

# Reflections



## HILLVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH

Volume 3, Issue 9

December 2024

### Illumination - by Pastor Norm Bleick



Sometimes I get asked about the advent wreath and lighting candles; for some this seems like a tradition belonging to other Christian denominations. However, I would argue that advent is a rich experience and it belongs to all Christians.

There are two points of emphasis during the Christmas season: incarnation and illumination. This year during the Christmas Eve celebration we at Hillview will emphasize illumination; "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." - John 1.4-5 (NIV)

So, what is advent? The

word advent is from the Latin word "adventus" which means "coming" or "arrival". Advent is a special time in the Christian calendar because it leads up to Christmas. It is observed in the four weeks before December 25th. As believers, it is a season of expectant waiting and preparation, not just for the celebration of Christ's birth, but for His promised return. During these weeks, we look back with joy at Christ's humble birth in Bethlehem, while at the same time looking forward with hope to His glorious return.

Each week of Advent centers on a different theme: hope, peace, joy, and love. These are not just "holiday" words—they are deep spiritual truths that remind us

of what Jesus brings into our lives. In lighting the candles each week, we symbolically cast aside the darkness of our world and declare that the Light of the World has come and He will come again.

Advent is also a time to prepare our hearts, clearing away the distractions and making room for the One who came to save us. It is a season of repentance and reflection, as we remember that Christ did not just come for a manger scene, but for the cross, that He might bring us into a relationship with Him. The season calls us to slow down and focus, to pray and seek, to hunger and wait, just as the Jewish people did before His first coming.

As we observe Advent, let's let it deepen our faith, refocus our lives on Christ, and renew our commitment to live in light of His coming. May we hold fast to the hope we have in Him, trusting that just as He came in humility, He will one day return in power and glory.

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## Roughrider Snowmen - by Krista Carlberg



Almost everyone has a favourite Christmas decoration. For me it actually would be our entire tree, covered in un-matching and often ridiculous ornaments. There is nothing beautiful about it by the world's standards, but for Neil and I, it is perfect. Transformers, homemade dinosaurs from elementary school, football players, surfing Santas, nativity scenes, angels, and all sorts of other things, including pictures of our lives, decorate our tree. It is an amalgamation of memories recognizing two pretty great lives that have now been joined together. It honours our separate yesterdays as we live in the present and look forward to the future.

Christmas decorations were the first thing Neil and I combined even before we were married. We spread them all out and then shared memories of various ones as we created "keep"

and "donate" piles. What we thought should have been a daunting task was actually great fun, and we ended up with the best tree - displaying all of our favourite things. We also get to enjoy some of our other decorations because we gave them to friends and get to visit them at Christmas time.

As we got to know each other, Neil and I realized quickly that we had a lot in common. Shared faith, strong family values, love of sports, going on long walks and much more. But our relationship was absolutely solidified when we realized we had matching Saskatchewan Roughrider Snowmen - an ornament I have never seen anywhere else. They now sit front and center on our tree every year. In addition, we added a lovely one of us from our wedding last year. This year's ornament is homemade; constructed from many different buttons that we collected during a holiday.

Christmas is a special time of year where we reflect on our Saviour's birth and get to honour past traditions and

make new ones. When I sit in the living room on a cold December evening with the fireplace going and just looking at our tree, I think of years gone by and know I am incredibly blessed. So take some extra time this year to appreciate your tree as you remember the beautiful memories of past years and look forward to what God has in store for your future.



**The Result!**

*Krista has been attending Hillview for more years than I know. She frequently plays the piano for multiple worship bands and is on the Church's Leadership Council. She married Neil in 2023. For more - check out Neil's "The Power of Rings" story in the January 2023 issue of Reflections and in the April 2023 issue you will find a bridal picture of Neil and Krista. The newsletters are on-line. Ed*



**Neil providing instructions to Krista!**

"IT IS AN  
AMALGAMATION  
OF  
MEMORIES  
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**Light the Fire-** by Gloria Swain

**The theme**



**“For God gave us a spirit NOT of fear, but of power and love and self-control. For this reason I remind YOU to fan the FLAME, the gift of God, which is in YOU through the laying on of my hands. (1 Timothy 1 6,7)**



"THE TASKS AT TIMES SEEMED LIKE CLIMBING MOUNTAINS."

In October Hillview hosted the 2024 Greater Edmonton Mission Event (GEM). God chose to inhabit our church that weekend and everyone in attendance knew it! We could not deny being in the presence of God.

It was spiritually overwhelming to see 160 kids fill our sanctuary and begin to praise God for 45 minutes. I did not think this level of worship existed with our young people anymore. What a sight to see kids

Then there was a "people stampede" to the fellowship hall where snacks were plentiful. I have never seen so many boxes of cookies devoured in such a short period of time, along with chips, trail mix and choco-

It all started back in April 2024 when Hillview's Missions Committee enlisted others to help accomplish this mammoth undertaking. As time went on our GEM Committee fizzled from ten to seven. The tasks at times seemed like climbing mountains. But with lots of prayer, faith, perseverance and with God we climbed to the summit. Seeing what God had done was surely worth every painful step of the climb.



**The view from the balcony during the Friday youth service.**

Friday, Oct 25th was Youth Night. I cannot imagine the hours of work that went into getting this event organized. Mike and Levi of the SMART team worked tirelessly with our tech people and Keith to have everything ready. The SMART team organizes and leads various youth events for Alberta Baptist Association.

praise God in song, loving on each other, praying for each other and just wanting more of Jesus.

late covered everything. What a joy to see youth on fire for Jesus!

Erin Bergman and Kristi TenClay gave presentations on their work in Romania and Cameroon. They spoke of overcoming some of their own personal battles before actually stepping foot on foreign soil.

On Saturday, at 7am a few of us returned to the Fellowship Hall, laying out the homemade muffins and other goodies for morning coffee and fellowship. We

*(Continued on page 5)*



## Light the Fire- by Gloria Swain

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opened the doors at 8am and people just kept coming and coming. We had 116 registered participants but at one point we thought we would have to move to the sanctuary as numbers grew to 140. We eventually ended up with 152, over 30 of which never pre-registered. Once we got everyone seated part of our problem was solved, but we still had to feed everyone. Keith and the Freedom Band during their preservice prayer time asked God for a loaves and fishes type of miracle.

Pastor Norm did a fantastic job of emceeing and keeping everything on schedule. God Bless Mike Tkachuk for his uplifting, inspiring devotional. This was followed by Keith leading us in worship through song. Each song was definitely selected by the Holy Spirit. What an awesome God we serve.

The Mission presentations were so uplifting and inspiring:

- **Maureen Moody** and **Kristi TenClay** shared their work in Cameroon. Maureen gave a big

'hats off' to the White Cross group and how important their work is to the Cameroon's hospital. This brought Irma Heide-mann to tears as White Cross is her passion.

- **Erin Bergman** described the work in Romania
- **Chad Merrifield** spoke of the work with "Farm to Field". They provide opportunities for Canadian farmers to engage in overseas missions through agricultural based fundraising.
- **Telmo and Jacques** outlined the Chain of Love ministry in Brazil. At Hillview we have a particular connection to this ministry because of the Effa family.
- **Gary Clutterbuck** shared on the work going on in Russia and the Ukraine, focusing on the training taking place in the seminaries

Such inspirational speakers sharing the love of God at home and abroad.

The morning session ended with Kurt doing an in memoriam presentation on about 25 of our missionaries who

have finished their sowing and have gone home to their reward. Bernie Lemke was recognized for his work in Cameroon. The presentation was made by his brother Deter Lemke . As lunch time approached Jerilyn Bayer and her friend sang "We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace".

And now, the time for miracles! Will there be enough food for lunch? Not entirely sure how many were fed, but everyone who wanted to eat, ate. God bless Lois Derkson, our caterer, and Hillview's kitchen help. Of course, praise God for answering the prayer of The Freedom Band to multiply the potatoes and beef.

Our Keynote speaker, Randy Schmor certainly enlightened us with what is happening in our world today. What changes we must make moving forward, and how God remains the heart of missionary work. We can never lose sight of that fact.

Carol Potratz looked after the offering, laying out the goals and where the monies will be spent. Unfortunately, presently we are \$5,000 short of achieving our goal of \$20,000.

Pastor Norm kept things timely and was able to say the benediction just a few minutes after the specified closing time of 3 p.m.

Hillview Family - we could not have done this without your support. One third of

"WE THOUGHT WE WOULD HAVE TO MOVE TO THE SANCTUARY AS NUMBERS GREW TO 140. ..."



**That is Herman Effa peering over Pastor Norm's shoulder!**

## Reflections

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### Light the Fire- by Gloria Swain

"THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ALL WORK TOGETHER TOWARDS A COMMON GOAL ..."

(Continued from page 5)

the attendees were YOU. This is what happens when we all work together towards a common goal to see God glorified in and through His people.

So many people worked so hard to pull this all together. Our AV Team, along with Keith were outstanding for all the work they had to do for both Friday and Saturday. Brian gave of himself tirelessly to the committee and to Kurt without ever

grumbling or complaining about the constant changes. Freedom Band, thank you for your praises and dedication. Our set up and clean up crew. Howard, you had to be in there somewhere! Carol Potratz was our 'go to' person. She is the Chair of the ABA Global Operations Team. Then there was Katie in the office, who fielded calls, helped with the mailing and stepped in wherever she could to take some of the load off of us. Finally, thank you GEM Committee: Jo, Pastor Norm, Kurt, Mo,

Larry, Brian and Gloria. The community volunteers who came and helped with Friday night clean up and Saturday set up. I know I am missing mentioning some people. It's not intentional. God knows and He is the rewarder.

As the people were leaving they could not thank us enough for a great conference. We could only say, "thank you" and then thank the ONE who made it all possible.

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### Changing Traditions - by Wayne Baker

(Continued from page 3)

focuses our attention on Christ, thereby denying false gods our attention, I have no problem with that. What should we do, if Christmas has lost its purpose of focusing on Christ?

If the tradition does not serve the intended purpose, should it be kept? When traditions lose their meaning we may need to refocus our attention, change the tradition or simply drop it. The traditions can be used, as with the family tradition I ex-

plained at the beginning, to include Christ in Christmas. The church may have replaced pagan traditions with Christ centered traditions, but the real question is how we use the traditions today. One suggestion would be to have each family member make a new decoration each year, showing something about the birth of Christ and what that means for them.

In my Grade 11 year, mom tried starting a new tradition. It involved mom hiding a present and then giving us a Christmas card with a poem.

The words provided clues to where the gift was hidden and what it was. "The Chimes of time ring out o'er the land" was one clue I remember. I wish I kept my cards; how meaningful they would be today! Likewise with our Christian life, if the traditions no longer point to Christ, it is time to find new ways to focus on Him. Traditions that are meaningless, should be abandoned. A new tradition could replace it, as mom did, or just leave the idea closed.



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### Important Editorial Request - by Bill Holmes

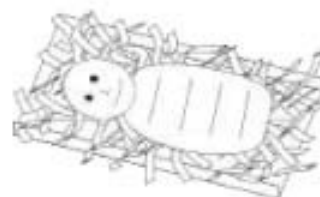
Dear Hillviewers, Reading Krista 's story about Christmas baubles gave me an idea, but you have to help to make it work. Would you please take a picture of your most favourite Christmas ornament, no matter how inappropriate (Saskatchewan Roughriders, indeed) and send the picture to me with a couple sentences outlining why it is your best-loved decoration. They will become part of the **December 2025** newsletter. Everyone can participate, but I am especially hoping that people who don't normally contribute to the newsletter will come on board.



What did Gabriel say to Mary? Use the code to find out.



Luke 1:31



Finish the story with the words at the right.

M \_\_\_\_\_ and J \_\_\_\_\_ traveled to

B \_\_\_\_\_.

M \_\_\_\_\_ had a baby and named him

J \_\_\_\_\_. He was God's Son.

She placed J \_\_\_\_\_ in a m \_\_\_\_\_

which was a place for animals to eat.

He was wrapped in s \_\_\_\_\_

clothes, which were strips of cloth.



**God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage!**

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### Christmas Letters? - submitted by Ardath Effa



Sometimes the letters themselves can add even more significance to the word.

**C** is for the Christ Child  
a child of hope and light

**H** is for the Heavens that were  
bright that holy night

**R** is for the Radiance  
of the star that led the way

**I** is for the lowly Inn  
where the Infant Jesus lay

**S** is for the Shepherds  
who beheld the Christmas star

**T** is for the Tidings  
the angels told afar

**M** is for the Magi  
with their gifts of myrrh and gold

**A** is for the Angels  
who were awesome to behold

**S** is for the Savior  
who was born to save all men

Together this spells  
**CHRISTMAS**  
It's what we are celebrating!

"FOR TO US A  
CHILD IS BORN, TO  
US A SON IS  
GIVEN; ... AND HIS  
NAME SHALL BE  
CALLED  
WONDERFUL  
COUNSELOR,  
MIGHTY GOD,  
EVERLASTING  
FATHER, PRINCE  
OF PEACE"  
ISAIAH 9:6

### Gingerbread Trivia - by Rick deLeeuw

**G**inger is pretty great stuff. It is almost up there with salt and sugar as valued commodities. Ginger can flavour your food and preserve it too. It can be used as medicine for stomach problems. The ancient Romans were keen on it, but after the fall of the Roman Empire it became expensive and rare. By the eleventh century it was more readily available throughout Europe, and by the fifteenth-century spice traders made ginger even more common.

Nuremberg, Germany, became the heart of the medieval ginger business. The city was home to a guild of Lebkuchen (i.e. gingerbread cakes and cookies) bakers. Obviously, the taste is wonderful. In addition, gingerbread can be cut into all kinds of shapes-such as gingerbread houses, stars and people. It's preservative qualities allows it to be used for Christmas decorations that can be displayed for a month or so, and still be a yummy treat.

The first documented instance of figure-shaped biscuits was at the court of Elizabeth 1 of England. She had the gingerbread figures made and presented in the likeness of some of her important guests which brought about the human shape of the gingerbread cookies.

Today, the infamous legend behind the gingerbread man is a classic fairytale that has been delighting children for more than 200 years. It was first published in 1875 under the title "The Gingerbread Boy". The story varies depending on where it is being told, but the moral always remains the same. "Be careful of who you trust".

