

Pastoring during the holidays

By [David Lewicki](#)

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It's become a cliché in pastor circles. How hard the holidays are. Sometimes clichés can make the reality rather than represent it, but in this case, I do think the holidays are particularly challenging for most pastors. Here's a list of 5 things that have been vexing for me this Christmas season:

1. Advent sermons. In Advent, the scriptures always talk about Jesus' Second Coming and re-making the earth. And every year the earth needs re-making. It exacerbates our legitimate doubts about whether he is coming back at all. Waiting for Jesus gets tiring. So do Advent sermons on waiting.
2. What to do with Mary? Never more than in the last two years have I been aware of pregnancy complications. Several more came on my radar this year in the congregation. None of these folks want to hear about Mary's miraculous pregnancy and how God comes as a baby. Those words hurt.
3. There's a homeless woman whom we suspect is sleeping in the church. Not sure how she gets in, but she hides and sleeps in a classroom. She can't stay there. But the shelters across the city are full to the gills. There is no room in the inn, anywhere in Atlanta. I still have to kick her out.
4. The calls for assistance come fast and furious. Random people just call and every story, if you listen to it, is desperate. Evicted. Staying in a hotel. No money. Kids. "Pastor, can you pay for just one more night? We'll find the rest...." People can lie about a lot of things, but desperation is not easy to mask in someone's voice.
5. Holidays without loved ones. So many families are missing somebody important, maybe from death, from mental illness, from a broken relationship.

In all of that, there is still great joy this holiday for me. A beautiful family. A great church that turns out for the things that count: 40 volunteers for a Christmas party for vulnerable families on Friday night and 40 more volunteers for a dinner for homeless men on the next Sunday. A job I like. Good friends all across the world. Lots of joy.

But if the holidays feel hard... I think it's because they are.

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