

Advent Adventure: Churches capitalize on movie-sparked Narnia-mania

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About 800 members of University Baptist Church in Houston gather for a Narnia night, designed to introduce Christians to the fantasy world of C.S. Lewis as a prelude to Advent. (Photos courtesy of University Baptist Church in Houston)

ADVENT ADVENTURE: Churches capitalize on movie-sparked Narnia-mania

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

Alongside the greenery and candles usually associated with Advent, some churches this year are using lions, witches and wardrobes to help worshippers experience the Christmas story.

Baptist churches learn to embrace Advent ritual

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Baptist churches learn to embrace Advent rituals

By Terri Jo Ryan

Special to the Baptist Standard

When Bill Hardage first “got” Advent after much Bible study more than a

decade ago, he fell in love with the sacred season.

Advent symbols explained

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Advent symbols explained

Advent centers on hope, peace, joy and love as Christians move through the season of waiting and looking forward to the feast of Christmas.

A common symbol for the season is the Advent wreath, a circular garland of evergreen branches signifying eternity. Arranged in the wreath are three purple candles and one pink candle. The first candle, purple, symbolizing hope, is lit on the first Sunday of Advent, the start of the liturgical year of the Christian calendar. Each week an additional candle is lit.

The second candle, also purple, represents peace. The third, a pink candle, is the shepherds' candle, symbolizing joy. The fourth candle is love.

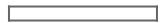
Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

The 13 Apostles by Preston Alford Taylor (Tate Publishing)

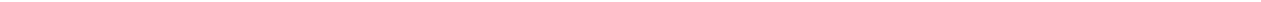


Preston Taylor has several published books with wide distribution in English, but predominately in Spanish. I predict this newest work will surpass the others in both sales and stature.

This is a book every pastor should have on his shelf, every seminary student should be required to study and every Sunday school teacher should have close at hand. It is one of the few books I would recommend that everyone should buy and read right now!



What are you reading that other Texas Baptists would find helpful? Send suggestions and reviews to books@baptiststandard.com.



Personal touch meaningful to Breckenridge residents

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Bob and Carolyn Holsomback, members of Colonial Hills Baptist Church in Tyler, try out one of the benches they rebuilt for the Breckenridge Village prayer garden. (Photo by Craig Bird)

Personal touch meaningful to Breckenridge residents

By **Craig Bird**

Baptist Child & Family Services

TYLER-At Breckenridge Village, Bob and Carolyn Holsomback are making names-not for themselves but for the residents of the Baptist Child & Family Services facility for mentally handicapped adults. They also have made Christmas gifts, park benches, napkins, bluebird houses-and lots and lots of friends.

Christmas music playlist ranges from sacred to secular

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Christmas music playlist ranges from sacred to secular

By Adelle Banks

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)-It's that time of year again, when Silent Night or Jingle Bells greets you as you turn on the radio, walk into a shopping mall or head down a city street.

Some churches say they'll sing no carol before its time

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Some churches say they'll sing no carol before its time

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

The starting date and finish line for singing carols in church depend on whether a congregation follows the Christian calendar or the Hallmark calendar—and how constrained worship leaders feel by their choice.

Unlikely allies defend 'Merry Christmas' greeting

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Unlikely allies defend 'Merry Christmas' greeting

By **Andrea Useem**

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)-The movement defending Christmas as a Christian holiday has attracted some unlikely allies-religiously observant Jews and Muslims.

Second Opinion: The cheering of Christmas

December 16, 2005

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SECOND OPINION: The cheering of Christmas

By **BO Baker**

We all need the cheering of Christmas. It seems the whole world recently has experienced the heaviness of hurt, stain marks unabated, and questions that have struck in powerful forms of aftershock. Name a nation-any one will do-that has been exempt from the clash of swords, the heavy thunder

of drums announcing new vistas of crime.

Yes, without question, we need the cheering of Christmas.

DOWN HOME A long walk into the future

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DOWN HOME: A long walk into the future

The Big Day is nigh upon us.

By the time you read this, Aaron Britt Kahler, otherwise known as “The Most Fortunate Young Man in the Universe,” will have married our oldest daughter, Lindsay Michelle Knox.

Due to the persistent demands of publishing schedules, I'm writing this a few days before the big wedding. Still, I'm looking ahead, anticipating that day.

EDITORIAL Have a Merry Christmas this year

December 16, 2005

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EDITORIAL:

Have a Merry *Christmas* this year

This season may be remembered as the time when Christians went ballistic over Christmas.

In the good old days, a sign proclaiming “Merry Xmas” would send many folks huffing. The abbreviation, infamously substituting “X” for “Christ,” prompted pointed-yet-benign counter-slogans, such as “Let’s Keep Christ in Christmas” and “Jesus is the Reason for the Season.”

Back then, “X” marked the spot for “Christ,” retaining the word, if not spelling it correctly. Now, many folks would gladly accept the occasional “Xmas” sign or advertisement. At least when people say the word, they pronounce it right: “Christmas.”



Howard Payne launches new graduate degree

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Howard Payne launches new graduate degree

By Laura Johnson

Howard Payne University

BROWNWOOD-Howard Payne University-the only Texas Baptist school to offer an undergraduate degree in youth ministry-will offer a master of arts in youth ministry beginning in fall 2006.