

JANUARY 22, 2026

# First Baptist Church of Eatonton Messenger

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST SHARING GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE WITH ALL



## FROM THE PASTOR

It's the season of Epiphany! I get to use the word, "epiphanic!" Epiphanic means "of or having the character of an epiphany!" A wow moment! An eye opener! A moment that turns the tide! You never see things the same again after an epiphany.

The Gospel of Matthew says the arrest of John the Baptist was an epiphanic moment for Jesus. "When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he went to Galilee ... and began to announce, "Change your hearts and lives! Repent! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!" (4:12, 17) Matthew recalls the words from Isaiah, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in pitch-dark land, light has dawned." (9:3)

So Jesus begins in Galilee to share the light of God. Jesus calls people to change their hearts and lives to live in the love of God Jesus teaches and lives.

So then - Jesus is an epiphanic moment. Jesus is an epiphany that lets us see things in an ever-growing light. We are drawn into the light of Christ, becoming the light of the world. And heaven itself is made known on earth.

How significant an epiphany!

Seeing everything in the light of Jesus directs everyone in particular, and even peculiar but blessed ways. The point of which the Bible seems certain is, "Blessed are those who see by the light of Jesus." What challenging, revealing light Jesus gives! But also the most loving actions are taken when walking in the light of Jesus. And what is more important than being loved and loving others? Blessed are those who live by the epiphany of Jesus.

This is not a narrow way of living, as some might perceive. But it is the *arms open wide* way of being. Think of all the stories you've read, cherished and lived wherein there has been such great joy, and many good tears as well – because people have opened their arms, their hearts.

God has made us with hearts that are capable of loving over and over, again and again. Some think, "I'll never love a people, a place, a moment, an event, ... like I have this one." But it is not true. The heart never exhausts itself of the capacity to love. Your heart is always ready to grow three sizes any day. Surely you remember the line, "And what happened that day – Well in Whoville they say the Grinch's heart grew three sizes that day."

Jesus is quite the epiphany! What an enlightened heart! What possibilities!

Such epiphanic moments are so needed these days! May it be so!

Let It Shine,

**Craig**

# MAY WE CARRY SUNDAY'S SNOW-QUIET BEAUTY WITH US

This past Sunday, many of us awoke to a transformed landscape. The heavy snowfall blanketed our community in white, muffling the usual sounds of morning and inviting us to pause and wonder at creation's beauty. As I watched the snowflakes fall, I found myself humming the opening lines of "Beautiful Savior," that beloved hymn that calls us to see God's glory reflected in the natural world around us.

Snow has a unique way of drawing our attention to the Creator. Each flake, scientists tell us, is genuinely unique—a tiny masterpiece of crystalline architecture that exists for only a brief time before melting back into water. The sheer abundance of them, falling silently from the sky, speaks to the lavish generosity woven into creation itself. When snow accumulates as it did this Sunday, it covers the worn and weathered, the broken and the ordinary, transforming our familiar surroundings into something that catches our breath. The parking lot becomes a field of diamonds under streetlights. The branches that looked bare and lifeless just hours before are suddenly outlined in white, revealing the elegant architecture of trees we pass every day without really seeing.

There's something profoundly humbling about heavy snow. It slows us down, sometimes stops us altogether. Our carefully made plans yield to weather we cannot control. In our age of climate control and technological mastery, snow reminds us that we are still creatures living within creation, subject to forces far greater than ourselves. This can be frustrating when we have places to be, but it can also be a gift—an invitation to rest, to notice, to be present in the moment rather than rushing toward the next thing on our schedule.

There's a reason our hymnody so often turns to winter imagery when speaking of spiritual truths. The tradition of "In the Bleak Midwinter" reminds us that Christ entered our world not in springtime splendor but in winter's humility. The cold season becomes a canvas for understanding incarnation—God dwelling with us in the lean times, the quiet times, the times when creation itself seems to be waiting. When we sing these winter hymns during Advent and Christmas, we're acknowledging that God's most profound gift came wrapped not in summer's abundance but in winter's stark simplicity. Snow also teaches us about covering and cleansing. The heavy accumulation this Sunday hid the imperfections beneath—the patchy grass, the scattered leaves, the cracks in the sidewalk. Everything was made uniform, peaceful, new. The old hymns speak of sins covered and souls made clean, and "Whiter than Snow" draws directly from this natural phenomenon, using winter's transformation as a picture of spiritual renewal. When we see snow's ability to cover and beautify, we're reminded of grace that doesn't ignore what lies beneath but transforms how we see and experience it. The imperfections are still there, yes, but they're held within something larger and more beautiful.

There's also something to be said for the silence that snow brings. Sunday's snowfall seemed to absorb sound itself, creating a hush that settled over everything. In that quietness, individual sounds became clearer—a bird's call, a child's laughter, the creak of a tree branch. Our faith tradition has always valued silence, those moments when we stop speaking and simply listen for the still, small voice. Snow creates an acoustic sanctuary, a natural pause in the noise of daily life. Perhaps that's why so many people report feeling a sense of peace during snowfall, even heavy snow that disrupts their plans. In the enforced quiet, we have space to hear what we usually miss.

For those of us who make music in worship, there's something particularly moving about the way snow connects to our heritage of hymnody. Generations of believers before us watched snow fall and saw in it the handiwork of the divine. They wrote songs comparing spiritual truths to snow's cleansing whiteness, its silent descent, its transforming power. When we sing these hymns now, we're joining our voices with countless others who stood at windows watching winter storms and felt moved to praise. The snow this Sunday was the same snow that inspired those writers centuries ago—the same physics, the same beauty, the same invitation to wonder.

As we move through this winter season, may we carry Sunday's snow-quiet beauty with us. May we remember that the same Creator who designed each intricate snowflake knows and cares for each of us with similar attention to detail and beauty. May we allow ourselves to be slowed down occasionally, to be stopped in our tracks by something lovely. And may our songs of faith help us recognize the divine presence in both the spectacular snowfalls and the ordinary days alike, knowing that the God we worship is present in all of it—in the storm and the stillness, in the extraordinary and the every-day.

The snow will melt, as it always does. But the truth it points toward remains: we are surrounded by beauty, held within a creation that still speaks of its Creator, invited daily to notice and give thanks.

*Dylan*



# STEPPING STONES MINISTRY

Dear FBCE church family.

I'd like to take a few moments to share an update on our Stepping Stones ministry and how God is at work through it.

Our preschool continues to be a vital ministry of this church. Each week, children and families enter our building and experience a loving, Christ-centered environment. For many families, the preschool is their first connection to our church, making it an important outreach as well as a place of discipleship.

Our mission remains the same: to partner with families in laying a strong foundation for learning while introducing children to the love of God. Through Bible stories, prayer, worship music, and daily interactions, children are learning that God loves them, Jesus is their friend, and they are called to love others.

This year, our teachers and staff have faithfully served with patience, kindness, and dedication. They see their work not only as teaching, but as ministry. Every hug, prayer, lesson, and moment of encouragement reflects Christ's love to our children and their families.

We are thankful for the ways this ministry reaches beyond the classroom. Families who may not yet have a church home are being welcomed, supported, and prayed for. Relationships are being built, and seeds of faith are being planted that we trust God will continue to grow.

We are grateful to this congregation for your continued prayers, encouragement, and support. Your partnership allows this ministry to thrive and helps us remain a place where children feel safe, loved, and valued.

As we look ahead, we ask for your prayers for our children, families, and staff, that God would continue to guide and bless this ministry. Thank you for investing in the next generation and for supporting the work God is doing through our Stepping Stones Learning Center.

*Thank you, and God bless.*

*Denise Carmichael*

*Director*

## UPCOMING EVENTS



# SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

## WELCOMING FOR JANUARY

Jim and Vicki Hall

## WELCOMING FOR FEBRUARY

Mike and Sherry Lyons

## USHERS FOR JANUARY

David Giddens, Scott Joris, Ben Leverette,  
Jesse McMillen, Charles Patten, Cary Walton

## USHERS FOR FEBRUARY

Howell Cardwell, Mike Faulk,  
Chris Hewette, Mike Lyons

## DEACON FOR JANUARY 25

Chad Davis

## DEACON FAMILIES

Pam Douglas, Charlotte Green,  
Luceil Harrison, Mike Reagin Family,  
Jim Ryan, Sonny Turner Family

## DEACON FOR FEBRUARY 1

Susan Davis

## DEACON FAMILIES

James Cheney Family, Edge Farley Family,  
Mabel Hicks, Guerry Key Family,  
Jan Long, Jesse McMillen Family,  
Peggy McMillen, Betty Sills

# WORSHIP REPORT

Sunday, January 11 113

Sunday, January 18 Canceled

# FINANCIAL REPORT

DECEMBER 31, 2025

<u>Budget Needs YTD</u>	<u>\$559,374.00</u>
<u>Total Receipts YTD</u>	<u>\$556,700.80</u>
<u>Budget Expenditures YTD</u>	<u>\$564,599.96</u>

# BIRTHDAYS

01/23 - McKenzie Cardwell, Carl Haizlip  
01/27 - Janice Turner  
01/29 - Davis McMillen, Gwen Ralston  
01/30 - David Giddens  
01/31 - Mollie Harvey  
02/01 - Jimmy Williams  
02/02 - Lee Dupree

# ANNIVERSARIES

02/05 - Mike and Sherry Lyons  
02/05 - Daryl and Connie Covington

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## 2026 VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL MEETING

Tuesday, January 27  
5:00 PM  
Fellowship Hall



## 2nd -5th Grade Sunday School Teacher Needed

We are currently looking for  
volunteers to help lead our  
Sunday School class for  
2nd-5th grade students.

If you're interested or would  
like more information, please  
contact a minister.



## WE ARE HIRING

JOB POSITIONS :

• CHILDREN'S MINISTER



EMAIL US

craigwmsn@gmail.com or  
revbowden@gmail.com



First Baptist Church  
P.O. Box 3400  
Eatonton, GA 31024  
Return Service Requested

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

**GUEST MISSIONARIES  
TREY AND KAITLYN LANCASTER  
WILL BE SPEAKING**



**FEBRUARY 8TH AT 10:50AM  
DURING MORNING WORSHIP**