

# The Hill Country Connection

## January 2026

Hill Country Christian Church  
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# 2026

HAPPY NEW YEAR



### Rick's Ramblings

I recently had a conversation with someone from our church family regarding their concerns about issues in our country that involve both morality and political policies. I can assure you as a pastor, this is a question I often struggle with myself. It is not that I do not see the intersection and overlapping of such issues, but I also never want to compromise the supremacy of the message of the gospel. The good news in Christ is the only thing that contains "the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). While I understand deep convictions about political/moral problems confronting all of us daily, I also want to uphold the ultimate value of Jesus Christ. I never want any secondary issue to keep someone from responding to both His grace and truth.

As we experience our nation becoming ever-more divided and polarized, I found these words by Philip Yancey, one of my favorite Christian authors, especially pertinent and wanted to share his insights with you.

"People who looked to Jesus as their political savior were constantly befuddled by his choice of companions. He became known as a friend of tax collectors, a group clearly identified with the foreign exploiters, not the exploited. Though he denounced the religious system of his day, he treated a leader like Nicodemus with respect, and though he spoke against the dangers of money and of violence, he showed love and compassion toward a rich young ruler and a Roman centurion.

"In short, Jesus honored the dignity of every person, whether he agreed with them or not. He would not found his kingdom on the basis of race or class or other such divisions. Anyone, even a half-breed with five husbands or a thief dying on a cross, was welcome to join his kingdom. The person was more important than any category or label.

"I feel convicted by this quality of Jesus every time I get involved in a cause I strongly believe in. How easy it is to join the politics of polarization, to find myself shouting across the picket lines at the "enemy" on the other side. How hard it is to remember that the kingdom of God calls me to love the woman who has just emerged from the abortion clinic (and, yes, even her doctor), the promiscuous person who is dying of AIDS, the wealthy landowner who is exploiting God's creation. If I cannot show love to such people, then I must question whether I have truly understood Jesus' gospel.

"A political movement by nature draws lines, makes distinctions, pronounces judgment; in contrast, Jesus' love cuts across lines, transcends distinctions, and dispenses grace. Regardless of the merits of a given issue—whether a pro-life lobby out of the Right or a peace-and-justice lobby out of the Left—political movements risk pulling onto themselves the mantle of power that smothers love. From Jesus, I learn that whatever activism I get involved in, it must not drive out love and humility, or otherwise I betray the kingdom of God."

You don't have to agree with this position (that I share with Philip Yancey), but I did want to try to communicate where I am coming from.

As we begin a new church year, we will have new leadership. We will recognize and dedicate our new church leaders and Board members on January 18<sup>th</sup> during the worship service. That Sunday I will also begin a new sermon series: A Topsy-Turvy Kingdom. Jesus initiated a new kingdom when He came to this world—the Kingdom of God. And the way He viewed reality was upside-down from the way the world sees things.

Also, a new year brings resolutions regarding things we want to change about our lives. Perhaps one of your resolutions is to draw closer to God. One way to help that endeavor is to read your Bible regularly and get involved in a Bible study. The Pastor's Bible Class meets on Wednesdays at 10:30, beginning January 14<sup>th</sup>. We will be diving into the second half of the book of Isaiah. It's the best half of the book—and the first half was pretty incredible! Come join us. Invite friends, family members, and new people in our church family to be a part! If your schedule won't allow you to participate, don't forget we have an adult Sunday School class that meets at 9:30 every Sunday. Small groups gathered around Scripture is where deep and caring relationships are formed and forged. This would be a wonderful way to begin your new year!



Have a Happy and Blessed New Year!



## Christmas at St. Jude's Ranch



Many thanks to all at HCCC for so generously supporting St. Jude's Ranch for Children again this year. After all of your kind donations and gifts, we ended up providing them with almost all of the items on their Amazon Wish List, and were also able to provide a couple of personal gifts for each child and gift cards to a movie theater so they could be taken to a movie on Christmas day. Santa needed helpers - it required several cars to transport the gifts but they were successfully loaded and delivered on Friday, the 19th.

### THANK YOU!

Your generosity gave these children the opportunity to have a "Christmas".

Also, our service to St Jude's continues throughout the year in the birthday parties that we provide through your generous donations. Many of these children have never had their birthdays celebrated, and it's only through your continued support that makes this possible.

Thank you again for your support and generosity.

## This Year

BELIEVE THAT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE  
START EACH DAY WITH GOALS  
EAT MORE REAL FOOD  
BUY GOOD BOOKS AND MAKE TIME TO READ THEM  
DRINK WATER  
EXERCISE DAILY EVEN WHEN IT SOUNDS LIKE A TERRIBLE IDEA  
SHOP FOR QUALITY NOT QUANTITY  
PURGE THE UNNECESSARY AND DECREASE CLUTTER  
HUG THE ONES I LOVE  
FIND THE BEST IN OTHERS  
SHOW OTHERS THE BEST IN ME

## A New Year's Prayer

### DEAR LORD

As a new year begins, We come to You and ask for Your blessing. We pray that you would give us joy to fill our days, peace to fill our hearts, and love to fill our lives.

Thank You for the plans You have for us in this new year. We wait in anticipation to see all You will do!

Thanking God for you and praying your new year is blessed in every way.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

AMEN

## Welcome 2025 Board Members!

### Executive Board:

*Jack Banowsky, Moderator  
William "Smitty" Smith, Vice-Moderator  
Dan Sawyer, Secretary  
Terry Miller, Treasurer*

### Elders:

*David Chipman  
Dixie Van Eynde  
Joan Miller  
Scott Shackelford*

### Deacons:

*Jerry Kelley  
Marsha Johnston  
Carol Banowsky  
Jenny Sawyer  
Carla Chipman  
Karen Smith  
Betty "Betsy" Hart  
Betsy Morgan*

### Trustees:

*Scott Shackelford  
Juan Ramirez  
Marsha Johnston*

*There will be training and a dinner for the new Board on Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m., and installation for the Board members will be during the worship service on January 18<sup>th</sup>.*

**TODAY**  
WILL NEVER COME AGAIN.

*Be a blessing.  
Be a friend.  
Encourage someone.  
Take Time To Care.  
Let your words heal,  
and not wound.*



I THOUGHT YOU WERE NEVER  
EVER EVER EVER COMING  
HOME EVER

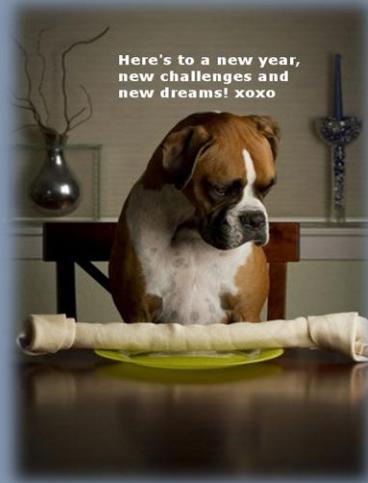
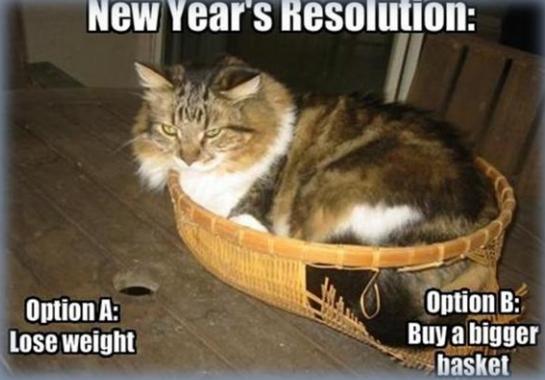


BIRTHDAYS

Charlotte Phair - 2  
Rosemary Piper - 5  
Megan Murray - 6  
Irene Kelley - 7  
Esteban Davila - 12  
Tomas Sigala - 12  
Frank Walsh - 16  
Elaine Anderson - 23  
Jerry Kelley - 24  
Mark Sogard - 24



**New Year's Resolution:**



No one can fully understand the meaning  
of love unless he's owned a Dog.

Happy New Year!

**HAPPY  
NEW  
YEAR**

NewYearWiki.Com



# January

# 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 New Year's Day		
4 9:30 am – Adult Bible Class 10:30 am – Worship	5		7 10:30 am – Pastor's Bible Class *No Class Today*	8	9 	10 8:30 am – Men's Breakfast
11 9:30 am – Adult Bible Class 10:30 am – Worship	12	13 	14 10:30 am – Pastor's Bible Class Class Resumes Today!!	15		17 10:00 am - CWF's Meeting & Luncheon 6:30 pm – Board Training Dinner
18 9:30 am – Adult Bible Class 10:30 am – Worship & Installation of Board Members	19 Martin Luther King's Birthday Office Holiday	20	21 10:30 am – Pastor's Bible Class	22	23	24
25 9:30 am – Adult Bible Class 10:30 am – Worship	26 	27	28 10:30 am – Pastor's Bible Class	29 6:00 pm - General Board Meeting	3 	

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