Advent in Isaiah

The most widely celebrated birthday in the world is the birth of Jesus Christ. All around the world people spend many weeks anticipating, and then celebrating, the birthday of Jesus Christ. Of course, there is much about Christmas that has to do with commercialism, advertising, and self-indulgence. Nevertheless, Christians are profoundly grateful for the Advent and Nativity of Christ.

This Advent season I plan to preach from the Prophet Isaiah a series of messages called “Advent in Isaiah.” I plan to examine key texts in Isaiah that relate to the Advent and Nativity of Christ.

God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans and led him to the Promised Land. Abram, who became Abraham, would be the one through whom God would bring to the world the blessing of knowing him (Genesis 12:1-3). The great tragedy of Israel was their repeated faithlessness, which blunted their testimony to the Gentiles. But God’s purpose always succeeds, and in order that all people in the world (including Gentiles) might receive his blessing, God would send one of Abraham’s descendants, from the house of David, who would be Immanuel (God with us, Isaiah 7:14).

Though the Prophet Isaiah denounced hypocrisy, greed, and idolatry as offenses against God, he also foresaw the Savior of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God-with-us (Isaiah 7:14), the child destined to rule forever (9:6-7), the hope of the Davidic throne (11:1), the anointed preacher of the gospel (61:1-3), and much more. Isaiah is quoted extensively and mentioned by name in the New Testament more than 20 times, because the message he proclaimed is the very gospel of Jesus Christ.

I pray that this year’s “Advent in Isaiah” will help each one of us to prepare well for the birthday of Jesus Christ that will be celebrated on December 25, 2016.
TBPC 2016 End-of-Year Gift: Bert and Cheryl Barber

TBPC consisted of a church planter and a small group of interested young believers in Christ when Bert and Cheryl Barber first committed to be part of this local body of Christ. As young adults, they had placed faith in Christ, but had not yet committed to a church. In the years since, the Barbers have come to appreciate deeply God’s calling to and for his church, and have a desire to serve and glorify God with the strength and gifts he has given. As Bert wrapped up a busy career in local government, he and Cheryl began to ask how they could serve God best with this new availability. God began to cultivate in their hearts an openness to serve him cross-culturally and a desire to join our church’s international ministry. The Barbers became aware of an opportunity in Bogota, Colombia, that seemed a match for their life experience and spiritual gifts.

Bert and Cheryl will join the Reformed University Fellowship Global ministry in Bogota, sharing their personal testimony of the power of the gospel to transform lives, futures, marriages, and families. Their work will include making connections with students through teaching and tutoring English, assisting with RUF college ministry functions, and extending hospitality to students.

TBPC is pleased to announce that all year-end gifts will be given to MTW for the benefit of Bert and Cheryl Barber. Please make checks payable to TBPC and note on the memo line “Barber Year End Gift.” They are seeking to raise $20,000 to cover the following one-time expenses:

- Tuition & travel for missionary training
- Language training
- Home office missionary care
- Travel and shipping to Colombia
- Transition and set-up costs
- Visas

### December Anniversaries

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Rock &amp; Jennie Roque</td>
<td>December 5</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>Freddy &amp; Eileen Fritz</td>
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<td>Ed &amp; Eileen Kociela</td>
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<td>Bill &amp; Joanne Campbell</td>
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<td>Drew &amp; Ashley Jeffries</td>
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<td>Peter &amp; Lauren Dishman</td>
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From 9-11 a.m. on Saturday, December 3, 2016, the TBPC Women’s Ministry will host its 28th Annual Christmas Brunch. The topic of our speaker, Ms. Donna Lynam, is “The Life and Influence of Elizabeth.” Elizabeth is referred to as “upright in the sight of God.” She is praised for observing all the Lord’s commandments and regulations without blame and was the first to acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

Ms. Lynam believes learning is a lifetime gift that God gives us so that we can enjoy his creation and reflect him to others. She is a member of The Geneva School’s faculty in Lakeland. The Geneva School offers a reformed, classical and Christ-centered college-preparatory curriculum. They are committed to excellence while encouraging students to develop a love of learning.

We are so looking forward not only to hearing Ms. Lynam’s presentation but also to having the opportunity to joyfully enjoy the beginning of the Advent season. Tickets for the event may be purchased from Barbara Hess after Sunday service. They are $10 for adults and $8 for young women 8 years or younger. Hope to see you there!

Every year, WM holds four Sister to Sister gatherings where we have small group fellowship, select prayer partners, pray for each other, and enjoy devotional messages. Our gatherings are held quarterly, either at the church or in our homes, and of course there is fun and food. Our hostesses this year were Ginny Bremer, Deborah Donaldson, Linda Childers, and Eve Thomas. Our thanks to each of you for hosting wonderful events!

On January 14, 2017, WM will host its annual “Soups On” Sister to Sister event at the church from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. Our main course will be three homemade soups with salad and sandwiches as sides. Another must-attend event! Mark your calendars.
We had an amazing opportunity to demonstrate what loving a Sister in Christ looks like. We came together to love on Jena Barber, encourage her and let her witness in a tangible way that many loved and supported her. A house FULL of women (thank you Skopp family) talking, laughing, eating, praying – love and fellowship permeated the entire evening. So, in this situation, love was pink (mostly) and beautiful. The pictures tell the story.

Love is going to someone (not waiting to be asked) and meeting them right where the Lord has them at that moment. An exhausted mom….someone dealing with work stress….a friend who has just received scary news….wherever they are – go there.

Thanks Amber Dixon for the emails, thanks Rebekah Skopp for opening your home, and thanks Suzanne Swenson for the pics.
The cultural influence of the British Royals has flavored our own family. My husband Freddy brought other things from South Africa besides his accent. We have a love for sipping tea, in high style, even if it cannot be at the Mt. Nelson Hotel in Cape Town. So it was that we ventured into The English Corner, a tea room that once graced a space in St. Petersburg Florida. What a delightful spot for a cup of tea! I could not ignore the ambiance of it all, created by silverware tinkling against the china tea cups, the flowered cozies blanketing the pots, the clotted cream icing scones, the stacked tiers showcasing the tantalizing scones, the cucumber sandwiches, the chocolate morsels, the colorful fruit...all so delightful!

But nothing in that tea room was more alluring than the quilt on the wall facing me. Cheerfully greeting me were swatches of purple, lavender, rose, and pink - all harmonized together, creating a kaleidoscope of my favorite colors. I studied the artistry to find the pattern. Only after an excursion around the shop to see all the touches of English elegance and royal reminiscence, and a re-entry into the room where our table was, did I gain a much fuller perspective of the quilt, having stepped farther away. I saw the design emerge! It was an unmistakable, unabashedly adoring tribute to royalty - a mosaic portrait of Princess Diana!

I love good mosaics. I have admired our own church photo mosaic of the stained-glass portrait of Jesus as the Good Shepherd super-imposed on a composite of tiny portraits of the church members. Lovely and meaningful as that may be, it remains a photo-shopped illusion, created “after the fact.” But oh, this mosaic before me was intricately more elegant and complex, creating a whole new sensation of loveliness and, regardless of the extent of any tea-sipper’s fondness for the royal portrayed, evoking a new crescendo of awe. Awe of the fusion. Awe of the face. Awe of the portrait. Awe of the designer. Awe of the craft. Awe of the surprise. Awe of the two-in-one.

The creation before me was not re-touched, or photo-shopped, or stamped-on print. I am not a quilter, and most likely, my friend, you aren’t either. But we all know that every swatch of that royal portrait had to be intentional, meticulously planned in advance to achieve this brilliant finale. It had to be crafted by a capable artist to capture the essence of every lovely feature of the royal subject of this art. No law of random probabilities could dictate that we would all just happen to see the portrait of Diana in the quilt, even in the English Corner of St. Pete.

Infinitely more “improbable” are the Biblical prophesies given over four millennia - all beautiful swatches, sometimes perplexing, often filled with mystery, and always embedded in history - the “seed” of a woman crushing the head of the serpent, a “son” of Jehovah who is to be worshipped as God, IMMANUEL, a root out of dry ground, despised, smitten by God, bearing our iniquities, a ruler out of Bethlehem, the Prince of Peace, a Savior who will save his people from their sins...From sacred scrolls to
speaker systems, from scholarly sermons to stuttering lisps, from seminary podiums to season’s pageants, we have fingered, even clutched those quilted swatches.

Linger again over the IMMANUEL swatches of prophecy from Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 8, Isaiah 9:6 and Micah 5:1-6 in their sovereignly sewn into historical settings. Finger their predictions. Trace their fulfillments.

True, even the most faithful scholars do not always agree precisely on the threads of meaning in each swatch in the quilted context of the history in which it was sovereignly stitched. But, can we really avoid the implications of their statistical exponential improbabilities, seemingly infinite as they are inscrutable, becoming realities for more than 300 Messianic prophesies of Jesus, some made thousands of years before His birth? Would that really give us permission to refuse to bow before the Royal of all royals? Would we dare to rip any piece of fabric out? Or move any squares to other spaces in history’s frame as the “higher critics” of the Biblical texts have dared to do? Would we follow them in ultimate feats of self-sabotaging silliness and pathological denial? Would we reject the loving intention of the Designer to unmistakably identify the real promised Messiah?

Yes, linger there on those swatches. Compile your objections to their prophetic nature – all of them.

Study your options for meaning from every conceivable angle. “Set forth your case,” as the Prophet Isaiah demands.

Now, step away, far away, two millennia later. Look again with fuller perspective to see the breathtaking Royal Portrait emerge in Matthew’s history.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”

Immanuel? Yes, “God, with us!” The King of the universe stepping out of His ivory palaces!

“When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.” --Matthew 1:18 – 25 ESV

There now, have you glimpsed the wonder of the Design? Have you dared to be covered with IMMANUEL’s Quilt?
Men’s Golf Tournament

On November 12, 2016, the Men’s ministry had their third annual Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church Golf tournament at Pebble Creek Golf Course. Those present in the picture from left to right were Pastor Freddy Fritz, Wes Mollard, Richard Thompson, Ken Pothoven, Bill Neal, Craig Tyler, Brian Carrier, Rick Donaldson & Jeff Montoney.

It was a beautiful day for golf with the temperature around 82 degrees and mostly sunny. We were able to have 3 teams and it was a 3 man best ball scramble. Team # 1 included Rick Donaldson, Bill Neal & Brian Carrier, Team # 2 included Pastor Freddy Fritz, Richard Thompson & Craig Tyler. Team # 3 included Wes Mollard, Ken Pothoven & Jeff Montoney.

The teams fought for the first place prize, but Team # 3 came up victorious with a score of 68 followed by Team # 2 with a score of 71 and in third place was Team # 1 with a score of 74. It was a day of great fellowship for the men who have asked for another golf outing in the fall. Team # 3 received prizes for their victorious round of competitive golf.
We also had individual winners for longest drive and closest to the pin. The first hole on the front nine was #6 closest to the pin and it was won by Pastor Freddy Fritz. The second hole was #7 longest drive hole and it was won by Jeff Montoney. On the back nine we had a closest to the pin on hole #12 and it was won by Craig Tyler. The final hole was a longest drive #16 and it was won by Brian Carrier.

A Christmas Carol – Friday, December 2 at 8 p.m.

We look forward to the next event which will be a Christmas play provided by the Carrollwood Players and it is for everyone at the church that would like to attend. This is sponsored by the Men’s Ministry when available each year to bring any or all family members together to enjoy fellowship together watching a Christmas Carol being performed. The Men’s Ministry appreciates the fun and fellowship we enjoy with our Christian brothers and sisters and look forward to other events throughout the year.
## Night in Bethlehem

**Saturday, December 10  5:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

Night in Bethlehem is a live nativity hosted by Tampa Bay Presbyterian. It is an anticipated tradition in our neighborhood and our “Christmas gift” to the community. The church will be filled with visitors, many with young children. All activities are free including a craft station, live nativity, animals, music, snacks, and treats.

Kristine Wyss filled an important role this year as our coordinator. Thank you Kristine! Many members plan to serve in one way or another. Contact Kristine [Kristine_wyss@yahoo.com](mailto:Kristine_wyss@yahoo.com). Additional information is provided in the bulletin.

Invite your friends and neighbors! Ask them to come. Mention Night in Bethlehem when you discuss holiday plans. Share our link on Facebook. This is a fun way to share the good “news of great joy.”

*From the NIB script: Welcome to the manger children. God’s Son himself is here. His name is Jesus. Jesus is God! Do you want to see him? Here. Come and see.*

### December Birthdays

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Dee Kaiser</td>
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<td>Melody Barber</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elijah Jeffries</td>
<td>December 11</td>
<td>Stevie Riley</td>
<td>December 27</td>
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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3: 9:00 A.M.: LADIES’ CHRISTMAS BRUNCH—All women, ages 8 and up are invited to join us for our annual Christmas Brunch at the church. Tickets are on sale in the Narthex or contact Barb Hess.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4: 12:30 P.M.: EMPTYNESTERS AND PACESETTERS’ CHRISTMAS LUNCH—Please join us to celebrate the Christmas season together. We will eat at Red Lobster (17021 Palm Point Dr, Tampa, FL 33647). Please RSVP to Sandy Neal (813-973-7814 or sandybill1941@gmail.com) or Randi Mallary (813-513-4400 or randimallary@gmail.com).

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7: 12:00 P.M.: LADIES’ LUNCH BUNCH—Come relax over lunch with other TBPC ladies at the home of Ginny Bremer (26904 Carmen Place, Lutz 33559). The hostess will provide the soup. Feel free to bring a salad, a sweet, or a beverage. You are welcome to bring a friend or family member! An RSVP would be helpful by Monday evening, December 5, to Eileen Fritz (813-731-0457 or EileenFritz@verizon.net).

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10: 8:30 A.M.: MEN’S BREAKFAST—The cost is $8.00 to be collected at the door; the meal will be followed by a short devotional time. For more information contact Brian Carrier (813-841-9146, brian@bcaflorida.com). RSVP by writing “Men’s Breakfast” on your Welcome Card.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10: 5:30 – 8:00 P.M.: NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM—Come and invite neighbors and friends to take a journey with us through the town of Bethlehem and experience the story of the birth of a Savior! This kid-friendly, family event features live animals, a Christmas Craft Workshop and a Christmas Café. This journey will transport you back in time as you ponder the wonder of the first Christmas Gift! Additional invitation cards at the Welcome Table. Please contact Kristine Wyss at 813-322-3821 or kristine_wyss@yahoo.com for opportunities to serve.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18: 2:00 P.M.: CHRISTMAS CAROLING—Westbrook Manor, 6701 Dairy Rd, Zephyrhills, FL 33544

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24: 7:00 P.M.: CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE—Please use the invitation card in the bulletin, or in the narthex, to invite friends and family to participate in our Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols. Refreshments will be available following the service.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25: 10:30 A.M.: CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE—Invite your friends and family to join us for a Christmas Day service! Please note we will not hold Sunday School classes on Christmas Day.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1: 10:30 A.M.: NEW YEAR’S DAY SERVICE—Invite your friends and family to join us for a New Year’s Day service! Please note we will not hold Sunday School classes on New Year’s Day. Dr. Stephen Clark will be preaching.