

# Church tops off Christmas season with high-powered gift to community\_122004

December 17, 2004

Posted: 12/17/04

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**By George Henson**

*Staff Writer*

FORT WORTH—River Oaks Baptist Church in Fort Worth hopes its Christmas present to the community will provide recipients the “get up and go” they need to come to church.

The congregation contracted with the gas station closest to the church to mark gasoline down to \$1.25 per gallon from 10 a.m. until noon Dec. 18, with the church making up the price difference.

A few days prior to the event, Pastor Jim Lemons was excited about the possibilities.

“We'll have a captive audience for at least 20 minutes or so while they are waiting in line,” he said.

During that wait, church members planned to wash windows, check air pressure in tires, hand out hot chocolate, distribute tracts and build relational bridges. Twenty to 30 people were expected to help in the

ministry, coordinated by the church's men's ministry team.

Lemons said the idea was born out of hearing radio stations during similar events. "If a radio station can do it, why not the church?" he said. "I guess this is a just a modern-day version of giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name."

He said the church's outreach team began talking about discounting gasoline as a means of reaching out to the community in late summer.

"As we talked about it, we decided: 'Why not wait until Christmas? People are looking to save a little money at Christmas.' This is our little Christmas gift to the community."

While it may be a "little Christmas gift," it will not be free.

"We realize we have to invest where the future of the church is, and that is in growing the church," Lemons said. "If it costs us \$1,000 to impact 100 people on a Saturday morning, so be it."

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