

G Garden Gleanings

December 2024

A monthly publication of the Garden Community Church



Shoebboxes!

Garden collected a total of 195 Shoebboxes for Operation Christmas Child! A new record for GCC! The youth group packed 150 of them after shopping with money donated from people within the church. Thank you to everyone who packed a box or who gave money or items towards this project. A dedication service was held for all the boxes on November 24. Continue to pray for the kids who will receive these gifts and hear the gospel!



Christmas Caroling

The 3rd—6th grade Garden Kids spent time packing sacks of goodies to be handed out to the Hickory Homes residents. The following Garden Kids night, December 4, they went caroling at Hickory Homes in Hesston and delivered the sacks to the residents. Pray that the love of Jesus shone through to the residents as the kids ministered to them.



CAROLS & COOKIES

The fellowship hall was filled with sounds of Carols and the smell of cookies on December 7th for our Carols & Cookies event.



Spiritual Conversations Training

Garden hosted a Spiritual Conversations Training at the Activity Center on December 7th. Dave and Scott with E3 Ministries, based out of Oklahoma, came and shared about having spiritual conversations with others in our community. Following lunch, catered by Knackies, the group headed in groups of 2 or 3 into the neighborhoods near the Church Office for a Prayer Walk, praying for those they came across and also knocked on doors asking if there was anything they could pray for them about with them. This gave a chance to pray right there for them and also share the gospel with them. Dave is planning to come back in March to share with us again.





Vonnie's Views

Genesis is a compelling narrative that begins by describing how God created the world, filling it with plants, animals, birds, and sea life. But the greatest creation was humans, made in God's very image. God declared creation "very good"—beautiful, orderly, and designed for humans to flourish. However, by the third chapter, this perfect world was marred by the sin and rebellion of humans. God had every right to destroy both humanity and the world they had corrupted. Yet, when God came to speak with Adam and Eve, He did not come with wrath, but with redemption in mind. He made a remarkable promise: "*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel*" (Genesis 3:15).

The second stanza of *O Little Town of Bethlehem* has been on my mind as I've been reading Genesis over the past few weeks:

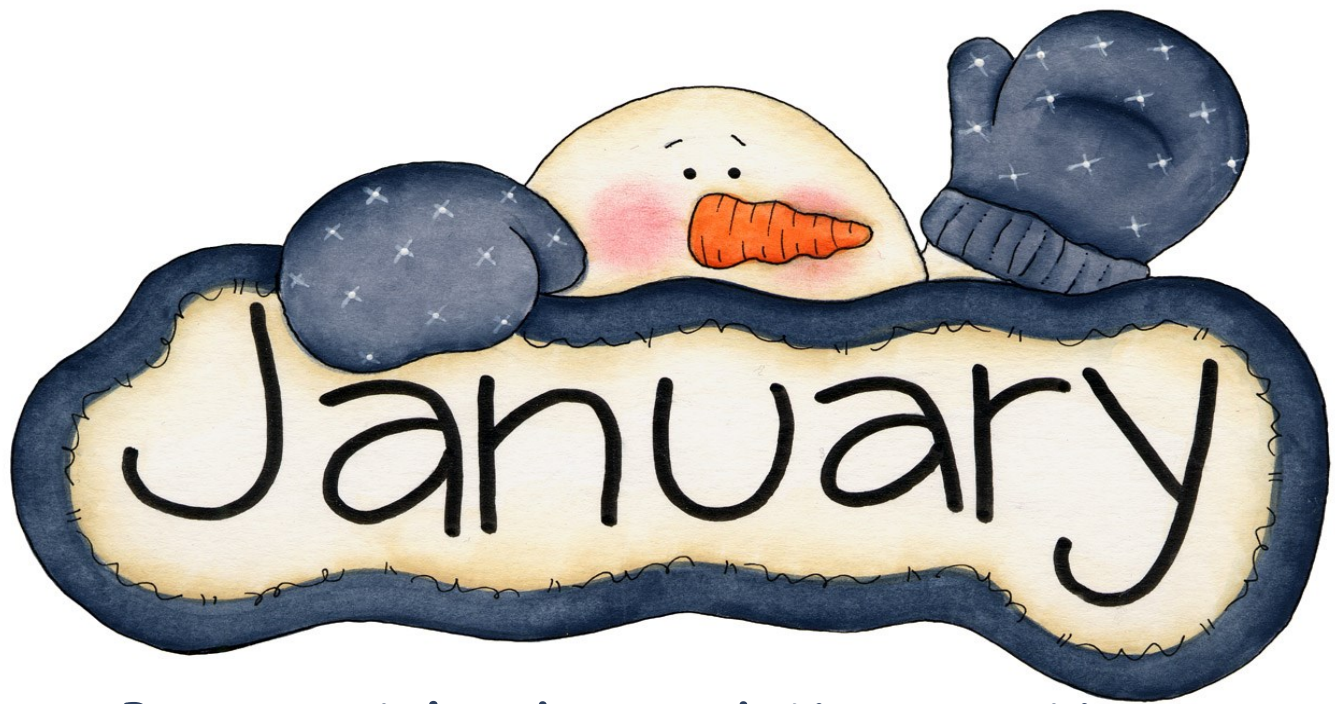
*Yet in Thy dark streets shineth
The Everlasting Light,
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in Thee tonight.*

Genesis tells the story of humanity's repeated failures—sin, rebellion, injustice, and turmoil. Despite these struggles, God's redemptive plan unfolds in the background. While God responds to sin and rebellion with justice, He never abandons His creation. God calls a man named Abraham and makes him staggering promises: blessing, land, and innumerable descendants through whom the entire world will be blessed. But each generation in Abraham's family is marked by moral failure. They make poor decisions that jeopardize their lives and threaten God's covenant promise. Yet, despite their failures, God stays faithful. He continues to rescue them and reaffirms His commitment to bless them—and through them, to bless all nations.

As I read through Genesis, a powerful theme of hope emerged. In the Bible, hope is a confident expectation and desire for something good in the future. It is the belief that the God who has promised will make good on His word. Biblical hope is a firm conviction, not an idle wish.

This theme of hope carries into the New Testament. The Apostle John introduces the Redeemer with these words: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind... He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him*" (John 1:1-10). Paul further describes Jesus: "*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*" (Philippians 2:6-8). The incarnation was exactly what God had planned from eternity past: "*He was chosen before the creation of the world...*" (1 Peter 1:20).

This Christmas season, as we reflect on the story of redemption that begins in Genesis and is fulfilled in Jesus, we find enduring hope. No matter how dark our circumstances may be, God's promises are steadfast. Even when humanity falters, God's faithfulness endures. Just as He kept His promises to Abraham and the generations that followed, He has fulfilled His ultimate promise in the coming of Jesus—the Word made flesh, who lived, died, and rose again for us. This Christmas, let us embrace that hope and be reminded that God's redemptive plan, though it often unfolds in unexpected ways, is always true and certain.



Prayer Calendar and Memory Verse

Memory Verse: Psalm 28:7—The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoices: and with my song will I praise Him.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1 Ask God for wisdom in every decision you make today.	2 Ask God to give you a hunger for more of Him and His word.	3 Thank God for all the hard things He used in the past year to bless you.	4 Pray for those who are sick, cold and in pain to find the relief they need.
5 Pray sincerely for God to bless someone you don't like.	6 Ask God to protect Harvest Radio & Across Nations radio equipment from breakdowns.	7 Pray for young men being disciplined in Brazil to grow into godly men.	8 Pray students in school grow in wisdom, in stature & in favor with God and men.	9 Pray for a friend to come alongside someone struggling with loneliness.	10 Pray for missionaries going out from Brazil just as we pray for our missionaries.	11 Pray for sensitivity to the Holy Spirit to lead you in sharing the gospel.
12 Pray we would value God above all else.	13 Pray for Child Evangelism Fellowship to reach many children with the truth of Christ.	14 Pray God's light will shine through for those struggling with depression.	15 Pray an unshakeable foundation of truth is built into the young ones in our church.	16 Ask God to use you to encourage someone today.	17 Ask God to show you something amazing today.	18 Search your heart and prepare for worship tomorrow.
19 Thank God for 5 blessings today you have been taking for granted.	20 Pray God heals the hurts of those in the military.	21 Pray parents know best how to direct, teach, train & correct their kids.	22 Pray we truly trust God when we don't understand at all what is going on.	23 Pray many Jews have their eyes opened to receive their Messiah.	24 Ask God to open our eyes to any ways we are compromising purity.	25 Praise God for His peace & comfort in our hearts.
26 Pray people come to know Jesus Christ through our church.	27 Ask God to help each of us be good stewards of all He has entrusted to us.	28 Pray we each know how to serve within the body & honor God.	29 He is God. There is no other. Bow before Him.	30 Pray those in the workplace work as unto the Lord in all they do.	31 Pray God would calm our fears & concerns, helping our unbelief.	



GOD'S GIFT

THE GIFT TAG: For unto you is born a child,
A Savior, Christ the Lord,
God's perfect gift to all mankind,
He is the Living Word. (Luke 2:11)

THE WRAPPING: He had a wrapping all His own,
In swaddling clothes He lay,
Tucked snugly in a manger,
Upon the warm soft hay. (Luke 2:12)

THE TRIMMINGS: The shepherds out in their fields,
Kept their flock by night,
A multitude of heavenly hosts
Shining O so bright, (Luke 2:13,14)

THE MESSAGE: "Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, good will to men."
He's the way to perfect peace,
We must be born again. (Acts 16:30, 31)

THE PURPOSE: For God so loved the world,
He gave His only Son,
When we receive the Savior,
Our New Life has begun. (John 3:16)

THE RESPONSE: We who have received Him,
Now and on the 25th,
Can truly say, "Thanks be unto God,
For His Unspeakable Gift." (II Cor.9:15)

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Norvin & Evelyn Schrag

Into the Light *ministry*



Dear Friends,

As I reflect back on 2024, I see a lot of beauty - hearts and lives being changed through healing and forgiveness of pain, cross-cultural relationships built that reach deep into my heart, the diversity of the nations and the continued pursuit of God to redeem us all and bring glory to His name alone...

I've thought a lot about God's glory and sovereignty in the past several months as my family lives through a season of deep grief and loss. God put it on my heart to do a presentation on grief and conflict, a presentation which He used to cause me to wrestle with my own beliefs about Him. Is God's sovereignty good? Is it compassionate? Is His sovereignty selfish - all for His glory at our expense? Does His sovereignty dominate and squelch our voice, leaving us crushed, helpless and a pawn in His Kingdom? These are all questions that most of my clients and I don't actually voice out loud but the pain and distrust is there, in our tone. As I questioned and wrestled with God, He reminded me of two core truths that brought peace to my heart. First, "I am gentle and humble in heart". If I pair God's sovereignty with His humility, it completely changes how I view it. It's no longer about a haughty God throwing His weight around with Job to prove that He is worthy. His humility softens His sovereignty, adding compassion to it. Second, in the garden, Jesus asked that the cup pass away from Himself. Three times He asked this. God's sovereignty does not take away our voice and our right to ask God for relief from pain. His sovereignty does ask us to trust and to yield. Which takes us back to "Do I actually trust God? If not, why not? What is trustworthy about Him?" As I have journeyed deeper into His heart the past 5 years, I am so thankful to be able to say, at least today, I do trust Him.

I will need that trust as I head into 2025, back to Egypt once again (Jan-Feb). A dear woman in my church commented, "Wow, God has really given you a love for that part of the world." No. No, He hasn't. Do I hate/resent going? Absolutely not. Am I eager to go? I am humbled that He continues to invite me deeper into healing, that He gives me opportunity to see how He continues to push back the darkness and that I get to be a part of His plan. I am willing to go.

One of the songs in our Christmas program this year is "Crowns Down" - "I will lay my crowns down at Your feet. You are holy, holy. I will give my life as an offering. You are worthy, so worthy, LORD." Growing the truth of LORD (not just Savior), the truth of His holiness and worthiness, that is my objective this holiday season. May God continue to grant me the grace to know and see Him more.

So, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. May you see the depth of the heart of God for you and over you, in whatever situation you find yourself these holidays. You are loved.

With thanks for all your prayers and support,
Briana Busenitz

Regarding my support:

Praise God and a huge THANK YOU to everyone who has prayed for, fasted over, and contributed financially to my counseling ministry and international trips! Since returning home, I've had a full schedule of counseling and speaking engagements. If you are interested in giving to either of my ministries, the links are below.

Into the Light Ministry: [Donate — Into the Light Ministry](#)
Message me if you want details for direct deposit.

International Messenger: <https://give.im-usa.org/busenitz>

IM has so many national missionaries 'in the trenches' of Ukraine, Lebanon and the Middle East. If you would be interested in giving to one of them, please message me. I have lots of names I could give you.