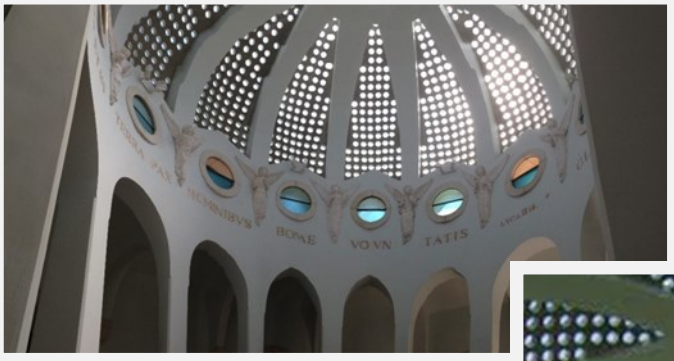
FIRST F CUS

December 2016 // Volume 6, Issue 12

a word from PASTOR OREN

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **– Luke 2:10**

Two years ago my wife Ginger and I stood in a church in Bethlehem, Palestine, called the Shepherds Field Chapel. This building was built in the place where it is believed the angel of the Lord appeared to the frightened shepherds and announced the birth of the Messiah Jesus. Now, I'm not all that sure that the site is the exact location of the divine meeting with the heavenly host, but it was quite the experience nonetheless. The chapel is absolutely beautiful. The Shepherds Field is maintained by Franciscan monks living in Bethlehem. Of all the buildings we visited on our trip, this church was one of the best kept and most pristine structures. What is unique about the Shepherds Field Chapel is its ceiling, which was designed by Antonio Barluzzi in 1953. There are hundreds of clear glass spheres covering the vaulted ceiling, which lets beams of natural light into the church. The light that penetrates the concrete and glass dome, illuminating the interior, calls to mind the heavenly light that appeared to the shepherds. The unique design attempts to capture what the shepherds might have experienced that cool night on the hillside in Bethlehem. I often wonder about that late night encounter between God's heavenly and earthly messengers.



As they were watching over the sheep entrusted to their protection and care, the dark sky was split with beams of heavenly light. It pierced the darkness in such a way that it terrified the shepherds; a sudden visitation from the host of heaven was the last thought on their minds that night. But once their eyes adjusted and their racing hearts slowed down a bit, it was a glorious experience. No doubt the angel had the shepherd's full and frightened attention. They were greeted with the words "*Fear not. . .*", because the purpose of the angel's announcement was not to terrify the shepherds, rather it was to proclaim the "greatest good news" that any man had ever heard. The angel declared that he was there to deliver "*good news of great joy that will be for all people*." This good news was the birth of Christ Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of man. The incarnate One had arrived to redeem sinful man and to give us unending hope, just as prophets foretold many generations past. Astoundingly, this great good news was devoid of fanfare or celebration. But how could something so significant and powerful and glorious be so unnoticed?

Quite simply, that's just the way God planned it. In fact, the angel's announcement to the fearful sheep watchers was the only announcement that Almighty God had planned to make that night. In his perfect providence and sovereign design God didn't make a big announcement because that is the way the Good News is meant to work. The gospel good news isn't broadcast by kings or noblemen. It isn't legislated by congress or ratified by parliament. It isn't produced by Hollywood or propagated by Madison Avenue. The Good News of the gospel is proclaimed through lowly means, yet its effect is eternally significant. Once the poor shepherds took heed of the angel's command and sought out this baby in Bethlehem, their personal witness would take the good news where it needed to go. As they laid their eyes upon the long awaited Christ, their only and best response would be to tell others about what they had seen. And so they did. And so should we.

God fulfilled his promise proclaimed by the angels, that the good news would be for "all people." You and I are those people for whom the good news was meant, and it has so completely changed us. The darkness of our lost souls was pierced by the light of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. *When light invades darkness, it exposes what we see and changes how we see it.* Once there was only fear, but now joy. Once there was occasional good news, but now there is ***good news of great joy*** that is forever and ever and ever. Once we walked alone, but praise God that Jesus has come to dwell with us! He is here! He saves! He heals! He died our death and now he lives to give us life! Bethlehem's baby is Calvary's Lamb and Heaven's Mighty King.

He who is mighty has done a great thing:
Taken on flesh, conquered deaths sting,
Shattered the darkness and lifted our shame;
Holy is His Name! Holy is His Name!

Just as God told the shepherds, he tells you as well. Now go and tell someone else. Tell them that God loves them. Tell them there is hope. Tell them that Christmas is about the light piercing the darkness of despair and breaking the chains of sin. Tell them they are precious in his sight, and all their fears can be calmed in Christ Jesus. Tell them Merry Christmas, Christ Jesus is here!

Mercy Christmas First Baptist Church!
I love you.

Your Pastor, Oren

DECEMBER 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6				1	2 Masterpiece Christmas Downtown Festival of Lights	3
4 First Sunday Fellowship Lottie Moon Week of Prayer	5	6 WOM	7	8	9 Parents Night Out	10
11 A Cup of Christmas Lottie Moon Christmas Offering Pilgrimage	12	13 Senior Adult Luncheon	14 Day of Prayer	15	16	17
18 Light Before Christmas Personnel Mtg Deacons Meeting	19	20	21	22	23 Office Closed	24 Christmas Eve Service // 6 pm
25 Christmas Day Worship Service 10:00 am	26 Office Closed	27 Office Closed	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve
January 1 New Year's Day First Sunday Fellowship Regular Schedule Resumes	January 2 Office Closed	**Happy Birthday!** 1 Gloria Ward 2 Eloise McMorris Blair Boles 3 Walter Hastings Kathryn Simon 4 Betty Wray Mary Villar 5 Kristina Simon 6 Alvin Long Stephen Jordan 8 Catherine Kissner John Villar 12 John Harter 18 Carlton Varnado Dot Lawrence Roya Nauta 20 Kris Kring John Wright 21 Marilyn Lovell Mary Susie Labry 26 Annis Tarver William Wolf 28 Beverly White 29 Bonnye Reeves 30 Bethany Conner 31 Michael Howes Lindsey Jennings Russ Sonnier				

I'm so excited for all the family-focused events we have planned this month, let's just start with that! Masterpiece Christmas (Dec. 2nd) kicks off our month of celebration. We're inviting families that are in the area for the Festival of Lights to stop by and make one-of-a-kind Christmas themed masterpieces! After that, we have our Parents Night Out (Dec.9th). This will be our third annual Christmas-themed PNO and we're going to have a blast while parents get away for a bit. Finally, we have The Light Before Christmas (Dec. 18th). Like last year, this family play will invite everyone who attends to come on stage and be a part of the action. So much fun!

And in the middle of all this, we're doing our Advent Devotional. This year's theme is "Jesus, God's greatest gift." The devotionals focus on Jesus' teaching about and showing examples of gifts like mercy, serving, teaching/preaching, and love.

Like previous years, we're doing a family version as well. Children are receiving two special gifts each Sunday. One present is for the child to keep and the other is to give away…both have a fun object lesson inside!

Since the theme is gifts, here are a few activities to do with your family to help you see Jesus as the ultimate gift!

Hope- Sticky Promises

Use this experience to discuss how God's promises always stick. You'll need a Bible and a roll of packing tape

Read Luke 1:26-33. Say: **The angel brought a promise from God that seemed impossible. But God's promises are always reliable. Let's think about that.**

Have family members form teams then wrap one teammate in packing tape, sticky side out. Give teams five minutes to work together to see which team can stick the most items to its taped-up teammate.

Congratulate the team with the most items. Have teams evaluate the things they stuck to the tape by putting the items in order from "barely holding" to "most solidly stuck."

Ask: • **Explain whether you expected some of the items to stick.**

• **Tell about a time you expected someone to keep a promise.**

• **Explain whether you expect God's promises to stick.**

• **How can examples like God's promise to Mary help you trust God's promises?**

Joy- SpiroJoy

Use this experience to help kids think about the joy surrounding Jesus' birth. You'll need: a Bible, butcher paper, crayons

Ask: • **What are things you do when you feel joyful?**

Say: **Jesus' birth brought joy to many people, and an angel brought the good news of his coming birth to Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. Today when we talk about the joy of Jesus' birth, we know the angels delivered the news of that joy. You know, in snowy areas, people sometimes like to go lay down and make snow angels on the ground** (explain to children who are unfamiliar with snow angles what they are). **Let's make angel wings as a reminder of their joyful role when Jesus was born.**

1. Have your kids each lie on their bellies on a sheet or section of butcher paper.

2. Each child will need enough room to extend his or her arms fully in every direction. Give each child a few crayons for each hand.

3. Show kids how to create half-circle "angel wings" on the paper while joyfully clapping their fists together above their heads.

4. Placing the crayon tips on the paper, they'll extend their arms above their heads.

5. Next, they'll swing their arms down to their sides, keeping the crayon tips on the paper and their arms extended.

6. Have kids repeat this stroke numerous times to create angel wings. **If you don't have butcher paper, try using newspaper taped together, or just use chalk and go outside!*

Read Luke 2:8-11.

Ask: • **What are some reasons Jesus' birth makes you feel joyful?**

For each reason, draw another layer on their wings. Have family members get up and admire their designs.

Say: **Jesus brings us all joy—his love impacts all of us. We can be thankful for his birth and for the angels who delivered the good news to Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds!**

Peace- The Match Hunt

Use this game to help kids reflect on the shepherds' search for Jesus. You'll need: a Bible, a deck of playing cards

Say: **When the shepherds heard about Jesus, they ran to find him. And they knew what to look for—the angels gave them a sign.** Read aloud Luke 2:12. **Let's play a game to help us think about their experience.**

1. Form teams, and have each team stand in line against a different wall.

2. Split the deck of cards into piles (one per group), and set them facedown in the center of the room, leaving room between piles.

3. The family members who are first in line will race to the center. While teams watch, players will flip the group's pile of cards one by one and lay them on the ground until a match is discovered. Matches can be numbers or face cards and can be made from any team's faceup cards.

4. When a player discovers a match, he or she will yell "Sign!"

5. The player in the center will run back to the team with the matching cards and tag the next child in line, who'll repeat the process. As cards get flipped, more opportunities for matches will occur. The goal is to have the most matches at the end.

Ask: • **What was this game like for you?**

• **Describe how you felt at the end when we'd found all the matches.**

• **Tell about a time you felt anxious. What brought you peace?**

• **How can you go to Jesus when you need peace?**

**If you have less than four family members for this experience, try playing a game like Slapjack instead.*

David

the Grace Note

Can you believe that Christmas is here already? It doesn't happen often that we get to celebrate Christmas on a Sunday morning, and I look forward to the opportunity to be with our church family as we rejoice together in the birth of our Savior on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Oddly enough, the next time Christmas Day will fall on a Sunday will be in years 2022, then 2033, 2039,2044, 2050!

One of my most beloved Christmas carols is "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." We don't get to sing it very often, in part because we are not normally worshipping together on Christmas Day! But the story behind the carol is what I love and how the hymn writer penned such beautiful lyrics. I'll let you read the lyrics as we prepare to sing it on Christmas Day:

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Till ringing, singing on its way
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Henry Longfellow was born and raised in the 1800s in Portland, Maine. Henry was a professor of literature at Harvard and known as one of the greatest writers. The year of 1861 proved to be a tragic and trying time in Henry's family as he lost his wife when her dress caught fire in their home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. That same year, the Civil War broke out, tearing our nation apart. Two years later, in 1863, Henry's son Charley ran away from home to join Lincoln's army at the age of 17.

Charley was a brave and popular soldier. He saw action at the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863 but contracted typhoid fever and malaria and was sent home to recover. Upon recovering, Charley returned to the field in the Battle of New Hope Church in Virginia on November 27th. During battle, He was shot through the left shoulder and the bullet nicked his spine and came close to paralyzing him. He was then carried into the church and later taken to Washington to recuperate. Receiving the news of his son, Henry left for Washington and met up with his son and traveled back with him to Cambridge, Massachusetts and arrived home on December 8th. Henry stayed by his side for many weeks, taking care of Charley and nursing him back to health.

On Christmas Day, December 25, 1863, Henry penned these words that "God is not dead, nor doth He sleep" which can be understood during the backdrop of war and tragedy in Henry's life. This carol became wildly sung during this time in American hymnody and is still sung today.[1]

2016 has been a rough year for many of us. With our city dealing with floods, racial tensions and many heartaches, this carol still rings true today that "God is not dead, nor does He sleep." Jesus has come to be our peace and salvation for mankind.

I hope you have made plans to join us as we celebrate the Birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Here are a few important dates you should know.

December 11th- "A Cup of Christmas" a Christmas at First Musical Performance featuring Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra. 10:45 AM

December 24th- Candlelight Christmas Eve Service, 6 PM (Kid Friendly!)

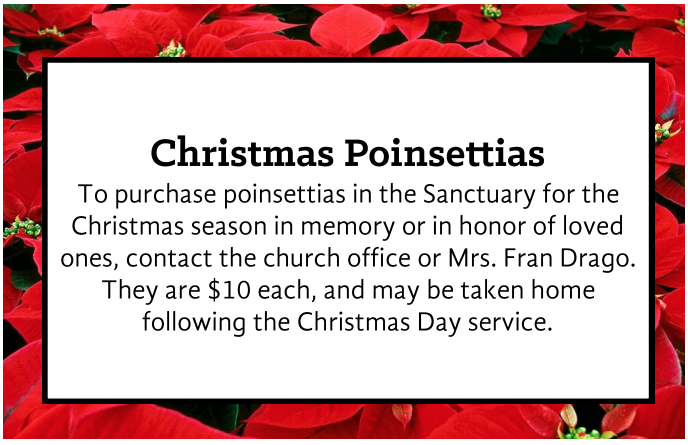
December 25- Christmas Day Worship Service, 10 AM, No Sunday School!

Merry Christmas FBC!

Jason

[1]Story can be found in:

Morgan, Robert. 2010, *Then Sings My Soul,* Special Edition.Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN.



Christmas Poinsettias

To purchase poinsettias in the Sanctuary for the Christmas season in memory or in honor of loved ones, contact the church office or Mrs. Fran Drago. They are $10 each, and may be taken home following the Christmas Day service.

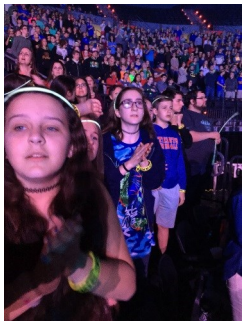
Christmas Eve Service

Wednesday, December 24, 6:00 pm in the Sanctuary

Year-End Contributions

Remember, all 2016 contributions must be received in the church office by 12:00 Noon, Friday, December 30, or postmarked by December 31st in order to be included on your 2016 contribution statement. Contributions received after this time will post to 2017.

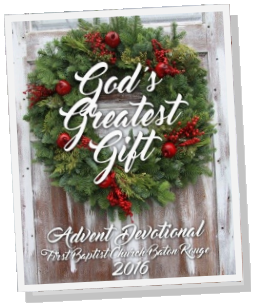
The youth attended the Youth Evangelism Conference this past month and it was an amazing time for our students and adult leaders. The conference was held at the Cajun Dome in Lafayette, and we had six students in attendance. It was a privilege for me to see God working within the lives of our students. There were several different decisions made at YEC. Some students began moving towards salvation and others had a fire lit for evangelism. I personally would like to thank all the parents for letting your students attend. I pray that this conference will have a lasting impact in the hearts of your children and grandchildren. Let us pray that this conference will impact our students' hearts for the gospel.



Also, I would like to thank those that have contacted me with yard projects. Our youth are excited about helping our members in need. So if you know someone that needs help around his or her house, please contact me at the church. Christmas break is approaching and I would like to have several projects lined up during our students' break from school.

Mason

Advent Devotional



Be sure to pick up a copy of the 2016 First Baptist Church Advent Devotional. It contains four weeks worth of short daily devotions, beginning on November 27th and continuing through Christmas Day. Each devotion was written by a member of our First Baptist Church family. This will be a wonderful tool to use as you prepare your heart and mind for Christmas. Copies of the devotional will be placed in baskets around the building. If you can't find one, contact the church office and we will be sure you get one! There is also a PDF version available on our website. We truly hope you enjoy this Christmas treat!

Downtown Christmas Pilgrimage

Sunday, December 13, 2015 at 5:30 pm
Starting at Mt. Zion First Baptist Church

Park your car here at FBC and come meet us over at Mt. Zion First Baptist (356 East Blvd.) for the Christmas Pilgrimage! Each church involved in the Pilgrimage will have a Christmas music presentation to share upon our arrival at their church, then we will travel as a group to the next location, finishing up right here at FBC with the Hallelujah Chorus. The churches include Mt. Zion, First Methodist, First Presbyterian, St. James Episcopal, St. Joseph Cathedral, and FBC! Don't miss this fun Baton Rouge Christmas tradition!

Redbird Christmas Tree

Redbirds are gathering to remember the homeless this Christmas. They are collecting NEW underwear for men and women in sizes S/M/L. Please wrap your gift to place under the redbird tree in the nursery entrance area. Write MAN or WOMAN and the size on the outside of your gift to put under the tree. Thank you!

-The Clothes Closet Ministry Team

Downtown Festival of Lights & Masterpiece Christmas

Make plans to be downtown on the evening of the Downtown Festival of Lights! We will be handing out hot chocolate and cookies on our front porch as usual, and this year we will also be hosting *Masterpiece Christmas*, where families can stop by our parking lot to do some amazing art projects the whole family can enjoy making together. We'll have some other surprises in store, so we hope to see your family here!

COLLEGE @first

Our wonderful tradition of partnering with the LSU Baptist Collegiate Ministry continues. I am so thankful that our Southern Baptist Convention allows us to have a BCM and that it reaches out to college students. I do hope and pray that Lifeway will continue to support our college students. College life is so very important to the growth of our students in their Christian walk. So, today I wanted to let you know just about one area that our BCM and FBC are working together on. It is all about missions.

Our LSU BCM has put together some amazing missions opportunities. Your FBC students will be participating in a number of these various mission trips, and we will support them however we can.

MISSION ARLINGTON

December 10-15. Cost $75.

The students will be working at the Mission Arlington Missionplex! They will help with the Christmas store, work the day care, deliver and pick up furniture, help with the medical clinic, help with after school tutoring and help with intake and the warehouse. We have been doing this trip for many years and it is an amazing opportunity to go and serve.

There is also a Mardi Gras trip to Arlington February 24-28. Cost $50.

CHRISTMAS IN CHINATOWN

(New York City) Dec. 26-Jan. 1. Cost $700.

The students will be working with the Chinese Christian Church to host a winter Vacation Bible Club and also will be hosting Christmas parties for International Students. They will be joining College students from across the country.

MEXICO TRIP

Passport or Original Birth Certificate needed. April 7-14. Cost $250.

This year we will have three major locations that we are working in: Morelos, Peidras Negras, and Acuna. The students will be able to join teams that will be hosting backyard Bible clubs, construction, and medical clinics. The students will be able to choose which group they would like to work with. Morelos is Vacation Bible School and farming. Peidras is construction, Vacation Bible School and Medical Clinics. Acuna is Vacation Bible school and youth camp.

HAWAII TRIP

Oahu, Hawaii. April 8-16 Cost $1900.

FBC and the BCM are sponsoring this annual trip. This is our 8th year in a row to partner with Arjay Gruspe and the Univerity of Hawaii BCM. We will be working with the BCM and their ministries. There are also 8 local churches that we will be assisting as well. It is a very similar to an international mission trip experience.

SOUTH AFRICA TRIP

Johannesburg and Madagascar. May 14-30. Cost $3200

This year we have two options for the South Africa trip. We will have a team in Johannesburg and in Madagascar. The students will be joined by several SEC schools in Atlanta and then all travel over to South Africa together. We will split up and then come back together at the end to spend some time in the city. Students will be able to join teams that will be hosting backyard Bible clubs, medical information clinics, ESL, school presentations, church planning and survery work, prayer walking and evangelism.

GOLA MISSIONS: UNITED STATES

GOLA Missions is the mission trips and programs through the BCMs in Louisiana. They will have the following opportunities this summer:

- Alaska // June 12-19 - paid positions
- Maui Hawaii // 2 weeks in June
- East Canada / Moncton Dieppe Canada // June 30th – July 27th
- Disaster Relief // TBA
- State Camps // Paid positions
- Soccer/VBS Hybrid camps throughout the state // May 27th – July 29th
- VBS // May 27th – July 29th

GenSend: North America

This is the North American Mission Board. They are working with college students throughout our country and Canada. Students will work from June 7th-July 27th. They will be working alongside missionaries in Atlanta, New Orleans, Washington D.C., New York, Boston, Columbus, Chicago, Denver, Portland, San Diego, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal and Toronto.

International Mission Board: World

IMB students is the student and young adult mobilization ministry of the IMB, providing international mission opportunities throughout the world for individuals and teams. There are 1-4 week options, 1-3 month options, and semester and study abroad options.

As you can see, our college ministry is terrifically important. These students have a huge opportunity to Geaux and Share Christ literally across the globe. FBC and the BCM are working hard to get our students to Geaux and share the love of Christ. Thank you for supporting all of our students and all of their mission opportunities. Thank you FBC for loving students and for loving our LSU BCM!!

In Him,

Larkin J. Harris

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Weekly Schedule

Sundays

8:45 am
First Sunday Fellowship Breakfast
(First Sunday each month)

9:15 am
Bible Study for all ages

10:15 am
Children of God Service

10:45 am
Worship Service

Tuesdays

9:30 am
WMU
(First Tuesday each Month)

11:30 am
Senior Adult Luncheon
(Second Tuesday each month)

Wednesdays

12:00 pm
Ladies Bible Study Lunch

4:00 pm
Young at Heart Choir

4:45 pm
Fellowship Meal
($7 each, $3 for children, $18 family maximum)

5:30 pm
Prayer

5:45 pm
BAM! Children's Activities
Adult Bible Study

6:00 pm
College Bible Study
Youth Bible Study

6:15 pm
Crafts class
Choir Rehearsal

Thursdays

9:00 am
Children of God Ministry

10:00 am
Ladies Bible Study

6:00 pm
GriefShare
(at the Grief Recovery Center)