

Christmas The Messenger

A publication of The First Baptist Church of Westfield

Dec 2014

Advent 2014: A Time of Waiting on God and Listening for God

Rev. Mayra Castañeda

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Isaiah 40:3-5 (nrsv)

Have you noticed that in the church we separate Advent from Christmas? While Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus and all that it means, has meant and will continue to mean for all of humanity, Advent is a time of waiting on God and listening for God. While Christmas is celebrated by gift giving, singing of Christmas hymns and coming to the Christmas Eve service and lighting the Christ Candle, we don't celebrate Advent in the same fashion. As far as I know, no one goes to an Advent office party, or exchange Advent gifts, or go to an after Advent sale. There's isn't even a Hallmark movie on Advent!

We all know that Christmas has been co-opted by society at large so that for many the commercial aspects of it are

much more important than the religious aspects. For many it has become a holiday for shopping, just like Thanksgiving is a holiday for eating. It is not surprising that for non-Christians this is so, but what is amazingly true is that this may be the case for many professed Christ followers.

How to change that? Let's focus on Advent. Let us intentionally and patiently await the birth of Jesus by wait-



ing, watching, trusting, and hoping. Let us look and listen. Let us repent and prepare our hearts for the miracle of Jesus' birth. We'll find ourselves swimming against the tide of the festivities, many that have nothing to do with the very simple, humble and yet powerful story of Joseph, Mary and the babe lying in a manger where there was no tinsel, no garland, and no hundreds of presents under the tree.

Focusing on Advent is a way of reclaiming the Christ of Christmas who gives us inner peace, pardon of sin, and the presence and the power of Christ in our life – real tidings of comfort and joy! I am inviting us to engage Advent and watch and wait with humble patience for the coming of the Messiah.

Focus on Advent and maybe you'll find:

- ★ The patience to wait and watch for God's miracle working power
- ★ Help to slow down and pay attention to God's peace and presence
- ★ Your heart open to receive God's pardon through true confession of sin
- ★ A transformed mind to let go of self-serving practices to leading a life of service
- ★ A listening ear and supple heart to the Words of Scripture
- ★ Renewal in your spirit quickened with hope, joy and love

So, instead of being exhausted, angry and maybe even Grinch-like in your approach to Christmas this year, wait on God and listen for God – the epiphany will manifest in the truth that Jesus IS God with us.

I pray that you and your family will come to the worship services in December, will be here for the Christmas Eve service and will experience the calming light of God.

God's words, "Prepare the Way of the Lord," spoken through the prophet, are a declaration that God will come to God's people and that we must respond by preparing the way in our heart....be still!

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



Pj & Movie Night for Children Invite a Friend!

Showtime: Friday, December 5, 6PM
Drop-off: 6pm/Pickup: 8pm
Now Playing: Happy Feet
The Big Screen: FBC Lounge
Pizza served!



Please bring a pillow & sleeping bag/ blanket & wear comfy pj's! Contact Carleen Morris to RSVP carleen.morris@verizon.net

Save the Date!

The Children's Christmas Pageant will be during worship on 12/21, with a 6p.m. dress rehearsal on 12/19.

We'll have roles for each child, even our littlest *angels* in the nursery. The script will be communicated to parents, as we prepare for all kids to have a special part in telling of the story of Jesus' birth.



Advent Festival Luncheon—Sunday, December 14th after worship

The Christian Education Committee would like to invite you to our Advent Festival Luncheon. Please sign up to bring a side dish, sandwiches or bread, CE will provide the soup/chili. After lunch, we will be creating Christmas Tree Ornaments, some of which will be brought to the Clark Nursing & Rehabilitation Center on December 21st. This church wide event is appropriate for all ages and a great opportunity to get to know our church family better. We look forward to seeing you there!

-Carleen Morris



The Youth Group will present a musical variety concert on Sunday, December 14 at 4pm. It will begin in recital format showcasing a variety of solo performers of diverse style and musical development and then proceed into rock concert featuring the bands "Spyked" and "El Guapo" from the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts Rock Performance Workshop. Food and drink will be available throughout.

A free will offering will be taken at the door in to support our Youth Group missions.

From the Associate Pastor

Hello! As you know, we have now entered that very special time of year when we celebrate the birth of our Savior. I pray that you will join me in celebrating this wonderful season by reflecting of this Advent's themes: the peace of Christ, the comfort and joy that Christ brings, the pardon of Christ, the presence of Christ, the power of Christ, and the message of what Christ brings to the world. Each and every one of these messages brings a powerful sense of wonder to this very special time of year.

I am also happy to announce that we have some great events lined up this month for our young adults, and in one instance, their families too. On **Saturday, December 6th** immediately following Carols in the Round, the young adults and their families are invited to go out to **dinner at Cosimo's** in downtown Westfield together. Each family, and or young adult, will cover the cost of their own meal, but I felt that this would be a wonderful opportunity for our young people to come together and socialize after a very important event in our church year.

On **Wednesday, December 17th at 6:30pm** we will also be gathering for the **Young Adult Christmas Party**. The dinner will be catered and all attendees are invited to wear the most obnoxious Christmas sweater they can manage to find. Following dinner, we will be celebrating with a variety of events, but most notably a White Elephant Gift Exchange. If you have never participated in a White Elephant Gift Exchange before, you're in for a treat. Everyone is invited to bring a gift, of very little monetary value, but of great humor. In other words, wrap up something ridiculous and get ready to laugh. It's a great opportunity to pass on those dorm room souvenirs.

I pray that all of you will be blessed in this very special time of year. It's a time of celebration and hopefully meditation. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at kadinw@verizon.net or (209) 840-4350.



- 12/3 Chitra Singh
 - 12/4 Atossa Cicchino
 - 12/6 Hilary Araujo
 - 12/6 Warren Hanscom
 - 12/7 Dudley Painter
 - 12/11 Trevor Morris
 - 12/13 Charles McCloud
Amanda Williams
 - 12/17 Alicia Lambros
 - 12/20 Gillian Clark
 - 12/23 Jaime Barton
 - 12/28 Laura Jane Pineiro
- And a Happy Anniversary to.....
- 12/18 Jay & Lalitha Kakileti



THANK YOU TO...

...**Lee Romano and Dot Waugh** for helping to mail out the November Messenger.

...**Cherie Parker, Barron Cash-dollar, Trish Scott, Mary Dobos, and Jessy Brown** for Thanksgiving Dinner food preparation; **Linda Johnson** for set up and all those who helped clean up
...**Paul Clark** for beautifying the children's bookcase in the narthex (pictured here)



...**Janet Winey and Mary Foster** for organizing Thanksgiving baskets; and all those who helped sort and deliver the bags of food.

Congratulations to Ryan, Jennie and big sister Laura Jane on the birth of Lucas Randall, November 18. 7.9oz!



The Pineiro family have also moved. Their new address is: 123 Wilshire Drive, Cranford 07016

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

LET US CELEBRATE JESUS IN OUR DAILY LIVES

“Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 6: 23 – 24).

On Pledge Sunday, December 7, 2014, we will receive and dedicate the pledges of our Church Family. The pledge goal is \$191,300, a 5% increase from last year. Throughout November we have heard moving testimony from members of our Church Family on their celebration of Jesus In their daily lives, on stewardship and on tithing. As the campaign has progressed, each of us should have been inspired to reflect on how we celebrate Jesus in our daily lives, on the meaning of this Stewardship Campaign for us as a member of a larger community and the active role that we wish to play in our Church Family. Faithfully consider the importance of our Church Family in each of our lives and give as generously as you are able.

Your Brother in Christ, Wendell O. Scott, M.D.



It's a busy time of year for the Missions Committee. We just collected food for ten Thanksgiving dinners. Three baskets were given to members of First Baptist and the remainder was delivered to families of a cancer patient served by Emmanuel Cancer Foundation of Scotch Plains. Thank you to all who picked an Angel Tree Tag on Sunday, November 30th.

PLEASE BRING ALL GIFTS SUNDAY, DEC. 7th. DO NOT WRAP BUT YOU CAN PUT IN A GIFT BAG. MAKE SURE TO ATTACH THE CODE TO THE BAG.

The wonderful cooks who support Family Promise will be making special holiday meals during the week of Dec. 14-21.

Mission Committee



**Saturday
December 13
8:30am**

**Please Join Us!!
Agape Dinner
Wednesday, Dec 17**



**6:30pm
Church Lounge
(please bring a dish to share)**

**Women's Book Club
Saturday, December 13, 10am,
Church Library**

Join us for a discussion of Christmas books; luncheon to follow. All are welcome. E-mail Bette Savage at elzsvg@netscape.net for additional info.



COMMITTEE CORNER—FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee is responsible for overseeing the financial assets of the church. The committee is comprised of the Financial Secretary, the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer, and the chair of the Investment Committee. As such, we monitor the “income” of the church, the investments that the church has made with various gifts and other assets, and, in conjunction with the chairs of the various committees, the expenses necessary to fulfill God’s mission represented by First Baptist. One major activity of the committee is to collect information from the various committees and prepare an annual budget.

As we look at the 2015 Asking Budget, our pledge target represents about 60% of our expected income for the year; we expect that we’ll receive another 10% from the collection plate that are not part of our pledges. The other 30% comes from the use of our building, primarily from the Y’s use of the education building. On the output side, program expenses represent only 10% of the budget, management & administration expenses represent 56% of the budget, building & grounds expenses represent 32% of the budget, and office expenses represent the last 2% of the budget. Lastly, to meet the budgeted expenses, it may be necessary to use about \$61,000 of our investment funds. The Finance Committee will work with the other committees to ensure that we are using our funds as efficiently and appropriately as possible. They have consistently managed their expenses under the budget in the past so that the reliance on those investment funds is minimized. Beyond that, the only way to meet the challenge before us is to increase the income component, either through increased giving or increasing the number of “giving units.” —Steve Lind

OUR ANNUAL

COOKIE EXCHANGE!
Wednesday, Dec 10 @7pm



A highlight of the season for sure! Participants should bring 4-5 dozen cookies, or other small desserts to be shared. Plenty of good fun and delicious desserts to take home for our family and friends! Invite a friend or neighbor—the more the merrier!

Hilary Araujo



Advent and Christmas 2014

Join Us as We Celebrate each Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

Tidings of Comfort and Joy! No, Really!
(Readings from the Prophet Isaiah)

Dec. 7 – Tidings of Comfort and Joy!
Lighting the Advent Candle: *Pardon of Christ*

Dec. 14 – God is With Us!
Lighting the Advent Candle: *Presence of Christ*

Dec. 21 – Unwrapping Christmas
Lighting the Advent Candle: *Power of Christ*

Dec. 21 – *Blue Christmas Service @ 4:00 p.m.*
“Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.”

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Candle Light Service
Calming Light of Christ
Lighting the *LOVE* Candle
7:15p.m. music for meditation; 7:30 p.m. Service

Dec. 28 – What the World Needs...



Blue Christmas Service – “Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.” Sunday, December 21st at 4:00 p.m.

Christmas can be a painful time
mas without a loved family
it may be a time that has
constant refrains on
the happiness of the
together with family
many people of what
need the space and
our sadness; we need
alone. We need encour-
ahead of us. Let us do this
with God and with one an-



for some. It may be the first Christ-
member who has recently died;
always been difficult. The
radio and television about
season or about getting
and friends, reminds
they have lost. We
time to acknowledge
to know that we are not
agement to live the days
together in our relationship
other. All are invited to come!

www.fbcwestfield.org



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DECEMBER CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Deacons, 7:30pm	2	3 Teacher Bible Study, 7pm	4	5 PJ/ Mov- ie Night , 6- 8pm	6 Young Adult Dinner, 6pm
7	8 Mission Commit- tee, 7pm; Finance @7:30	9	10 Cookie Exchange, 7pm; CE Commit- tee, 7:30pm	11	12	13 Men's Break- fast, 8:30am
14 Advent Festival, 12Noon Variety Con- cert, 4pm	15 Council meets, 7:30pm	16	17 Agape Potluck Supper, 6:30pm	18	19	20
21 Blue Christ- mas Service, 4pm	22	23	24 Christ- mas Eve Service, 7:30pm	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

ONGOING SCHEDULE (Weekly, unless otherwise noted.)

Sundays:

- 9:00 am Singles
- 9:15 Adult Bible Study
- 9:55 Chancel Choir/Song Leaders rehearsal
- 10:30 am Worship Service
Children's Sunday School (pre-school-5th grades)
(children join us for worship and leave for Sunday school after a children's message)
- 11:30 am Children's Choir rehearsal
- 11:30am Prayer Team meets *(1st Sunday, Dec 7)*
- 5 pm Youth Group (6th-12th grades)

Tuesdays:

- 10:30am Bible Devotion & Discussion (church library)

Wednesdays:

- 12Noon "Conversations with God" (prayer time) in our sanctuary
- 1-3 pm Craft Group *(2nd Thurs, Dec 11)*

Thursdays:

- 10:30 am The Hearing Society: Speech Reading Class

Saturdays:

- 10 :00 am Women's Book Club *(monthly, Dec 13)*

CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Mayra Castañeda, *Senior Pastor*
Kadin J.G. Williams, *Associate Pastor*
Katie McGuire, *Children's Ministry Coordinator*
Glen Brown, *Youth Ministry Coordinator*
Ricardo Ribeiro, *Assistant Youth Ministry Coordinator*
Nancy Lambros, *Church Administrator*
Adriana Rodriguez, *Custodian*
Matt Barton, *Nightly Sexton*

OUR PURPOSE

Coming together in joyful worship,
we're here...

- *To share the reality of God's love,*
- *To connect our lifestyles to Christian truth,*
- *And to put our faith into action through responding to needs in our community, nation, and world.*