



THE CORNERSTONE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH THOMSON

*Loving God, Loving People,
Making Disciples of Jesus*

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Advent 2023



December 3

Hanging of the Green

Sermon: Longing for Hope: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

December 3-5

7:00-9:00 PM Drive-Thru Nativity

December 10

Sermon: Longing for Peace: "How Long, O Lord?"

Week of Prayer for International Missions Begins

December 17

Sermon: Longing for Joy:

"Reaping Songs of Joy from Seeds of Sorrow"

Kids turn in Lottie Moon Banks

5:00 PM Kids Caroling followed by S'mores at the
Warehouse

December 24

Sermon: Longing for Love: "Eagerly Waiting"

5:00 PM Candlelight Service with Lord's Supper

Dr. David Lambert, Lead Pastor

The stage is set. The curtain is about to rise. The drama is about to begin. It's the greatest story the world has ever heard. And you and I are invited to become players in this divine drama called the Gospel Story. Its first act is called, "**Advent.**" Advent begins the Christian year, as we spend the four weeks leading up to Christmas in holy anticipation of the coming of the Messiah, the Promised Ruler who is Ancient and Strong.

In Advent we join with the ancient longing, hungering for God to move among His people and bring redemption, deliverance, and restoration. Sarah and Abraham longed for a son. The Hebrew slaves longed for a Promised Land. The Jews in Babylonian exile yearned to return home. Oppressed Jews looked for a Heavenly King to overthrow the Empire. And we too long for our Lord and Savior to come quickly and usher in God's eternal rule and reign on the Earth.

This year's Advent theme is "**A Season of Longing.**" We will explore our longing, and our world's longing, for the **hope, peace, joy, and love** that can come only from the Savior born in Bethlehem, who in Jerusalem would then die and rise and ascend to the Father, and who comes to every person who calls upon His name as Lord and Savior. We prepare for His return and open our hearts more to His rule and reign in us as we reflect on His first coming 2,000 ago.

I pray that you will make the most of this "season of longing" by making use of our annual **Advent Devotional**, which is a little different this year. We were graciously given the right to reprint devotionals written by John Piper. *We will return to having members of FBC write devotionals next year.* But this year gives us a different experience and a unique opportunity to reflect on the depths of God's grace as we welcome the Christ into our Advent season, just as the Shepherds welcomed him into this world. There are lots of fun **family activities** for parents and grandparents to use in helping our children experience Advent and Christmas with a focus on Jesus.

Join us in worship each week of Advent, beginning with our annual **Hanging of the Green** service on December 3. Worship with us on **Christmas Eve** with a normal morning of Sunday School and worship, then join us at 5 PM for the candlelight Lord's Supper service. Remember our **Week of Prayer for International Missions**, from December 10-17. May I encourage you to go ahead and decide how much God would have you give to the **Lottie Moon Christmas Offering**...our church's goal is \$13,000. Every penny goes directly to the field to help Southern Baptists carry the Gospel to the nations.

There are also several ways you and your family can serve and share Jesus with our community this month, such as the **Drive-Thru Nativity** December 3, 4, and 5; contributing to the **Angel Tree** gifts for foster care children, and the "Wrap Party" at 2 PM on the 10th to prepare those gifts to be distributed; bringing your kids or grandkids to go **Christmas Caroling** to our nursing homes and shut-ins at the 17th—followed by hot chocolate around a fire in our park!

And I hope you can join us for some wonderful times of fellowship, learning, and worshipping this month. For example, our Women's Ministry is presenting a unique Advent program for women called "**Prepare Him Room,**" with a simulcast session in the Sanctuary and Christmas appetizers in the Atrium. Ladies, make plans to be there on Saturday the 16th, from 4-6:30 PM. Also, everyone is invited to our annual Christmas Family Feast at 6 PM on Wednesday the 13th. Please note that time, as the meal and fellowship will be the program—and maybe a fun game!

Word of Praise!!! I want to end with an exciting announcement: We have exceeded our church goal of 300 Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes!!! Thank you to everyone who brought boxes in July and November. Each box represents a child and a family who will learn about the love of the Savior born on Christmas Day!



Dr. Matt Ward

It's Christmas Season!

What did you think my December article would be about? There's a lot to do, and we want your presence!

- Friday, Nov 24, 9:00 AM—church Christmas decorating; we want to make our church building beautiful for Christmas!
- Saturday, Nov 25, 6:00 PM—the Mark Trammell Quartet and the Whisnants bring their Christmas gospel concert! Doors open at 5:00, no reserved seating, and it's free,
- Sunday, Nov 26, 5:00 PM—our Thomson community chorus is back for a new Christmas concert, featuring guest instrumentalists and wonderful music. It's also free. Invite your friends!
- Wednesday, Nov 29, 6:00 PM—missions night featuring the TinyKid Living Nativity, an international missions focus, and more.
- Sunday, Dec 3, begins our Drive-Thru Nativity ...

Drive-Thru Nativity, Sunday—Tuesday, 12/3-5

This is the schedule we used last year, and it did what we wanted — more people could help us set everything up on Sunday afternoon. We need your help again!

- Sunday afternoon, December 3, after lunch: help us set up our props! You don't have to do the "final touches"; we're just needed to put everything in place (the first day is the hardest).

And then here's the daily schedule:

- 5:00 — the supper line opens
- ~6:00 — we want our actors to start getting into costume, our parking lot attendants to start directing traffic, and our tech team to live-test the lights and narration
- ~6:30 — we want our actors to move into position
- ~6:45 — we want to let traffic flow to the Nativity entrance and then release them to our Census Taker as soon as possible.

Remember that this is our "Christmas gospel presentation" to our community. We do this once a year, and we can be patient and encouraging of one another as we give our guests the best Nativity experience they could possibly have.

The Rest of December

- Wednesday, Dec 13, 6:00 PM—Christmas family feast in the fellowship hall (the feast is our Wednesday night ministry)
- Saturday, Dec 16, 4:00 PM—Ladies' Christmas outreach ("Prepare Him Room"). Get away from your holiday madness and spend some quality time with Jesus and your friends in church. Contact Shelly or the office for more info.
- Sunday, Dec 17—the kids are going caroling to our care facilities, and we think the adults should do some caroling, too! As we flesh out this plan, we will let the Sunday School classes know more.
- Sunday, Dec 24—normal Sunday morning (i.e., Sunday School and worship at normal times). And don't forget our Christmas Eve service at 5:00 PM!
- Sunday, Dec 31—normal Sunday morning.

And also be aware that we are not having Wednesday night ministries on Dec 6, Dec 20, or Dec 27! Everyone, take your Christmas travels and don't feel guilty. Merry Christmas (and Happy Thanksgiving) - I do hope you enjoy our Sunday School lessons this holiday season. They are covering some amazing passages. In Jesus,



Rev. Ben Tarver

The **Youth Christmas Party** will be December 2 at 6:00 PM at my house. There will be dinner, games, and a \$15 gift exchange (funny & appropriate gag gifts). Also, there is a tacky Christmas sweater contest with a prize. This is always a highlight for the end of the year with lots of laughs, good food, and gifts!

I am excited to announce the **2024 Youth Winter Retreat** over Presidents' Day Weekend (Feb 16-19) in Gatlinburg! It's open to all students, 7-12th grades. We will stay at the beautiful Smoky Mountain Resort Ministries house. The basic cost of the **Winter Retreat is \$125** and includes snowtubing for two hours at Ober Gatlinburg, riding the Ober Gatlinburg Tram, Ice-skating, Snow Zone, Chairlift and Ice Bumper Cars, a t-shirt and one meal out. Additional money for two fast-food meals on the road and spending money for free time in Gatlinburg would be needed. Throughout the weekend there will be time to hang out, play games, and have devotions at the SMRM house. This is a major trip for our youth, and I would love for every youth to attend if possible. **A \$50 non-refundable deposit is DUE by Sunday, December 10.**

Angel Tree gifts will be delivered to case workers at the McDuffie County DFCS in mid-December. There are over 30 children in the foster care system on the list for Christmas gifts this year. Please be in prayer for foster families, children in foster care, and that brokenness in these family situations can be mended, if possible. DFCS does important, but very difficult work in caring for these children coming out of challenging circumstances.

The church Advent devotional book has daily devotions from Pastor, author and Christian scholar John Piper. At the start of each week is also a Faith @ Home Christmas activity. I know it can be a challenge to find time during the busyness of the season, but I encourage you to find 10-15 minutes as a family to go through the devotion together and talk about it. Then once a week you can do a simple family activity together.

Merry Christmas,

Ben



Every Christmas, the Deacons of First Baptist Church deliver a beautiful plant to each homebound member. If you would like to contribute to this ministry, please bring your \$15 donation labeled "Homebound Plants" to the church office or place it in the offering box.

Last Month

We Came	Morning Worship (in person)	Morning Worship (online)	Sunday School	We Gave
October 22	246		202	\$14,063.00
October 29	242	173	239	\$12,233.00
November 5	275	173	220	\$18,398.00
November 12	237	306	222	\$16,413.00

BUDGET

Required	\$767,714.20
Received	\$735,056.17
Disbursed	\$712,708.04

NON-BUDGET RECEIPTS

Cap. Improvements	\$18,697.62
Ferguson Property	\$4,890.00
Go & Tell Mission Fund	\$41,560.82

**End-of-
October
Final
Finances**

Drive-Thru Nativity

December 3-5
(Sunday- Tuesday)
7:00-9:00 PM

TinyKID Nativity
&
Lottie Moon
Dessert Auction
and Program
November 29,
6:00 PM



Young @
Heart

Tuesday, December 12
11:00 AM

Speaker: Rev. Ben Tarver

RSVP By December 7 at Noon
Cost is \$9.50

Christmas Family Feast

Wednesday, December 13
6:00 PM

\$5.50/Adult
\$3.00/Kid

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR
INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS
DECEMBER 10-17

LOTTIE MOON OFFERING GOAL:
\$13,000

KIDS' LOTTIE MOON BANKS DUE
BACK DECEMBER 17

Prepare Him Room

An Event for Women
Saturday, December 16, 2023
4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Fellowship Hall, First Baptist Thomson

Prepare Him room this season—
your heart will never be the same.

Register online or by calling the church office.
Deadline to register is December 8.

Year-End Giving

Year-End gifts need to be
received in the church office no later
than 5:00 PM on.

Friday, December 29, 2023, or
postmarked by December 31, 2023, in
order to receive 2023 giving credit.

Thank you for your gifts!

December Ministry
Winter Wearables

Warm socks, hats,
scarves, gloves, etc.
(Any Size or Gender)



Please place items in the blue
bin in the atrium



DECEMBER



SUN	9:00	Cornerstone Cafe
	9:30	Sunday School
	10:45	Morning Worship
MON	9:00	Walking Track open (until 5:00 PM)
	9:00	Nautilus Room open (until 1:00 PM)
	10:00	Stretch & Flex, Gym
TUE	9:00	Walking Track open (until 5:00 PM)
	9:00	Nautilus Room open (until 1:00 PM)
	2:00	Church Staff Meeting, 402
	5:15	Firm Believers, Gym
WED	9:00	Walking Track open (until 5:00 PM)
	9:00	Nautilus Room open (until 1:00 PM)
	10:00	Stretch & Flex, Gym
	5:00	Family Night Supper, FH
	6:00	<i>Disciples Pathway</i> (Adults, Fellowship Hall)
	6:00	TinyKID (Ages 3-K), Chapel
	6:00	TeamKID (Grades 1-6), Gym
	6:00	Elevate (Grades 7-12), WH
	7:15	Adult Choir Rehearsal, S
THU	6:30	<i>Stand in the Gap</i> Prayer Group, Parlor
	9:00	Walking Track open (until 5:00 PM)
	9:00	Nautilus Room open (until 1:00 PM)
	5:15	Firm Believers, Gym
FRI	9:00	Walking Track open (until 5:00 PM)
	9:00	Nautilus Room open (until 1:00 PM)
	10:00	Stretch & Flex, Gym

- December 2, 2023
6:00 PM Youth Christmas Party at the Tarvers
- December 3, 2023
Hanging of the Green Service
First Sunday of Advent
7:00 PM Drive-Thru Nativity
- December 4, 2023
7:00 PM Drive-Thru Nativity
- December 5, 2023
7:00 PM Drive-Thru Nativity
- December 6, 2023
No Evening Activities
- December 9, 2023
3:00 PM Thomson Christmas Parade
- December 12, 2023
11:00 AM Young at Heart
6:00 PM Stewardship Committee Meeting
7:00 PM Deacons Meeting
- December 13, 2023
6:00 PM Christmas Family Feast
- December 16, 2023
4:00 PM Women's Ministry Outreach
Event "Prepare Him Room"
- December 17, 2023
5:00 PM Kids Caroling and S'mores at the Warehouse
- December 20, 2023
No Evening Activities
- December 24, 2023
5:00 PM Christmas Eve Service with the Lord's Supper
- December 25-26, 2023
Church Office Closed
- December 27, 2023
No Evening Activities