Because of Christmas, we will one day be in a place where none of earth's ill can befall us. Because of Christmas, what's broken can be made whole.

Because of Christmas, we are blessed when we mourn! This is the good news we can cling to in the midst of trials ... even when we are covered in tears at the foot of our Christmas tree.

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Celebrate the Holidays in Downtown Topeka!

As we enter the Holiday season, Downtown is looking better than ever! People are getting in the Christmas Spirit!

Christmas shopping in Downtown Topeka can be fun, with all the unique shops and a bit of nostalgia in the air. It might remind you of a time when shopping was more exciting, more personal, and less of a chore.

Following are some tidbits from some of your friendly downtown merchants. Why not take a trip downtown and visit them?

A Full-Service Florist & Gift Shop

Absolute Design by Brenda, 629 S. Kansas Avenue, offers hand-selected flowers and exquisite designs with delivery throughout the Topeka area. They have an expansive line of gifts, jewelry and home decor for all your holiday and year-round needs.

This locally-owned Topeka florist delivers courteous, professional service and the highest quality floral and gift items around. Their experienced designers can create floral designs that will complement any occasion and meet your budget and style expectations as well. Daily delivery service is



available to all local funeral homes, hospitals and nursing homes. You can even save \$5.00 by using the coupon on this page!

You can also order or wire flowers 24 hours a day at the website: www.absolutedesignbybrenda.com.

Taking chocolate to a new level

Owners Nick & Terry Xidis at Hazel Hill Chocolate, 724 S. Kansas Avenue, have been a staple in Downtown Topeka for years.

Hazel Hill, Terry's grandmother, is a symbol of their dedication to a family tradition of "the best in everything they do." Nick is the third generation chocolatier, and they use only the finest ingredients, chocolate, fresh

cream and butter, to produce hand-made treats that explode with flavor.

Lately, Nick has been making hand-crafted chocolate from cacao (coco beans) that import from around the globe. Much like fine wine, each cacao origin produces a unique flavor profile in the finished chocolate.



"There are only a couple of hundred companies in the US that hand craft chocolate," Nick said. "We just put a new bar out made from cacao from the Semuliki Forest in Uganda. It's a 72% cacao dark chocolate that has a delightful flavor." It's not just Topekans that delight in Hazel Hill chocolates.

"In 2019, three of our handcrafted chocolate bars won bronze in the International Chocolate Awards Americas competition," Nick said. "In 2020 our sea salt caramel won the gold medal in the Chocolate Alliance competition. Both of these competitions include entries from more than 400 craft chocolate professionals."

Whatever your preference may be – handmade chocolate truffles, home-style fudge, crispy-creamy caramel apples or something else – at Hazel Hill they fashion delightful treats for every palate.

Need a gift basket, gift box, or just a few delicious chocolates to go? They'll take care of all the packing and shipping, too!

When you need a break

For your coffee emergency, go Downtown to Juli's Coffee and Bistro – a locally owned, woman owned, Veteran owned and operated coffee shop offering legit house coffee and all manner of espresso drinks.

Now featuring "Made in the USA" coffee grown and roasted in Hawaii, with aloha flavors like toasted coconut, chocolate and vanilla macadamia nut. Buy a bag to take home!

See the new place at 911 S. Kansas

Avenue, having relocated from 8th Street. The new space has easier access – no more stairs to the front door. Local favorites are still available, like the Turkey Lurkey and house made Cranberry Almond Chicken Salad for lunch. Fresh salads, wraps and tasty paninis make it perfect for casual dining. Daily house made specials keep it fresh and exciting.

Check out the menus online at www.juliscoffeeandbistro.com and order online, pay online and then pick up, or use Eatstreet delivery.

The owner and staff at Juli's want to



take this opportunity to thank the Topeka community for their undying support since 2016. Despite the pandemic and relocation Juli's remained OPEN normal hours and kept 80% of their staff on payroll throughout the pandemic. Community matters and that is the reason Topeka has been home for 6 generations of the Bistro family. Remember 911 Kansas for Great Coffee, Better Food and Happy Holidays!

Delicious treats for all to enjoy

Shana Cake opened at 435 S Kansas in 2015. Over the past couple of years there have been a few changes, but the most important thing has remained unchanged; we are as committed to providing your family gluten-free, allergy-friendly treats today as Kelly was when she opened the doors 5 years ago.

We have a variety of cupcakes, cookies, muffins, breads, and other treats that are free of gluten, dairy, soy, nuts, tree nuts, artificial colors and flavors, preservatives, and GMO's.

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Holiday Memories, Events, & Gift Ideas!

Check Out Some of the Upcoming Holiday Events & Activities

Most of our products can also be made egg-free, and we strive to offer vegan goods daily. We love feedback from our vegan customers, so we can bake more of the treats you are craving.



ing.

One of our favorite compliments is when a new customer tells us they can't tell our treats are gluten-free. We love having customers that have no dietary restrictions return simply because they enjoy our delicious treats.

Special orders, such as cakes, specific flavors of cupcakes, or special treats are welcome and orders can be placed online at www.shanacake.com or by calling us at (785)408-1272.

Diamonds are Forever

With the Christmas season in full swing, you'll find many specials and gift ideas at David's Jewelers, 623 S. Kansas - a family business that has



served Topeka for four generations, with over 50 years in business.

Diamond rings, pendants and earrings usually top the list but they also offer vivid colored gemstones in unique settings, watches, clocks, statues and fine crystal.

"Gifts can start at \$20.00 and go from there," said Mitzi from behind the counter at David's. "We will be glad to help you find that special gift for that special someone."

While you're making your way around the downtown area, check out all of the new things to look at on both sides of the street

There are lots of new features! And watch for these downtown events and opportunities during the holiday season:

SHINE TOGETHER TOPEKA

– Every Plaza. A Community Light Display with a small taste of what awaits for you throughout the rest of town!



AFTER WALK AT THE HAWK – Dec. 3, 7:30-9pm, Jayhawk Theatre. No Good Johnny in concert, \$5 at the door.



MIRACLE ON KANSAS AVENUE PARADE – Dec. 4, 3pm, Downtown. Lighted Holiday Parade starts at 6pm.

RED STOCKING BREAKFAST - Dec. 11, 7:30-10:30am, The Pennant, 915 S. Kansas Ave. Cost is \$15 in advance at www.kcsl.org/RedStocking_Home.aspx and \$18 at the door. Children 10 & under eat free. Benefits Kansas Childrens Service League's child abuse prevention programs and services.

FRIDAY FLICKS: HOME ALONE – Dec. 10, 6pm, Every Plaza



THE NUTCRACKER BY KANSAS BALLET ACADEMY– Dec. 18, 19, at TPAC. Tickets available at the TPAC box office or Ticketmaster.com. For info: 785-234-2787

LUCERO PADILLA: PUT A BOW ON IT – Dec. 18, 7:30pm, Jayhawk Theatre. Lucero Padilla holiday show with music, laughs, and food and drinks by Norsemen Brewing Company.

AN EVENING WITH CHEVY CHASE – Dec. 23, 7pm, TPAC. Chevy Chase live on stage plus audience Q & A following a screening of National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com or the Box Office. For info: 785-234-2787



BALLET MIDWEST'S THE NUTCRACKER – Dec. 10-12, TPAC. Tickets available at the TPAC box office or Ticketmaster.com. For info: 785-234-2787



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Celebrate the Holidays in North Topeka!

A Celebration of Winter, a six-week vendor & craft market, continues in the NOTO Arts District on Saturdays Nov. 27, and Dec. 4, 11 and 18. There will be a wide variety of arts, crafts, antiques & gifts, as well as special Santa visits every Saturday. Performances by local schools will also be featured.



First Fridays, at various venues during the art walk up and down N. Kansas Avenue, as well as street-side vendors. The restaurants, locally owned shops, art galleries, antiques and studios have become a favorite art walk destination.

Take advantage of the opportunity to shop local in NOTO for all your holiday needs.

- Dec. 4 - The Glass Station
- Dec. 11 - Compass Point
- Dec. 18 - Round Table Bookstore

The NOTO Arts District has become an attraction to art lovers and history buffs alike with beautiful scenes of art and history. The restaurants, locally owned shops, art galleries and studios have become a favorite art walk destination.

A variety of arts, antiques, crafts, and gifts will be available

First Friday Art Walk hours are 10 am to 9 pm. Visit the NOTO Arts Center to pick up a map of participating businesses and view the newest exhibit at the Morris Gallery.

You can also visit 3rd Friday's NOTO Night Out! Many Merchants are also open longer hours on Second Saturdays.

- Nov. 27 - Rustic Junktion @ Kaw River Rustics
- Entertainment can also be found on

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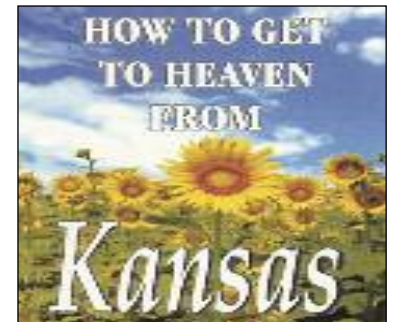
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More important than living in KANSAS is where you will live forever. Just as you would look at a map of KANSAS to find your way, so you must look at the Bible to find your way to heaven. The Bible says, "Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:14). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (Jn. 14:6). Jesus is the only way to Heaven and He gave these directions on getting there.

1. Realize you are a sinner. Everyone starts the same place spiritually. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of god." (Rom. 3:23). Sin's penalty keeps you out of Heaven and condemns you to Hell, separating you from God. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." Sin brings both physical & spiritual death. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Rev. 20:14).

2. Realize Jesus paid the penalty. Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection provided a way for you to go to heaven and restore your relationship with God. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8). Since Jesus, God's Son, was the only One who could pay for our sin, He is the only Way to Heaven.

3. Repent of your sin and receive Jesus as your Savior. In order to go to Heaven from KANSAS, or anywhere else, you must accept Christ by calling on Him in prayer. He tells us in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Use the following prayer, or one similar to it, to receive Him now:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I believe that you died and rose again for me. Please forgive me of my sin, become Lord of my life, and take me to heaven when I die. I am trusting you completely, and in nothing I can do. Thank you Jesus! Amen.

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CONCERTS

KANSAS PRAIRIE PICKERS – Fourth Sun. ea. Month, 1pm, Auburn Community Center. Foot-stomping, hand-clapping tunes. Concessions available

TOPEKA ACOUSTIC MUSIC JAM – First Sat. of ea. month, 3-5pm, Potwin Presbyterian Church (enter south door), 400 S.W. Washburn: 286-0227 hagen1525@gmail.com.

THE BERRYTON PICKERS – First Sat. of ea. month, 7-9pm, Berryton Baptist Church. Bring snacks, have fun!

GRAND O' OPRY – 2nd & 4th Saturday, 6:30PM-pre-show, 7PM showtime, Ottawa Memorial Auditorium, 301 S Hickory, Ottawa. Tickets are \$10 and only at the door. Ph. 785-214-0013, email grandopry@gmail.com.

INSPIRE COUNTRY NIGHTS – Nov. 27, 6pm, Heritage Country Cowboy Church, 15767 S. Topeka Ave., Scranton, KS at Four Corners. Christmas worship with Mary James, Melissa Perez and Dan Blackwood.

ZACH WILLIAMS CHRISTMAS – Dec 4, 7pm, Landon Arena.

SPECIAL CHURCH EVENTS

SENIOR FIT & FUN PROGRAM – every Mon., Wed., & Fri., 1:30pm, Rolling Hills Christian Church, 4530 NW Hiawatha Place (US Hwy 75 & NW 46th St.) 785-286-0601 or office@rhctoepka.org

SENIOR SOLO'S – Every 3rd Tuesday from 3 to 6 p.m. at First Assembly Church, 500 SW 27th St, downstairs Fellowship Hall. Games & Fellowship, lots of Laughter & Fun. 785-817-3071.

HARVESTER'S PROGRAM FOR SENIOR CITIZENS – every second Sat., takes place at Christian Lord Ministries, 2421 SE California. Call 266-4979.

FREE WEEKLY COMMUNITY PANCAKE BREAKFAST – Sundays at 10am sharp, at Oakland Church of the Nazarene: 900 block of NE Oakland, followed by church services at 10:45am – followed at noon by The Hope House FREE Community Food & Clothing Banks.

FIRST WEDNESDAY WESLEY CAFE – First Wed., 6:15pm, Susanna Wesley UMC, 7433 SW 29th. A worship service will follow at 7:00. 785-478-3697 or www.swumc.org/wesley-cafe-sign-up.html.

FIRST SATURDAY BREAKFAST BUFFET – 7:30 AM - 10:00 AM, Shawnee Heights UMC, 6020 SE 44th

INSIDE OUT FELLOWSHIP – Every Saturday, 6:30pm. Faith Temple Church, 1162 SW Lincoln. For info: 785-380-7031 or rhaggertyjr@hotmail.com

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE – December 24, 6pm, Bethel Baptist, 4011 N. Kansas Ave. www.betheltopeka.org | bethelbaptist17@yahoo.com | 785.286.0467

YOUTH NIGHT – Dec 12, 6pm, Lakeview Church of the Nazarene, 2835 SE Croco Rd. A time in the Word of God, food, & fun! (785) 266-3247; LakeviewTopeka.org; LakeNaz@aol.com

FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS

SENIORS NUTRITIONAL LUNCH – Weekdays, except holidays, at noon at Auburn Civic Center, 1020 N. Washington Street. Minimal cost per person. Reservations/cancellations required 24 hours in advance by calling Meals on Wheels of Jefferson & Shawnee Co. at 295-3980. Each meal includes 1% milk & sugar-free items for diabetics. 215- 0064.

TOPEKA TWILIGHT LIONS BRANCH CLUB – 4th Mondays at 5:30pm, Norsemen Brewing Co., Visitors welcome.

MEDICARE MONDAYS – First Mon. ea. month, 1-3pm. Topeka/Sh. Co. Public Library, 1515 SW 10th. Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging offers Senior health insurance counseling. For info: 580-4545 or nhoni@tsclp.org

MARKET MONDAYS – Monday 3-7pm through October, Every Plaza. A farmers market and artisan market helping to increase access to fresh, locally produced foods and other products.

SHEPHERDS CENTER PICKLEBALL GROUP – plays Mon. & Wed. Mon. at Countryside UMC, 32nd & Burlingame, from 3-5. Park on the NORTH side & use the furthest WEST door. Follow the hallway to gym. On Wed. at First Baptist, 30th & MacVicar, from 1-3. Park on the WEST side. Gym is right inside the doors.

TOPEKA SWING DANCE – Tuesdays, 7-8pm, Swing Dance Lessons, no partner required, Jayhawk Theatre, 720 SW Jackson. www.topekasingdance.com.

SAFE STREETS COALITION MEETING – First Wed. of the

month, 11:45am-1pm. Great Overland Station. For info: 266-4606 or jwilson@safestreeets.org

COUNTRY AND BALLROOM DANCING – Thursdays 6-9pm. Croco Hall. Info: Edwina 379-9538 or 478-4760.

SHEPHERDS CENTER LINE DANCING GROUP – meets 2nd & 4th Thur, 2-4 at First UMC, 6th & Topeka. Park on the west side & use west door. Immediately inside, turn left & walk the ramp to the library, then left to elevator. Push [B] for fellowship hall 785-249-3258.

FIRST FRIDAY ART MARKET – Downtown and NOTO arts district. Arts, antiques, fine crafts, flea market items, snacks & beverages, entertainment and more.

MOVIES AT EVERY PLAZA – Second Fridays

TOPEKA ACAPPELLA UNLIMITED AUDITIONS – Topeka Acapella Unlimited is looking for female singers who would like to sing four part acapella harmonies. Come be our guest via Zoom at our guest nights to meet the Director and learn more about our chorus. Topeka Acapella Unlimited is a Chapter of Sweet Adelines, International. Call Cindy Patton at 785-640-7403 for information on how to receive a Zoom invitation

SQUARE DANCING – Shawnee Swingers has monthly dances and sponsors lessons in the Fall. Call or text 785-845-2357; shawneeswingers@gmail.com. On Facebook: Shawnee Swingers Square Dance Club. www.squaredance.com

HARVESTERS MOBILE FOOD PANTRY, 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 2-3pm, Shawnee Heights UMC parking lot.

TERRITORIAL CAPITAL MUSEUM – Now Open, 640 E Woodson, Leocompton. (785) 887-6148 www.lecomptonkansascity.com historiclecompton@gmail.com

FREE MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION – Fourth Tuesday through November, 9am, 1231 NW Eugene St. Randel Ministries, Inc., in partnership with Harvesters and Family of God Church will be conducting its monthly food distribution. No ID or proof of income required, first come first served. Distributing several tons of fresh produce and other items to families in need. (785) 234-1111 www.RandelMinistries.com

150 CHRISTMAS TREES & ORNAMENT DISPLAY – Nov. 1-Jan. 1, 10am-4pm Wed-Sat. & 1-5pm Sun. at Territorial Capital Museum, 640 E. Woodson, Leocompton. Over 170 Christmas Trees decorated in antique, Victorian, vintage and theme décor – including turn of the century and WW II era decorations, a barb-wire tree and feather trees. Also tour Constitution Hall, a National Landmark 785-887-6148. lecomptonkansascity.com

FESTIVAL OF TREES – Nov. 22 - Dec. 4, 10-6, Fairlawn Plaza. Features trees & wreaths beautifully decorated by talented designers. silent auction and Sweet Shoppe featuring fabulous homemade treats. For info: www.slifestivaloftrees.com

TARC's WINTER WONDERLAND – Nov. 24-Dec. 31, 6-

10pm. Lake Shawnee, 3435 SE East Edge Rd. View dazzling holiday light displays, featuring one million lights, while winding through a 2-mile scenic drive. Advanced Tickets are available: TARC, 2701 SW Randolph. 785.506-8720

KNIGHTS OF LIGHTS – Thursday to Sunday, Nov. 27-Dec. 31, 5-10pm, Rain or Shine, Kansas City Renaissance Festival grounds, Bonner Springs. 26 thousand shimmering lights nestled among a wondrous & whimsical world of animated scenes and electrifying special effects. Drive through 22 acres of holiday magic featuring Penelope the Magnificent Fire-breathing Dragon, enchanted castle ruins and Magical Tree House. Become emersed in the beauty of a 25ft Christmas Tree and Snowflake Chapel, then send off your letter in Santa's Mailbox! www.kcrenfest.com/2021-knights-of-lights/

ZOO LIGHTS – Nov. 27 to Dec. 30, 5pm, Topeka Zoo. Visitors will stroll around the zoo and enjoy twinkling lights, dazzling displays, festive activities, and of course... Santa Claus! 2 and under free; \$6 for children; \$8 for adults.

FREE BREAKFAST LAST SUNDAY EACH MONTH – Nov. 28, 8am-12pm, VFW Philip Billard Post 1650, 3110 SW Huntoon. Free breakfast to all that come through the door. Pancakes, sausage, eggs, coffee, juice and some times biscuits & gravy. Donations are accepted and will go to helping vets in the Topeka area. vfw1650seniorvice@gmail.com; 785-383-2997

SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY in Topeka – Nov. 27.

SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY SALE – Nov. 27, 8am, Capital Gymnastics & Athletics, 3740 SW South Park Ave. Gift Cards \$100 value for \$80, \$75 value for \$60, \$50 value for \$40 – will be for purchase from 8-Noon in person. (785) 2664151; www.cgatopeka.com; office@cgatopeka.com

AFTER WALK AT THE HAWK – Dec. 3, 7:30-9pm, Jayhawk Theatre. No Good Johnny in concert, \$5 at the door.

LADIES DAY OUT – Dec. 4, 10-3, Ag Hall

SHINE TOGETHER TOPEKA – Every Plaza. A Community Light Display with a small taste of what awaits for you throughout the rest of town!

TOPEKA FREECON COMIC AND TOY SHOW – Dec 4, 10am-4pm, Lundgren Elementary, 1020 NE Forest. Topeka Youth Project event. Game & Comics Drive for Highland Park High School. Cash Donations for TYP Intern Programs. Youth Court: Heroes on Trial. 10 comic book artists. 30 vending spaces. For more information contact director@topekayouthproject.com

MIRACLE ON KANSAS AVENUE PARADE – Dec. 4, 3pm, Downtown Topeka. Tree-lighting at 5:30pm, lighted parade at 6pm. www.topekapartnership.com/events/

LAWRENCE OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS PARADE –

Dec. 4, 11am, Downtown Lawrence, Massachusetts St. Authentic horse-drawn carriages is the perfect way to kick off the holiday season. Cozy up with hot cocoa and blankets. info@lawrencechristmasparade.org; 785-856-4437

HOLIDAY STOCKING DECORATING – Dec. 6, 6-9pm, Norsemen Brewing Company. Cost is \$25 and will include a beer, fountain drink, or trip through a hot cocoa station. Includes Stocking and supplies to decorate it with. Kitchen will be open until 8. Family friendly event

C5Alive "CHRISTMAS" LUNCHEON – Dec. 9, 11:30-1 at Fairlawn Plaza Mall.

Cost: \$10 for C5 members & first-time guests who RSVP, \$12 at the door

• \$15 for non-members & repeat guests.

• Please RSVP to info@C5Alive.org, so we know how much food is needed!

Open to the public – Put POWER in your life with great food, great speakers and great company! Invite a friend to join you!

SAVE THE DATE: C5 POWER Luncheon, Jan. 13, 11:30-1.

BALLET MIDWEST PRESENTS The Nutcracker – Dec. 10-12, at TPAC. 45th annual presentation of this holiday favorite. Tickets through Ticketmaster or at TPAC

RED STOCKING BREAKFAST – Dec. 11, 7:30-10:30am, The Pennant, 915 S. Kansas Ave. Cost is \$15 in advance at www.kcsl.org/RedStockingHome.aspx and \$18 at the door. Children 10 & under eat free. Benefits Kansas Childrens Service League's child abuse prevention programs and services.

FRIDAY FLICKS: HOME ALONE – Dec. 10, 6pm, Every Plaza

MANNHEIM STEAMROLLER CHRISTMAS SHOW – Dec. 18, 7pm, Stormont Vail Events Center.

THE NUTCRACKER BY KANSAS BALLET ACADEMY– Dec. 18 at 7pm & 19 at 1pm, TPAC. Tickets available at the TPAC box office or Ticketmaster.com. For info: 785-234-2787

PUT A BOW ON IT – Dec. 18, 7:30pm, Jayhawk Theatre. Lucero Padilla holiday show. Music, laughs, and food and drinks by Norsemen Brewing Company.

OLD PRAIRIE TOWN CHRISTMAS – Dec. 18, 4-7pm, Old Prairie Town at Ward-Meade Park. Visit the Lingo Livery Stable to make magic reindeer feed, help an elf on the railroad hand car, write a letter to Santa at the depot, take pictures at the selfie station, hear a story read by a local celebrity in the school house and seasonal music and dancing in the church. Shop for nostalgic gifts or treats in the Mulvane General Store and Potwin Drug Store. \$5 @ the gate per person

SANTA SUPPER – Dec. 19, 4 - 7pm, The Brownstone, 4020 NW 25th St. Winter wonderland complete with carriage rides & Santa's workshop! To maintain social distancing, we are selling tickets based on check-in/dinner time. Each ticket will include the following - Check-in at The Brownstone (4020 NW 25th St.) to gain your event punch card. Enjoy live tunes and grab a delicious dinner to start off the holiday celebration. Jump in line to take a short carriage ride and end at The Milestone Market (right across the street from The Brownstone) where Santa will be ready for photos! Feel free to grab a photo on your phone too. All photos will be available digitally after the event. The carriage will pick you up after your photo and return you to The Brownstone. Adult beverages, hot chocolate, and more will also be available for purchase. <https://www.facebook.com/events/742666529648088/>

AN EVENING WITH CHEVY CHASE – Dec. 23, 7pm, TPAC. Chevy Chase live on stage plus audience Q & A following a screening of National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. Tickets at Ticketmaster.com or the Box Office.

C5Alive *Developing and Uniting Christian Leadership*

• Business • Non-profits • Churches

*Membership open to all Christian businesses, non-profits, churches & individuals!
Luncheons & Tradeshows & other events open to the general public!*


C5Alive POWER Luncheons are held 2nd Thur. each mo.

Dec. 9, 11:30-1: "Christmas"
Luncheon at Fairlawn Plaza Mall

RSVP to info@C5Alive.org. Open to the public.


- Jan. 13: **POWER** Luncheon
- Feb. 10: **Valentine** Luncheon at Fairlawn Plaza
- Mar. 10: **POWER** Luncheon
- Apr. 14: **POWER** Luncheon
- Apr. 16: **EASTERFEST**

For info: www.C5Alive.org or [Facebook.com/C5Alive](https://www.facebook.com/C5Alive)



The Nutcracker

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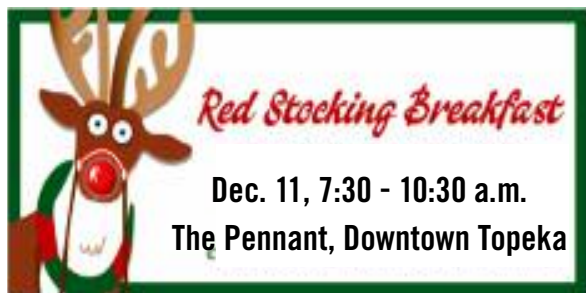
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December 10, 11 & 12

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Red Stocking Breakfast
Dec. 11, 7:30 - 10:30 a.m.
The Pennant, Downtown Topeka

music all centered around the word of God for 45 minutes. A free family worship event. For info: Emily Moore, 272-6322 or ftxhelawn@gmail.com.
BOY'S TRAIL LIFE & AMERICAN HERITAGE GIRLS TROUPE - Every Mon. 6pm, Cornerstone Comm. Ch., 7620 SW 21st. Faith-based scouting programs, age 5-18. Register at cornerstone-

MEETINGS & CLASSES

CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA MEETING - Join other concerned individuals to pray and unite in action for Shawnee Co. and our Nation. For info about monthly meetings: 785-260-5659 or ks.cwfa.org.

HEAT UP TOPEKA - Free fitness classes; learn and build healthy social & eating habits. Held at Trinity Presbyterian Church, 4746 SW 21st St. Florence Crittenton: 785-233-0516 www.flocritkansas.org

TOPEKA TREASURE HUNTERS CLUB - 3rd Sun. of each month except May, Sep. & Dec., 7pm, Papan's Landing Senior Center, 618 NW Paramore St. Family Memberships include children & grandchildren up to 18 yrs. A place to meet friends to discuss all aspects of Metal Detecting, club business, plus socializing & entertainment.

DEAF WORSHIP SERVICE - 3rd Sun., 3pm, Faith Lutheran Church, 17th & Gage. Also, every Sun. 9:30am service is interpreted.

FAMILY EXPERIENCE (FX) - Every Sun., 6:01pm, Fairlawn Church of Nazarene, 730 Fairlawn Rd. A time of high intensity, action packed, skit mania, worship

topeka.com. 478-2929.

TOPEKA MANKIND PROJECT - Mondays, 6:30pm, 2112 SW Morningside Rd. Supports men in becoming their best selves, including physical, mental & emotional health & wellness. Open to any man. Brian Thomas: brian.thomas01@gmail.com or 785-727-9439

THE FORCE (Students Taking Action) - 1st Mon. & 3rd Tue., 6:30-8pm, Safe Streets, 2209 SW 29th St. Committed to being alcohol & drug free. Associate with like-minded peers, plan activities & get involved in the community. Youth 12-18 invited. 266-4606.

HEARTLAND HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS - 2nd Mon., 11:45am-1pm. Promoting neighborhood well-being by mobilizing people, ideas & resources. 233-1365.

TOPEKA LINCOLN CLUB - 1st Tue. of month, 7pm, Topeka Public Library. Discussing our greatest President, Abraham Lincoln, and his times. The public is welcome. For info, contact Kirk Nystrom 235-6977.

OUR LADY OF THE FAITHFUL - 1st Tues., 6:30pm Mass followed by Dinner, Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church. A Catholic group for those in their 20-30s. Michelle Ann 580-3071 or ourladyofthefairful@gmail.com. Facebook: "Ourladyofthefairful."

SUNRISE OPTIMIST CLUB - Every Tue., 6:30am, Sunrise Optimist Complex, 720 NW 50th St. 246-1291.

MENNINGER BIBLE CLASSES - Tuesdays 11am-12:30. Amerus Room, YWCA, 225 West 12th. A new study group for Year One of Flo Menninger's course on Four Years through the Bible. Read and discuss Genesis through First Kings. Nominal charge for materials. For info call the YWCA at 233-1750 or Clara Gamache at 785-408-5433. (The Bible study is also taught on Sat. mornings on 101.5 FM radio.)

FRATERNAL ORDER OF EAGLES Aerie 4319: First & Third Tue. 7pm; Auxiliary: Third & Fourth Tue. month 6pm, 2941 SE Fremont Street. The Fraternal Order of Eagles is an international non-profit organization uniting fraternally in the spirit of liberty, truth, justice, and equality, to make human life more desirable by lessening its ills and promoting peace, prosperity, gladness and hope. www.foe.com 785-266-7307

O.W.L.S. (Older Wise Loving Saints) - meets the second Tuesday of the month. Location varies and can be found at www.faithfamilylife.com

S.W.A.G. (Spiritual Warriors Anointed by God) youth group - Wed at 7:00 p.m. 3710 NW Topeka Blvd.

AWANA - Every Wed., 6-8pm, First Southern Baptist Church, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 272-0443.

AWANA - Every Wed., 6:30pm, Bethel Baptist Church, 4011 N. Kansas Ave. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 286-0467.

AWANA - Every Wed., 6:30-8pm, Auburn Christian Church. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 256-2515.

TOPEKA PRAYER GROUP - Every Wed., 6:30pm, 409 SW Buchanan St. Do you believe that God hears and answers prayers? Do you believe Jesus wants to lead His people by His Holy Spirit? Come join us in prayer as we seek His face for answers and direction. 785-845-1948; holmie2@sbcglobal.net

VIP LUNCHEON FOR SENIORS - Every Wed., 10:45 Bible Study and meal at Noon, Topeka Church of the Brethren, 3201 NW Rochester Rd. (1 mile north of Dillon's North). FREE lunch with Christian fellowship, devotions & entertainment provided by Topeka North Outreach. Free will donations accepted. For info: 785-224-8803 or vip@topekanorthoutreach.org

MACHINE EMBROIDERY CLUB - 1st Wed., 9am-3pm, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 2021 SW 29th Street (east door). Anyone with an Embroidery machine is invited to attend, there are no dues or formal meeting agenda. Lunch is on your own. Teach each other, enjoy fellowship & complete projects. Call 379-5159.

SAFE STREETS MEETING - 1st Wed., 11:45am, Great Overland Station 266-4606.

STUDENT IMPACT - Every Wed., 6-8pm, First Southern Baptist, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Youth games, teaching, worship, small groups. For info: 272-0443.

CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE - Every Thurs. 7-9pm, First Southern Baptist, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Worship for college students.

INTENTIONAL MOM - 1st & 3rd Thurs., 9-11:30am, Topeka Bible Church Auditorium, 1135 SW College. For all moms, helping them to be intentional! 234-5545.

OPERATION BACKPACK - 1st Thurs., 6pm, Indian Creek Elementary School, 4303 NE Indian Creek Rd. Volunteers gather to assemble Weekend Snack Sacks for low-income students. No assembly in August. Sponsored by Topeka North Outreach. For info: 286-1370.

TOPEKA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY - 4th Thurs., 7pm, Topeka Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th St. No program in Nov. or Dec. Promotes & stimulates the education, knowledge & interest of the membership & the public in family history, genealogical records & research. 233-5762 or tgstopeka.org.

KINGDOM ADVISORS TOPEKA AREA STUDY GROUP - 3rd Thu., 11:30am, Northland Christian Church, 3102 NW Topeka Blvd. Christian financial professionals: financial planners, accountants, attorney's & insurance agents invited. kingdomadvisors.org or Jim Hanna, james.c.hanna@ampf.com or 357-6278 x19.

TOPEKA (Downtown) OPTIMIST CLUB - Every Fri., noon, Top of the Tower. Serving the youth of Topeka. Anyone welcome. For info: 272-1099 or fostern60@yahoo.com.

TOPS (Taking Off Pounds Sensibly) - Every Fri. 8:30 to 10:00 am at 3221 SW Burlingame Road. 800-932-8677. Support for your weight loss journey. tops.org

A GOOD YARN CLUB - 2nd & 4th Sat., 9-11am, Wana-maker Rd Baptist Church, 2700 SW Wana-maker. Doing Good for Others: Knitting & Crocheting for Local Charities, free yarn, needles, hooks & patterns. All are welcome. Anne, 272-9249 or kittens812@sbcglobal.net

BIBLE QUIZZING - 1st Sat. Learn God's Word & have fun with area Christian youth age 9-19. YFC/YEA style quizzing & rules. 913-593-6427 or biblequizzing.org.

MONTHLY SCORE MEETING - 1st Sat., 8-9:30am, Washburn Tech, 5724 SW Huntoon (enter east doors facing Huntoon). No RSVP or fee is required. Small business owners are invited to a Breakfast Roundtable discussion with members of SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives). Info: 234-3049.

TOPEKA GREAT LIGHT AGLOW - For meeting info contact Vickie Lynch at greatlighttopeka@gmail.com.

MIDLAND CARE GRIEF SUPPORT Groups: Building A, 200 SW Frazier Circle; Every Mon., 4-5pm: 12 Week Adult Group for Recent Loss 1st and 3rd Thu., 10:30am & 5:30pm—Ongoing Adult Group 1st and 3rd Thu., 5:30pm: Ongoing Young Adult Group (4-18 years of age) For All Groups: Call for start dates and info packet. Group and individual grief support available upon request. Info: 785-232-2044 ext.341

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS - Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging provides an opportunity for caregivers to get together and share their ideas and feelings. 2nd Monday of the month, 3:30pm, Topeka public library, Anton Rm. 3rd Friday of the month, 12 noon, Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, 2910 SW Topeka

ABORTION RECOVERY SUPPORT - Providing services for women & men who suffer from Post-Abortion Syndrome. Kay Lyn at KLcarson20@cox.net.

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS - for friends & families of alcoholics. 785-409-3072 or topekaanon.org

PURSUIT FOR SEXUAL PURITY - Men struggling with pornography & sexual addiction. This bible study/accountability group uses the Pure Desire book by Ted Roberts. For info: 249-9509. All inquiries confidential.

ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUPS - Monthly support group meetings for caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. All of our programs have moved from in-person to virtual.

Caregiver support group via Skype 9:30am every other Wednesday. Email Hayley Young at hdyoung@alz.org or call 785.379.3067 for the meeting link and other info.

Caregiver Support Group via Google Hangouts, 4:30pm every other Wednesday. Email Hayley Young at hdyoung@alz.org or call 785.379.3067 for the meeting link and other info.

BIKERS AGAINST CHILD ABUSE - NE Kansas Chapter (B.A.C.A.) 3rd Sun., 4 pm American Legion, 3800 SE

Michigan. Open to the public. For info: 817-5801.

CELEBRATE RECOVERY - Every Mon. 7-9pm at Topeka First Church, 500 SW 27th, Bldg 'B'. Healing our hurts, habits, and hangups. Learning to grow in a Christ-like maturity.

COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS/BEREAVED PARENTS GROUP - Meets 4th Mon. in Formation classroom at Most Pure Heart of Mary, 17th & Stone. Discussion starts 7pm; fellowship & refreshments 8:30. 272-4895

GRIEF SUPPORT - Sponsored by Heartland Hospice for those dealing with death or major loss:

1st Mon., 5:30-7:30pm, Individual appointments; other times are available. Call Terry at (785)230-6730.

3rd Thurs., 11am, Lunch After Loss, Paisano's Ristorante, Fleming Place, SW 10th & Gage Blvd., For reservations or info: 785-171-6500.

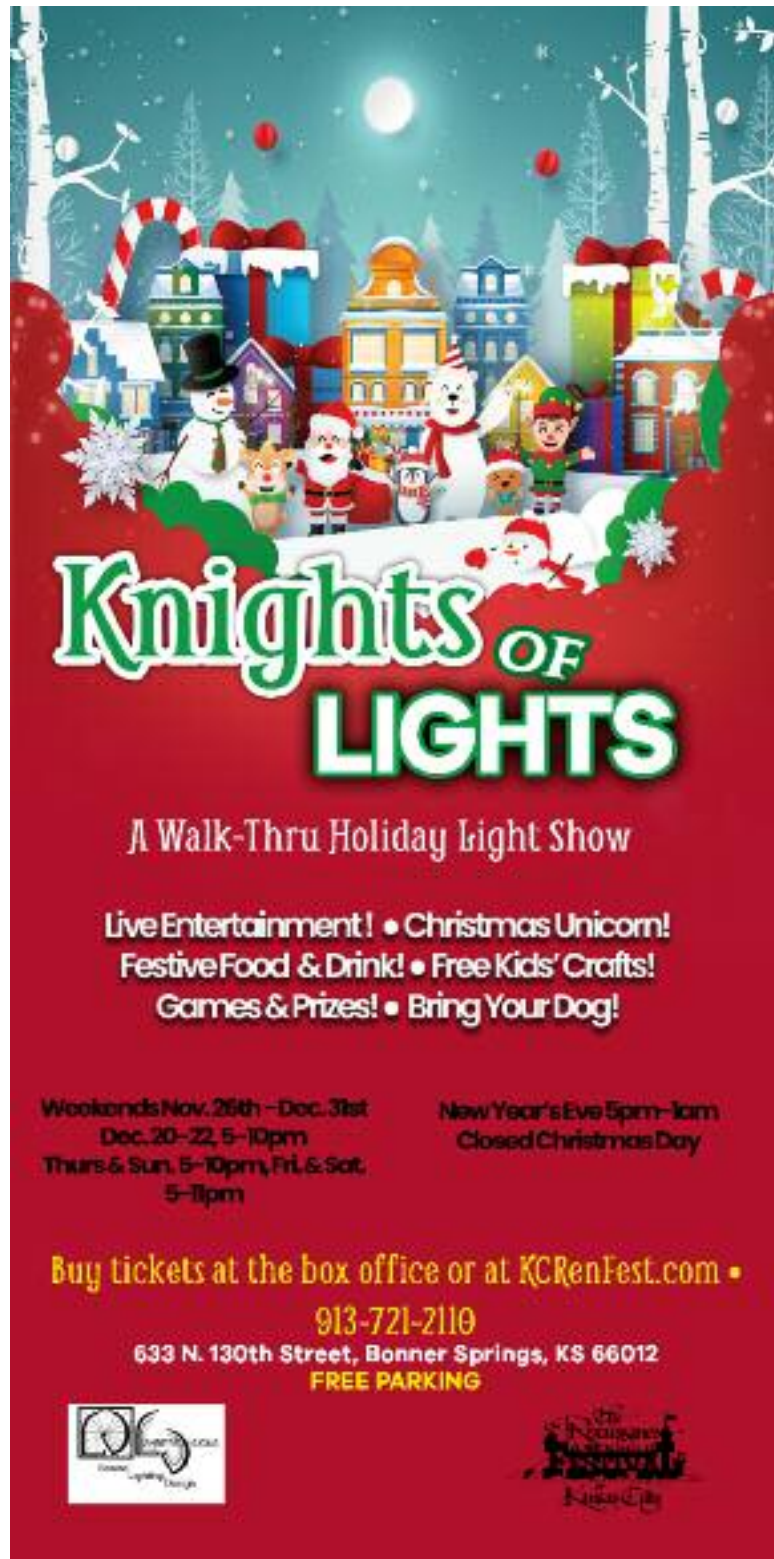
EMOTIONS ANONYMOUS: a 12-step program for those suffering with emotional instability such as depression, anxiety, grief, etc. Meets every Tues. at Grace Episcopal Cathedral, Noon-1pm. For info: Sharon 785-633-7764

FIBROMYALGIA & CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME SUPPORT GROUP - 2nd Tue., 7-9pm. First Congregational Church, 17th and Collins. For info: Randy at 785-969-4038 or TopekaCFS@outlook.com.

GRANDPARENT/RELATIVE CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP - 3rd Tue., 6:30-8pm, 2nd floor meeting room, St. Francis Hosp., 1700 SW 7th. For info: Sharla, 286-2329; Jennie (English/Spanish) 231-0763.

"HEALING AFTER THE SUICIDE OF A LOVED ONE" ("HEAL") - or Survivors of Suicide" (SOS). 1st & 3rd Tue., 7-8:30pm, Pozee Education Center of Stormont Vail Hospital, 1505 SW 8th St. Serving anyone who has lost a loved one by suicide.

PRISON OUTREACH MINISTRY - Every Tue., 7-9pm, Topeka Women's Prison, 815 Rice Rd. Reaching out to those who can't come in, finding freedom behind bars, inspiring inmates to seek salvation during a difficult



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SUPPORT GROUPS

time. Providing support & guidance through the Holy Spirit to offer strength. Director: Don Garner, 286-0489 or faithfamilyministries@gmail.com.

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS – Every Wed, 7pm, St. Francis Hospital, meeting room #8.

MOMS-IN-TOUCH PRAYER GROUP – Every Wed., 2:30-3:30pm, Library at Cair Paravel-Latin School. Experience God's power through prayer as we lift our students, teachers, staff, administrators & board up to the Lord. For info: 357-0369.

DIVORCECARE PROGRAMS – (For updates check www.divorcecare.org) Locations and times:
 WED. – 6:30pm, Topeka Bible Church, 1101 SW Mulvane. Cost: \$15. Child care provided. For info: 379-0505 or www.divorcecare.org.
 WED. – 6:45 – 8:45pm, Walnut View Christian Church, 3634 SE 37th St. (just East of 37th & Croco). Cost: \$10 registration (scholarships available). The video seminar series featuring some of the nation's foremost experts on divorce and recovery topics, combined with support group discussion of the materials. Complimentary child care children up to the fifth grade. Info: 266-7550 or walnutviewcc@att.net.

WED. – 6:30pm, Northland Christian Church, 3102 NW Topeka Blvd. No Cost. 286-1204, www.northland.cc

PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP – 1st Thurs., 7pm, Saint Francis Hospital 2nd floor conf. room of the cancer unit. For info: 266-9533.

CELEBRATE RECOVERY – Every Fri., 6pm, 1912 Gage Blvd. A Christ-centered program, based on 8 principles found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Applying these Biblical principles, become free from addictive & dysfunctional behaviors. crtopekaks.org.

NICOTINE ANONYMOUS – Every Fri., 6:30pm, Town & Country Church Renaissance Room, 4925 SW 29th St., use west door cross red foot bridge. A fellowship of men &

women helping each other to live free of nicotine. No fees. 402-321-486; Laboomaha@att.net

TOPEKA NAR-ANON FAMILY GROUP – For families & friends who are affected by someone else's narcotic addiction. Every Sat., noon-1:15 pm, rm. A, 1st Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar, enter on S. side, door A. www.naranonmidwest.org

COVENANT KEEPERS – 3rd Sat. Group for people who want to see their marriage saved when their spouse wants out. For info: 816-453-0884 or 816-966-0927.

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Blue Christmas: A Service Of Hope And Healing to be Held

A local Topeka church will hold a Blue Christmas service of hope and healing, on Sunday, December 5 at 3pm. The service is for those whose heart is heavy because of burdens this past year or years.

The public is invited to come and listen to words of hope and healing. There will also be music,

scripture readings, prayers, meditation, anointing, and the Lord's Supper to acknowledge the loss you are feeling and the assurance that God is at your side.

Stephen Ministers will be assisting at the service and will be available after the service to listen if you would like to share your con-

cerns.

For more information, contact Pastor Neil Buono or Mary Hume (parish nurse) at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church 785-271-0808. The service will be held at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 3725 SW Wanamaker Dr., Topeka Ks 66614.

Alpha Christian Children's Home & School
www.alphachristianchildrenshome.com

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“Christmas with The Chosen” already setting sales records

The television series “The Chosen” continues to grow in popularity. More than \$1.5 million worth of tickets were sold in the first 12 hours for an in-theater showing of its upcoming Christmas show.

“Christmas with The Chosen: The Messengers,” which features actors from “The Chosen” series, will be shown on December 1 and 2. Producer Derral Eves says that viewers can expect an amazing experience that showcases the birth of Christ through the eyes of Mary and Joseph and highlights the hardships they endured.

“We’re giving symbolism to the importance of certain things around the nativity that most people just kind of push aside, or they might sing about it, but not really have the context of what that means,” Eves said. “With ‘The Chosen,’ we try to do things disruptive. We try to do things outside the box. And we do believe that sometimes you need to do that to get more eyeballs on certain things.”

“The Messengers” will feature performances from popular Christian artists and groups including Phil Wickham,



Maverick City Music, for King and Country, Brandon Lake, Bryan and Katie Torwalt and others. Show creators want the event to be a worshipful experience celebrating the Christmas season, Eves said.

“What I love is we don’t necessarily view this as a special episode; it’s more of a way to worship and to gather together in a unique way,” he said. “And that’s kind of how we’re approaching this. It will be fun to see how people use this opportunity to gather their friends, their family and come

together in the theaters and see something that was made specifically for that.”

Through the Christmas special, creators hope viewers will connect with the gospel personally, whether through song or the spoken word.

“We all connect differently, and so we wanted to really look at people that connect visually or through music or through spoken word and bring that together in an experience that should build upon each other and make a very strong piece for people to really be moved,” Eves said.

Dean Cain Teams With Damascus Road Productions for New

Former Superman actor Dean Cain teamed up with Damascus Road Productions for a new faith-based movie, IN GOD’S TIME.

The movie is based on Robert Fraley’s book, “Blessings of Obedience” and tells the true story of Bob and Barbara Fraley, who adopted six children.

Deadline reported:

The film written and produced by Cain will tell the true story of Bob and Barbara Fraley, who adopted six children following the tragic car accident of a family friend. Rather than split up the family unit, the Fraleys petitioned the state courts to keep all six siblings together and join with their existing family of five, as all 11 traveled across the country to start a new life together.

Pic marks the third collaboration between Cain and producers Ryan and Heather O’Quinn of Damascus Road. They



most recently wrapped production on Cain’s feature directorial debut, the family comedy Little Angels, which he also penned.

Despite his time in Hollywood, Cain said that family is his number one priority. Movieguide® previously reported:

Since Dean Cain’s role as the iconic comic book character Superman in the ’90s TV show LOIS & CLARK, the actor has become a hallmark of conservative values in Hollywood. The actor, director, and writer’s heart for moral and faith-based movies like GOD’S NOT DEAD and FAITH UNDER FIRE is a breath of fresh air for many moviegoers.

Cain revealed that his upbringing in Hollywood helped him create compelling

movies that champion faith and morality in a saturated market.

“You know, I grew up around a lot of actors – people like Chris Penn, Sean Penn, Rob Lowe, Charlie Sheen, Emilio Estevez, Holly Robinson – but I didn’t think about becoming an actor myself. I went to college instead; I was a History major at Princeton,” Cain told Wide Open Country. “But I had actually done a number of films beforehand because my father was a director and I learned a lot just by being on set. Every job that ever had to be done on set, I would do: being a gopher, getting coffee, working in the edit room, holding the boom – I did all sorts of jobs, and so I came to understand the process of filmmaking. I was raised around film.”

“It’s just a balance between work and travel. And I have to balance it all times. [Son Christopher] comes with me on some of the shoots. I grew up the son of a director and grew up on sets myself, so I was the kid getting dragged around from this set to that set and I loved it. There’s something about it which is really interesting.” Cain said.

–Movieguide



LeAnn Rimes says new album 'God's Work' is an 'inspirational record': We need to 'love one another'

LeAnn Rimes is set to release her next studio album, “God’s Work,” in early 2022 which is a little over 25 years after she dropped her debut album “Blue” at just 14 years old.

“Blue” earned Rimes her first Grammy Award as a teen, making her the youngest individual artist to win a Grammy and the first country artist to win best new artist in 1997.

Over the last three years, the 39-year-old singer/songwriter has been hard at work writing and rewriting new songs in order to really capture what she calls an “inspirational” record.

Rimes spoke with Fox News about “God’s Work,” the anniversary of “Blue,” and how her longtime struggle with psoriasis affected her creatively.

Fox News: What was the inspiration behind the album title “God’s Work?” In what way do you hope this album connects with your fans?

LeAnn Rimes: I think the title speaks to, I think, what we’re all here to do if we so choose. It is a bit of an inspirational record. I actually have “God’s Work” tattooed on my arm because I do believe that we are all a part of that and here to put down the doctrine and our own beliefs of duality and our differences and actually love one another and create a new world. And that really is what the record is about – music speaking to the times and the importance of each and every one of our places in creating a better world for one another. So yeah, it’s a deep record and it was really fun to create. We’re almost finished with it and I can’t wait for people to hear it.

Fox News: What were some themes you tackle while writing new songs?

Rimes: I’m a full believer that we are human and there is so much beauty in our humanity and we are completely holy at the same time. And to be able to embrace both sides of that coin is what makes us whole.

Fox News: When you’re creating new music, who hears it first?

Rimes: My husband [Eddie Cibrian] usually because we have a piano in the center of the house. And so we write a lot here. So he will usually hear the whole process. If I finish a song that day and he’s like humming it, then I’ve done my job. He always there listening and he’s so cute. Somebody the other day was saying, the best part of watching my show is watching him watch me, which is so sweet. He

really gets into it. He’s super, super supportive. And he’ll let me know what he feels about [songs]. I love that. I love having that honest communication.

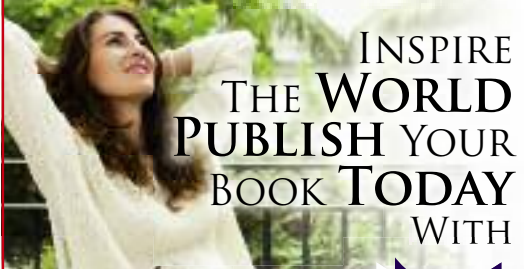
Fox News: “Blue” is celebrating its 25th anniversary. What was a great piece of advice you received as a teen star that you’ve carried with you all these years later?

Rimes: I don’t remember much of that time in my life. It was such a whirlwind. I know the piece of advice that I would always give myself, and back then I was so especially for such a young child, so self-assured and I was very internally driven. I really listened to my intuition and was very creative and kind of led from just what I felt. Throughout these last 25 years, I’ve had so many people in my ear and so many opinions. At some point in this journey of I’ve kind of started to follow the advice of others more than I started to listen to myself and I think that these last several years have been a returning home to my own intuition and my own trust in myself. If there’s any advice that I would have given to myself back then, it’s to hang on to that because you know what’s best for you. You know what you want to create, and listening to that inner voice is super important.

Fox News: You’ve been very open and vulnerable about your struggle with psoriasis. Now you’re partnering with Novartis and Cyndi Lauper on the podcast, PsO in the Know, about psoriasis. How has talking about psoriasis helped you mentally and emotionally?

Rimes: I used to feel very isolated my whole life as a kid and like I was always hiding. So there was an almost split version of me, you know, this persona that I’ve presented to the world and then there’s this human living behind that persona. It was really amazing to be able to tear that mask away and merge with myself and all my humanity. And I think I have written about that a lot in my music, and it has influenced the way that I create.

I get to use my voice in different ways to connect with people. I feel like what I’m here to do, you know, like the celebrity and the music and all of that is an added bonus to what we’re really here to do with each other, right? [We’re here] to connect and for that vulnerability to be what connects us.




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Camp's new album a picture of what 'God's done in my heart'

By Michael Foust

For 20 years, Jeremy Camp's life has been one of touring and writing songs ... and then touring and writing songs again.

Until the pandemic hit, that is.

When COVID-19 shut down public events in the spring of 2020, Camp found himself at home and far away from the tour busses, airplanes and concert stages that were his life for two decades. Without a live show to play -- and with plenty of time on his hands -- Camp had more time to pray and think deeply about the biggest issues in life. Like faith and family.

Camp's newest album, *When You Speak*, includes songs written during those introspective moments with God. Camp says he sensed God was telling him, "I want to teach you some things. So be open."

It has 13 tracks -- the most ever for one of his LPs.

"I had a whole year to just sit and process through all the things that I'm learning," Camp said. "So there's a depth, I believe, to this album for every song. ... There's a depth in this album, overall, from start to finish, that I think is just probably greater than what I've done since I first started."

The album is a mixture of worship songs, pop, synth-pop and rock. The title track has enjoyed more than 15 weeks on Billboard's Hot Christian

Songs chart.

"I've been telling people, 'You have to listen from start to finish instead of just being like, 'Oh, that's the 'radio' song.' That is just the tip of the iceberg of things that God's done in my heart. ... We're really excited about the diversity of the album. ... I love different styles of music."

When You Speak is the 13th studio album from Camp, who has 41 No. 1 radio hits across all formats.

One of Camp's radio hits, *I Still Believe*, was the basis for the 2020 movie of the same name. It opened at No. 3 in theaters and was the No. 1 movie in America on its first night.

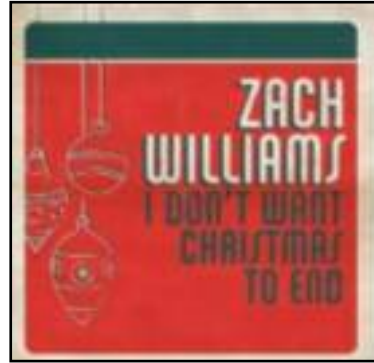
Camp, though, says he rejects the idea of writing songs for radio. For Camp, writing music is a process of listening to God.

"Early on, I would go into writing sessions with people. And if they were like, 'Oh, man, that would be good for radio,' I would kind of shut down. And I wouldn't want to write with them again. Because I know that you can have a song that does well on radio, but it doesn't connect with the heart. ... I'm looking to write a song that connects in people's hearts. And if it does well on radio [then] that's because it's connected that way."

Learn more about *When You Speak* and Camp's upcoming tour at JeremyCamp.com.

It's beginning to sound a lot like Christmas with ten new albums

December is just around the corner, and Christmas music can't be far behind. At least 10 Christian artists have released new albums.



Zach Williams is putting his own spin on Christmas classics such as "Mary, Did You Know?" and "Christmas Time Is Here." The album, "I Don't Want Christmas to End," was recorded at Fame studio in Muscle Shoals, Ala. "We knew we wanted it to have a rock 'n' roll edge, a southern rock feel," he said. "That's when we got the idea to go down to Muscle Shoals."



Voctave, an acapella group based in Florida, is best known for including several performers from the Voices of Liberty ensemble singing at the American Adventure pavilion in Walt Disney World's EPCOT. The 11-member group also frequently covers contemporary Christian music and often partners with Christian singers. The album "Spirit of the Season" features Avalon's Jody McBrayer and southern gospel singer Mark Lowry.



Life Church Worship, the praise team at Life Church in Edmond, Okla., has released a Christmas worship album. "Gloria" contains 10 songs that proclaim the same truth: Jesus, the Son of God, deserves all our praise. He is our truth. He is our hope. And we'll give Him all the glory and honor forever. It's available for free download, too, includ-

ing for use in your church service. The church says "Gloria" is designed to connect Christmas carols with the worship that you experience on the weekend all year long.



We the Kingdom. The album's title, "A Family Christmas," is appropriate, given the band comprises songwriter Ed Cash, his kids Franni Mae and Martin Cash, his brother Scott, and family friend Andrew Bergthold.



Jason Crabb, a two-time Grammy winner, has released a new three-track Christmas EP produced by the late Tim Akers, known for his work with CeCe Winans and Reba McEntire. The three songs are a teaser for a full Christmas album coming out in 2022.



Cade Thompson, known for the radio hit "Provider," has released his first Christmas EP. "My Christmas EP brings me so much joy as I have been able to put my personality into each single," he said. "There has been so much life and excitement surrounding this project, from the moment we began. The arrangements for these songs bring a fun, fresh and new spin, but keep the traditional heartbeats of two well-known Christmas songs."

Sarah Reeves is debuting her latest Christmas album. Ahead of the "More the Merrier" album release, Reeves released the single "Go Tell It on the Mountain," a song she said



she chose for the record because it chronicles the true meaning of the holiday season.



Jordan Feliz, a Christian recording artist known for his folksy, soulful sound, has released a new Christmas EP with two songs -- the original, "Joy to Our World" and a cover of "Feliz Navidad."

Brian Courtney Wilson's new holiday record, "At Christmas," includes four covers of famous Christmas songs. "I know you have a lot on your plate, but it is really right around the corner," Wilson wrote of the new songs and the coming holiday season. "Might as well get a jump on your playlist."



Gordon Mote joined singer-songwriter Lee Greenwood's band right after he graduated college. He went on to tour with Trisha Yearwood, the Gaither Vocal Band and Porter Wagoner, among others. Mote's latest album, "Christmas Hymns & Carols: Solo Piano," features instrumental renditions of holiday favorites.

Virtual Christian performer JC releases first single, "Biblical Love"

Christian music lovers may enjoy listening to a performer named JC, but they will never see him in concert. A Christian entertainment and media company has released a new single performed by JC, a virtual gospel artist made through artificial intelligence.

Marquis Boone Enterprises created the virtual artist. According to its website, the company was founded in 2013, and its vision is to "captivate, cultivate, commission and coach widespread audiences with solid expressions of God's love through entertainment."

Last month, MBE released its first single, "Biblical Love," which is entirely performed by JC. JC was created to be a "forefront runner in the Metaverse on Meta," according to a news release.

"Relevant Magazine" reported that the gospel song was written, recorded and performed by an algorithm. Moreover, a news release about the song said it is

"about unquantifiable love beyond description or measure -- a love of biblical proportions that transcends to everyone and everything!"

The song originally was performed by British singer and songwriter Calum Scott.

"JC has been in the works for a little over a year, and our plan is to continue to develop and invest resources in this new space," MBE founder Marquis Boone said. "We are excited to be one of the pioneers and trailblazers in this AI space in the gospel industry, and we have more plans to release and develop even more AI artists like this."

JC also has an Instagram account under the username @JC.theartist. The AI singer's bio reads, "They call me JC, I'm just His son. Made in His image and a robot 4 Him! The first Christian/Gospel AI (artificial intelligence) artist. #metaverse."

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50+ Lifestyles A Guide to Enjoying Life in the Best Years

How to Have Happy, Healthy Holidays

Happy Holidays! A time for all the family, friends, gifts, and ...the food. THE FOOD.

How many times have you regretted eating too much during a Thanksgiving, Christmas or other holiday dinner? You know the feeling. You sit down at the table, enjoy all the mouthwatering foods made by generations of family members, and you feel fine, happy, even content. But, then as soon as you stand up from the table, all the food you ate "hits bottom" like a ton of bricks.

Well, make this year different. Eating to maintain and/or lose weight is not so much about what we eat, but rather, how much and how often we eat. In order to be successful, we can't feed our fat cells; we need to turn them off. But where do our fat cells come from?

The average person will have developed 6 billion fat cells by the time they enter adulthood. The job of those fat cells is to store fat to help with body temperature regulation, to store certain vitamins (fat-soluble vitamins), and to use as an energy source. Each fat cell has a significant storage capacity. Collectively, we have the potential to fill those fat cells "to the brim"—not a good thing.

So, let's say that your body is like a fireplace. How do you keep a fire burning? You add more logs to it. This is where so many people get "tripped up" in their nutrition intake or dieting. You must add fuel (food) to keep that fat burning process (metabolism) burning longer and hotter. Don't deprive yourself of food before the holiday meal because you know that the big family dinner is

coming. Likewise, don't skip meals after your holiday dinner to "make up" for what you ate at the dinner table. Instead, here are some practical steps that you can take to increase fat cell burn and decrease fat cell storage.

Eat breakfast. Eating breakfast increases your metabolism. Remember, your metabolism is always working day and night, slowing down during the night. So, eating breakfast helps to tell your body "I'm awake" and "you need to get working this morning". So, skipping breakfast while waiting for that big turkey dinner may not be the best idea. Instead, try having a small breakfast, just enough to get that body going and be full until snack time.

Eat your largest meal earlier in the day (i.e., lunch). Most families already do this on the holiday — the early dinner around 2 or 3pm. That's great because your body's ability to burn fat is greater during daylight hours (when you are moving more and haven't begun to slow down).

AVOID skipping meals, especially lunch. Your fat cells like when you skip a meal because it puts them in charge. They are in charge of your survival process and will start storing fat, as opposed to burning fat the next time you eat.

AVOID overeating. This is the big one for Thanksgiving or Christmas Day. Some tips to help with this are to drink a glass of water before each meal or you can use this hunger scale to help you better determine when it is time to eat or stop eating.

1. You feel weak and light-headed — Your stomach acid is churning.
2. Very uncomfortable — You feel irritable and unable to concentrate
3. Uncomfortable — Your stomach is rumbling
4. Slightly uncomfortable — You just beginning to feel hungry
5. Comfortable — You're neither hunger nor full
6. Perfectly comfortable — You feel satisfied
7. Full — A little bit uncomfortable
8. Uncomfortably full — You feel bloated
9. Very Uncomfortably full — You need to loosen some clothing
10. Stuffed — You are so full you feel nauseous

When eating, you should put your fork down at step 5 (for weight loss) or 6 (to maintain weight). You should eat only at step 4, 3, 2, or 1.

Eat smaller meals more frequently. Instead of eating that really big meal with turkey, stuffing, and the works, try to eat less. Then eat a little more in three hours or so.

Reduce the amount of fat in your diet. We should only be consuming 30% or less of our daily calories from fat. To help decrease the fat in our diets we can add some more fruits and vegetables to our holiday table.



Set a "stop eating" time. Try not to eat beyond 8pm (or three hours prior to bed time). If you do eat at night, it should be a small, low calorie, low fat snack (e.g., rice cake, fruit, or pretzels). Say no to the cold turkey sandwich at midnight.

Finally, eat more slowly. Eating slowly allows your other senses to more fully

enjoy your food. Look at the colors and textures, smell the aromas, then taste the flavors.

Applying these eating tips will encourage you to better enjoy your holiday dinners this year. Then when you greet your guests this season you can say, "Happy HEALTHY Holidays!"

—Dr. Charles Burrage

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5 Ways to Stay Balanced During the Busy Holiday Season

As bright and joyful as the holidays can be, the hustle and bustle of the season can also leave people feeling overwhelmed. Remembering to slow down and find ways to maintain self-care between festivities can make the holidays more enjoyable.

Supporting a healthy lifestyle can be as easy as taking small actions when life gets hectic. Chakra Earthsong, founder of KeVita – makers of prebiotic and probiotic drinks – recommends these tips for integrating self-care during the season. Visit kevita.com for more information.



1. Get the Family Involved – In the midst of the busyness, activities that include the entire family – like scavenger hunts, crafts, making placemats and table decor for holiday meals and cooking – can create special moments that get the feel-good emotions flowing. It's also a good idea to get fresh air, whether it's a walk, bike ride or hike to look at decorations.

2. Take Time for Yourself – Togetherness is one of the best aspects of the winter holidays but making time for favorite personal activities can help keep stress levels low. Whether it's keeping up with hobbies, meditating, exercising or “me time” moments such as wrapping holiday gifts with music playing, these breaks can positively boost your mood and overall productivity.

3. Practice Healthy Habits – Enjoying delicious holiday foods and treats are highlights of the season. One way to balance those indulgences with wellness goals is adding probiotics to daily routines. Probiotics are the live micro-organisms referred to as “good” bacteria that, when consumed in the correct amounts, may provide health benefits, such as improving digestion. Another option to keep your goals on track is adding prebiotic fiber – the fiber that contributes to the good bacteria in the gut. Try an option like KeVita's Prebiotic Shots, a convenient way to support your digestive health and wellness routines on the go.

4. Enjoy Holiday Treats in Moderation – Parties often involve enjoying holiday baked goods, snacking and chatting but can sometimes lead to overindulgence. Practicing mindful or intuitive eating and making smart swaps, such as mocktails over cocktails, are two ways to find balance and enjoy events.

5. Experiment with New Recipes – Most hosts have their own holiday go-to's and traditions, and adding fun beverages is one of the

easiest ways to try something new while also squeezing in functional benefits. One idea is to mix up light and bubbly drinks that offer a festive feel. Earthsong recommends this Lemon Ginger Merry Mocktail, made with KeVita's Sparkling Probiotic Drinks, which contain billions of live probiotics.

Lemon Ginger Merry Mocktail

Prep time: 3 minutes

Yield: 16 ounces

2 tablespoons pomegranate seeds, plus additional for garnish, divided

1 1/2 teaspoons molasses

5 small mint leaves
1 cup KeVita Lemon Ginger Sparkling Probiotic Drink

1/4 cup pomegranate juice

3/4 cup ice

1 mint sprig, for garnish

In glass, muddle 2 tablespoons pomegranate seeds, molasses and mint leaves.

Add probiotic drink, pomegranate juice and ice.

Stir gently.

Garnish with additional pomegranate seeds and mint sprig.

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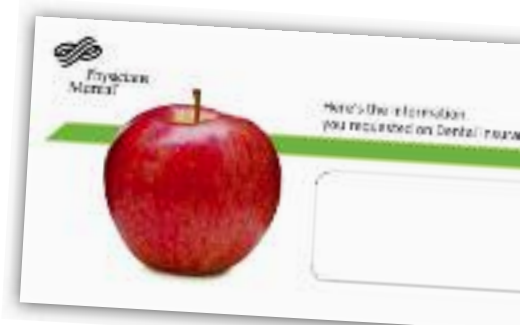
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Chiefs' Chris Jones lives by 'I am Second' mantra



The Kansas City Chiefs picked up a much-needed win on November 21 over the Dallas Cowboys. One big reason was the play of defensive tackle Chris Jones.

The veteran from Mississippi State recorded a career-high 3.5 sacks to go along with five total tackles, two tackles for loss, a fumble recovery and a pass deflection that led to an interception that sealed a 19-9 win over the Cowboys. The win was the fourth in a row for the Chiefs, and it brought their record to 7-4 and put them atop the AFC West.

On Jones' wrist during the game were a couple of wristbands, which proclaim his faith in Jesus. One says "I am Second," a phrase he also has in his Twitter bio. The other says "I play for Him." He says he's worn them since entering the NFL in 2016.

"It's a Christian wristband," Jones told Sports Spectrum ahead of Super Bowl LIV. "I am second, God is first. And I also have a wristband [that says] 'I play for Him.' I play for God, Jesus Christ. I'm a very religious guy. I believe my faith is everything and that's what I live by."

Over the past few seasons, Jones has become a rock on the Kansas City defense, and in June 2020, he was rewarded with a four-year, \$85 million contract, with \$60 million guaranteed.

He shared with Sports Spectrum that his faith has always been important to him, going back to his childhood in Houston, Mississippi.

"My grandma, right behind her house, probably 200 feet, is a church that everyone in my neighborhood, goes to," he said. "I was raised in a church. My grandfather used to play guitar. My grandmother has a singing group, so it was a natural thing for us to go to church every Sunday."

Jones also uses his social media presence to share his

faith and give God the glory, as he did on Sunday following the win: "Thanks you God!"

He also has a tweet pinned from 2017 that serves as a declaration for his faith: "Whoever finds God finds life!!!"

He told Sports Spectrum ahead of Super Bowl LIV why he chooses Jesus over everything else.

"Jesus means the Son of God," he said. "The most perfect human being who sacrificed His life for us, so that right there means a lot so our sins can be forgiven."

—Cole Claybourn / sportsspectrum.com

Tennessee QB Hendon Hooker authors a new Bible-based comic book, 'Scripture for Athletes'

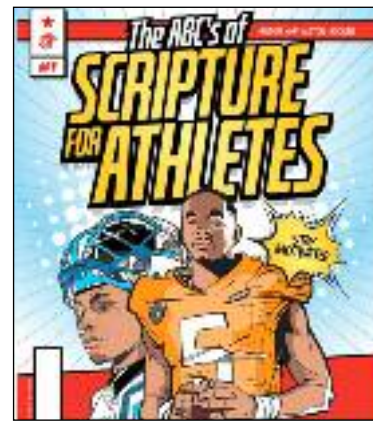
Tennessee quarterback Hendon Hooker can now add "author" to his list of titles. Earlier this week, he and his brother, Alston Hooker, announced the release of a new Scripture book for athletes that they co-created.

"The ABC's of Scripture for Athletes" is a comic-book style book filled with some of their favorite Scriptures and is now available for pre-order. It's tailored toward young athletes and there are also companion flashcards available.

"These are some of our [family's] favorite scriptures to use to stay encouraged while battling the roller coaster events of what life can bring," the book's website reads. "These few scriptures will give athletes or anyone a foundation of God's word to live in their hearts. We encourage you to read them repeatedly until they become an extension of your daily conversation as you pursue what you love."

Hooker, a redshirt senior, is vocal about how important his faith in God and his family are to him. His Twitter bio includes the phrase, "Giving him all the Glory." He also uses the platform to share messages about God and his faith: "The NCAA's new name, image and likeness rules helped make it possible for Hendon and Alston (who is a quarterback at North Carolina A&T) to see the project — which features artwork of the two brothers in their college uniforms — come to fruition."

After a productive career at Virginia Tech, where he started 22 games, the



dual-threat Hendon graduated and transferred to Tennessee, where he'll have another year of eligibility after this season. He told reporters last week that after his bout with COVID-19 last season while at Virginia Tech, he's grateful just to be playing football still.

He underwent a heart screening after

he was released from quarantine, and the tests showed a potential heart issue that was unrelated to COVID. His initial fear was that his football career could be over.

"It really just opened my eyes to show me how blessed I am," Hooker told The Ledger. "Really just gave me the thought that I shouldn't put anything other than God and my family before football. Just because I've put in so much work and have so much love for the game that I shouldn't take it for granted."

Hooker is enjoying a successful first season with the Vols, throwing for 1,894 yards and 21 touchdowns to go with 457 rushing yards and four touchdowns. He and his Volunteers (5-4) have a tall task Saturday as they look to knock off unbeaten No. 1 Georgia at home at Neyland Stadium in Knoxville.

—Cole Claybourn / sportsspectrum.com

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5 Eye-Catching Ways to Update Your Home

Your home is a reflection of you, and your decor should match your tastes. With some simple home upgrades, you can create the perfect space for you and your family, even if your design preferences change over time.

“When we’re designing our ideal home, too often we may only think about what we want others to see and enjoy when they visit,” said Jack Goldman, president and CEO of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA). “The reality is visitors account for less than 1% of your in-home time.”

Consider these ideas to get started:

Add a Fresh Coat of Paint

One of the easiest home improvement projects, a fresh coat of paint can change the entire look of a room. Whether you choose to paint the entire space one new color, opt for an accent wall in a vibrant shade or simply freshen up the trim, paint can go a long way toward adding visual appeal and reflecting your personality. Patterned wallpaper, board and batten, stone



and tile can also be added to create textured accents.

Bring Warmth and Ambience with a Fireplace

“A fireplace is for you and your family, a personal addition that serves you and your household in more ways than you may realize,” Goldman said. “October is National Fireplace Month, a time to celebrate the warmth, comfort and ambience a fireplace or stove can bring to a home.”

More than 3 in 5 homeowners have a fireplace or other hearth product in their homes, according to the HPBA, and including a fireplace in your construction or renovation plans is a gift of warmth, comfort and ambience you can give yourself. Whether it’s a centerpiece for your living room or family room, or an accent to your bedroom, bathroom or study, a fireplace can provide an artful design element for your home and a safe, reliable heat source in the event of unexpected weather.

Update Lighting Fixtures

Proper lighting can bring rooms to life and make spaces look larger and more welcoming. You can brighten up your home in a variety of ways, from strategically placing table and floor lamps that fit your design style to replacing older ceiling and wall-mounted fixtures with more modern styles.

Give Cabinetry a Fresh Look

There are numerous easy ways to update your kitchen and bathroom cabinets to create a more updated look. One of the easiest is swapping out older cabinet pulls and knobs for more modern options. With a variety of finishes – stainless, bronze, brushed nickel, black, copper and more – and styles available, you can match your cabinets to nearly any design style in a matter of minutes. Adding a coat of stain or paint is also a relatively quick and easy way to update some of the most-used spaces in your home without completely replacing the cabinets.

Upcycle Furniture

You can breathe new life into your current furniture by making simple

changes. The easiest would be simply rearranging your pieces and moving some to different rooms to create an updated look. You can also add decorative covers to sofas, chairs, throw pillows and more, or take your upcycling a step further and refinish a bookshelf, table or other wooden furniture with a

fresh coat of paint or stain, or give it a more weathered look with some sandpaper.

Find more ideas for upgrading your home at HPBA.org/house-warming.

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Tecumseh, Kansas 66542
www.highlandheightsccc.com
Jars of Clay Children's Ctr 785-379-9098

2. CHRISTIAN CAVALRY MINISTRIES INT.

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Call about new meeting location for current services.
785-224-5419 • www.church4bikers.org
Sun. School 9:30 am
Sun. Service 10:45 am
Wed. Prayer & Bible Study 7pm

3. TOPEKA BIBLE CHURCH

1101 SW Mulvane St., Topeka
785-234-5545
Worship: 9:00 & 10:30 am
Livestream at 9:00 am
Sunday School & Bible Studies:
9:00 & 10:30 am
www.discovertbc.com

4. NORTHLAND CHRISTIAN CHURCH

3102 NW Topeka Blvd., Topeka
286-1204
Worship Sun. 9:00 & 10:45 AM
www.northland.cc

5. INDIANA AVENUE CHURCH OF CHRIST

"Grace has dispensed, because Grace has redeemed"
3510 SE Indiana Ave., Topeka, Ks. 66605

785-266-7788, www.Indianaavecofc.org
Bible University – Sunday – 9:30 a.m.
Classes for all ages.
Morning Worship – Sunday – 10:45 a.m.
Midweek Bible University – Wed. – 7pm

6. FIRST SOUTHERN BAPTIST

1912 SW Gage, Topeka, KS
272-0443 www.fsbctopeka.org
Sunday Services:
8:30 AM Traditional Worship
9:45 AM Bible study—all ages
11 AM Contemporary Worship

7. TOPEKA BAPTIST CHURCH

"Finding NEW LIFE in CHRIST"
Sunday Worship 9:15 & 10:45am, 6pm
~ Sunday School for all ages ~
4500 SW Gage Blvd., Topeka
785-862-0988
www.topekabaptist.org

8. WANAMAKER ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH

"Being and making disciples of Jesus Christ by the power of the Gospel, to the glory of God"
2700 SW Wanamaker Rd., Topeka
(785) 272-9323 www.wrbcctopeka.com
Traditional Sunday Worship 10:30am & 6pm
Sunday School 9am • Wed. Prayer 7pm

9. GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

310 E 8th St (E. US 56 Hwy)
Overbrook, KS; 785-670-6456
Elvin Dillard, Senior Pastor
Sunday School 9 am; Worship 10 am
www.gccinoverbrook.com
office@gccinoverbrook.com

11. COMMUNITY CHURCH

1819 SW 21st St., Topeka

233-3537 www.CommunityTopeka.com
info@CommunityTopeka.com
Sun. 8:30am - Sunday School for all ages
Sun. 10:00am - Worship & Word
Sun. 10:00am Youth Service
~ Nursery care for all services ~

12. BUCK CREEK COUNTRY CHURCH

Meeting at Buck Creek School House
5 mi. east of Perry on Hwy 24, 13th & Phillips Rd.
Childrens Sunday School - 8:30 a.m.
Worship Service - 9:00 a.m.
Contacts: Logan Barnett 785-597-5498,
or Scott Bond 423-0406

13. WANAMAKER WOODS NAZARENE

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3501 SW Wanamaker Rd • 273-2248
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www.wwnaz.org
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6 pm Life Groups; 6:30 pm Teen Service
Wed. 6:30 pm Adult & Teen Life Groups
Wed. 6:30 pm Kids University
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14. OPEN ARMS OUTREACH MINISTRIES COGIC

1 (785) 232-3463/41 (785) 217-5560
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In person or conference call:
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2401 SE 11th St., Topeka KS 66607
Supt. S. C. Mitchell, Pastor

15. OAKLAND UNITED METHODIST

801 NE Chester, Topeka, KS 66616
235-1010 • oumc@att.net
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J. Michael Borjon, Pastor

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Student Ministries & Kid City
www.esbcks.org

19. SEAMAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

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354-8777 • www.seamanchurch.com
Adult Sunday School - Sun. 9:30am
Sunday Worship: 10:30am
Children's Sunday School: 10:30am
Youth group 1st & 3rd Sundays 4-6pm

20. HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH

1937 NE Madison St,
Topeka, KS 66616 • 785-506-4594
Pastor Dale Stockburger
Sunday Worship: 11 am and 6pm
Sunday School: Sun 10am
Wed. Evening Worship: 7pm

21. HARVEST FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

Meets at 522 SW Polk
785-220-5418
Pastor Rey Rodriguez
Sun. Worship 10:30 am
www.topekaharvest.vpweb.com

22. FAMILY OF GOD CHURCH

1231 NW Eugene St.
Topeka, KS 66608

Pastor Roger Randel
Sunday Worship 10:30am & 6pm
Wednesday Bible Study 7pm
234-1111 • FOGchurch.com

24. TRINITY REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

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www.TrinityReformedBaptist.org

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FACILITIES MANAGER- Cair Paravel Latin School is accepting applications for a full-time Facilities Manager. The Facilities Manager is in charge of building maintenance, performing small janitorial duties and loving our 95-year-old school building as much as we do. Knowledge of heating and air conditioning systems, plumbing and basic construction is a plus. Please contact Melody Congdon at 785-232-3878 or at mcongdon@cpls.org.

NOTICES:

NOTICE: Kirk Nystrom's Law Office has moved upstairs to Suite 509, still at 112 SW 6th Avenue, Topeka, Kansas 66603. Phone Number remains (785)235-6977

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MINISTRY NEEDS GUIDE



Each year Metro Voice provides a listing of organizations that serve the most vulnerable in our communities. Whether it is the single mom and her children, our elderly, orphans, the sick, the homeless or incarcerated, our readers respond with prayers, time, items and finances to keep these ministries going throughout the year. "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" 1 John 3:17. Let us all work together to show the love of Christ this Christmas and the coming year. Together, we can make a difference.

ALPHA CHRISTIAN CHILDREN'S HOME AND SCHOOL. Perry, Ks; 785-597-5235; www.alphachristian-childrenshome.com; Michelle Kincaid. A ministry for children in need due to poverty, abuse, neglect, being orphaned, or having other needs. Alpha provides the children with a loving family and opportunities for healing and growth. A school learning center promotes excellence and success academically, sometimes for the first time, for each child. Alpha is 100% privately funded, and there is no tuition charge for those served. We are always in need of financial support, as well as food, clothing & toys.

BREAKTHROUGH HOUSE, INC. 785-232-6807; 1195 SW Buchanan, Topeka, KS 66604. www.breakthroughhouse.org; www.facebook.com/Breakthrough-House-Inc-228527173160/. A non-clinical, non-medical, private non-profit that helps support individuals with mental illness. Our mission is To Empower Our Mental Health Consumers to Live Independent, Impactful Lives. We serve over 350 residents of Shawnee County through three programs: Breakthrough Clubhouse, a place for consumers to gather for socialization, activities, and a healthy meal; Breakthrough Residential Program, a supportive-care program of two group homes and independent apartments; and the Breakthrough Representative Payee Program, ensuring our consumers' rents, utilities and medical bills are paid. Needs: non-perishable foods, personal hygiene items, volunteers.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF NORTHEAST KANSAS. 234 S Kansas Avenue, Topeka, KS 66603. www.catholiccharitiesks.org. Founded in 1956, Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas is a nonprofit health and human services agency that assists annually more than 85,000 people of all faiths. Our work strengthens both families and communities in the 21 counties we serve. Our vision is that our neighbors who are challenged by poverty of mind, body and spirit find the open door of Catholic Charities in our communities and are met with help, hospitality and hope. Donations appreciated.

CHRISTIAN STREET WITNESS and CHRISTIAN NEIGHBOR CENTER. 107 SW 14th St., Topeka, Ks, 66612; 354-8763. James Kincade, House Manager. Purpose is to share the Good News, feed and clothe the hungry, work with ex-convicts, the down and out, alcoholics, drug addicts, widows and orphans, abused women and children, and others going through difficult times; help them find jobs, counsel them and offer them a safe place. Donations/volunteers needed; also canned goods.

CHRISTIANS FOR LIFE. PO Box 3856, Topeka, Ks, 66604. 267-5777; bakerbarb54130@gmail.com; Barbara Saldivar. A pro-life ministry that facilitates the Heart of America Memorial Wall for the Unborn, located at 1216 SE Republican Ave., offering those who lost a baby through miscarriage, still birth, or abortion a place to put their child's name on the wall of remembrance. Donations toward the cost are welcome and needed but not required. Meetings are monthly. Public is welcome. Post Abortion Bible Studies are also available. Donations & volunteers to assist with upkeep of the memorial rounds are needed.

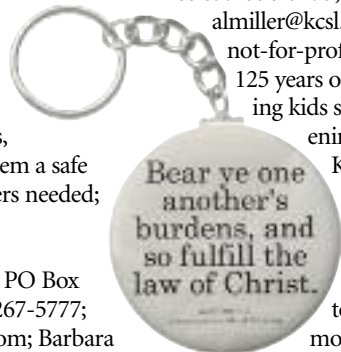
DOORSTEP, INC., 1119 SW 10th Avenue, Topeka, Ks, 66604; 357-5341; www.doorsteptopeka.org. An emergency aid agency providing assistance for families and individuals in need for over 55 years, primarily supported by 52 area member congregations, businesses, individuals, community groups and grants. Doorstep provides food, clothing, household goods, and



assistance for rent, utilities, rx/dental, gas vouchers and local bus tickets for thousands of households all year long, and adopts 260 households with over 800 individuals from the Christmas Bureau during the holidays. Needs: New Queen & King Size Blankets, board games, puzzles, crockpots, cof-

fee pots, electric skillets, toasters and monetary funds for the Christmas Store.

KANSAS CHILDREN'S SERVICE LEAGUE (KCSL). 3545 SW 5th St, Topeka, Ks, 66606; 274-3100 or Toll Free 877-530-5275; kcsl.org; almillier@kcsl.org. A statewide not-for-profit agency with over 125 years of experience keeping kids safe and strengthening families in Kansas. KCSL serves more than 40,000 children and their families each year. KCSL's mission is to protect and promote the well-being of children. Our services focus on preventing child abuse, strengthening families and empowering parents and youth. KCSL is the Kansas chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America. In northeast Kansas, KCSL offers a variety of services including foster care, infant adoption, the Adoption Exchange Adopt Kansas Kids, the Parent Helpline 1-800-CHILDREN and app, and a range of child abuse prevention programs like Healthy Families, the Period of PURPLE Crying® and Community Resource Library. Needed items include gift cards for groceries and new baby items (bottles, bibs, diapers, clothes, etc.).



KANSANS FOR LIFE. Topeka, KS. Phone: 785-234-2998, E-mail: topeka@kfl.org Website: www.kfl.org. Jeanne Gawdun, Senior Lobbyist and Events Coordinator. Kansans for Life is a statewide non-profit educational organization also engaged in social action. It is dedicated to protecting and fostering the most basic human right...life itself. KFL is a state affiliate of the National Right to Life Committee.

LET'S HELP, INC. 200 S. Kansas Ave., Topeka, Ks, 66603; www.letshelpinc.org; 234-6208. We provide programs and services through Comprehensive Emergency Services by offering aid with rent, utilities, and medication; Food & Clothing Banks, including professional attire; Adult Basic Education & GED; Pre-Employment Training & Job Placement Coordination; and a Community Lunch. Let's Help is committed to building a better community by inspiring hope, promoting self-sufficiency and breaking the cycle of poverty one person at a time.

LIFELINE CHILDREN'S SERVICES. Amy Snow 785-249-6130. Our needs are diapers size 3-6, 12 oz cans of formula, toddler size clothing and shoes and maternity clothes. To learn more about Lifeline Children's Services and

all the ministries God has given us to serve in, visit www.lifelinechild.org or Facebook: Lifeline Children's Services Kansas.

INSIGHT WOMEN'S CENTER, Lawrence, KS; 785-842-6499; info@insightlawrence.org Hours: 9 am - 5:00 pm Mon- Weds, 11:00 am - 7:00 pm, Thursday. Closed Friday - Sunday. Insight Women's Center reaches out with Jesus' love to women in the Lawrence/Topeka area facing unplanned pregnancies. All Services Provided at No Charge: Pregnancy Tests and Verification, Ultrasounds, Options Education, Pregnancy/Parenting Educational Classes, and Fatherhood Classes. Always Free, Always Caring, Always Confidential. Financial support and donations accepted.

RANDEL MINISTRIES, INC. FOOD PANTRY & FAMILY OF GOD CHURCH CLOTHING BANK located at 1231 NW Eugene, Topeka, KS 66608, 234-1111, Open Tues & Thurs 10:30-2pm. www.FOGchurch.com or www.RandelMinistries.com, contact Leah Randel, FOGsecretary@gmail.com.



SALVATION ARMY, 1320 SE 6th Ave., Topeka KS 66614; 785-233-9648. Website: www.topeka.salvationarmy.us. Facebook: The Salvation Army Topeka Kansas. The Salvation Army mission is to meet basic human needs in the name of Jesus Christ. Volunteers are needed for bellringing - signup online at www.registertoring.com. Sponsor a virtual kettle at onlineredkettle.org or donate at www.DonateTopeka.com. Wish list includes non-perishable food items, toys, and sports equipment.

TOPEKA NORTH OUTREACH, INC. 210 NW Menninger Rd. Topeka,



KS 66617. 785-286-1370. topekanorthoutreach@gmail.com, www.topekanorthoutreach.org. "Christian Churches United in Service." Emergency Assistance: Limited financial help to families to assist in paying utilities, rent & prescriptions. Food baskets, Hygiene baskets, Bibles. VIP Luncheons: Free lunch served to Senior Citizens every Friday at 12 noon at North Topeka Baptist Church. Youth Program: Operation Backpack program provides "Weekend Snack Sacks" to area students in need. Scholarship assistance for school, medical or emergency expenses. Christmas Project: Families adopted through Topeka Christmas Bureau. Also providing Holiday Food Baskets with Bibles, Blankets, Towels, Hygiene Baskets, Hats & Gloves. Donations of funds, food, time and prayers are needed.

TOPEKA RESCUE MISSION MINISTRIES. 600 N. Kansas Ave., Topeka, Ks, 66608; 357-4285; trm@trmonline.org; www.trmonline.org; On Facebook at Topeka-Rescue-Mission-Ministries. Barry Feaker, Executive Director. The Mission provides shelter, food, clothing and other necessary services to individuals and families who are homeless or in need. This Christmas we are in most need of: new clothing (all sizes), bath/cologne gift sets, pots/pans, coffee makers, crock pots, small appliances, cooking utensils, towels, tool sets, men's & women's gifts & accessories, educational gifts and VOLUNTEERS!

TOPEKA YOUTH FOR CHRIST, INC. 2714 N. Topeka Blvd., # 103; Topeka, KS 66617; 785-232-8296; http://topeka.yfc.net; TYFC is looking for additional volunteers, prayer warriors, and donors who want to share the love of Christ with local youth. Click on the website or call the office to explore our ministry opportunities.



Insight Women's Center
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info@insightlawrence.org
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45 Years of The Nutcracker

Ballet Midwest to Present Annual Production

For forty-five years, Ballet Midwest has been entertaining audiences with the enchanting Nutcracker Ballet set to the unforgettable score by Tchaikovsky.

Join Clara at her family's Christmas Eve party where she receives a gift of a Nutcracker that will soon take her on a magical journey. Feel the joy of a Christmas Eve party, marvel at the special effects and excitement as the Nutcracker battles the Mouse King, watch as the snow falls gently in the forest and marvel as the dancers entertain you in the Kingdom of Sweets.

Join Ballet Midwest for the timeless tale of a little girl's Christmas Eve fantastical dreams on the stage of the Topeka Performing Arts Center.

The production is very entertaining for all audience members – from the seasoned ballet veteran to those seeing their very first ballet. There are many themes that continue through the entire ballet – for example, each dance in the Act 2 Land of Sweets has already been introduced to the audience. The toy dolls that are given to Clara and her friends in the Party Scene have the same costuming on as the Act 2 leads; and in the battle scene our youngest cast members pop out as living dolls dressed in a smaller version of the Act 2 leads.

The performances offer something for everyone. From the Mouse King and the



Wichers Photography

battle scene to the Sugar Plum Fairy, the cast of almost 200 dancers perform choreography filled with humor, excitement and magical energy. There are also many special effects that keep the audience's attention and excitement – the show is very theatrical!

Points of interest about Ballet Midwest's Nutcracker

- They use all local talent! All dancers are trained right here in Northeast Kansas and many grow up performing in the tra-

dition dreaming of the day they get to perform the lead roles in the production.

- It's the longest running Nutcracker in Northeast Kansas.

- There is a plethora of lighting and theatrical effects – smoking cannons, lighting flashes, growing sets, falling snow, and more.

- Costumes are stunning. Talented seamstresses work endless hours to create them.

- There is a detailed set where the tree

grows over 20 feet!

- Full family involvement: The Nutcracker has become many family's holiday tradition – make it yours too!

- The acting is highlighted. Shannon Reilly (Topeka Civic Theater's Artistic Director) creates magic on stage and all the cast members join him in bringing the stage to life through their acting ability.

- Incredible pas de deux (dance of two) dances. Strong gentlemen lift the balleri-

nas effortlessly in overhead lifts and allow them to float across the stage. The grace and brilliance in these pieces takes your breath away.

Attending 'The Nutcracker' is a tradition for so many families, and the Ballet Midwest performance of 'The Nutcracker' has become a multi-generational experience with children, parents, and grandparents alike entranced by this story.

Ballet Midwest's Nutcracker Ballet is a holiday staple and will be performed live at TPAC Friday, December 10th at 7:30, Saturday, December 11th at 1:30 pm and 7:30 pm and Sunday, December 12th at 1:30 pm.

Ticket prices are \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors 55 and older, and \$12 for students 18 and younger. A family pack of two adult and two youth tickets is \$55. Tickets can be purchased in person at the box office of TPAC, from cast members, and at Barbara's Conservatory of Dance.

Ballet Midwest Nutcracker production will be touring to Concordia, Kansas the weekend after the Topeka presentation. The Brown Grand Historic Theater there requested the production be staged in their theater. The production has also toured to Kansas City, Gardner, Junction City, and Salina in the past.

For more information visit www.balletmidwest.net.

Finding faith in "The Nutcracker," a Christmas classic

The popularity of the ballet "The Nutcracker" skyrockets during Advent and the Christmas season because of its pageantry, dancing, and timeless classical music. But have you ever wondered what the story is really all about? If so, you're not alone.

The story is much clearer, says the Reverend Matt Rawle, the lead pastor at Asbury United Methodist Church in Bossier City, Louisiana, if we use a "lens of faith" to look more closely at the characters and the action.

The story actually resonates with strong parallels to our faith and helps us prepare for Christmas, writes Rawle, whose new book and Advent series was published in 2018 by Abingdon Press.

We can see many parallels to our faith in what happens to the characters. Clara, the main character, is at that "in between" age and always waiting: waiting to grow older, waiting for someone, waiting to understand the world. She is loved dearly by her peculiar godfather who gives her a special gift – the Nutcracker. After the Nutcracker later comes to life, he battles the evil Mouse King, only to die in battle. However, the loving godfather resurrects the Nutcracker, who then takes Clara to his kingdom to the acclaim of many who have awaited his return.

Sound familiar?

"The Gift of the Nutcracker

explores (many) Christian themes throughout the four chapters," writes Rawle, "each focusing on a particular character from the story. In turn, each chapter applies the lessons learned from the story to help us better understand our walk as Christians and relationship with Christ."

Like Clara, we Christians understand what it's like to live in an "in between" time of life. We live in this world, raise families, enjoy traditions, and celebrate holidays and holy days. Yet Paul encourages us to not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." (Romans 12:2). Like Clara, we find that it is often in these periods of waiting that we see the most growth in our lives.

Or consider Drosselmeir, Clara's peculiar godfather, who gives her the Nutcracker. He also produces a puppet show that foreshadows future events, though it doesn't disclose everything

that will happen. If we are watching the play for the first time, we may not know this. But if once we have seen the play in its entirety, we know what events lies ahead.

Similarly, the Scripture passages during Advent foretell the coming of the Messiah, God's gift of his only begotten son. We know now that Jesus is the King of Kings, but people in the first century did not know the full story. "Scripture doesn't tell us everything we want to know," writes Rawle, "but it does reveal everything that we

need." The third section of the book looks at the Mouse King, the villain of the story. We're not quite sure who he is or why he wants to battle the Nutcracker, but Clara fears him from the start.

Are there times when fear and suspicion are the dominant feelings in our day? Are we constantly fighting battles, both real and perceived ones, throughout the day? Clara finds comfort when the Nutcracker is by her side, but what about us? Do we truly feel peace and the hope for a new life by realizing that God will never abandon us?

The final section of the book deals with the Nutcracker, whom Rawle calls "the greatest gift." When Clara receives the Nutcracker at the Christmas party, she doesn't know what to think about the gift. It wasn't something that she wanted, but she found out later that it



Photo by Roman Boldyrev, courtesy of Creativecommons.org

was a gift that she needed.

In one sense, Jesus is the gift we wanted, but we are surprised to find that he is also the gift we need. Jesus calls us all to turn the other cheek, welcome our neighbor, feed and clothe the poor, even carry his cross. If we are to welcome the Christ child into our lives at Christmas, we must also embody his teachings and act more like Jesus during the rest of the year.

Rawle summarizes the connections between the story and our faith journey in this way: "Much like our journey as Christians, Clara's story is one that begins with uncertainty, fear, and struggle, yet ends with comfort, hope, and joy. Both The Nutcracker and the Advent story unfold just as we know they will, but not without the hope and anticipation that always accompany both the dance and the season."

So the next time you attend a live performance of The Nutcracker, or watch it on TV, be sure to use a "lens of faith" and walk with Christ alongside Clara and the Nutcracker.

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