

Church gives all year for Operation Christmas Child

November 20, 2013

COLLEGE STATION—[Parkway Baptist Church](#) gives all year long so its children can bless other children at Christmas.



Parents and children work together at Parkway Baptist Church in College Station to pack shoeboxes with gifts collected for Operation Christmas Child. (PHOTO/ George Henson) Each month, the congregation brings assigned items—small stuffed animals, cars, crayons, balls, dolls, toothpaste, flashlights and batteries, and numerous other gifts—for [Operation Christmas Child](#), a ministry of Samaritan's Purse. The children in the church gather in November to pack boxes with the gifts the congregation has provided.

This year, the children packed 1,029 boxes in one evening. The church also

functions as a collection center for other churches and families in the area. Parkway Baptist Church received 2,500 boxes the first day of the collection—a new record, said Coordinator Tom Foster.

In addition, Pastor Chris Snidow expects families in the church to pack another 500 boxes for Operation Christmas Child in their homes.

“We’ve been a part of this about 15 years, and it’s been a wonderful experience every single year. We’ve tried to raise our goal every year,” he said.



Members of Parkway Baptist Church in College Station collect gifts all year to pack in shoeboxes each November for Operation Christmas Child. (PHOTO/ George Henson)Members of the church’s youth group assemble the boxes, which arrive flat, and place the empty boxes on the platform in the sanctuary.

“We ask our people to adopt those empty boxes,” Snidow explained. “Operation Christmas Child has become part of the DNA of our church. We always say it’s not about a box. It’s about the child who receives the box. So, when we introduce our church goal, we don’t say we want to pack 1,500 boxes. We say we want to touch 1,500 children. It’s become personal

for us.”

On the night of the children’s packing party, a photographer takes each child’s photo. The child writes a short note to go with it, and the photo and note are the first items packed in each box.

In preparation for the packing party, Parkway organizes items donated throughout the year and places them in classrooms. Each classroom features gifts appropriate for the age and gender of the child receiving the box. In addition to toys, each box includes toothpaste and a toothbrush. After the box is packed, volunteers take it to the prayer room and pray for the boy or girl who will receive the box.



A grandfather and his grandchild pray over a shoebox filled with toys, collected and packed at Parkway Baptist Church in College Station for Operation Christmas Child. (PHOTO/ George Henson)“We are expecting great things as the gospel is placed in their hands,” Snidow said.

The last three years, Snidow has attended a leadership event in Atlanta. There, he met full-circle children—children who received a box, made a profession of faith in Christ and now reside in the United States.

“That so touched us, because we got to see the actual people who had accepted Christ because of a shoebox,” he said.

“The gospel starts in the box. The child receives it. The child then has the opportunity to go through the Bible study—the Journey they call it—and accept Christ. They then take their Bibles, and they become missionaries in their own villages. So, from box to Bible to multiplying disciple.”

Knowing how children’s lives change through Operation Christmas Child energizes the church to give year-around in expectation of the packing night.

“They have lived in anticipation of this night all year long,” Snidow said.