CORNERSTONE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FRONTLINES

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1 JANUARY 2018

Renewing our families, our communities, and our world by bringing faith and life together in Christ.

JESUS: KING

BY CARTER SANGER

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

(Luke 1:32–33)

The beginning of the year is a good time to take stock of life. What's important? What direction will you take this year? One thing we profess as Christians is Jesus as King. Have you ever thought about what it means to have a King over you? It grates against our nature – the one we get from Adam. At the heart of the sin in the garden was the desire to be their own king. It is still the pulse of our hearts. We don't like submitting to authority figures over us. Think about it. Are there are any authorities in your life that you obey without question in totality?

> YOU DON'T GET TO PICK AND CHOOSE WHICH OF HIS MARCHING ORDERS YOU OBEY.

But calling yourself a Christian is to acknowledge Jesus as your King. You don't get to pick and choose which of his marching orders you obey. Your life, and everything in it, belongs to Him. What does that mean practically? The exciting part is that you are an heir of the Kingdom of God. The day to day part is to obey. You are part of the church militant with marching orders to gather the elect from the four corners of the earth. This is the Great Commission that Jesus gave the apostles (and through them the Church) at His ascension.

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CONGREGATIONAL MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

A Congregational Meeting has been called for Cornerstone members for Sunday, February 11. At this meeting we will review the church budget for 2018, answer any questions you may have about it, and vote on its adoption.

A copy of the Annual Report, which includes the 2018 budget, will be handed out to all our members three weeks before the meeting, giving you time to review it. Be sure to get your copy!

The proposed budget is similar to that of 2017, as our giving continues to lag behind our expenditures. A large-ticket item coming is replacing the destroyed sign at the corner of Mason Road. At Easter, we will be saying "goodbye" to the Cottons and the folks who will go with them as they launch Haven, the new church plant. We will continue to encourage and support them in this endeavor, however, as their mother church.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Sunday School will resume on January 7.*
- *Annual Reports will be coming out at the end of January. Be sure to get yours!*
- *Men's Retreat will be held at Pine Cove on January 19-20. Talk to Tom Lott or see last month's newsletter for more details.*
- *Stepping Stones will begin its third season on Friday, January 5.*

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SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

BY GENE COVER

Do you wonder where the money goes? Pick up an annual report to find out.

- Carter continued our devotional study by reviewing Chapter 2 of Rainer and Geiger's book, *Simple Church*. This chapter deals with the Simple Church in Action. A good model seems to be where the spiritual growth of members through an active discipleship program is used in growing churches.

  How can we simplify what we do, so that everyone can tell what we do and how we do it? Do we have a simple vision statement that everyone knows and has put into action in their ministry? How do we make outreach a part of everything we do rather than a separate function? Are we becoming "comfortable Christians?" (See article on the subject beginning on page 4 of this newsletter.)

- The Deacons report that our new signs should appear in January.

- Our 2018 church budget has been prepared and is about the same as the 2017 budget. The Annual Financial Report to the Congregation should be available for hand out on January 21.

- With all the recent news about church shootings, the Deacons will be examining our policy regarding the presence of guns on our campus. There probably need to be some changes to our unstated "no-guns" policy. State law does allow churches to have guns present, if it is clearly stated as such; otherwise the law prohibits guns in churches.

- We continue to seek ways to help those affected by Hurricane Harvey. Our denomination has some additional funds available and is seeking proposals on wise ways to spend those funds. Carter is working with Katy-area pastors to develop ideas for relief efforts.

- Allen White is seeking God's mind on what or where his next ministry will be. Please join us in prayer as he looks for clear guidance. Allen is clearly not ready to retire.

- Tom Lott was elected to replace Gene Cover as Stated Clerk, as Gene rotates off Session this year.

KING: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

(Continued from page 1)

Do you take these marching orders into account when you make decisions about your career, your family, your friends? Everything in your life should be submitted to these orders. Imagine a soldier given orders to rescue the civilians trapped in terrorist occupied territories that chooses instead to use his time to gather and hide wealth first and rescue civilians second—If they happen to meet any along the way. Yet, I'm convinced that's how most Christians approach their faith. Backwards.

Jesus is King. All we are and all we have is to be at his disposal. Let us live our lives in such a way that this is evident to the world around us.

For the Kingdom,

Carter

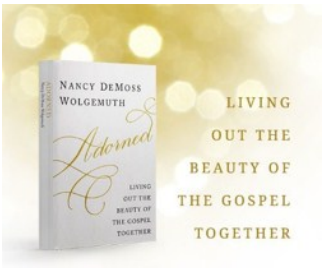
VOLUNTEER WORKSHOP WILL BE SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 8:00A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

If you are a current volunteer and have not attended a Volunteer Workshop in the past three years, or hope to begin working with our children or youth in the near future, please plan to attend this important event. We will review our current Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Cornerstone policies as they relate to our children.

Why is this training important? While tedious, completion of this training (which is required by our insurance provider) will help us create a warm, welcoming and safe environment for our members, attenders and most importantly, our visitors.

Feel free to bring a sack lunch, but dessert will be provided. To register or for more information, please contact Carol Kutzer at 281-579-1080 or info@CornerstoneKaty.org.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY BEGINS THURSDAY, JANUARY 18 AT 9:15 A.M.



The Thursday morning women's Bible study is excited to announce its choice for the spring study. As a continuation of our review of the book of Titus, the women will be reading Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth's new book, Adorned: Living Out the Beauty of the Gospel Together, a powerful vision for women based on Titus 2.

This will be a 15-week lesson that involves reading one chapter of the book per week prior to the lesson so that we can review discussion questions during the Thursday morning meeting.

> "The Titus 2 model of older women living out the gospel alongside younger women is vital to us all to thrive. It is mutually strengthening, glorifies God, and makes His truth believable to our world".

All women are invited to join us for this practical application of Titus 2. Friends and children are also encouraged to attend. Childcare is available for preschool-aged children.

Please contact Beverly Tucker if you have questions about the study. Books will be available to purchase beginning Sunday, January 7.

THANKS FOR THE PHC GIFTS!

BY DEBI BARRETT

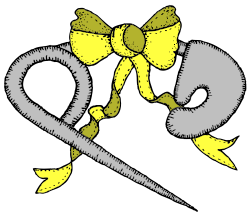
This year Cornerstone supported Pregnancy Help Center again by generously giving through the PHC Christmas tree, where many of you took one or more of the ornaments and purchased the items listed for the women and their families. The response has always been amazing, and as before, members were so very generous again.

We were able to deliver the following items in early December:

- Over 400 diapers
- More than 1,300 wipes
- Baby lotion, shampoo and baby wash
- Bath towels and wash cloths
- Clothes, sleepers, and 10 onesies
- 12 corner guards
- 10 cabinet latches
- 28 plug protectors
- Pacifiers
- $145 in Gift Cards to Babies-R-Us

Thank you Cornerstone!

What blessings you continue to share in helping the women and their families, by providing for them at Christmas.



The Pregnancy Help Center was blessed by your gifts this Christmas.

8 SIGNS YOUR CHRISTIANITY IS TOO COMFORTABLE

By BRETT MCCRACKEN

In many parts of the world today, it can be easy to live a comfortable life as a Christian. Certainly where I live—in Orange County, California—this is the case. But is that a good thing?

"IF YOU WANT A RELIGION TO MAKE YOU FEEL REALLY COMFORTABLE, I CERTAINLY DON'T RECOMMEND CHRISTIANITY."
C.S. LEWIS

C. S. Lewis once said, "I did not go to religion to make me happy. I always knew a bottle of Port would do that. If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don't recommend Christianity."

But comfort-seeking is our default mode in a consumerist society, so we often find ourselves in "comfortable Christianity" without even knowing it. What are some indicators that our Christianity has become too cozy, more like a pleasant bottle of port than the uncomfortable, sharpening faith the New Testament envisions?

Here are eight signs that your Christianity might be too comfortable:

1. THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO FRICTION BETWEEN YOUR CHRISTIANITY AND YOUR PARTISAN POLITICS.

If you're all-in with one political party and never feel any tension whatsoever with your Christian faith, it probably means your faith is too comfortable. Whether you're a lifelong Democrat or a diehard Republican, a robust Christian faith should create dissonance with politics at various points.

A faith that aligns perfectly with one political party is suspiciously convenient and lacks prophetic witness.

2. THERE ARE NO PARADOXES, TENSIONS, OR UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS.

If you never ponder or wrestle with the mind-boggling tenets of Christian theology (e.g., the Trinity, the incarnation, God's sovereignty coexisting with human action, the Holy Spirit's presence, to name just a few), your faith is probably too comfortable.

A healthy, uncomfortable faith constantly rocks you, prods you, and blows your mind. It's a faith that leaves you restless to want to know more, not satisfied you've grasped all there is to grasp about God.

3. YOUR FRIENDS AND COWORKERS ARE SURPRISED TO LEARN YOU'RE A CHURCHGOING CHRISTIAN.

A sure sign your faith is too comfortable is if nothing in your life sets you apart as a Jesus follower, to the point that even those who know you well can't tell you're a Christian.

A comfortable Christian is one who easily blends in, looking and talking and acting just like his or her lost neighbors.

4. YOU NEVER THINK ABOUT OR EVEN REMEMBER THE SUNDAY SERMON ON MONDAY.

If Sunday sermons at your church are so forgettable (or you're so disengaged) that you rarely recall them after you leave church, your Christianity is probably too comfortable.

Biblical preaching shouldn't leave us apathetic or unchallenged. The Word of God is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

5. NO ONE AT YOUR CHURCH EVER ANNOYS YOU.

If you go to church with people who are always easy to talk to, always fun to be around, and always closely aligned with your opinions, tastes, and preferences, your Christianity is too comfortable.

One of the glorious things about the gospel is that it creates a new community out of disparate types of people who, in many cases, wouldn't otherwise choose to spend time together.

6. YOU NEVER FEEL CHALLENGED, ONLY AFFIRMED.

If your Christian faith never

(Continued on page 8)

Our friends and coworkers should see that we are different from those who are unbelievers.

BRIDGES WELCOMES NEW STUDENTS IN JANUARY

BY DAKA DYUSSEKOV

We will be welcoming new students on **January 20th** with a walking city tour. Please save the date (mid-morning to mid-afternoon) and join us.

Our regular socials and community events will resume the 2nd or 3rd week of January.

Our biggest need is prayer. Please pray for the following:

- for the students attending the Vision Conference (Dec. 27-Jan.1), where Christian students have a chance to grow in their faith and seekers can experience community and learn truth.
- for God to soften the hearts of the international students to be open to Jesus.
- for many students to accept Christ through hearing the gospel and the true meaning of Christmas.
- for students arriving in January to be welcomed into Bridges community.

BRIDGES INTERNATIONAL

Bridges helps international students at Rice and the University of Houston feel welcomed.

NEWS FROM ABROAD

BY NICK AND AMANDA

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

We hope you all had an amazing Christmas to celebrate the birth of the One who came to save us from our sins. Every year, we enjoy telling the Christmas story with our kids, each day counting down the days until His birth, adding pieces to our little nativity scene. Traditions like these make the holidays feel rich and full, no matter where we are in the world.

To end the year, we wanted to share some highlights of things that happened since our last update. We visited the States for a few weeks in September, and were able to see many of you're the presbytery meetings. We truly enjoyed a little time away with extended family, but even the girls were ready to come home. This, in and of itself, is a blessing as parents, to see that your kids are happy with the path God has chosen for our lives. We returned for Disciple Making Movement training with our teammates in October, as well as a visit from 3 men from our presbytery's Home Team! They got to experience a little bit of what our daily life is like: visiting refugees, doing Bible study in their homes, attending church services, cycling with Nick, hanging out on our couch, loving our kids, and of course, great food!

On a sidenote: if any of you EPC'ers are interested in visiting us this spring, Mark V, who is on staff with World Outreach, is coming in March and is looking for 1-2 people to come with him (either both men or a married couple). Let us know if you are interested!

We are excited about having finished a full year of ministry

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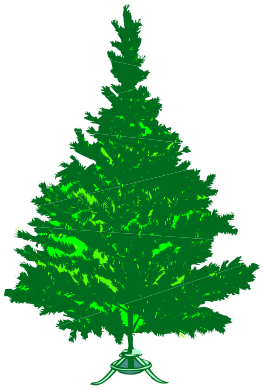

The church looked beautiful for Christmas, with the help of lots of folks.

DECKING THE HALLS

BY CAROL KUTZER

Thanks to everyone who assisted Lauren Torregano and Rhonda Sanger with Christmas decorations this year! Both the decking of the halls and also the putting away for next year require lots of man-power (and women-power) and stair climbing.

NOTE: We need to replace one of our artificial trees. If you have an artificial tree that is still in good shape which you no longer need, please consider donating to the church. Thank you!!!!

UNNERSTALLS: REFUGEES ARE PART OF THE MINISTRY

LET'S PRAY FOR A DISCIPLE-MAKING MOVEMENT TO EXPLODE IN THIS AREA AMONG THE REFUGEES.

(Continued from page 5)

here with our teammates, and are looking forward to another! Let's begin praying for 2018 and all that God has in store for it. In the next year, we hope to welcome 3 new team members to the field, another baby boy (coming February 15) including visits from Amanda's mom and sister shortly thereafter), 1 or 2 short-term teams from our supporting churches, and countless new brothers and sisters in Christ! Let's pray for a disciple-making movement to explode in this area among the Syrian refugees. God is working, and we are excited to be a part of it!

If you are interested in financially supporting us, or any of our new teammates joining this year, you can so at www.epc.org or by emailing us. We are eternally grateful for all who give and pray for the work being done here.

May God bless you! As always, let us know how we can be a part of your lives as well, and how we can be praying for you!

A few prayer requests:

- Our residency visas expired in October, and the government is taking longer than normal to approve them. We are not the only foreigners dealing with this right now, and it does not necessarily mean that we will be denied, but please pray for approval!
- Continue to pray for Amanda's health during the pregnancy. She is now 30 weeks, and her blood pressure has started to go up slightly, which means she has to go to the hospital twice a week for fetal monitoring. So far, the baby is growing normally and doing fine. We still plan to deliver at 37 weeks. Please pray for no complications between now and then, as well as patience and stamina dealing with constant trips to the hospital for testing.
- Pray for all those that we are in relationship with. As a team, we are leading 4 Bible studies in homes, and we are praying about what next steps would be for each of them. Pray for discernment as a team as we seek God's will, not ours.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

☺ **And the winner is…** The winner of December's Peppermint Candy Game is Miss Helen. Her guess was SPOT ON – there were exactly 91 pieces of candy in the jar and Helen guessed 91. WOW! Congratulations, Helen! She will receive a Chick-fil-A coupon and all the peppermints from the jar.

Be sure to submit your guess for January's Popsicle Stick Game…and be **sure to write clearly and include your FIRST & LAST names**. To encourage our kids to read the *Frontlines* newsletter, winners must ask Mrs. Kutzer for their prize.

☺ **Children & Youth Ministry Volunteer Workshop:** Due to the aftermath of Harvey, the fall workshop was cancelled. Please make every attempt to attend the next one scheduled for Saturday, February 3. (See article on page 3.)

☺ **Valentines Parents' Night Out:** On Friday, February 16, at 6:00 p.m. parents may drop off their children in their PJs at Cornerstone and then spend a few hours celebrating Valentines together. Please send a dinner with them, a blanket and a pillow. We will provide a dessert, a craft or two, and popcorn while they watch a movie. Children should be picked up at or before 10:00 p.m. The cost is $10 for the first child; $5 each additional child.

Please contact the Carol Kutzer by February 14 to register your kiddos. We do not want the cost to be prohibitive. If you would like to sponsor a family please contact Carol. (281) 579-1080 | *info@CornerstoneKaty.org*.

☺ **Get to know our Childcare Workers:** Question of the month – On average, how many diapers do you change each week?

- Ms. Ann – 2
- Ms. Kinsey – 16
- Ms. April – 12
- Ms. Carol – 2

Parents Night Out is scheduled for Friday, February 16.

KIDZ CLUB ENDS FALL SESSION

Kidz Club, Cornerstone's ministry to children living in the nearby apartments The Grove, ended the fall session on a fun but chilly note on Tuesday, December 5.

The cold front that blew in was a good excuse to snuggle up while listening to the Christmas story. The afternoon also included singing scripture and Christmas songs with Jeremy Smith, fun crafts organized by Carol Kutzer, and of course refreshments. Evelyn Saugier brought Santa hats for everyone, which was a perfect way to keep heads warm.

It is a joy to see children who return from year to year, along with new ones. They always seem happy when we begin a new season.

Our spring session will begin in mid-March and run through April. Meetings are Tuesday afternoons, 4:00-5:15 p.m. There is always a need for "house parents" to welcome the children and sit with them during the activities, as well as helpers for games and refreshments, and for substitutes.

Please talk to Evelyn Saugier to learn more or get involved next spring.

Thanks to the <u>many</u> people who helped with Kidz Club this year!

Kidz Club ended its fall session with a recounting of the Christmas story.

ARE YOU COMFORTABLE?

(Continued from page 4)
confronts your idols and challenges your sinful habits—but only ever affirms you as you are—this is a sure sign of a too-comfortable faith.

Healthy faith doesn't just celebrate you as you are but relentlessly molds and refines you into the likeness of Christ, which is a beautiful but necessarily uncomfortable process.

7. YOU'VE NEVER HAD TO HAVE A 'TRUTH-IN-LOVE' CONVERSATION WITH A FELLOW CHRISTIAN.

It's always more comfortable to just "live and let live" when there's an offense or sin that needs to be called out. It's more comfortable to just shrug when we see others in our community making unhealthy decisions.

But this isn't true Christian love.

Love isn't opposed to truth, and if your faith doesn't include the capacity to speak hard truths in love, it's too comfortable.

8. NO ONE IN YOUR CHURCH COULD COMMENT ON ANY AREA OF GROWTH THEY'VE SEEN IN YOU.

To believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ is to believe in change. Though not always linear, the Christian life should be marked by growth, forward momentum, and change for the better.

If you're a Christian who's grown so little that no one in your church could identify any area of improvement, your faith is too comfortable.

—

Why is it important that we avoid falling into comfortable Christianity? Because comfortable Christianity is far from the costly, inconvenient, idol-crushing, cross-shaped path for disciples of Jesus. Comfortable Christianity has little prophetic to say to a comfortable, consumerist world. Comfortable Christianity has little urgency in mission and little aptitude for growth.

Uncomfortable Christianity, however, leads to life and transformation. It leads us to rely on God and not on ourselves; to serve rather than be served; to live lives marked by sacrifice. It leads us to do hard things, to embrace hard truths, to do life with hard people for the sake and glory of the One who did the hardest thing. It may be uncomfortable, but it will be worth it. On the other side of discomfort is delight in Christ.

Editors' note: This is an adapted excerpt from Brett McCracken's new book, *Uncomfortable: The Awkward and Essential Challenge of Christian Community*.

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JESUS
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