

**THE NEWS**  
of  
**East Washington Heights Baptist Church**

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*During this Holy Season and throughout the coming year  
May God calm you with His Peace,  
Comfort you with His Presence,  
And bless you with His Love.*



*Season's Greetings  
from the Staff of EWHBC*

## *The Pastor's Message*

### **Touched By an Angel**

During the Christian season, there is always a lot of focus on angels and this is understandable because angels play a key role in the Christmas narrative. Indeed, during the Christmas season, there is an emergence of a whole angel industry. During this time of the year we'll see angel ornaments, angel wrapping paper, angel books, angel cards, angel websites, angel shirts, angel dolls, angel key chains, angel earrings, angel neckties, and the list goes on and on. Angels are also popularized in television and in the movies with movies like "It's a Wonderful Life," "The Preacher's Wife" and the popular television show "Touched by an Angel." In this former hit television show, starring Della Reese and Roma Downey, the angels were on a mission to help humankind with their various trials and tribulations. This show and many of the popular movies are okay, but they too often give a false, touchy feely impression of what it means to be "Touched by An Angel."

What does it mean to be touched by an angel? There's a clear outline in the first chapter of Luke beginning at verse 26 in the story of the Angel's birth announcement to Mary the Mother of Jesus. You know the story, one afternoon, Mary was in her father's house, minding her own business, and then from behind her came a voice saying "Hail thou that art highly favored among women." Mary was startled. She turned around, looked up and there he was, this angel ... a sight she had never seen before. I don't know what she saw, but in my mind's eye, his face must have had a glow of glory. His face must have been so radiant, that it gave Mary pause. It gave her a feeling of "the Awe and Wonder of God." Look at what it says verse 29, "and when she saw him, she was troubled. Mary had a clear sense of the awe and wonder of God."

In the first instance to be touched by an angel means that you have a sense of the "Awe and Wonder" of God. It's a feeling that you're little and insignificant, but that God is great and powerful. It's a feeling that you'd better wake up and pay attention because God is real. It's a feeling that no matter where you go and no matter what you do, that God's is there and your actions have consequences, a feeling of the awe and the wonder of God!

If there's anything that we need more today in our nation and in our lives, it is a feeling for the awe and the wonder of God. As we celebrate this Christmas, as we run about with all our shopping, as we make the mad dash to Macy's, Best Buy and Target, we need a sense of the Awe and the Wonder of God. We need a sense of the sacred. That is we need to pause, stop, and be still and know that God is God. We need to think about the vast greatness of God. We need a little bit of fear and reverence for God.

Also in verse 28, the angel told Mary that she had found favor with God and that she was blessed among women. Therefore, in the second instance, to be touched by angel means that you've been blessed. But let's examine this closer. The blessing and favor that the angel told Mary about, isn't the kind of blessing, and favor that we often think about it. **(Continued on Page 3)**

**(Continued from Page 2)** Let's look at Mary's life. Her fiancé thought about putting her away, because she had conceived a child by someone else before they were married, but she was blessed. She was forced to travel to Bethlehem miles and miles, it was a tough journey, and she was about to have a baby, but she was blessed. When she got to Bethlehem, there was no room in the inn, but she was blessed. Mary had to deliver her baby in a stable, with cattle, sheep and pigs, but she was blessed. After the baby Jesus was born, King Herod wanted to kill him and the family had to flee into Egypt, but she was blessed. Once Jesus grew up and became a man the religious rulers hated him, and wanted to put him to death, but Mary was blessed. Finally, one day Mary had to watch her son be crucified on a cross, but in spite of this, Mary was blessed!

Why was she blessed? She was blessed because like Luke says in verse 28, the Lord was with her. God walked with her and talked with her and told her that she was his own. To be touched by an angel means to know that you're blessed, no matter what your circumstance.

You need to hear this today, as you celebrate Christmas. You're blessed no matter what your circumstances. You're blessed even if you can't afford to buy a thing for Christmas. You're blessed even if you don't have a house with fancy decorations or a Christmas tree. Your body may be sick, and filled with pain, but you're blessed. Your loved one may have passed on or your marriage may be on the rocks, but you're blessed. No matter what your circumstances as long as you've got Jesus you're blessed!

In the final analysis, to be touched by an angel means that you've received a message. In Mary's case, the angel gave her a message that she would never forget. The angel told her that she would have a son and his name would be Jesus. And he would be great and the son of the highest. He would rule and of his kingdom there will be no end.

What a message! To be touched by an angel means to receive a message. You see the word angel in the Greek is "angelos" which means "messenger." Therefore, if you've been touched by an angel, it means that you've received a message. We rejoice because the Lord has the same message today that He gave to Mary and to the prophets of old. That message is: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace." The message is that God loves you. He loves you so much that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

So this Christmas when you see an angel movie or an angel character please remember: the "Awe and Wonder" of God; that you're blessed no matter what your circumstances; and that God gave us the greatest gift ever, in the gift of His son Jesus! Amen. **\_\_Pastor Kip Banks**

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*Happy Birthday to all who were born in December!*

## Christmas To-Do List

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
to find the lost,  
to heal the broken,  
to feed the hungry,  
to release the prisoner,  
to rebuild the nations,  
to bring peace among brothers,  
to make music in the heart. \_\_Howard Thurman

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## Welcome And Attached

According to research conducted by the Barna Group, the holidays are tough for people who aren't connected to faith communities or other civic groups. They feel isolated by experiences that bring others joy, such as giving gifts, singing carols, and attending religious services and parties.

"In past decades," writes George Barna, "there was an assumption that the holidays were a time when outsiders might explore church life. These days, however, churches and other religious institutions are not seen as safe or value-adding places by most outsiders. They see little reason to attend seasonal events, especially since those events often highlight their outsider status."

This Christmas, how can you help someone feel welcome *and* "attached" at your church?

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## Now That's News

In 1809, with Napoleon sweeping through Austria, the world was in such upheaval that nobody paid much attention to baby news. Yet during that year, Abraham Lincoln, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charles Darwin, Alfred Tennyson, Edgar Allen Poe and William Gladstone were born.

Although the attention was on an Austrian battlefield, "history was actually being shaped in the cradles of England and America," writes Charles Swindoll.

"Similarly, everyone thought taxation was the big news when Jesus was born. But a young Jewish woman cradled the biggest news of all: the birth of the Savior."

\_\_Adapted from *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*

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*Happy Anniversary to all who were married in December!*

## God With Us

Faith isn't about knowing all of the right stuff or obeying a list of rules. It's something more, something more costly because it involves being present and making a sacrifice.

Perhaps that's why Jesus is sometimes called Immanuel, "God with us." I think that's what God had in mind, for Jesus to be present, to be with us. It's also what he has in mind for us when it comes to other people. \_\_**Bob Goff, *Love Does***

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## How Far To Christmas?

How far is it to Christmas Day?  
The journey's just as long  
as taking time to listen  
to a joyful angel song.  
It's just as far as one can go  
in doing a loving deed  
that helps someone feel better  
or that meets their special need.  
For Christmas is a journey  
that the heart makes every year.  
It starts right with your family  
and those you hold so dear.  
It travels on to strangers  
'round the world to everyone  
with the message that God loves us  
and that's why he's sent his Son! \_\_**Peggy Ferrell**

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## Angels Among Us

"When God wants to speak and deal with us," said Martin Luther, "he does not avail himself of an angel but of parents, or the pastor, or of our neighbor." Never underestimate how powerfully God can use you in the life of a child, a church member, a friend, or a stranger.

The Hebrew word for *angel* also means "messenger." *You* may be specially chosen to deliver to someone the message of God's love or guidance. Listen intently for what God would have you share with others, then do so faithfully and caringly.

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# THE NEWS

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November 7, 2015  
International Ministries  
P.O. Box 851  
Valley Forge, PA 19482

RE: Donation to the Mission Partnership  
Network of Reverend Cheryl Jones

The enclosed \$500 check represents combined donations by several organizations of the East Washington Heights Baptist Church in memory of Deacon Mildred Dallas, a faithful servant who recently transitioned to her permanent home with God. Because she was a member of our Baptist Women's group for many years and was deeply committed to our efforts in support of missions both here and abroad, the Dallas family proposed that the donated funds be used to further the mission goals of our organization.

What better use of these funds than to provide financial assistance to a servant of God, dedicated to opening the hearts and minds of our brothers and sisters in Africa to God's word, his power and grace, and his boundless love for all of his creations. We understand that Reverend Jones, who is back in the United States, has been reinstated for service in South Africa as a teacher with International Ministries and will assist in administration at the Baptist Convention College in Soweto where men and women from southern Africa are educated for Christian leadership. However, the resumption of her work there is contingent on her receiving committed financing from relatives, friends, churches and/or other organizations to cover her living expenses.

While this donation is just a small- onetime gift, we hope that it will be of help to her. We truly believe that Mrs. Dallas would applaud this tribute in her memory.

Sincerely,  
Jean I. Holmes,  
Interim President  
Baptist Women, EWHBC

Enclosure

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*"For unto to us a Child is born, unto to us a Son is given;  
and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His  
name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." \_\_Isaiah 9:6*

## Special December Dates

Second Sunday of Advent, December 6  
Baptist Women's Christmas Luncheon, Thursday, December 10, 12:00 Noon  
Annual Family Christmas Dinner, Saturday, December 12, 6:30PM  
Third Sunday of Advent, December 13  
Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 20  
First Day of Winter, Monday, December 21  
Christmas Eve Caroling, Thursday, December 24, 5:30PM  
Christmas Eve Service, Thursday, December 24, 6:30PM  
Christmas Day, Friday, December 25,  
New Year's Eve/Watch Night, Thursday, December 31, 10:30PM

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## The Origin of The Christmas Tree

It's difficult to pinpoint when and why Christians first began to use evergreen trees at Christmastime. There are many legends and myths regarding the origin of Christmas trees. For example, the ancient Romans brought greenery into their homes in winter to symbolize life in the midst of bleakness and death.

German Christians in the early part of the 16th century may have been the first to use evergreen trees during Advent and Christmas. Those trees had no candles on them, but were decorated with items at hand: colored paper, gold foil, apples and dolls. German immigrants brought the custom to America around 1700 when they settled in Pennsylvania.

Some scholars say that evergreen trees represent Christ, because they, too, are everlasting. Others say that Christmas trees remind us of salvation which came to us through Christ who died on a "tree." St. Peter wrote: "He [Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24, RSV).

The forbidden fruit of the tree in the Garden of Eden, when eaten, brought guilt and death. On the other hand, the "tree" on Calvary was the instrument by which God through Christ ushered in salvation, new life and hope. The Christmas tree can remind us of those wonderful gifts.

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## Homeless Families

As many as 3.5 million Americans are homeless each year. Of these, more than 1 million are children and on any given night, more than 300,000 children are homeless. Today, the rapid, unexpected loss of jobs and resultant foreclosures has caused great dislocation among families and has dramatically added to the number of people without a roof over their heads.

**Help someone who is less fortunate than you.**



# The star of Christmas

When Jesus was born, a star led the wise men to him.

*Directions: Place the words in order, by their numbers, on the blanks below to complete Matthew 2:10, NIV.*

1 When

7 were

4 the

2 they

3 saw

10 2:10

5 star

9 Matthew

6 they

8 overjoyed

“ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”  
\_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_, NIV

Answer: "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed." Matthew 2:10, NIV