

2018 Simple Christmas Invitation

Dear Church Family:

It is hard to believe that this year we will celebrate 13 years of practicing Simple Christmas. Simple Christmas was created when I realized that the Church was contributing to the chaos of Christmas. I believed the Church was unwittingly a part of the problem and not a part of the solution to the commercialism and fatigue that dominates our community during the Christmas season.

Simple Christmas is nothing more than a re-prioritization of our time and resources at Christmas. We direct our focus on Jesus and not the many idols that our culture parades before us. It is a statement that **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!**

Our hope is that families will reduce what we spend on obligatory gifts by 20% and share the difference with a mission or local ministry. We also ask families to dedicate Sundays for togetherness, filling the Lord's day with activities that honor the gift of family and friends.

Each year we select a few ministries, from which families can choose to make their Simple Christmas gift offering. Beginning on the first Sunday of Advent, December 2nd, we will have a "Simple Christmas" Table in the courtyard.

Each family can select the ministry/ministries of their choice by picking up a designated envelope and returning the envelope to the offering plate anytime during Advent. The church will then send one life-altering check to each organization at the end of the year.

Here are this year's opportunities:

-Exodus Road: This is a sister organization of a Syria-based ministry we have supported in the past, FAI. There are currently more than 20-40 million people caught up in sex trafficking world-wide. This despicable practice is the 2nd most common violation of human rights in the world. Exodus Road is a ministry that physically goes in and rescues those who have been abducted and abused for the purpose of the sex trade industry. To date, they have rescued more than 1,000 people.

-Pregnancy Resources/Alternative Pregnancy Center: Each year, we want to focus on a local ministry. There is nothing closer to our hearts than the protection of children, both born and unborn. These two Brevard County ministries are committed to the sanctity of life and have been previous benefactors of our generosity. Last year alone, Pregnancy Resources saved 362 babies from potential abortion. We will split this offering between these two great ministries so they may continue to glorify God in the protection of unborn life.

-Helen's House (CITA Mission): Homelessness in our community is on the rise and affects the most vulnerable, women and children. This ministry will establish a residential home for mothers and children as they address the cultural and social challenges they face escaping their past. This Christ-centered ministry of recovery is committed to seeing fresh starts and healthy practices. This facility will be a necessary shelter in a storm that is all too common in Brevard County.

-Port St. Joe UMC: This past October, Hurricane Michael ravaged the Gulf Coast of Florida and left a trail of devastation. We wanted to reach out and help a church that was completely destroyed by the storm and assist them with rebuilding their campus for the work of Christ to continue. We chose this church primarily because they have been a spearhead in their community. They have glorified God, all from their parking lot - worshiping, serving and feeding - all in the shadow of their destroyed church. This is our chance to help a faithful congregation get back on its feet!

We are excited about this opportunity to share the love of Jesus Christ with the those right here in our own community and to the ends of the earth.

We believe these four outreach opportunities represent the greatest amount of ripple effect in breaking the grip of evil, and restoring lives and hope in others. Is this not why Christ came?

May the peace of God be with you and your family and may a Simple Christmas find its way to your home.

All my love,

Pastor Corky Calhoun