

DECEMBER 7, 2023

# First Baptist Church of Eatonton Messenger

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



Join Us For Our  
*Advent Services*  
Sundays at 10:50AM

December 10 - Peace  
December 17 - Joy  
December 24 - Love



## FROM THE PASTOR

My barber always asks me as I sit down in his chair, "How are you doing?" Today, he asked me how I do Christmas. How do I do Christmas? When I paused he explained he was wondering if Christmas is a really big kind of celebration or does it just come and go in some sort of regular pattern. And then when I still didn't answer, because I was still formulating an answer, he went on to tell me about a special gift he was especially excited about. I'll not tell you the details lest his surprise get out, but he is giving one of those 'half-dozen in a life-time kind of gifts' this year to someone very special. I look forward to the next hair cut to see how it turned out.

I finally found my space to answer his question. I confessed to him I make Christmas hard on myself as a preacher. My comment left me musing all afternoon until now. I feel like I hold these great jewels in my hands – all the trappings of Holy Scripture, Holy Child, Holy Mother, Holy Angels, Holy Shepherds, ... And it's my job to display them once again in a way that people will gasp, be enamored and be filled with wonder, joy and peace. Yet everyone has seen the jewels before. Many times. All that can be said about them has been said. They can hardly be displayed in any better way than they have already. Light has been shined upon them for over two thousand years. Their brilliance has shined just as long. Some really sappy things have been said. Some really dumb songs have been written. I've read year after year the ancient texts and the more modern reflections on the ancient text. Every author I admire, and others as well, has had a go at putting into words the significance of the event. And now, I am to add to those words more words? Words that somehow snap people awake to Christmas like never before!

Of course, it's an impossible task. It rises out of an egotistical heart to a great degree. To be the best. Say it the best. Like never before. To be the greatest of all time with my words! It will not happen. It need not happen.

The ancient text itself is the jewel. And what you do with jewels is just display them. You just fasten them around a neck, an arm, an ear ... And they shine and draw the eye. Before you know it, they garner someone's attention. Some say so. They compliment. They gasp. They sigh. Others just admire. You never know what they are thinking. You never know the impact made. And that's the beauty of a real jewel. It does a work of grace upon folks all by itself.

That's the beauty of a thing like Christmas. It's just a story, filled with a number of moving parts. Most are familiar with every piece of it. Occasionally, someone thinks they've found something novel, but rarely is their discovery so novel. It's mostly hidden knowledge they discover, but knowledge that's been around forever.

But again, that's OK. Christmas works a grace upon folks all by itself. And isn't that the blessing of it? The blessing of God, working works of grace upon folks in the Advent of Christ?

It will be so. It is the nature of God to do so. Thanks be to God!

*Peace,  
Craig*



# YOUTH AND CHILDREN NEWS

We live in a restless world. The evidence is all around us. We hurry from one project and activity to another. We may wake up at six or seven in the morning only to be thinking about what we must do at work or what we must do to get the kids ready for school. Once work or school is over then it is off to soccer practice or dance lessons, stopping at McDonald's for a quick bite to eat in between. If we are retired, we often still find ourselves thinking of the next project we should be doing. Even when there is finally downtime in the evenings or the weekends, we may still feel restless and anxious. Rather than enjoying the quiet and truly resting, we may turn on the television or spend hours on our iPhones and iPads checking out Facebook, Pinterest, or YouTube... I may be confessing here a little... It seems that we always need to be doing something.

In his article, "God's Rest In A Restless World," Dr. Charles Arand attempts to diagnose the problem. He writes that our focus is too inward. We focus too much on ourselves, our activities, and our worries. He then points us to God's gift of Sabbath.

The Sabbath, as the Bible speaks of it, directs us to look past ourselves to the works of our God. If we do this, we truly receive rest that inspires and refreshes us. Then, we as created beings, receive the rest that our Creator has intended for us from the beginning of creation.

In Genesis 2 we read about God resting on the seventh day after he called his creation "very good." However, we read nothing about God's creatures resting on the seventh day. We find that in the Third Commandment in Exodus 20:8: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Two reasons are given in the Scriptures for the Third Commandment. First, in Exodus 20:11 it says, "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." It was important for the Creator and so it is important for his creatures. Second, Deuteronomy 5 places the Third Commandment in God's work of redeeming creation: "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Dt. 5:15).

As Arand writes, "So the Sabbath is connected to the two great works of God: creation and the renewal of His creation. The one looked back to Eden, and the other looked forward to a new Eden, namely, the land of Canaan. Together they comprise God's epic story. Israel was to stop working, rest, and celebrate both of God's achievements. In the process, Israel would be refreshed, renewed, confident of God's provision".

God's works of creation and redemption in the Old Testament look forward to God's final renewal of creation accomplished in Christ. Through God's work in Christ, He gives us, His re-created and redeemed people, rest.

In our Sunday Morning Worship Services, God gives us rest in the work of Christ. Rest from our Sins. Renewal in the Spirit of God so that we are empowered and enabled to truly live as God's people in a restless world. No other rest that we create from our own hands will work. Only receiving and resting in the work of God's hands, our Creator truly works.

So, we continue to rest in God's work in Christ as he offers it in Word, Song, and Prayer in our Morning Worship Services each Sunday. Come this Advent Seasons, as God's child and rest in his Word and work for you.

*In Christ,*

*Dylan*

## JOIN US FOR OUR CHILDREN'S LIVE NATIVITY AND CHILDREN'S CHOIR ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17!

### CHILDREN'S LIVE NATIVITY

Sunday, December 17  
10:30am - 10:40am  
First Baptist Church



### CHILDREN'S CHOIR

OUR CHILDREN WILL BE SINGING CHRISTMAS CAROLS  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17 AT 10:50 AM  
DURING MORNING WORSHIP



# O COME, LET US ADORE HIM

## O Come, Let Us Adore Him!

And just like that, "*Christmas on the Avenue – 2023*," a worship concert that our community's musicians worked on together since August, is history. Our singers, ringers, and instrumentalists lifted up *God With Us* in beautiful ways. We became an even closer community of believers who, despite our denominational differences, share a common love for our Lord and desire to love our neighbors as ourselves. Ours is a unique community, and we are blessed to be able to join hands and hearts this way.

Those on the outside might wonder if a single concert was worth that much effort. It was, absolutely! It was much more than just that one hour performance. Each rehearsal was a worship experience, a mood changer, a re-energizer! We left each rehearsal as an extended family bound by friendship and faith, having laughed and smiled as we drew strength and encouragement from one another.

Because our music includes such sound Biblical theology, our rehearsals help us hide His Word in our hearts, and grow in our faith and commitment. They remind us of the stark difference between simply going through religious motions and truly repenting and joyfully serving. It's no accident that so many choir members also lead their churches in other ways as well.

While this year's *Christmas on the Avenue* is over, our choir and handbell's roles in worship are definitely not. Their roles are ongoing. Our new semester of musical ministry begins in January. We invite you to join us!

It is an honor and privilege to be your Music Minister, and I am deeply grateful. I wish each one reading this more than just a sincere Merry Christmas, but rather a profound appreciation of the truth that Longfellow wrote, "*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep, God is not dead nor doth He sleep; the wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good will to men!*" O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

**John Cotten**

## MINISTRY THROUGH MUSIC

**JOIN US AS WE GO CHRISTMAS CAROLING AROUND DOWNTOWN  
EATONTON THIS WEDNESDAY NIGHT AFTER OUR CHRISTMAS DINNER!**



**CHRISTMAS CAROLING**  
Wednesday, December 13 after Dinner  
Wear Festive Attire  
Golf carts will be available to ride.

The background of the graphic shows musical notation for "Silent Night" and "Joy to the World". A gold and red Christmas ornament is positioned above the red banner. The text on the banner is in white, bold, sans-serif font.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## CHRISTMAS DINNER

Wednesday, December 13  
6:00PM

Turkey, Ham, and Dressing Provided  
Please bring casseroles, vegetables,  
salads and desserts.

RSVP TO THE CHURCH OFFICE  
BY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8  
ACCEPTING RESERVATIONS NOW!

## NO WEDNESDAY NIGHT ACTIVITIES

DECEMBER 20, DECEMBER 27,  
AND JANUARY 3

## TACKY CHRISTMAS SWEATER SUNDAY

DECEMBER 17

COME TO CHURCH DRESSED IN YOUR  
FESTIVE CHRISTMAS SWEATER

## Donuts, Coffee & Juice

Sunday, December 17 Before Sunday School



## Children's Choir

AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Begins January 16, 2024

**TUESDAYS**  
**3PM - 4:30PM**

Come and be a part of our  
new Children's Choir for  
children in K4-5th Grade.  
A snack will be provided and we  
will offer a time for a Bible Story.

**Register Today at**  
**[www.firstbaptisteatonton.org](http://www.firstbaptisteatonton.org)**

For More Information,  
Contact Dylan  
at 706-485-3331

## NEW LADIES SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

A new fellowship for adult women.

**SUNDAYS at 9:45AM**

Meeting in the room on the hallway directly behind  
the sanctuary. Greeters will gladly direct you.

**December's Study -**  
**"Women Around the Manger"**

For additional information, contact Pam Lancaster at  
[pamelalancastercpa@gmail.com](mailto:pamelalancastercpa@gmail.com) or 706-318-9500





# MISSION AND GIVING OPPORTUNITIES



## Christmas TOY DRIVE

**Please bring new unwrapped toys for all ages to the Narthex by Sunday, December 10.**

The Eatonton Service League Annual Christmas Toy Drive is underway and we are collecting toys for children. Please bring new, unwrapped toys to the church by Sunday, December 10.




## Angel Tree

Stepping Stones Learning Center

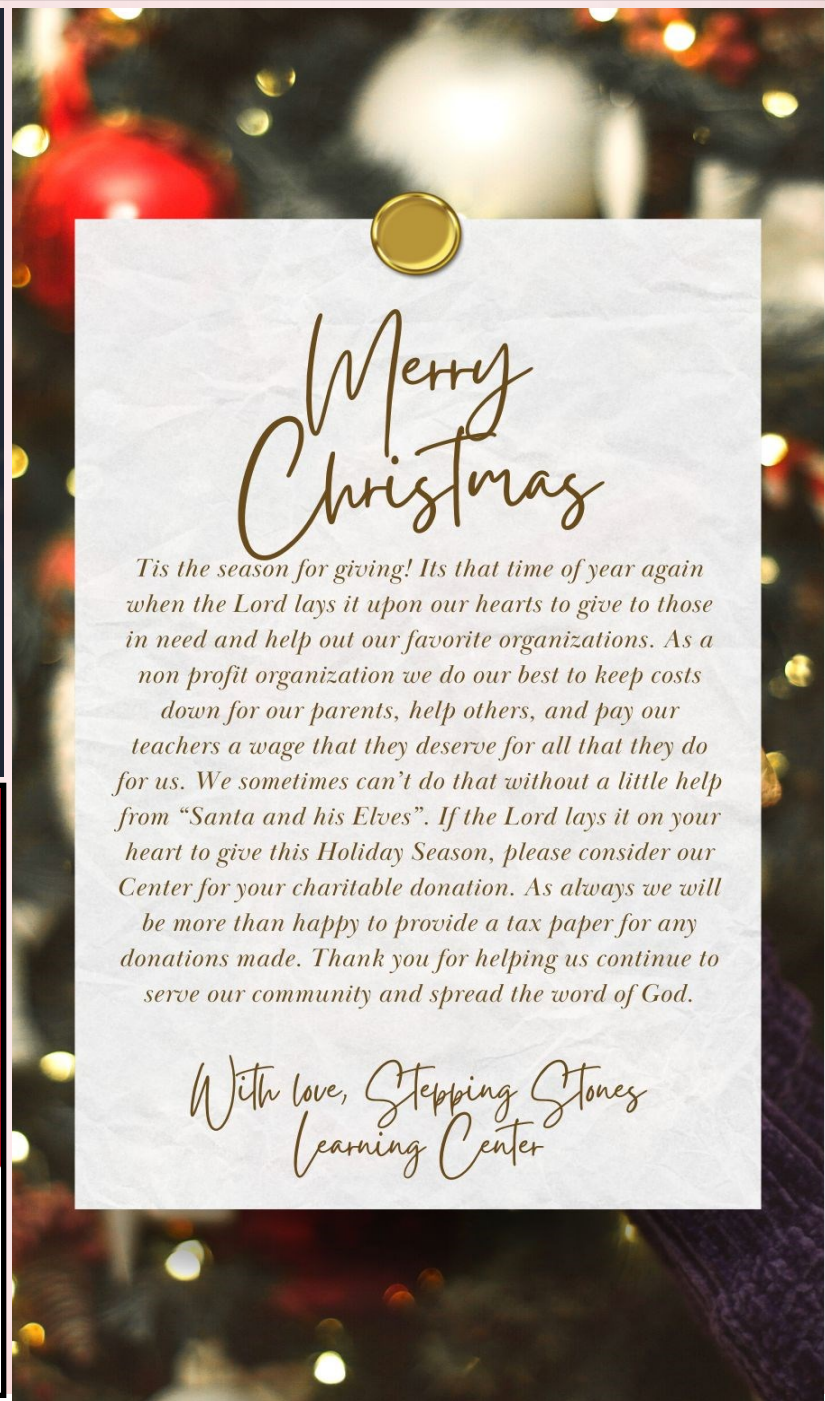
This year our Angel Tree is for Stepping Stones Learning Center. Select an angel from the tree with the monetary value you feel comfortable giving. Please make checks payable to Stepping Stones (with notation) and include the angel with your donation. Drop it by the Stepping Stones office, the church office, or place in the offering plate.

**Donations are Due  
December 20**



## End of the Year Giving

**FOR ALL END OF THE YEAR CONTRIBUTIONS TO BE COUNTED AS 2023 DONATIONS, THEY MUST BE PLACED IN THE OFFERING PLATE, BROUGHT TO THE CHURCH OFFICE, OR POSTMARKED BY MIDNIGHT, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31.**



## Merry Christmas

*Tis the season for giving! Its that time of year again when the Lord lays it upon our hearts to give to those in need and help out our favorite organizations. As a non profit organization we do our best to keep costs down for our parents, help others, and pay our teachers a wage that they deserve for all that they do for us. We sometimes can't do that without a little help from "Santa and his Elves". If the Lord lays it on your heart to give this Holiday Season, please consider our Center for your charitable donation. As always we will be more than happy to provide a tax paper for any donations made. Thank you for helping us continue to serve our community and spread the word of God.*

*With love, Stepping Stones  
Learning Center*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 1st Sunday of Advent 9:45am Sunday School 10:50am Worship 6:00pm Christmas on the Avenue at Eatonton First United Methodist Church	4	5	6 5:30pm Supper 6:00pm Children 6:00pm Youth 6:15pm Adult Bible Study 7:15pm Choir	7 8:00am Men's Prayer Group in the Sanctuary	8	9
10 2nd Sunday of Advent 9:45am Sunday School 10:50am Worship 1:30pm Handbells	11	12	13 6:00pm Christmas Dinner 7:00pm Christmas Caroling	14 8:00am Men's Prayer Group in the Sanctuary	15	16
17 3rd Sunday of Advent Tacky Christmas Sweater Donuts & Coffee served 9:45am Sunday School 10:30am Children's Live Nativity 10:50am Worship	18	19	20 No Wednesday Night Activities	21 Church Office Closes at 12 Noon	22 Church Office Closed	23
24 4th Sunday of Advent 10:50am Worship 5:00pm Christmas Eve Service and Communion	25 CHRISTMAS Church Office Closed	26	27 No Wednesday Night Activities	28	29	30
31 NEW YEARS EVE 10:50am Worship						



# SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

## WELCOMING FOR DECEMBER

Guerry and Joan Key

## USHERS FOR DECEMBER

Mike Reagin, Don Baker, Tim Camp,  
Hollis Harrison, Jim Ryan

## DEACON FOR DECEMBER 10 & 17

Roger Vining

## DEACON FAMILIES

Terry Blanton family, Maxine Godin,  
Grace Resseau, Walt Rocker family,  
Lois Schell, Ellen Trice, Nell Wright

## THANK YOU

Thank you for your help with our pumpkin patch! We are so blessed to have you all as a church family and we were all moved by the outpouring of love and support! Thank you again for all that you do for our center. - SSLC

## WELCOME

We welcome Wyatt Prance and Eleanor Rocker to the membership of First Baptist Church by profession of faith and baptism.

## WORSHIP REPORT

Sunday, November 19	84
Sunday, November 26	86
Sunday, December 3	113

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### NOVEMBER 19, 2023

Budget Needs	\$10,392.26
Budget Receipts	\$7,275.00
Budget Needs YTD	\$488,436.22
Budget Receipts YTD	\$470,447.34

### NOVEMBER 26, 2023

Budget Needs	\$10,392.26
Budget Receipts	\$7,151.25
Budget Needs YTD	\$498,828.48
Budget Receipts YTD	\$477,598.62

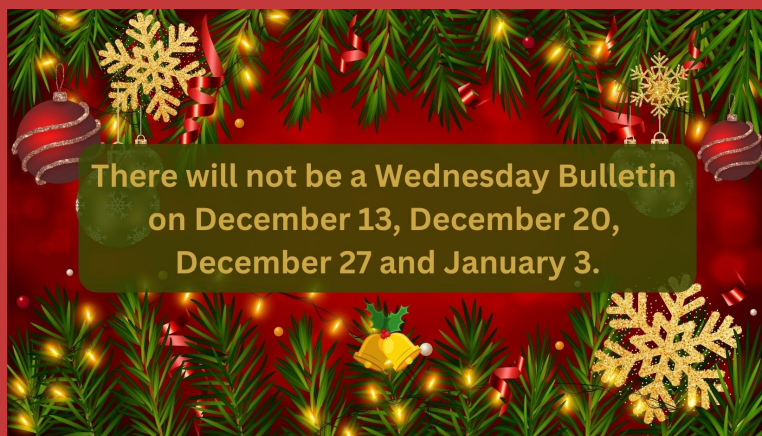
## BIRTHDAYS

12/08 - Jim Hall, Janette McCollum  
12/12 - Hayden Harper  
12/15 - Chad Davis  
12/21 - Jared Williams, Beth Willis

## ANNIVERSARIES

12/09 - Steve and Lisa Tubbs  
12/11 - Howell and Penney Cardwell  
12/12 - Russell and Susan Davis  
12/14 - Thomas and Gwen Ralston  
12/20 - Jim and Casey Kauffmann

## CHURCH OFFICE ANNOUNCEMENTS



There will not be a Wednesday Bulletin  
on December 13, December 20,  
December 27 and January 3.



## Merry Christmas

First Baptist Church will close on  
Thursday, December 21 at 12 noon and  
be closed on Friday, December 22 and  
Monday, December 25 for Christmas.



No Sunday School  
December 24 & December 31

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

*Christmas Eve*  
*Candlelight and Communion Service*  
Sunday, December 24 at 5:00PM

