

FIRST FOCUS

THE ADVENT OF GOOD NEWS



This week, the epic journey of Star Wars returns. I'm sure that I'll climb aboard the Millennium Falcon and enjoy the ride at some point. Our world looks to heroic tales of adventure between the Force of light and dark to help them imaginatively deal with reality today. We don't have to argue with those around us whether trouble abounds. At best, secular people wish that the goodness in us will eventually triumph over the badness. Star Wars speaks to that deeply felt need inside most people. The birth of Jesus, however, offers even greater hope.

Christianity preaches good news. We don't look to heroes who somehow summon up the right inside them to triumph over wrong. We admit that we're all terribly warped by the choices we've made in our world today. We tell stories of inspiring saints. We lift up imperfect, fallen people like Mary, Joseph, and shepherds who, in the midst of the deepest forces of darkness in their world, God showed up. Through no effort of their own or any expectation otherwise, God caught them by surprise. A baby was born that changed the world.

We believe "God is still with us" even today. This good, loving Baby reigns over the forces of light and dark. Jesus has already fought and won a cosmic battle over death, hell, and the grave. Yes, there is deep difficulty in our world, and our world writhes and convulses in the pain and agony that we have caused. Gun violence, hatred, terrorism, child abuse, abortion, racism, and wars are just a few of the many examples of the ways we are still surrounded by the deepest darkness of death's shadow. In fact, our world

is often led temporarily by people who perpetuate these problems. Some of them do so ignorantly because they do not know a better way. Some leaders do so intentionally because this is how they came to power in the first place. Just as Mary and Joseph found in the days of Caesar and Herod, Jesus didn't go to Bethlehem and Egypt because they were looking for something fun to do. Our God was born in Bethlehem and became a refugee because of the ruthless butchers of Rome and Caesarea.

So what on earth is God doing this year? Instead of waiting for us to summon the strength to fix the world, and instead of asking us to use the same violent weapons that perpetuate our problems, our living reigning God is sending his Son again to Bethlehem. What worked back then continues to work on us. The grace that came in the fullness of time is offered in a manger to us this year.

If you were here, you will remember that Jesus showed up Sunday night in the powerful musical, "Come Home for Christmas." We heard the invitation, "Come Home," and the announcement, "All is Well." We don't need to listen any longer or look any farther to awaken to a brand new day dawning on the horizon. We don't need an angel to tell us that God is changing our world from the darkness of a cave in Bethlehem. He uses humble people like me and you. He invites us to come again to declare our loyalty to Jesus as our Savior and Lord. He invites us to live righteous, obedient, humble, loving lives. He asks us to be the church that can shine his light all the way from the manger to the world.

I'll be here Thursday evening, December 24 at 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. In our first service, we'll invite the children to wear biblical costumes and help us perform this message. At 6:00 p.m., we'll raise our candles to the darkness as we come home for Christmas at the manger together. I hope you'll come. Bring your family; bring your friends; invite your enemies. This is an epic journey from heaven to earth that you don't want to miss.

THIS WEEK

FIRST STEP

Are you new to FBCTLH, or maybe you've been a regular attendee for the past few months? If so, please join us for our next "First Step" to discuss what it means to be a member of our church family, and how to get plugged in here! We will meet this Sunday at 10:15AM in the Welcome Center. If you have any questions, please contact Hannah Watt (hannah@fbctlh.org).

NO FELLOWSHIP MEAL

Due to the Christmas holiday, there will be no Fellowship Meal on Wednesday, December 23.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Christmas fun for the whole family – children will play Christmas songs, participate in a spontaneous nativity, and experience the true meaning of Christmas time at 4:00PM.

CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Come home for Christmas Eve. Carols and candlelight frame this service of joy as we gather around the manger, homeless no more at 6:00PM.

NO SMBS ON SUNDAY, DEC. 27TH

We will have a combined service at 10:30AM. The 8:00AM SMBS will still meet.

BUS MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY

We are in need of someone to drive a church bus to pick up and return senior members of our congregation on one Sunday of each month for the Traditional Service and SMBS. No special driver's license is required. If you would like to volunteer for this ministry, or if you would like additional information, contact Jordan Mallory at jmallory@fbctlh.org.

DEATH AND BIRTH NOTICES

As part of the new strategic plan, we will begin notifying the congregation of the death of church members and the birth of babies with their family's permission. Soon we will provide you with an opportunity to subscribe to this email newsletter. We'll continue to communicate to family members and extended family by the prayer list and through SMBS classes and normal channels of communication.

Members and friends of First Baptist may call the information into the church and may distribute info to their SMBS groups and email lists. However, only members of immediate family have permission to ask the church to send out churchwide death or birth notices.

CALENDAR

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

7:45AM Coffee Gathering
8:00AM Median Adult III Bible Study, Parlor
9:00AM Traditional Worship - Sanctuary
10:00AM Church-wide Bible Study Options
10:15AM First Step, Welcome Center
11:15AM Contemporary Worship - Sanctuary

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21

9:30AM Homebound Visitation
10:30AM First Joy, C-2201
5:00PM First Brass, A-200 Choir Room
6:00PM Bells of Praise, Adams 211

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

9:00AM First Joy, Westminster Oaks
9:30AM Knitting Ministry, Welcome Center
6:00PM Childcare for Internationals, D-209
6:30PM INTERNATIONALS – English Classes, C2201
7:00PM Capital Bells, Adams 211

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

4:00PM Christmas Eve Family Service, Sanctuary
6:00PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Sanctuary

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

Christmas Day – Office Closed

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26

COMING SOON

DESSERT THEATRE, JANUARY 22-24 2016

Dessert Theatre will be performed the weekend of January 22-24. We will be performing Disney songs from Mary Poppins, High School Musical and Frozen! There will be 4 performances: Friday evening at 7:00 pm, Saturday evening at 7:00 pm, Sunday Matinee at 2:00 pm and Sunday evening at 6:00 pm. Tickets will be available beginning Sunday morning, January 3, after both morning worship services. There is no charge for the tickets. A love offering to offset the cost of the youth choir mission trip will be taken at each performance.

CHRISTIAN LIFE CENTER

As you make plans for a healthier new year, consider a gym membership to Downtown Fitness. With access to a large weight room that includes circuit training and cardio, unlimited group fitness classes, basketball and volleyball leagues, our Christian Life Center (CLC), offers all of the above to members of First Baptist Church for FREE!

Simply stop by the front desk on the second floor of the CLC, pay a one-time registration fee of \$10, and receive a complimentary gym membership with a key tag that grants you full access to the facility when not reserved for church activities or league play. Contact Josh Hall (josh@fbctlh.org) if you'd like more information.

BREAKFAST IN BETHLEHEM, DECEMBER 12, 2015



Families gathered together to share the Christmas story, participate in crafts, and have photos taken at the nativity.



SERVE

FLORIDA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOME

For the month of January, we will join the Children's Home in providing winter socks for boys and girls, ages 5 through 18 in various sizes and styles. Collection bins are in the College Avenue foyer, the Welcome Center, by the elevator on the first floor of the Adams building, and in the main office.

Check out the fbctlh.org/Serve page for more ways to get involved now in serving in and through FBCTLH.



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF TALLAHASSEE

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THE VISION NEWSLETTER

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For submissions, address corrections, or to unsubscribe, contact x132 or hello@fbctlh.org.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Vision, 108 West College Avenue, Tallahassee, FL 32301.

SERVICE RECORDINGS

fbctlh.org/sermons

Our Traditional Worship service is broadcast on Comcast Channel 21 at 11:00AM each Sunday.

Contact x215 or lee@fbctlh.org with questions.

If you are homebound and would like to be on our mailing list to receive a free DVD of our worship services each week, please contact x201 or lenoir@fbctlh.org. All other requests are \$5, and can be made at the front desk or online at fbctlh.org/contact.

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID
TALLAHASSEE
FLORIDA

FELLOWSHIP MEAL

No Fellowship Meal due to Christmas.

FINANCIALS

YTD budget: \$2,826,430
Receipts 12/13: \$2,826,430
YTD receipts: \$2,412,926
Winter Missions Offering: \$5,769

DEACON SCHEDULE

Deacon of the Day – Jeff Crew

Deacons of the Week

- 9AM Hugh Hauck
- 10AM Darrell Thompson
- 11AM Denis Harrelle

SECURITY SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 13

- 8AM Jim Wheeler
- 10AM Jeff Crew
- 11AM Keith Burnsed

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

9:00AM

BIBLE STUDY

10:00AM

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP

11:15AM

A
MERCIFUL
PERFORMANCE

Luke 1:67-80