



WELCOMING
EVERYONE TO A
BIGGER TABLE.

THE CORNER

uhbc.org  

SUNDAY MORNING LIFE GROUPS - 9:15AM
SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP - 10:30AM
WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY - 6PM

NEWS FROM UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH

(a CBF/ABC Church)

Dec 2025

CRITER

Andy Williams may have said it best, “*It’s the most wonderful time of the year.*” And while he was singing about parties for hosting and marshmallows for toasting, the deeper truth is that this season is wonderful because it draws us again into the sacred rhythm of Advent: a season of waiting, watching, hoping, and trusting that God is still breaking into the world in ways both small and stunning.

Advent reminds us that faith is not passive optimism; it’s active expectation. It’s leaning forward with courage and attention in a world that sometimes feels weary and worn down. It’s looking at the darkness honestly, and yet daring to believe that the light still shines, still calls, still heals, still leads. As a church family, we walk into this season together, seeking the Christ who comes to us in word and worship, in song and silence, and in every act of love we offer to others.

This December we also hold some of the most meaningful gatherings of the year. I want to personally invite you to **The Longest Night Service on December 21st at 6:00 pm**. The Longest Night is a moment to shine light on those lost to violence in our community over the last year. So far, since Winter Solstice of 2024, there have been 19 homicides. This has become a very meaningful moment for our church and our city. Each year, unfortunately, brings new opportunities to care for those experiencing the crushing grief of a loved one gone too soon.

Crosses will be constructed on Wednesday Night December 3rd (after budget discussion) and we’ll take time to pray for families and friends. Crosses will go in the ground the next day.

Then, on **Christmas Eve at 5:30 pm**, we gather for our **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**, celebrating the birth of Jesus with Scripture, carols, prayer, and the beauty of the Lord’s Supper. It is one of the most cherished and holy moments in our church life together—standing shoulder to shoulder as the sanctuary fills with candlelight and we proclaim, “**Joy to the world, the Lord is come!**” I hope you’ll join us and invite family, friends, and neighbors to share in that radiant moment.

As we turn the corner toward a new year, I am filled with genuine excitement about **2026**. We are dreaming boldly and preparing for new approaches to ministry—new ways to serve, to learn, to deepen faith, and to meet the needs of our community and world. Our story as a church has always been one of thoughtful faithfulness, gentle courage, and a willingness to grow, and I believe the coming year will stretch us in beautiful and meaningful ways.

As we move through December—through the joy and busyness, the music and the memories, the traditions and the surprises— I want you to know how deeply grateful I am for you. Your faith, your presence, your generosity, your willingness to love and serve—it all matters, and it strengthens our church in ways that go far beyond what we see on Sunday mornings.

May this season bring you peace, hope, and joy.

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and may the Light of Christ dwell richly in your home and heart.

-Pastor Nolan

Pastor's
Corner

Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry Update – November Reflections

As I wrap up my second month serving as Youth Pastor, I continue to be grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside our students as they grow in faith, character, and community. Many of you know that I previously served as the Children's Pastor, and stepping to lead our youth when the position opened has been both a joy and a privilege. Thank you for your prayers and encouragement during this season—God is moving in this ministry.

Rooted in Identity & Practicing Our Faith

Throughout November, our lessons focused on identity. More specifically, the truth that our value comes from Jesus Christ, not from our successes or our failures. We explored passages like Psalm 139, Romans 8, and Ephesians 2:10, reminding our students that they are known, loved, and created with purpose.

We also spent time talking about what it means to put our faith into *practice*. Just like any skill grows with consistent effort, our faith deepens when we intentionally spend time with God. We encouraged our students to practice their faith by reading Scripture, praying, being kind to themselves, and loving their community well.

One powerful theme that emerged in our conversations is that knowing someone's story changes the way we see them. It becomes much harder to judge someone—and much easier to extend grace—when we understand their journey. Instead of assuming or criticizing, we challenged our students to slow down, listen, and learn someone's story first.

A Night at the Theater

We had the joy of supporting several of our own students in the Ozark High School production of *Tuck Everlasting*. Miles Porter starring as Angus Tuck, and Alaina Edwards in the ensemble, did a wonderful job on stage, and London Porter served faithfully behind the scenes.



A particularly special moment came after the show when we saw the smile on Miles' face—pure, unmistakable joy from doing something he loved. Watching him shine on stage and then seeing that joy spill over afterward was something truly meaningful to be a part of. Our youth filled the seats, cheered loudly, and celebrated both Miles and Alaina's performances, as well as London's behind-the-scenes work. It was a great night of encouragement, laughter, and community.

Serving Our Neighbors at Eden Village

To finish the month, our youth cooked and served a spaghetti dinner for the residents of Eden Village, followed by a fun evening of Bingo and fellowship. The students worked hard—preparing food, serving plates, visiting with residents, and helping bring joy to the evening. Many residents shared how meaningful it was to spend time with the youth, and our students left feeling encouraged and blessed. I was incredibly proud of their servant hearts.

Looking Ahead – December

This month, we're excited to celebrate together! On **Wednesday, December 10th**, we will be hosting our Youth Christmas Party upstairs in the Loft from **6:00–7:30 PM**. It will be a night of fun, food, games, and celebrating the season together. We can't wait!

Mentor Program Update

Our Youth Mentor Program is continuing to grow, and we are still looking for **four more mentors** to step up and invest in the lives of our students. This ministry is an incredible opportunity to walk alongside a young person, encourage them, and help them grow in their faith. Once we have our full team of mentors in place, we'll schedule our first mentor event, which we plan to hold sometime in **January**. If God is nudging your heart to be a part of this, we would love to talk with you!

Thank you, church family, for investing in our young people. Please continue praying for them as they practice their faith, grow in Christ, and learn to extend compassion and grace to others. I'm excited to see all that God will continue to do as we move into the Christmas season!

With gratitude and joy,

Heather Twibell

It's the most wonderful time of the year at UHBC and the kids are gearing up for a busy month ahead! We will be spending time each week preparing for the Nativity on December 21st. As always, it is a meaningful service where we pause to reflect on Jesus' birth. Seeing it through the eyes of our children makes it even more special. We hope you can be there to experience the true JOY of Christmas.



During the month of November, we've been having fun with a Minecraft-inspired series called "Bedrock: Building confidence in God block by block." We've spent time learning through the stories of Elijah, Jonah, Daniel, Esther and Nehemiah. Brooklyn Twibell, Elliot Miller and Addy Jennings were the first to complete a BINGO in our Bible Verse Bingo Challenge and claimed a "sweet" prize. Encourage our children by asking them if they know our verse for the month!

Children's Ministry



"Those who trust in the Lord will receive new strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak." Isaiah 40:31



As we look forward, I encourage you to get involved in helping with our children's ministry. If you feel led, I would love to have regular volunteers to assist during Children's Church monthly, and am also in need of people who can step in to teach on occasion. Please reach out to me if you would like more information on how you can serve our sweet kids!

**Blessings and Joy,
Alicyn Jennings
Interim Children's Pastor**

Thank you!

We are so grateful to God and our church family for walking beside us on this cancer journey. We cherish all the prayers, cards, and calls.

-Gary and Brenda Hall

In this time of increasing food insecurity for many in our community, the Board of Deacons has designated the **Christmas Eve offering** for the **Crosslines Food Pantry Ministry**. Please give as you feel able and called and help ease the burden for families in our area.

If you want to purchase a poinsettia in memory or honor of someone, we'll be selling them again for \$15.00. You can take your order home with you after the Christmas Eve service. Order forms are in the narthex, and place them in the offering plate or drop at the church office. Deadline to order is December 14.



News and Notes

Make plans to join us at the **Longest Night** service on **December 21**, 6pm.



We'll recognize and remember the lives lost to homicide in our area this year, and ***mourn with those who mourn.***

(Romans 12:15)

Congregational Elections

Our elections for congregational officers, Boards, and Standing Committees, as well as the Board of Deacons and the 2026 Budget approval, are scheduled for a special called business meeting after worship on **December 14.**

Sample ballots and the proposed budget are available in the narthex.

We'll be discussing the proposed budget on Wednesday evening, **December 3, 6:30pm.**

After the budget discussion on December 3, we'll be assembling crosses for our Longest Night recognition later in December. (To date, there have been 19 homicides in our area since our 2024 Longest Night Service.)



University Hope Update



University Hope continues to serve in our upside down kingdom, as we seek to meet the transportation needs of those in our local community.

UHope provided over \$8,000 in assistance in 2025. This transportation assistance included much needed bus passes, cab rides, car repairs, licensing, and help with insurance. UHope received the following word of thanks from one of our friends who requested transportation support:

“A big thanks again for helping my son with some past car repairs. I'm happy to say they now have a great apartment. Wonderful for them. Got them settled in with stuff they need. But your kindness helped them reach their goal. Truly blessed.”

So often financial support for transportation needs is the first step to establishing financial stability. Bus passes or a working car or scooter means you can get to work and earn a paycheck to pay for food and housing and provide for your children. UHope is grateful and humbled to see God at work with the resources given to help individuals and families begin to rebuild their lives.

Multiple people have paid back 50% or more of their UHope loans. While we are grateful for these faithful individuals, we can't continue to serve without your generosity. We currently have about \$4,000 as we enter 2026. Please prayerfully consider how you can financially give to UHope. Your financial donations truly make a difference in the lives of those living in our local community.

As always, UHope is grateful for our partnership with University Heights. Thank you for being a people who love generously.

Heather Haynes and Jerry Scott

MISSIONS & MINISTRY



Mission Group Meetings

Tuesday, December 9

**Mann Group 12:30pm
Christmas Lunch at The Hill**

Williams Group—no meeting

Coming December 7

Global Missions



9am

Rev Dr Toya Richards

Guest Speaker

Breakfast

Followed by

the

Parade of Flags

at 10:30am.



This year's Global Missions goal is

\$7,500

Any funds collected will be split evenly between Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and American Baptist Churches for their global missions efforts.

Rev. Dr. Toya Richards is a change agent with three decades of experience in transforming lives through community-based and cross-cultural efforts. Her portfolio includes executive leadership with faith-based and secular organizations across the United States, as well as extensive international mission work across five continents. Currently she directs the Peace and Justice Ministry Certificate program at Central Baptist Theological

Seminary in Overland Park, Kansas.

Dr. Richards holds a Doctor of Ministry degree in pastoral care from McCormick Theological Seminary, a Master

of Divinity degree from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism from Western Kentucky University. She is the proud mother of three adult children and two beautiful grandchildren. Dr. Richards resides in Louisville, Kentucky.



Breakfast, 9am, Fellowship Hall

ALL ARE INVITED! (Life Groups are dismissed for the breakfast and program.)

Breakfast casseroles are provided. Each family is asked to bring a breakfast bread or fruit.

UHBC-ROUNTREE SCHOOL CHRISTMAS MARKET TOY DRIVE

WOW!!! THANK YOU to all those who contributed toys for the toy drive. The market place for the parents to purchase toys will be held Saturday, December 13 and Monday, December 15. There will be a need for volunteers to help on those two days. Watch for sign up sheets to volunteer. Thank you to **Maria Grindstaff** who is our UHBC liaison with Rountree for this project.

What's Happening?



- 1** Robert Thiebaud
- 3** Holly Herr
Kathy Twibell
- 10** Julie Miller
- 11** Maryann Smith
Elaine Young

- 16** Noah Porter
- 17** Andy Inman
Ellie Inmon
- 18** Gary Fortner
- 19** Josh Haynes
- 21** Wilda Rosse
Josie Sharp

- 24** Carol Clifton
- 25** Jamea Crum
BJo Snyder
- 26** Chris Brammer
- 28** Bob Baldwin
- 29** Zoe Roberts

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 5:45 Supper 6:30 Budget discus- sion /Kids/Youth 6:45 Chancel Choir	4	5	6
7 9am Mission Breakfast 10:30 Worship w/ Parade of Flags	8	9 M & M Meetings	10 5:45 Supper 6:30 Bible Study Kids/Youth 6:45 Chancel Choir	11	12	13 10 am Christian Writers Group
14 9:15 Life Groups 10:30 Worship Voting—Cong. Elec- tions 3:30 SCC Concert	15	16	17 5:45 supper 6:30 Bible Study Kids/Youth 6:45 Chancel Choir	18 7pm Springfield Boys' Choir Con- cert	19	20
21 9:15 Life Groups 10:30 Worship w/ Cantata 6 pm Longest Night Service	22	23	24 5:30 Christmas Eve Service w/ commun- ion	25 CHRISTMAS	26	27
28 9:15 Life Groups 10:30 Worship	29	30	31 New Year's Eve NO WED ACTIVITIES	New Years Day— Church Of- fice Closed		

Sit down with a cup of coffee and check out the insert in this month's Crier, which profiles an exciting project of *International Ministries*, the global missions arm of American Baptist Churches.



I know it's December and I don't want us to rush through the season of Advent. I think, for all of us, it is good to pause and prepare for God's good work during the season. As we pause, prepare, watch, and wait for the good news of Jesus I am excited about a couple of opportunities we have coming up in 2026:

1. On Sundays in January, Curtis Jones will be leading *"The Life of Moses: Learning More About Someone the Scriptures Call a Friend of God."*

This is great opportunity to learn as we look at the life of Moses. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall at 9:30. Come early for donuts, coffee, and fellowship!

2. On January 7, we'll begin an eight-part study we're calling *"The B-I-B-L-E"* on Wednesday nights. In those sessions we will cover how we got the Bible (since the Gideons didn't deliver it to us), Old Testament, New Testament, the Bible and relationships, the Bible and science, violence and suffering in the Bible, and we will wrap it up with a session dedicated to your Big Questions!

If you're new to studying the Bible, have questions, or want to have a better understanding of the Bible, this class is a great opportunity to grow deeper in your understanding. Or maybe you've seen the Bible used as a weapon and you want to see if there's a different way to look at Scripture. If so, your doubts are welcome too!

I look forward to the relationships we will build, the connections we will make, and the ways the Spirit might speak to us in the coming weeks.

Blessings,

-Joe

On **Wednesday, December 17th**, **Jerry Scott** and **Nate Schlueter** will be talking to us about what it looks like to serve at the **Cold Weather Shelter**. They will be presenting during our normal Bible Study time at 6:30. If you've ever thought about volunteering or helping in some way, this will be a good opportunity to hear from the experts and get any questions that you might have answered. We know this is a need in our area and I look forward to the insight Jerry and Nate bring to our community.

Wake Up
and Smell
the Coffee

We can get a family out of poverty in six years.
All it takes is coffee.

IM Global Consultant Mike Mann spent his childhood tagging along after his dad, an American Baptist missionary who helped the tribal people of northern Thailand replace opium crops with coffee farms in the 1960s and 70s.

Confident he would follow in his father's footsteps, Mike earned degrees in agronomy and international agriculture. For seven years, Mike asked the church to put him to work.

Every year, the answer was the same: We don't have the money.

Finally, having graduated with his master's degree in plant pathology, Mike got a letter from the Dole Corporation. Would he serve as their plant pathologist on the coast in southern Thailand?

Mike's heart was still with the hill tribes, but how could he argue with the luxuries of a corporate job at the beach? The morning after the company's offer, the church called at 6:00 a.m. The Swedish Baptists would support Mike in the Thai hill country if he would develop clean water projects.



Two women from a hill tribe in Thailand hold a basket of coffee cherries.



And that's how you start coffee:

With water.

Mike began overseeing gravity-fed water solutions. Before long, the village leaders asked for help with education, so construction started on schools. Then, they asked for health care, so Mike began erecting clinics.

Every time the village leaders brought a new problem, Mike said, "We don't have the funding for it, but if people give, we'll do it." Money started trickling in from churches and caring individuals. By faith, each project moved from vision to reality.

With a foundation of clean water, education, and healthcare, the villagers now needed a source of income.

COULD COFFEE BE THE ANSWER? THAI COFFEE HAD NO GLOBAL MARKET.

Mike knew that if you couldn't find a solution, you had to build one. So he and our mission partners at the Integrated Tribal Development Foundation created Lanna Coffee. This retail company could buy coffee from the hill tribe farmers for a generous price and deliver it straight to your doorstep in the U.S. or Canada.

It was an ambitious project, but God had even grander plans for His people in northern Thailand.

Starbucks opened its first store in Thailand in 2003. "They need to buy Thai coffee," Mike thought, "but their general manager won't give me the time of day."

What if the general manager had a Thai secretary? Wouldn't she be proud if Starbucks sold Thai coffee?

Mike approached the young woman in the outer office and shared his idea. "The general manager will give you five minutes," she told him.

"You know what percentage of coffee Starbucks accepts?" the executive asked Mike after hearing his plan. "One. One percent. But if you want, I'll forward your coffee to Seattle."

MIKE SENT 10 SAMPLES. STARBUCKS PASSED THREE OF THEM.

Inspired by the story, Andrew Nathan, then Starbucks Thailand Managing Director, wanted to know more.

"Why don't you see one of our coffee farms for yourself?" Mike asked and was floored when Nathan agreed. Mike drove up dirt roads and through pouring rain until the mud trapped them on the mountainside. "Andrew, I'm sorry," Mike said, "you can either drive or drag the winch up the hill to the tree."



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Starbucks Managing Director (top left) with Starbucks Community Development Fund staff and community members in a rural village. Starbucks Community Development Fund projects include building schools, health centers, and providing clean water.

Andrew Nathan promptly hopped out of the truck. "I have lost this deal forever," Mike thought as he watched the Managing Director of one of the world's largest companies drag a winch up the muddy hill.

But once they were safely in the village, clean and dry, Andrew said, "This has been the best trip of my life. We're going to buy your coffee."

Two years later, Starbucks' customers were drinking Thai coffee. They call it Muan Jai, which means "wholehearted happiness" in the northern Thai dialect. Starbucks also donates some of its profits to the Integrated Tribal Development Foundation.

As a result, they have built Christian schools and family farms that help keep young tribal people from being snared by the lure of quick money through sex trafficking.

People often ask Mike how to solve global poverty in an innovative and sustainable way. He says...



Real sustainability comes from knowing Jesus Christ and having faith in Him.

And good coffee never hurts.

www.starbucks.com

