



CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

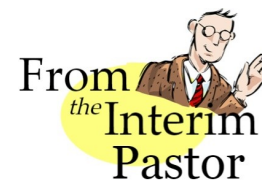
December 2023

Volume LXXV, No. 12



Advent Schedule

- December 1** Mepkin Creche Festival (RSVP Closed)
December 3 **Advent 1:** "Hanging of the Green"
 "Mothers Around the Manger: Ruth"
December 6 Children's Family Ornament Party
December 7 College Trip to Lauren Daigle Concert
December 8 **RSVP DUE** for Pizza and Gingerbread House
 Building Intergenerational Event
December 10 **Advent 2:** "Mothers Around the Manger:
 Uriah's Wife (Bathsheba)"
December 12 NGO, *Sounds of Grace* Christmas Concert
December 13 Intergenerational Event: Pizza and Gingerbread
 House Building
December 17 **Advent 3:** A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
December 20 **NO** Wednesday Night Activities,
except Chancel Choir
December 24 **Advent 4**
NO Sunday School
 11:00 am Worship: "Mothers Around the
 Manger: Elizabeth"
 4:30 pm Communion
 5:00 pm Christmas Eve Service,
 "Mothers Around the Manger: Mary"
December 25 and 26 Church Offices **CLOSED**
December 27 **NO** Wednesday Night Activities
December 31 **NO** Sunday School;
 11:00 am "Mothers Around the Manger: Tamar"
January 1 Church Offices **CLOSED**
January 7 Epiphany and Communion
 "Mothers Around the Manger: Anna"



Senior Pastor Search – The Senior Pastor Search Committee is at work. They have placed ads seeking resumes in various publications as well as CBF organizations. If anyone has a recommendation for the Pastor Search Committee to consider, please have that potential candidate send their information/resume to gwdfbc.spsearch@gmail.com. The Pastor Profile and Church Profile can be found on the church website.

My role in the search – After the Pastor Search Committee was elected by the church, the committee had a six-hour retreat where they got oriented to the task before them. My role moving forward is to serve as a consultant to the Pastor Search Committee. I will help regarding the search process as needed. I do not recommend or vet potential candidates, that is the work of the Pastor Search Committee. If they have questions about HOW to do their work, I will be available to help in any way.

Your role in the search – Ask potential senior pastor candidates to send their information to the Pastor Search Committee. Above all, pray persistently and consistently for all involved.

Advent 2023 – The theme for Advent this year is "*Mothers Around the Manger*." They are an interesting lot. My takeaway is that if God can use people like Ruth and Uriah's wife (Bathsheba), God can use you and me. All of the "*Mothers Around the Manger*" are interesting characters. December 3 is the *Hanging of the Green* service. December 17 will be the *Lessons and Carols* service. In addition to the regular 11:00 am service on December 24, First Baptist will observe communion at 4:30 pm with the Christmas Eve service to follow at 5:00 pm.

End of Year – I have heard, over and over, that this is a "end of the year giving church." Well, the end of the year is approaching quickly. I deeply appreciate the blessing and challenge that Alice Gilchrist and Stephanie Turner offered us with their stewardship testimonies during worship in November. I invite you to live and give generously to the Lord's work through FBC.

Looking ahead – Dr. Paul Baxley, Executive Coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship will be our guest Sunday, January 28. All adults will meet with him in Fellowship Hall during the Sunday School hour to share about the work of CBF and answer your questions. Then, he will preach in the morning worship service.

I continue to be grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside you!

Layne

Sunday Monday Tuesday **Wednesday Night Activities** Thursday Friday Saturday

The Chancel Choir will be the only Wednesday night activity at the church on December 20. There will be no Wednesday night activities at church on December 27 and January 3. Regular Wednesday night schedule will resume on January 10. Please watch for announcements about kitchen renovation progress and Wednesday night meals.



Worship in December

Sunday—December 3 First Sunday of Advent Hanging of the Green

Scripture:

Matthew 1:1-6a, Ruth 1:3-11

Sermon

“Mothers Around the Manger: Ruth”
Layne Smith

Special Music

Robert Wilson, guest organist,
Children’s Choirs, “Come, Savior of the
Nations” - *Voices of Grace* Youth Choir,
“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

Sunday—December 10 Second Sunday of Advent

Scripture:

2 Samuel 11:1-4, 1Kings 1:15-21,
Matthew 1:1-6

Sermon

“Mothers Around the Manager:
Uriah’s Wife” (Bathsheba)
Layne Smith

Special Music

“Little Drummer Boy” - Chancel Choir;
“Love Came Down at Christmas”
Jean O. Wood Handbell Ensemble

Sunday—December 17 Third Sunday of Advent

A SERVICE OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

Special Music

“Adam lay ybounden,” “Coventry Carol,”
“Skye Carol,” “Once in Royal David’s City,”
Rutter’s “Sans Day Carol,” “How Far Is It to
Bethlehem,” “The Hands that First Held
Mary’s Child” - Chancel Choir; “Good
Christian Friends Rejoice” - *Voices of
Grace* Youth Choir, soloists, and readers

Worship—December 24 AM Fourth Sunday of Advent

Scripture:

Luke 1:5-15, 57; Colossians 4:2-6

Sermon

“Mothers Around the Manger: Elizabeth”
Layne Smith

Special Music

“Wexford Carol” - Chancel Choir

Worship—December 24 PM Christmas Eve

4:30 pm - Holy Communion and
Personal Meditation

**Childcare for babies –2K available
beginning at 4:45 pm**

5:00 pm - Service

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7, Isaiah 7:13-14

Sermon:

“Mothers Around the Manager: Mary”

Special Music

“Fum, Fum Fum”,
“What Strangers Are These?” with Nat
Chandler; “Sweet Little Jesus Boy,” “The
Snow Lay on the Ground”
Chancel Choir

December 31 First Sunday after Christmas

Scripture: Genesis 38

Sermon

“Mothers Around the Manger: Tamar”

Special Music

“Good King Wenceslas” - Chancel Choir



Hanging of the Green

December 3, 2023
11:00 am



Advent Devotional Available

Advent is a period of spiritual preparation for the birth of Christ. The Spiritual Formation Committee invites each family to take an advent devotional booklet from the narthex to use beginning December 3. Material for children and their families are by the stairs in the children’s area.

Music Notes

A Lesson and a Carol: “Are We There Yet?”

The service of Nine Lessons and Carols will be on Sunday, December 17, with anthems sung by the Chancel Choir, *Voices of Grace*, and *Sounds of Grace*. We will be joined by guest organist Robert Wilson, and instrumentalists, plus various readers and soloists. One of the carols within the service will be “How Far Is It to Bethlehem”, which I am arranging for the choir and instrumentalists. It reminds me of children on a long cross-country automobile journey asking their parents: “Are We There Yet?” It is a beautiful, simple carol filled with such longing and questioning... How far is it? Will the room be lit by a star? Can we go inside? Can we see the tiny child? Can we touch His hand? Will there be animals there? Can we pet them too? The final verse, with words by Christina Rossetti, are familiar but worth repeating. It is one of my favorite verses of all Christmas carols, and a lesson to remember during this season of anticipation, longing, and expectation:

*O what can I give to Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I’d bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I’d do my part;
Yet what can I give to Him?
Give Him my heart.*

Let’s go on this journey together, and give Him our time, our presence, our love, and our hearts.



Never Grow Old (NGO)

The *Sounds of Grace* will present a program of beautiful Christmas music at the NGO Fellowship on Tuesday, December 12, at 11:45 am in the fellowship hall. The program will be held at the beginning of the meeting, followed by the meal. The meal, which will cost \$10.00, will be a box lunch from Chick-Fil-A. **Non NGO members who would like to attend are asked to call the church office (229-5557) by Thursday, December 7 to make a meal reservation.** Visitors are always welcome. There will be no meeting in January.



Gifts “in Honor Of”/ “In Memory Of” at Christmas

On Christmas Eve, First Baptist will publish a list of donors and those honored or remembered through a special offering during Advent. Although the deadline to order poinsettias has passed, donations to the Offering for Global Missions or annual Ministry Plan may be made **through Tuesday, December 19**. After worship on Christmas Eve, poinsettias may be picked up by the donor or recipient. A form is in the church office for donors to indicate where the donation is to go and who is being honored or remembered.



January Building Blocks

In the beginning ...Some BIG Events Taught by Carole Russell

Though everyone is very familiar with the Book of Genesis, this study will revisit four “Big Events.” Participants will spend time recalling and learning again the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. If time permits, in a different study, the group will take another look at the uniqueness of The Twelve Apostles.

The Creative Encounter Taught by Andy Westbrook

The block session will be a time to review the four main sections of Howard Thurman’s book, *The Creative Encounter*. Participants will discuss, as Thuman says, the meaning of the religious experience as it involves the individual totally, which means inclusive of feelings and emotions. What effect does our religious experience have on our lives, both as a private person and as a member of society?

Growing on Grace

This block will continue as the group decides a new study for 2024.

Adult Choir

If interested in joining the Adult Choir, the January block is a great time to try it out!



November Diaconate Meeting Update

The Diaconate met in person just prior to the Annual Meeting on Sunday, November 19. In addition to receiving reports from the staff, the Diaconate approved the following items of business.

- 1) The Diaconate approved the following minutes:
 - October 22 (meeting minutes)
 - October 24 (email vote)
 - October 31 (email vote)
 - November 2 (email vote)
- 2) The Diaconate approved a job description for a Part-time Interim Youth Leader.
- 3) The Diaconate approved a recommendation from the Diaconate Executive Committee to extend the 2023 Diaconate term until a new Diaconate slate is approved by the congregation. (The Nominations and Lay Leadership Committee is working to fill the position by the first of January 2024.)
- 4) The Diaconate approved a motion to create a Diaconate Ad-hoc committee to study the process of developing the annual Ministry Plan.



Help Needed to Finish Strong

As First Baptist approaches the last month of 2023, the the October financial report reflects a deficit between revenue and expenses of \$89,332.73. Based on the 2023 monthly financial report (and shared each month in the Ministry Plan section of the newsletter), the average revenue needed each month to meet the annual Ministry Plan is \$83,984.96. Gifts to the Ministry Plan for the month of October were \$69,439.65. Therefore, the deficit for the month of October was \$14,545.31. Your help is needed to "finish strong" by the end of the year! Thank you in advance for your generous support of the 2023 Ministry Plan.

Church Family News

Christian Sympathy is extended to the family of

- Eleanor Palmer Metts, mother of Liz White
- Linda Self
- Bill Pittman, grandfather of Ayla Snead

Greenwood Rehab: Harry Stephens

NHC Rehab: Joann Gray

Home: Kinlee Beard, Cali Weaver, Betty Schopp, Nancy Young

Birth

Ren Scott Hewitt, son of Jordan and Ryan Hewitt

Sara Elizabeth Stevenson, daughter of Meredith and Rob Stevenson, granddaughter of Glenda and Bob Hermoston and Chareen and Robby Stevenson, great-granddaughter of Jo Stevenson



2023 Contributions

Anyone wishing to make a contribution for the 2023 tax year must do so before the end of the year. All gifts must be received or postmarked **no later than December 31**. Individuals may place a check in the mail, or use the FBC online giving tool at <https://www.fbcgwd.org/giving>. For information about 2023 contributions, contact Linda Miller at lindamillerfbc@gmail.com.

2023 Ministry Plan

November Income	\$69,192.31
November Expenses	69,439.65
Deficit	(247.34)

October 23-November 26 2023

Monthly Need	83,984.96
Monthly Gifts	95,077.30
Ministry Plan Req'd YTD	912,742.11
Ministry Plan Rcv'd YTD	717,164.03
Ministry Plan YTD Deficit (Under)	(195,578.08)
Sunday School Att. (Avg)	162
Worship Attendance (Avg)	186



Upcoming Dates

- **December 3-** Hanging of Green Children will help with the creche Two older choirs will sing
- **December 6-** Ornament Party
- **December 8-** Gingerbread RSVPs Due (on church web-site)
- **December 10-** Younger children will light Advent candles; 3rd-5th graders will read litany
- **December 13-** Intergenerational Gingerbread Houses Event
- **December 24 and 31:** No Sunday School
- **December 24:** Christmas Eve Service Childcare for babies-2k. Drop off will begin at 4:45 pm. RSVPs are appreciated but not required.
- **January 4:** RSVP due for childcare for Committee Orientation



Volunteer Openings

- Nursery Extended Session (2nd Sundays in February, April, June, August, October, December)
- 1st-5th Sunday School Helper (extra set of hands) - every 4th Sunday, every 5th Sunday

Please let Anna know if you are interested in helping to fill one of these openings!

Youth News



Sunday Night Live December 3

Youth Christmas Party
5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Host Home: Don & Cille Bishop
(110 Ashford Place, Greenwood)

The Youth Committee has planned a Youth Christmas party during *Sunday Night Live* on December 3. Meredith and Josh Sims are hosting the event. Youth are encouraged to bring a ten dollar white elephant gift to the party. For additional information, please contact the Sims.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 6

Children's Ornament Party

The youth will assist the children during the Children's Ornament Party.

December 7

Lights for Love
Christmas Tree Lighting

The *Voices of Grace* Youth Choir have been asked to sing at the *Lights for Love* Christmas Tree Lighting at Self Regional Hospital. Choir members are asked to meet at the church at 4:30 pm. The choir will travel to the hospital in the church bus for the lighting ceremony at 5:30 pm

December 13

Intergenerational Event
Gingerbread Houses

The youth will participate in the Intergenerational Gingerbread Houses event. Youth are asked to make a reservation by December 8. The cost of pizza is a dollar (\$1.00) per slice.

Greeters Needed



Greeters are needed to help in welcoming church members and visitors! Greeters are responsible for welcoming visitors and church members at all entry ways to the church prior to Sunday School and Worship and taking up Offering. It's a wonderful way to be the hands and feet of Jesus! Please contact Vaughan Free at (864) 992-8212.

ANNUAL MEETING

Annual Meeting Update

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2023 Annual meeting. Special “thanks” to the Congregational Life Committee for the chili supper prior to the meeting. The chili was delicious!

As a result of the Annual Meeting, those in attendance approved the following agenda items.

- 1) Approved the minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting as well as Called Business Meeting throughout the year.
- 2) Approved the election of church officers for 2024:
 - Pat Penn - Assistant Church Treasurer
 - Alan Ogles - Church Clerk
- 3) Approved the list of 2024-2026 Committee Members
- 4) Approved the 2024 Ministry Plan

Fourth Quarter Missions Payment

Because First Baptist is behind in revenue to expenses at the end of October by \$89,332.73, the Stewardship Committee voted to pay fourth quarter missions at the same level as third quarter. Therefore, the Stewardship Committee voted to...

- Pay 85% of the missions payment to CBF Global, CBF SC, and Special Mission Emphasis to include Baptist Women in Ministry and Janee Angel.
- Pay 50% of the missions payment to local missions partners.

The committee also voted not to send fourth quarter funds to Greenwood Habitat for Humanity, Greenwood Soup Kitchen, International Ministries, and A Voice for Children.

With the reductions just mentioned, the fourth quarter missions payment will be \$13,042.50, a reduction of \$8,732.50.



Christmas Post Office Available in the Narthex

December 3 - December 24

The Rosemary Benjamin Circle Christmas Card Post Office will operate from December 3 to December 24, 2023. Please bring your **unstamped** Christmas Cards for **active** church members (members able to attend church in person) to the post office in the Narthex.

- To “mail” cards at church, please make your check payable to **Greater Greenwood United Ministry** and place it in the donation basket on the table.
- To give a cash donation, please place the money in an envelope and place it in the donation basket.
- Don't forget to go by the post office each week and pick up cards addressed to you.



Committee Orientation January 7 at 2:00 pm

The First Baptist Church 2024 Committee Orientation is **Sunday, January 7, at 2:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall**. Everyone serving on a committee in 2024 is asked to gather for a time of orientation before meeting with members of your respective committees. Following a brief orientation in the Fellowship Hall, committee members are asked to continue their discussion. The January Committee Orientation serves as the first meeting of the year. Regular meeting dates and times will be set during the Committee Orientation meeting. Committee members, please add this date to your calendar.

2023 Offering Envelopes

Beginning Sunday, December 10, the 2024 Offering envelopes will be available for pick-up in the narthex. Anyone who is unable to pick up their envelopes is asked to contact the church office so your envelopes can be mailed to you. If for some reason you cannot locate your envelopes, please contact David Jennings (jenningsdaj@gmail.com or 229-5557).



722 Grace Street
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(864) 229-2561 Fax
Website: fbcgwd.org

Cheerful Cherubs

(864) 229-2787 www.cheerfulcherubsfbc.com

Ministers and Staff

Layne Smith
Anna Burch
David Jennings
Keith Jameson
Claudia Burch
Mary Frances Thompson
Linda Miller

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Minister to Children
Minister of Administration
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Director of Cheerful Cherubs
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Helping Hands Ministry Information Line(864) 229-8051

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED