Dear Cross Roads Church Family:

With the month of December comes the beginning of the Advent season once again. Advent, which means “coming,” is the traditional start of the church calendar and is the season that helps us lead up to and prepare for the celebration of Jesus’ birth at Christmas. With all of the hubbub and busy-ness of Christmas, it is tempting to jump right into the holiday full blast: Christmas now and all the time! There is only so much time, after all, to do the shopping, plan and attend all the parties, and listen to “Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer” several hundred times. You have to cram it all in while you can. For many, Christmas begins the day after Thanksgiving, before the leftovers are even served, and I’ve been noticing that for others Christmas begins even earlier, even if that means we are sick of it by the time the day actually does arrive. But this year, don’t skip over Advent. There is value in anticipation, and in the slower, hushed rhythms of waiting. Christmas gets its own season after all – 12 days beginning on December 25th – where we celebrate the full meaning of Christ’s birth. There is time then to celebrate Christmas as believers. But before Christmas is Advent, that season of preparation. There is wisdom in the church calendar in scheduling it that...
way. We need time to slow down and reflect, to repent, to take stock, and to be renewed. I find there is more room here for the many different emotions we have at the holidays, as well. Christmas is not always so easy for those who are grieving, or hurting, or struggling. All of our real, messy human emotions don’t always fit in so well in the Norman Rockwell Christmas postcard images we carry in our heads. But Christmas is hope, peace, love, and joy to the hurting heart precisely because it comes to us after acknowledging our hurts, pains, disappointments, and impatience. So don’t skip Advent. To paraphrase the Buechner quote above, the extraordinary moment of Jesus’ coming is matched only by the extraordinary moment just before it happens. The wait adds to the enjoyment.

This month in worship, we’ll focus on what it means then to “Prepare the Way.” What does it mean to ready our hearts and minds for the arrival of Jesus? Of course, the Lord’s coming is not limited to one time and place 2,000 years ago. It is a coming and an arrival that happens again and again as Christ enters our lives, our families, and our situations. It is a coming that is promised to us in the future where Jesus will return once again and make all things new. It is a coming over and over again of that promised future arriving now. It is a brand new day! So relish the wait. Christ is coming.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Brian

Thank you! Thank you to everyone who turned in a 2018 pledge card. If you have not had opportunity yet to do so, please help us out by prayerfully doing so soon. This helps your session in setting an accurate budget for the 2018 year. Need a pledge card? Extra pledge cards are available at the Welcome Center in the Lobby – or simply stop by, email or call the church office.
Greetings from your brand new Facilities and Events Coordinator! This position was created a few months ago as an integral part of the unfolding plan for CRC – using our gifts, resources and facilities to become a destination congregation of God’s people, spreading His love through relationships and partnerships in our community. To that end, I was hired last month to establish and maintain those relationships and partnerships, and to manage the use of CRC facilities by outside groups. I will use the newsletter occasionally to update you on the different partners who come to CRC. Watch closely as you might find a group you’d like to join, or support in some way – your actions will strengthen these relationships and help fulfill our mission.

The past few weeks have been very busy as many hands have been at work preparing the newly named Geneva Conference Center and Calvin Annex for future partners. We are anxiously awaiting to see what God has planned for these spaces. Please keep prayers flowing as we continue to discern who God may put in our path to use these spaces!

The main campus continues to be in fairly constant use – truly a blessing to hear and feel the hum of activity! Besides our current CRC groups and missions, many other groups use this building. The Gymatorium is used daily by Ballinisahabit, a basketball-focused scholarship and life skills program run by Jarrett Turner. In November, St. Thomas More Middle School began to use the Gymatorium for their basketball practice, Mon-Thu and Sat. mornings; they will be with us until mid-February, with a hope to use it also in the summer and next fall. But that’s not all the Gymatorium is used for. In Oct. we hosted a Genealogy Conference, as well as the Windcrest Women’s Club for an exercise demonstration. In Nov a day-long Sea Shell Auction was held in this same space!

Our “new” buildings have also begun to see some activi-
ty. The Windcrest Lion’s Club met in the Calvin Annex and TXWeACT, an animal rescue organization has also started meeting in classroom space once a month – they even used the kitchen to make doggie treats! The Presbyterian Midwinter Planning Team for Youth were our first occupants of the Geneva Conference Center and we are looking forward to hosting a 6-week class series on Diabetes Self-Management from the Oasis Center in the spring.

As you can tell, we have a very active campus, which is an incredible blessing. I invite you to be part of this amazing process and join a group, or better yet, BRING a group to use this wonderful campus – and most importantly build a relationship with those who also call our campus “home”. And may all these efforts bring glory to God and faith to our community.

Bev Spitznagel

The pictures on the following page are from the Cross Roads Church Reveal / Open House on November 19th. These are just some suggestions how our newly renovated spaces can be configured:
Life at Cross Roads Church

Cross Roads Church Education Wing (to r): Parlor, Quilt Room/Adult Sunday School Room, Children’s Sunday School Room, Nursery

Gymatorium Family Waiting Room
**Book Group**
The Read & Dialogue Book Group meets the 2nd Thursday of each month (September-June) at 7:00 pm in the Parlor to fellowship, review the book of the month, pray & discuss their mission focus. This month’s book is an old favorite “Fahrenheit 451.” For December, the group will meet on Thursday, December 14th. Stop in with your fellow book lovers! Questions? Contact Ann Zeigler.

**Having a Birthday?**
The Birthday fund was established a few years ago and is used to purchase items beneficial to the life of the whole congregation that may not be part of the operating budget. Simply make a donation in the amount of your age as a thanks giving to God for another year of life!

**Sunday School**
Sunday School classes for all ages are ready & waiting for you! Sunday mornings at 10:05 am in the main building—just follow the crowd.

**Presbyterian Women**
The Presbyterian Women are waiting on you to join them. On December 7th, the Lydia Circle will meet at Noon at Los Patios for Christmas fellowship. The Mary Martha Circle will meet on Monday, December 11th at 9:30 am in the Parlor. Study, Fellowship & Mission awaits you!

**Men’s Breakfast**
The Men’s Breakfast group is reconvening for their monthly breakfast on the second Saturday of each month. 8:00 am at the Windcrest Golf Club is the place to be. (December 9th). See you then!

**Prayer Quilt Ministry**
The Prayer Quilt Ministry meets the 1st Friday and 3rd Monday of each month at 9:00 am in the Quilting Room in the Cross Roads Church Education Wing. (Note: the Quilt Ministry will not meet on December 18th). Join them! Questions? Contact Beth Powell or Debbie Gilbert.

**Christmas Eve Worship:**
- Sunday, December 24th – 10:00 am
- Sunday, December 24th – 6:00 pm
  (includes Night of Miracles Cantata and Candlelighting)

**Prayer Team**
Thinking about joining the Tuesday morning prayer team? Stop on in any Tuesday morning at 10:00 am in the Parlor to pray. Note: The Prayer Team will be on Christmas break Tuesdays December 19, 26 & January 2. They will still be in prayer for you—simply contact the church office.

**Church Office Hours**
As a reminder, the church office is closed on Wednesdays. The church office will be closed Monday-Wednesday, December 25-27 and January 1-3 for the Christmas and New Year’s holidays.

**Pics and blessings … for pets!**
TXWeACT is a non-profit group of Windcrest citizens ready to help the Windcrest Animal Control Department in solving pet issues that face this community. Help be a part of the solution by creating awareness. Stop by the Cross Roads Church parking lot on December 17th from 5pm-7pm and get your pet’s picture taken with Santa for FREE! Pastor Brian will also be blessing the animals at 5:30 pm. Don’t miss it.
Youth News

The Youth of Cross Roads Church would like to thank the congregation for their heartfelt generosity in support of the Joshua Build being sponsored by the Youth of Mission Presbytery. Cross Roads Church reached their goal! Praise be to God! A total of $2025 was raised. We ask that you continue to be in prayer for the event; for those taking part in the build and for the families for whom the walls will eventually become a part of their home. The Joshua Build is scheduled for the afternoon of January 14th at Northwood Presbyterian Church. Be sure to check the January Newsletter for details on how you can participate!

With sincere gratitude, Sandy, Stefan, Liz, Cameron and Jordan

What’s that noise? Within days, roofers will be arriving at Cross Roads Church. The April 2016 roof hail damage repair project is about to begin. The contractor’s material and equipment storage enclosure has been erected in the NE parking lot, the sprinkler system valve boxes and sprinkler heads have been marked, and Lone Star Roofing and Construction, Inc. has told us they will probably start some work next week. All four shingled roofs, the metal walkway cover and some gutters will be replaced on and around the sloped roof buildings along with other minor repairs. The HVAC ducting on the flat roof buildings will be replaced as well as much of the admin wing, choir hall and gym roof-to-wall flashings and caps. We’re coordinating our and the contractor’s schedules as closely as we can to minimize disruptions but there will be some. The project is expected to take about 6 weeks, barring weather or other delays, during which time we will experience some inconveniences, e.g. safety areas blocked off around the parking lot, buildings, sidewalks and entrances, and potential heating and cooling interruptions, etc. as those areas are affected. Please bear with us, observe the safety cones and barriers, etc., let the staff know of any changes in building use schedules, and avoid moving equipment and interrupting the contractors as they go about their work. Bob Robbins and Vern Handel are our primary points of contact with the contractor’s on site supervisor and production controller. Please let them know of any concerns and, with a little luck and cooperation, we will find a solution that works for both us and the contractor. Thanks in advance for your patience during this project. And pray for an on-time successful completion without unexpected damage or injury to anyone involved.
Lunch & Love
We would like to thank the Walzem Road Revitalization group for providing the meal for our guests in October. We served 31 guests. As we start our new year in 2018, we will need groups to serve the meal at Lunch & Love. All months are open. Please contact Silbia Esparza at 210 860-7293 if you are willing to serve.

Disaster Relief Angel Tree
December 3 marks the start of the Advent Season and the opportunity to remove a tag or tags off the Disaster Relief Angel Tree. This means that this year, you will be able to select hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and/or Maria, and/or the earthquake in Mexico to donate money for their recovery. The tree is located in the coffee area between the Chapel and Parlor.

Alternative Gift Market
This year, our Alternative Gift Market will focus on one international ministry (CEDEPCA) and four local ministries (Lunch & Love, Ballinisahabit. Presbyterian Children’s Home and Battered Womens Shelter.) Ann Zeigler, Brenda Hutzler, and Silbia Esparza will be available in the coffee area between the Chapel and Parlor to receive your selection sheet. You have the option to receive card(s) to be used to give to the person you purchased the gift for.

Mayan Market
Edward and Silbia Esparza will be selling Guatemala crafts benefiting the Guatemala Partnership Team’s work in the country. Proceeds of this sale will be used to support four seminarian students attending the Evangelic Seminary of Guatemala. The market will be held in the coffee area between the Chapel and Parlor.

Agape Ministry
Don’t forget to bring your nonperishable food items to benefit the Agape food pantry. Place your donation in the new “Agape Pantry.” This cupboard is located on the wall headed toward the kitchen.

Peace and Blessings, Silbia Esparza, Chair
Outreach Event for Windcrest Light Up – Can you help? Windcrest Light Up begins December 9th this year and Cross Roads Church will be participating by putting on a Live Nativity! We’ve booked a camel, donkey, and four sheep for that night from 6-8pm. We are planning on having volunteers dressed in costume as Joseph, Mary, angels, shepherds and wise men. Our own Praise Team will play music, and volunteers will pass out invitations to our church along with hot cocoa and small gifts for kids as they pass by. It should truly be a fun night of sharing our love for Jesus and connecting with people in the city.

We need lots of volunteers! A volunteer training session and prayer time will take place on Wednesday, December 6th at 5:15 pm. Interested? Chat with Pastor Brian or contact the church office.

Seize the Moment! It’s always difficult to know what to say or how to invite someone to worship. This time of year makes it easier because— for whatever reason—during the Advent season, it seems our friends, neighbors and family members are more open to an invitation.

Invite a family member, a friend or a neighbor to help out at the Live Nativity on December 9th or to one of the Christmas Eve worship services. We’ll have just one service of worship in a traditional style at 10:00 am on Christmas Eve morning or to 6:00 pm Christmas Eve worship which will include the “Night of Miracles” Christmas Cantata and candlelighting.
Pastor Brian, Tim McKee and Marlene Patton attended a luncheon and Ambassador’s meeting at the PCHAS home on Whitby Road. As we do every year, we extended an invitation to the PCHAS San Antonio staff and clients to attend our annual Thanks Giving to God celebration on November 19th.

PCHAS continues to follow Christ’s example by how clients are served, always treating them with respect and protecting their dignity. PCHAS focuses on their clients’ strengths rather than on their problems and encourages them to focus on their future rather than their past.

PCHAS’s San Antonio campus is thriving with both a Transitional Living Home and a Single Parent/Child Home. The Transitional Living Home houses young adults who have aged out of foster care but are not equipped to be self-sustaining. These clients need additional time to pursue education while living in a safe environment. Recently 3 clients obtained their goal of sufficient salary to pay for housing and personal needs and one client moved out of state. PCHAS is now reviewing applications and expects those beds to be filled soon.

The Single Parent/Child Homes currently houses two Moms and five children. This program has been so successful the PCHAS Board of Directors recently approved pursuing an expansion at the San Antonio campus. Pending a successful capital improvement funding campaign, the plan is to build four duplexes (8 homes) and supporting infrastructure during Phase I. The plan also includes renovating existing buildings on the campus. Please pray for God’s guidance for the architects and fund raisers!

It was great to meet and greet staff from both the Austin headquarters and the San Antonio campus of PCHAS – including our own Sibyl Kaufman, the Director of Marketing and Communications.

PCHAS thanked us for Cross Road’s continued support of the PCHAS programs and invited any interested members to visit the campus to learn more about Presbyterian Children’s Homes and Services.