

DECEMBER 21, 2023

First Baptist Church of Eatonton Messenger

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



FROM THE PASTOR

In the Gospel of John it says, **“There was a man sent from God whose name was John.”** As he preaches this text, Will Willimon asks some pertinent questions and makes some pointed observations.

“How did you get here in this church, standing on the threshold of Christmas, the mystery of the incarnation? You are here only because someone “sent from God” told you the truth about Christ. Someone became a witness to you that the babe born in Bethlehem was your good news, the best news you’ll ever hear.

Nobody is born Christian. This faith is not innate, natural, part of our genetic inheritance. You cannot think up this faith on your own by having a long walk in the woods, or by sitting quietly at the lakeside. Someone must hand it over to you, tell you the story, attempt to help you see that this ancient story of Jesus is your story here, now. Somebody had to be like John the Baptist—a witness, someone who pointed your gaze toward the Way, the Truth, and the Light.

John’s witness was to say to a waiting world, “Look, there, in this Jew from Nazareth named Jesus, there’s Mr. Light of the World!”

Maybe your witness was a beloved grandmother who read Bible stories to you. Perhaps your witness was somebody who sat on the side of a bed in a dormitory room in college and argued with you into the night and overcame your doubts. Or maybe your witness was a writer of a book, someone whom you have never met, who said just the right words to you whereby you “saw the light,” as we sometimes say. Heck, maybe your witness was some wild-eyed preacher like John the Baptist who said something in a sermon that grabbed you by the neck and demanded to be heard!

You wouldn’t be here this Sunday, affirming this faith, expecting the advent of this Messiah if someone had not been your John the Baptist, your witness, your giver of the gift of Good News.

There’s something about this God whereby God chooses to make connection with humanity, to speak to us, through ordinary people like John the Baptist. Ordinary folk who are “sent from God” like John to witness to the Light. If someone had not been a witness to you, you’d still be in the dark, so-to-speak.

...
So here’s your Advent/Christmas gospel, good news: There was a person sent from God whose name was Amy (or Tom, or Barry, June, you fill in the name) who “was sent from God.” That person was nobody special, an average sort of person who was special in one important way: “sent from God.” Why was this one sent, “as a witness to testify concerning the light” so that through their witness, “everyone would believe in the light.” The witness “wasn’t the light,” not even close. But the witness’s “mission was to testify concerning the light.”

And the Light was the light of all. Through the light shining from the witness, some saw the Light, and the Light shines in the darkness (Jn 1:5), and nothing the darkness has ever been able to do has put out the Light.

Now, go share that good news with somebody who needs to hear it. And don’t we all?”

May the good news be shared among us, through us and in us.

**Christ is Born,
Craig**

P.O. Box 3400

115 N. Madison Ave

706-485-3331

firstbaptisteatonton.org

Office Hours: Monday – Thursday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Friday: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

YOUTH AND CHILDREN NEWS

I would like to share an unfamiliar Christmas story with you all that I read last week. According to this story, when Joseph was warned in a dream to flee from King Herod and the massacre which he intended to inflict upon the children of Bethlehem, several animals from the manger decided to accompany the Holy Family on their journey. Each of the animals was determined to protect the baby Jesus, and each felt sure his or her talents would prove invaluable in that task. There also happened to be a spider who wanted to come. Yet none of the other animals felt the spider would be helpful. After all, she was only an insect. She had no keen ears or sharp teeth, no strong bones and no claws whatsoever. However, the spider persistently pleaded to be included, until at last the other animals agreed she could join them, provided she did not get in the way. Unfortunately, as the journey unfolded, all the other supposedly brave animals either were frightened off or else were distracted. They ended up returning home or embarking on a more appealing adventure of their own. With Herod's troops on the march, and with the Holy Family growing more and more tired, Joseph and Mary had little choice but to try and hide. Finding a small and inconspicuous cave, they huddled inside, seeking shelter and rest, with the donkey and the spider their only remaining companions. Holding Jesus in her arms, Mary gently rocked him to sleep, and, for a while, it appeared everything would be fine. The only immediate problem was the chill in the air. Seeking to be of help in some small way, the spider carefully wove a web over the opening of the cave to try to keep the baby warm. The spider had just finished her weaving when suddenly voices were heard outside the cave. The soldiers had caught up with the Holy Family, and they were diligently searching the entire area. When they came to the cave where the Holy Family was hidden, both Mary and Joseph held their breath, certain their doom was upon them. Yet the soldiers passed by the cave. One soldier said it was a waste of time to search it, since anyone who had entered the cave would have broken the spider's web over the opening.

And so, it was that the seemingly insignificant spider saved the day; and the legend goes on to say that this is why we hang tinsel on our Christmas trees ... to remind us of the silver strands of the web which the little spider wove ... and to remind us that no act of kindness, no act of courage, no act through which we seek peace with justice is ever wasted.

Blessed Advent and Joyous Christmas,

Dylan

COMING IN JANUARY

**We are starting a Children's Choir
on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 3PM
for children K4 through 5th Grade!**

**A snack will be provided and we will
offer a time for a Bible Story.**

**Register Today online or come by
the church office today.**

**Contact Dylan or the church office
for more information.**

We look forward to seeing you there!

**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**

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

First Baptist Church
Eatonton, Georgia

“GO, ALL YE FAITHFUL!”

We close our December worship services by singing my friend, R. G. Huff's hymn, “*Go, All Ye Faithful*,” to the familiar hymn tune we use for “*O Come, All Ye Faithful*.” R. G.'s words are appropriate any time of the year, not just at Christmas.

***Go, all ye faithful! All who know the Savior,
Carry the message far beyond these walls.
Hold forth the Christ-light, conquer every darkness.
Go forth O church of Jesus! Proclaim the One who frees us!
Speak peace! Reach out in mercy, in kindness and love.***
(Copyright 2015 R. G. Huff, used by permission)

If our church needed a theme song, that might be a good one! It reflects Jesus' “Great Commission” for His disciples to go into all the world and make more disciples. (Matthew 28:19-20) It reminds us that as we go, we should reflect the Light of the World so clearly that people see Him in us. It encourages us to be bold in sharing our faith in the One who has freed us. As we say in the South, “Brother, that will PREACH!”

Preach? Wait! Isn't that the Preacher's job, not the musicians or anybody else? No, though he is normally the one who delivers what we call a sermon. When Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy to preach the Word, he uses the Greek word *keyroxon*, which simply means “publish or proclaim openly.” He wasn't just talking about a half-hour speech in a church service. He meant any kind of presentation of God's Word. Our carefully chosen worship music and the words used to help us understand it is another form of “preaching,” but that's not all.

Carrying the message far beyond these walls can happen over coffee with friends, or around the dinner table with kids. We can hold forth the Christ light at the grocery store or gas station, the ball field or hospital room. We can proclaim the One who frees us with coworkers and clients, customers and schoolmates. We can even “Speak peace! Reach out in mercy, in kindness and love” in traffic or on social media. Jesus told us to share God's Good News wherever we are in every way we can.

God gave us music and created us to be sensitive to it. Remember learning your ABCs? It was that song! If we're happy and we know it, we know to clap our hands because of another song. Ditto the fact that I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.

What a privilege it is to preach the Word of God with you through His wonderful gift of music! I am humbly thankful to get to lead our church's musical ministry. You are a gracious, generous, thoughtful people. I appreciate the Christmas gifts and loving words of affirmation more than you can know.

I invite you to join us. Our adult Choir resumes rehearsing at 7:15 on Wednesday nights on January 3. Our handbell choir resumes on Sundays at 1:30 on January 7. I am especially excited that our Children's Choir for K4-5th grade will be on Tuesdays, 3:00-4:30 pm, beginning January 18. (Please register at www.firstbaptistatonton.org.) Come help us use music to

***Go forth O church of Jesus! Proclaim the One who frees us!
Speak peace! Reach out in mercy, in kindness and love.***

John Cotten

POINSETTAS

IN MEMORY OF

IN MEMORY OF

Howard Harrison
Hughlon and Lillian McElbenney
Belle and Percy Stewart
Bill and Janette Moore

Shelba Key
Bill Rich
Bill Nolen
Doyal and Eula Chambers
Guy and Dean Duren
Don's Parents
Pat's Parents
Robert Lee Marks
Ernest R. McDade
Ruil H. and Ethel L. Smith
Dr. Lewis R. and Shirley G. Smith
Roy C. and Sally C. Smith
Annie Claire Reid Farley
Imogene Johnson Vincent
Felice's Parents
Felice's Two Brothers
George's Parents
Wendel and Mary Thomas
Earl McMillen Jr.
Earl McMillen Jr.
Earl McMillen Jr.
Sara Key
Sallie Key
Gebu Key
David Key
Fred Key
Bob and Andriette Weeks
Jeff and Georgia Corley
Powell and Marianne Griffith
Our Parents
George and Lois Harvill
Randy Harvill
John Gordon
Florence Madsen

BY

Luceil Harrison
The McElbenney Family
The McElbenney Family
Cristi Sheppard, Leslie Peebles,
and Carri Thomas
Gary McElbenney
Jean Rich
His Family
Barry and Nancy Chambers
Barry and Nancy Chambers
Don and Pat Turney
Don and Pat Turney
Family
Family
Edge and Esther Farley
Edge and Esther Farley
Edge and Esther Farley
Edge and Esther Farley
Jill, Cheri, and Amy
George and Felice Dismmeyer
George and Felice Dismmeyer
George and Felice Dismmeyer
Faith Thomas
Family
Family
Family
Guerry Key
Guerry Key
Guerry Key
Guerry Key
Guerry Key
Guerry and Joan Key
Guerry and Joan Key
Guerry and Joan Key
Tom and Pam Thompson
Karen and Ed Ricketson
Karen and Ed Ricketson
Tim and Kim Camp
Craig and Catherine Williamson

POINSETTAS

IN HONOR OF

In Honor of

Tom and Amy McElhenney
Pam Lacey
Cristi Sheppard
Leslie Peebles
Carri Thomas
Ellen Trice
Andy and Neile Chambers & Family
Chad and Heather Chambers & Family
Our Children
Our Grandchildren
Ellen Trice
Karen Smith Moore
Pastor Craig Williamson
Rev. John Cotten
Rev. Dylan Bowden
Rev. William Kitchen III
Ellen Trice
Denise Carmichael
Ron and Gail Harley
Victor and Rebecca Hobbs
Our Children
Our Grandchildren
Our Grandchildren, Tatum, Charlee Ann,
Tripp, Celia Wren and Rhett
Mary and Warren Camp
JoAnn Clay
FBC Staff and
The Wonderful People of FBC
Paul Madsen

By

Gary McElhenney
Gary McElhenney
Gary McElhenney
Gary McElhenney
Gary McElhenney
Gary McElhenney
Barry and Nancy Chambers
Barry and Nancy Chambers
Don and Pat Turney
Don and Pat Turney
Don and Pat Turney
Edge and Esther Farley
Edge and Esther Farley
Edge and Esther Farley
Edge and Esther Farley
Edge and Esther Farley
Edge and Esther Farley
Edge and Esther Farley
Faith Thomas
Faith Thomas
Tom and Pam Thompson
Tom and Pam Thompson
Tim and Kim Camp

Tim and Kim Camp
Tim and Kim Camp
Tim and Kim Camp

Craig and Catherine Williamson

*Poinsettias may be picked up after
Morning Worship on Sunday, December 24.*

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 24

Harris McCollum

DEACON FAMILIES

Ralph Barclay family
Sharon Haney
Paula Rossee family
Grady Strube
Lynda Walker family
Cary Walton family
Sug Walton

DEACON FOR DECEMBER 31

Charles Winslette

DEACON FAMILIES

Helen Benshoof
Mike Faulk family
Hollis Harrison family
David Heath family
Bill Kitchen family
Scott Sharp
Patrice Underkofler family

BIRTHDAYS

12/21 - Jared Williams, Beth Willis
12/22 - Clayton Lancaster
12/27 - Ralph Barclay
12/28 - Sammy Walker
12/29 - Daniel Andrews, Andrea Welch
12/30 - Tim Camp, Margaret Howell, David Lutz
01/02 - Elaine Haizlip
01/03 - Vicki Hall, Gaye Lankford, T.J. McElhenney
01/04 - Jean Rich, Betty Sills

ANNIVERSARIES

12/28 - Bill and Jennie Sharp
12/29 - Craig and Catherine Williamson

WORSHIP REPORT

<u>Sunday, December 10</u>	<u>84</u>
<u>Sunday, December 17</u>	<u>125</u>

FINANCIAL REPORT

DECEMBER 03, 2023

<u>Budget Needs</u>	<u>\$10,392.26</u>
<u>Budget Receipts</u>	<u>\$19,290.17</u>
<u>Budget Needs YTD</u>	<u>\$509,220.74</u>
<u>Budget Receipts YTD</u>	<u>\$496,888.79</u>

DECEMBER 10, 2023

<u>Budget Needs</u>	<u>\$10,392.26</u>
<u>Budget Receipts</u>	<u>\$8,420.00</u>
<u>Budget Needs YTD</u>	<u>\$519,613.00</u>
<u>Budget Receipts YTD</u>	<u>\$505,308.79</u>

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Merry Christmas

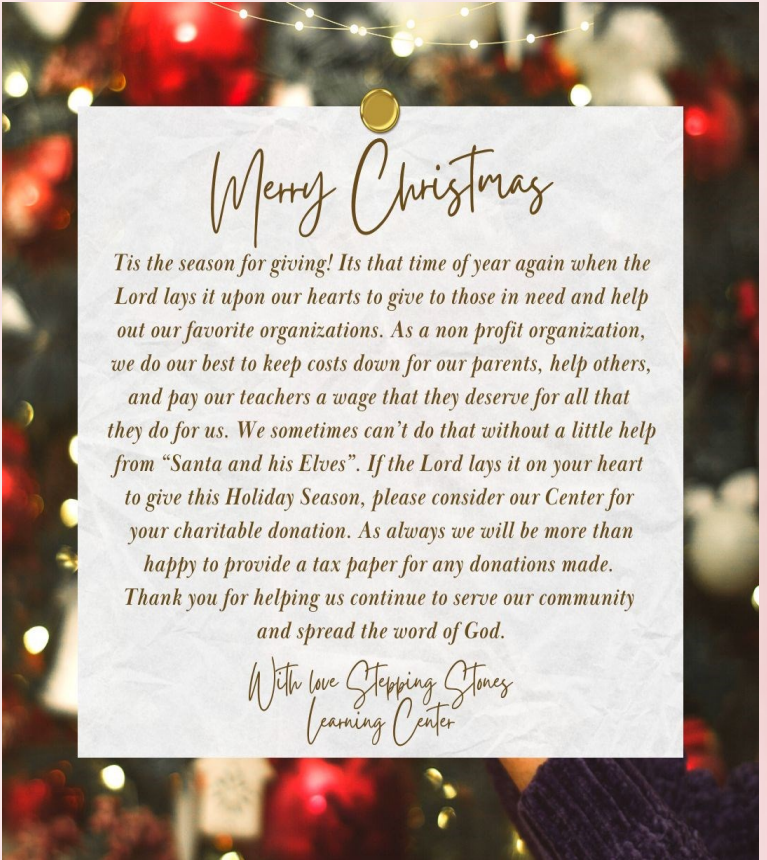
First Baptist Church will close on Thursday, December 21 at 12 noon and be closed on Friday, December 22 and Monday, December 25 for Christmas.



**No Sunday School
December 24 & December 31**



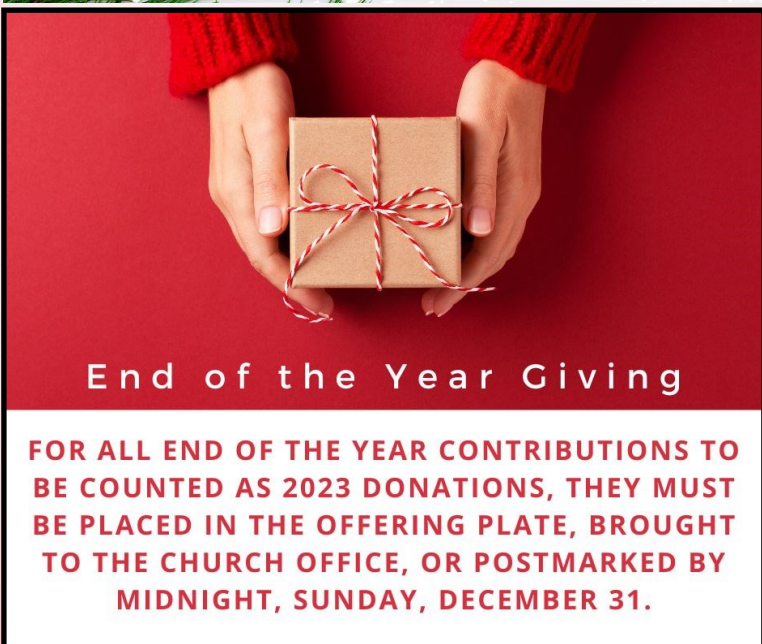
**NO WEDNESDAY
NIGHT ACTIVITIES
DECEMBER 27 AND JANUARY 3
WE WILL RESUME WEDNESDAY NIGHT
ACTIVITIES ON JANUARY 10**



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*



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.



Happy NEW YEAR 2024

The Church Office will be closed on Monday, January 1, 2024.



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

