

Live the Adventure Share the Hope

December
2015



Volume 11
Number 12

First Focus

First Baptist Church



**Christmas Eve
Services**

**Thursday, Dec. 24th
6PM and 7:30PM**

So I did it. I went shopping on Black Friday while I was with Luanne's family for Thanksgiving. We ventured into one of the more exclusive malls in the Dallas area. I went not so much to buy anything but to observe. The particular mall we went to had collections of art and sculptures like Andy Warhol and other European artists. It was very impressive.

While observing this I also observed how people were shopping. Many of them were focused on the sales trying to get the best deals. I saw sales for 50% off everything in the store all the way to 80% off. I also saw a shift. People were buying all kinds of items but as I observed them, it was apparent that most of the items being purchased were for themselves. That seemed odd. It wasn't everyone but it was noticeable. So what's happened? Why is Christmas being celebrated from the perspective of us getting the best deals in town? What has happened to our understanding of giving?

The simple reason is we have become selfish and our focus is more on ourselves. That would be the easy culture answer but I think there is more to observe and it's why we give to others in the first place. We give as followers of Jesus Christ because so much has been given to us. We give to others from what God has given to us. That is the heart behind the Gospel and Christmas.

Christmas is a reminder that our Lord and Savior came to earth. He gave up his crown and his throne to come to earth to be with us. That is an amazing gift to receive and as followers of Jesus Christ we receive that gift and respond in the same way. We seek ways to give to others. That is the heart behind missions. It is why we give. We give because God first gave to us. So this Christmas season let me encourage you to seek ways to acknowledge all that God has given to you by seeking creative ways to give to others. And let's seek ways to make a difference in how we are giving.

Merry Christmas to all of you!

Pastor John



**21 Days of Prayer
January 4th - 23rd**

5:30PM Mon. - Fri. 9AM Saturdays



Vision Sunday

It has been an amazing year as we have seen God do some amazing things. I want to share with you what God has been doing through our church and so I am setting aside December 27th just to share with you what God has done and where we are going in 2016. I am calling it **Vision Sunday** and instead of a message, we will be looking back over the year and remembering what God has done. We will also look ahead to see what is coming.

Dec. 6th **Step 1 Know God**
Dec. 13th **Step 2 Find Freedom**
Dec. 20th **Step 3 Discover Purpose**

6PM in the Fellowship Hall



No Growth Tracks "Next Steps" in January. Watch for date of leadership training in January.

As I enter into another holiday season, I find myself in a learning process with God. Learning how to be present in the moment has been something God has been teaching me for long time. But this year has been a little different. God has been showing me that it isn't just about being present each day, but being aware of the season as well. We all have seasons in our lives. We have seasons of the year and seasons of life. For example, if I focus on the coming days too closely and I am not fully aware of the season I am entering, then Christmas will come and pass as another holiday in the year with no real meaning. If I retain a seasonal focus while still being present each day then I can move through the season with purpose and intent. It is much like our eyes. We are capable of seeing what we are directly looking at with clear focus but still seeing and identifying what is in our peripheral vision. I find this especially true in my trials and hardships. If I am aware of the season then I can have a different perspective. I can move through a season of loss or pain with the understanding that it is a learning opportunity. I can also have a healthy perspective on grief and the need for it. I can be in the moment and feel but not drown in confusion and chaos. It also allows me to shift the focus. I can focus on finding things to be grateful for. I can look for the blessing around me, but not just try to escape. It is unhealthy to push our struggles aside and pretend that they aren't there. I can be present but not overwhelmed. My prayer is that as I walk through this learning season with God that I can learn how to pass it on to others as well. Thank you all for being part of FBC, I am thankful for you all!

Beau Gamble Youth Pastor



Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Project

What goes into the box is fun.... what comes out is eternal!

We collected 212 boxes. Thank you so much!



No children's or youth program on December 23rd or 30th. No children's Wednesday program in January.

Merry Christmas! We in Children's Ministry feel like we've been celebrating for a few weeks now enjoying our renovated classrooms! What a gift! THANK YOU to those who have worked so hard to transform that space. To quote McDonalds, "We're Lovin' It!"

This fall we tracked the Israelites and discovered that God is a big God who is faithful and keeps his promises even when we stray from him. Last Sunday began our look into his greatest promise when we learned about the prophets foretelling the birth of Christ. We talked about God's love for us and his desire to have us as part of his family. We will continue to focus on the good news of the King's birth and preparing our hearts to celebrate him.

Below we have given you a few ideas to enjoy as you gather as a family this Advent Season. We appreciate the privilege we have in partnering with you to raise the next generation of saints. May you be blessed and encouraged in the Good News the angels sing about. Christmas Blessings! Jackie Huber and Jennifer Juarez

3 Gifts for Jesus

1. Read Matthew 2:2. Say: The wise men gave baby Jesus gold to show that he is a king. Find something fancy like a gold-colored picture frame or a fashionable piece of costume jewelry, and place it under your Christmas tree as you take turns naming things you love about Jesus.

2. Read Revelation 5:8. Say: The wise men presented baby Jesus with frankincense, a spice used when people worshipped God. Set an unlit candle or other fragrant item under your tree, and take turns offering prayers as a gift to Jesus.

3. Read John 19:39-40. Say: The wise men brought myrrh, an ointment people put on bodies that were going to be buried. Set out lotion or perfume as you thank Jesus for dying for your sins. Excerpted from Children's Ministry Magazine

Children's Message: Christmas Quiet BY CHILDREN'S MINISTRY MAGAZINE ON JANUARY 14, 2013

Truth: It is good to pray in silence and stillness--Even during the excitement of Christmas.

You'll need a CD of different styles of Christmas music. You'll also need index cards, pencils, and a figure of baby Jesus from a crèche scene.

Pass out index cards and pencils, and invite kids to make lists of what they'd like to get for Christmas. As kids begin to write, play Christmas music with the volume turned loud.

After about a minute, stop the music, and have kids place their lists and pencils behind them. As you place the figure of baby Jesus in the center of the circle, say: I'd like everyone to be perfectly silent for the next two minutes. You may close your eyes or look at this figure of baby Jesus, but please don't look at each other until I call time. During this quiet time, please pray and ask God to show you what's important about this Christmas season.

After two minutes call time and ask:

You were asked to pray and think about what is important about this season. What would you say that is?

How was the noise from the CD like what happens at Christmastime?

What have you learned from this experience?

Pray: Dear Lord, it's so easy to be caught up in noise and confusion and busyness. Help us find time to be quiet this season and to be thankful that you came to earth to be our Savior. Amen.

As the great movie character Buddy the Elf says, "The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear." Christmas is a great time to enjoy music together as a family. Perhaps you'd like to share it with your neighbors!

Here are a few ideas for spreading Christmas cheer.

1. Take advantage of the internet. www.pandora.com/kids-christmas-favorites-holiday, www.live365.com/stations/christmasmusic247b, and www.orsradio.com/christmas-kids-128k all offer Christmas music with children in mind. If you'd like to see lyrics and have printouts as well, try www.kiddles.com/lyrics/christmas.html.

2. Take a favorite Christmas tune and rewrite it using lyrics you've come up with as a family.

3. Listen to and discuss the value in singing praises to God.

4. Strap on your coat and mittens and "sing loud for all to hear" through your neighborhood. A caroling you will go!

These are simply a few ideas to help you celebrate our Lord.

Merry Christmas!



Ephesians 3:20-21 says this, Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus. It reminds me that God has a powerful work for us to accomplish in this world as the church. That work exceeds our imagination. And it is for the glory of the church and Christ Jesus. That is significant to me and here is why. The church is the only organization that Jesus Christ has established that shares the glory that he himself receives. Interesting point to ponder.

I am sharing this with you as we end this year because I would like for you to consider how you can give to support what God wants to do through our church. Giving to our church is more than giving to a building. Your giving builds what God wants to do through our church. It allows us to resource the dreams that exceed what we can imagine. It is leveraging your life for the eternal as together we seek to make an eternal difference and in order to accomplish what God has in store for this church, I am asking you to consider how you are giving.

King David said about his gifts to build God’s house; in my devotion to the house of my God I now give of my personal treasures to the house of my God over and above everything I have already provided...who among you is ready and willing to join in the giving? 1 Chronicles 29:3-6. Will you help us? This Christmas season and as the year ends, will you think through how you can contribute to what God wants to do in and through our church for the coming year?

Live the Adventure Share the Hope

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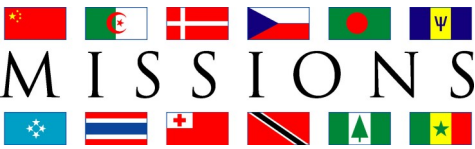
Mission Opportunities 2016

Beius, Romania March 28th – April 6th

Approximate cost is \$2200 to \$2400. This includes plane fare, lodging, food (except in route), and transportation in country. We will be working with the gypsies and the local churches in their communities. The specific project has yet to be determined. Let us know of your interest by December 1st. We are asking to secure your spot with a \$200 deposit by January 1st.

Sao Paulo, Brazil August 28th – September 6th

Approximate cost is \$1700 to \$1900. This includes plane fare, lodging, food (except in route), and transportation in country. We will be working with our daughter church in Sao Paulo Brazil and constructing raised seating in their sanctuary. We can always add additional aspects to the trip but this is our primary focus. Let us know of your interest by December 1st and a deposit by March 1st of \$200.



International Global Prayer Gathering

Washington DC Convention Center Event dates: April 21-23
Travel dates: April 21 – 24th Cost: Travel and Lodging \$900.
(Does not include meals or ground transportation) Contact the church office to secure your spot.
What to Expect: Worship and fellowship with IJM staff, and meet friends passionate about justice. Hear first-hand stories from the fight for justice, directly from our field leaders. See where God is moving today, and pray for those still trapped in slavery and violence.

Sunday Worship

8:30 and 10:30AM

Children’s Classes and
Nursery at 10:30AM

The Bridge

between services -
brunch, coffee and
fellowship

MidWeek
Prayer
service

Wednesdays
at 5:30 PM



Wednesday Nights

Children and Youth
Ministry
6:30-8PM

January Events

Un-decorate Church

Jan.2nd at 9AM

21 Days of Prayer Jan. 4th-23rd

5:30PM Monday-Friday
9AM Saturdays

Sermon Series

in January - Firsts



FBC Financial
Report

Nov. 1 \$ 7,993.56
Nov. 8 \$ 6,621.43
Nov. 15 \$ 6,367.25
Nov. 22 \$ 4,646.50
Nov. 29 \$ 5,811.10



ONLINE GIVING Thank you for giving! You can go to the church website or our specific giving website to give your offering online.

Fbccasper.com or https://firstbaptistchurchofcasper.cloverdonations.com