



**Newsletter**  
*Vol. 51, No. 50*  
*Sunday, December 17, 2017*

*Sunday's offering* may have been the largest single Lord's day offering in the history of our little church. Thanks to all who gave so generously. Substantial gifts to aid the Atchleys, last-minute donations to Angel Tree, and Mary Poynor's \$2,000 in memory of dear Emmett helped to boost the day's total.

*Wasn't it great* to see Danny Sr., Daniel Ladd, and Connie Westbrook able to worship with us Sunday so soon after their recent hospital visits? Patsy and Glenn Evans were able to be there too, although we learned that Patsy spent several days hospitalized last week due to breathing problems, and Glenn is having carotid artery studies done this week.

*Bob Brazille is now* in Amarillo Skilled Nursing Center on Amarillo Blvd. W., and Louise Rogers is improving daily at The Arbors (406). Ronnie Hawthorne and Jerry Derrick are at home, but they are hurting a lot these days.

*Instead of our usual 6 p.m. study* at the church, we plan to meet this Sunday in Abuelos' party room for our church Christmas party. Rebecca needs to know if you're bringing kids under 12 so Santa can include gifts for them. If you can, bring cookies or finger goodies for our dessert.

*Have you noted* Glenna Atchley's post-fire email address: atchley.glenna@yahoo.com?

*On our holiday schedule* we'll meet only at 10:30 a.m. on the last two Sundays in December—no studies early or late on those days, and no meeting on Wednesday, the 27<sup>th</sup>. Come sing with us the glorious music of the season on Wednesday, the 20<sup>th</sup>.

*Thanks to all who have accepted* names of former Boys Ranch students to pray for them in the days just ahead. Gene still has several dozen names that need prayer-sponsors.

**Worship Assignments for This Lord's Day**

In charge, Lee; Prayer, Richard E.; Reading, Jim (Matt. 1:18-25); Bread, Jeff; Wine, Cary; Serve, Cole, Ben J.

**GOD IN THE FLESH**

*The God-Man*

Christmas traditions like Santa Claus and elves and reindeer and carrot-nosed snowmen, while loaded with fun, come across as almost mindlessly simple. So much so that one local dude who calls himself a Baptist pastor showed up in our mall last December to tell kids in the Santa Claus line that Santa doesn't really exist.

When this guy's antics made the six o'clock news, most of my Baptist friends cringed with embarrassment, and all of us who honor Jesus joined them in fervent hope that this deluded soul and his bah-humbug message would vanish quickly from our local headlines.

I have no idea what triggered that fellow's anti-Santa campaign. Could it be that he is a theological literalist who has no place in his own mental world for fairy tales and nursery rhymes and therefore cannot tolerate such unreality in the minds of little children?

If that poor man's mental make-up lacks the dimension where most adults store what we call fantasy, I feel sorry for him. With a psyche so crippled, he's probably also ill-equipped to grasp the subtle contrasts that for almost two millennia have fascinated great Christian teachers and thinkers when they ponder the truths of Christmas.

St. Augustine of Hippo, for example, captured some of the yuletide mystery in his famous description of the baby Jesus: "He was created of a mother whom He created. He was carried by hands that He formed. He cried in the manger in wordless infancy, He the Word, without whom all human eloquence is mute."

Centuries later the Christian poet Lucy Shaw captured more of the same cosmic ironies in a piece she called "Mary's Song":

*Breath, mouth, ears, eyes  
he is curtailed  
who overflowed all skies,  
all years.  
Older than eternity, now he  
is new.*

While these seeming contradictions fuel the faith and warm the hearts of those who bow before Jesus, they may cause skeptics to choke and chortle. The marvels of Christmas bless one and blind the other.

Thomas Aquinas probably didn't know he was writing about Christmas, but his words apply to Bethlehem: "To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible."

By Gene Shelburne

**Nuggets of Wisdom**  
*By Dr. Joe Barnett*  
"Defeat is temporary. Giving up is what makes it permanent."  
"Live through disappointment by refusing to give up hope."  
"How many times you fall won't ultimately define you. How many times you get back up will."