


FIRST BAPTIST ARLINGTON

TOGETHER

in the Light



A faint, light-colored illustration of a leafy branch, possibly a laurel wreath, is scattered across the background of the page. The leaves are simple, elongated shapes with a central vein, and the branches are thin and curved.

We are excited to offer a digital version of this book at FBCA.org/WordAndDeed, which can be easily searched, bookmarked, and downloaded, making it convenient to take with you wherever you go.

FBCA.org/WordAndDeed

Advent - “to arrive.” Each year, followers of Jesus across the denominational spectrum celebrate this festive liturgical season. Advent officially begins the 4th Sunday prior to Christmas Day. Congregational leaders traditionally use these Sundays to communicate the unique message of Christianity—*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*

Traditionally, an Advent Wreath is used in the actual worship services during the season of Advent with four candles surrounding a larger, central candle. Each successive Sunday, a candle is lit to illustrate the truth that the light of Jesus Christ dispels the darkness of a sinful world. The central candle is known as the Christ Candle, and it usually is lit on Christmas Eve.

So, as the church family moves closer to Christmas Day, there is more light in the room. The imagery culminates on Christmas Eve when all of the candles in the wreath are illuminated, and the church celebrates the birth of Christ. It is a beautiful and rich tradition in which our church participates.

This Advent, we want to capture the theme of “Together...in the light.” We hope you can join us for so many rich celebrations around FBCA - our Women’s Christmas event, our Illuminate worship program, our TMS Choir concert, Christmas ADVENTure for our children, Christmas Eve services and more. We hope you journey with us as we anticipate the birth of Jesus - The Light of the World.


Dennis R. Wiles, Senior Pastor



TOGETHER IN WORD:

John 3:19-21

As we begin the Advent Season, we acknowledge that our world is broken. Sinful behavior has real consequences. Where there is no light, darkness prevails. Were there not so much darkness in our world, there would have been no need for God to send his Son, the Light of the World.

As we read and contemplate this text this week, let's spend some time reflecting on just how dark our world can be when Christ is not accepted and honored. We may want to spend some time this week praying for those we know this Advent Season who have yet to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to remind your children that no matter how dark our world seems, Jesus overcomes all darkness. Understanding this can be difficult for our kids, especially our teenagers. Help them understand that evil in our world does not mean God's absence. Instead, evil explains why God is real and the gospel is necessary for hope. Read John 3:19-21 as a family and reflect on all the ways that you have seen Jesus's light shine in a dark place. What examples can you share with your family?

For younger families, consider turning all the lights off in the house and then using flashlights to shine around. Explain to your children that Jesus provides hope that breaks through even the darkest places. What areas of their life are they afraid of? Jesus's light can defeat all our fears.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

- Sin thrives when it remains unconfessed. Bring your sin into the light by practicing confession: “Most merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what I have done and by what I have left undone. I have not loved You with my whole heart, I have not loved my neighbor as myself. I am truly sorry, and I humbly repent.”
- Who is someone in your life who needs to experience the Light of the World? Commit to praying that the Holy Spirit will illuminate their life with the Gospel this week.
- Are you planning on attending Illuminate on December 8? Invite three people who aren't part of our church to join you!
- Bake cookies and give them to a neighbor, coworker, or friend this week. When you give them, let the person know that you are praying for them throughout this holiday season.



TOGETHER IN WORD:

John 1:1-14

John opens His Gospel with a bold cosmic description of the miracle of the Incarnation. This dark world needed the Light of the World and the life He brings. The light of Jesus Christ dispels the darkness of the sinfulness of humanity. He brings life to us! We are all witnesses of this light.

As we read and reflect on this passage this Advent Season, let's pause to express our gratitude to God for this incredible Christmas Gift! We are not left in darkness. We can live in the light of the life Jesus has brought to us!

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to talk to your family about what it means to walk in the light of Jesus. If Jesus's light breaks through the darkness of our world and defeats our fears, what does it look like to live into that hope? Read John 1:1-14 with your family and allow them to discuss that idea. Share with them real examples from your own life about how you are walking in Jesus.

One way we walk in Jesus's way is to study His Word, the Bible. Psalm 119:15 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and light for my path." If you haven't spoken to your children about the importance of Scripture, this is a good time to do so. The Bible is the best tool we have for discovering the light of Jesus and learning to follow Him.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

- Join us for Illuminate tonight, and bring unchurched friends with you!
- If you committed to praying that someone's heart opens to the Gospel this month, look for opportunities to share a story of why you have hope in Jesus with them this week.
- Look for a tangible way to express the love of God to someone in your neighborhood this week. What is something you can do for someone else to make their life easier?
- Spend time this week listing the ways that Jesus has shown the light of God's goodness in your life. Thank God for the good things you have experienced because of Jesus!

TOGETHER IN WORD:

Luke 2:1-20

The Story of Christmas is the most endearing story ever told! The Son of God born as a little baby in Bethlehem! Wow! This week, as we read and reflect, let's take time to contemplate how this story has changed everything! Nothing has ever been the same since Jesus was born that night in Bethlehem. The Angel of the Lord was right—He was sharing good news!

How has that good news shaped your life? How can God use you to share that good news with others this Christmas Season? Can you live as Christmas Lights in your circle of influence?

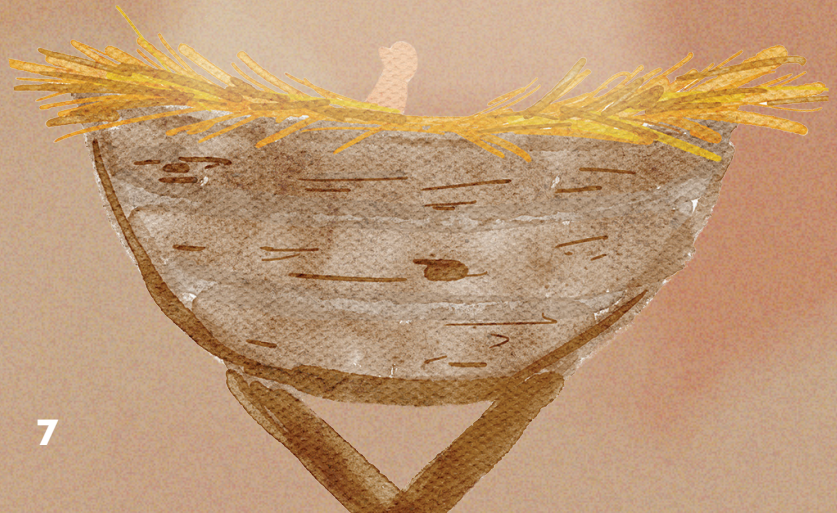
Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to emphasize why Jesus's birth is a big deal. The incarnational impact can be lost for our kids who grow up in the church. The birth of Jesus wasn't just an ordinary event—it changed everything. When Jesus was born, God's love came down to earth in the most amazing way. Jesus came as a tiny baby, but He brought with Him hope, peace, and joy for all people. Because of Jesus' birth, we have a Savior who understands us, loves us, and has made a way for us to be close to God. His birth shows us that God keeps His promises and always works for our good.

This is also a good time to explain gift-giving at Christmas. We not only give gifts to one another to imitate the Magi who gave gifts to Jesus when they visited Him, but also to remember that Jesus Himself is the greatest gift the world has ever received. It's a gift that your child could accept this Christmas, too. Consider talking to your child or teenager about how to accept the gift of Jesus into their life.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

- Bring a family with you to enjoy Family Christmas ADVENTure! If you don't have children living in your home, pray that this event will be a great way for our church to connect with families in our community.
- Who can you tell about God's love for the world that is shown to us through Jesus? Pray that God will help you see (and take!) and opportunity to show and tell the love of God this week.
- Invite another family from church over to your house for dinner. Consider reading Luke 2:8-12 and lighting a candle before your shared meal.



TOGETHER IN WORD:

Matthew 2:1-12

This week we read the story of the visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem to pay homage to Jesus, the King of the Jews. The magi came from the east, bearing gifts to this baby King. This week is Christmas! We will be sharing gifts with family and friends. This tradition arose from the original gifts given to Jesus by these visitors.

As we make our way through this week, let's reflect upon the true gift of Christmas—the gift of love from God wrapped up in His Son! Merry Christmas!

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to help your family address materialism. For children and teenagers, the true meaning of Christmas can get lost beneath the tree and all the wrapped presents. But Christmas is much bigger than that. All gift-giving should be a reminder of God's gift to humankind in Jesus. The gifts we parents give to our children illustrate what our Great Parent did for us by sending His Son, Jesus, to earth. The bottom line is that gift-giving should never become the center focus of the season.

Parents of younger children should consider doing something interesting with their children. Ask them to give up one toy they love to someone else. That's harder than buying a new toy, but it helps them understand the sacrifice that was Jesus. For older families, consider volunteering somewhere during the holidays. Give up a day to serve others so that your teenager can begin to understand that the Jesus way requires sacrifice.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

- Looking for some music to help you meditate on the comprehensive story of the Bible? Listen to the album 'Behold the Lamb of God' by Andrew Peterson.
- Invite a family to join you for Christmas Eve services this week.
- What will you do on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to help orient your celebration around the story of Jesus? Consider reading the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke or Matthew at some point with your family or friends on that day.
- Will you have children in your home this week? Consider making this simple Nativity ornament craft and using it as an opportunity to talk about the story of Jesus:



TOGETHER IN WORD:

Isaiah 61:1-3

We end this year with this text that was so important to Jesus. In Luke 4, Jesus will read this text in His hometown synagogue in Nazareth. He will claim it has been fulfilled with His appearing!

As we focus on this text, let's reflect upon how God used Jesus to fulfill His will.

Let's reflect upon this past year and consider how closely we have followed God's will. How has God used us in His work? How are we planning to be used by Him in this new year?

Parent Spotlight

Parents, this is a good week to emphasize a crucial part of the faith: we give to others because Christ has first given to us. This part of Christianity can be challenging. Jesus saved us not so that we could live our best lives now but so that we could give our very best to help others find life.

Read Isaiah 61:1-3 and then Luke 4:16-21. Explain to your children that when we choose to follow Jesus, we are also choosing to join His mission to the world. Next Sunday will be 2025. Everyone will be making New Year's resolutions. Who is Christ calling us to be this next year as we engage with a world that desperately needs the hope of Jesus?

Lead your family in a prayer for 2025. Ask God to reorient your mind toward the kingdom and how He wants to use you this year.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

- A new year will be here soon. What is God calling you to leave behind in the coming year? Spend time prayerfully reflecting and writing.
- What is God calling you to do or become in the coming year? Spend time prayerfully reflecting and writing.
- Who is God calling you to pray for in the coming year? Spend time praying that God will bring people to your mind who need the Good News of Jesus.
- After the busyness of the season, take a day to rest. Avoid using screens, especially smart phones. Work on unplugging and being present to the people around you and invite others to do the same with you. Play games, take naps, and eat good food.



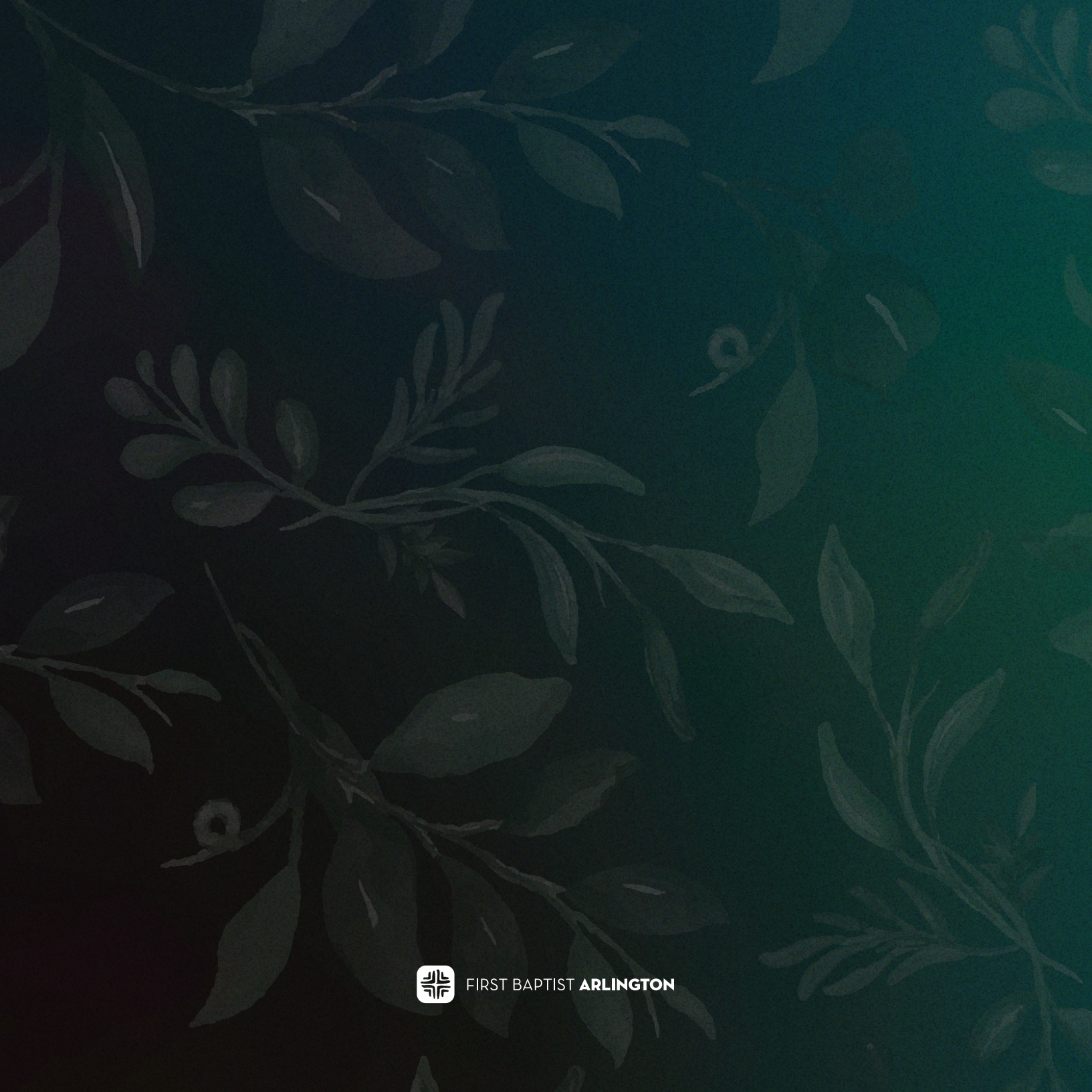
JANUARY 24-26, 2025

Join together for Launch Weekend, a 3-day event designed to equip us to thrive both personally and within our communities. This retreat is a chance for us to grow closer to each other, deepen our faith, and learn how to be a positive influence in the neighborhoods where we live.

Whether you're seeking more fulfillment, stronger connections, or a deeper purpose for your life, this retreat will provide you with practical tools and a supportive community to help you grow. As we prepare to come together for this retreat, we invite you to reflect on how God is calling you to impact the world around you.



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