



Southside Baptist Church  
11th Ave. & 19th St. South  
Birmingham, AL 35205



# SOUTHSIDE COLUMNS

December 2015 Vol. 1 No. 8

## The Work of Christmas

Dear Church,

As we journey together towards the manger scene this Christmas, I hope that we might pause for a moment to consider whom we are approaching. The closing verses of the Old Testament tell us that in the days of Jesus the people were anticipating the Great Day of the Lord. On that day the prophet Elijah was to return, preparing the way for the Lord and turning the people to their God. And so, when the astute reader encounters John the Baptist in the opening pages of the New Testament, he or she knows that the day which was prophesied of is not far off!

We could say that the Kingdom of God really breaks onto the scene when Jesus begins His public ministry, and even more so when the King is raised upon a cross and seen victorious over death as He stands outside an empty tomb on Easter Sunday; but none of that happen without a manger scene in the small town of Bethlehem. On Christmas we not only celebrate the birth of a Savior, but we anticipate what that Savior might do in the world in which we live. Dr. Craddock always found it rather peculiar that it is not uncommon to find a lighted cross atop a Christmas tree.

And so, as we journey towards the manger scene and participate in the great birthday celebration of the King of the Universe, I think we would be wise to consider what this world will demand of Jesus. I think we would be wise to consider what this world will demand of those who bear His image. The great theologian Howard Thurmond penned a little

poem about what Christmas means for the Christian. It reads:

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 flocks, 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 the people, to make music in the heart.

Christmas is certainly a time to celebrate. It is a time to share with family and friends, and to thank God for all of the blessings He has given us, most notably, His own Son. But Christmas becomes all the more beautiful when we recognize that the child whom we bow before in praise and adoration has come to turn the world upside down. And He has invited us to join Him in the work. I hope you will have a very special Christmas this year, and remember that the work of Christmas never ends. Every time we engage in the work of Christ – to heal the sick, feed the hungry, care for widows and orphans – we honor the birth we enjoy celebrating so much. Perhaps the work of Christmas might make the celebration thereof all the more special. May God bless you this Christmas.



In Christ,

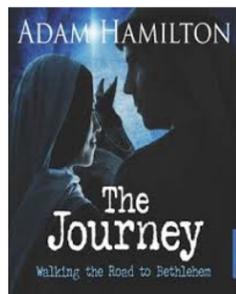
Kris

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## HAPPENING AT SOUTHSIDE



### New Young Adult Study

This Advent, the Young Adult class will be studying Adam Hamilton's "The Journey," as our theological round-table on Wednesday nights. We hope that you will join us as we walk the road to Bethlehem this Christmas. For more information, please contact Kris Roberts at: kroberts@southsidebirmingham.org



### Christmas Eve Service

The Christmas Eve Service and Candlelight Communion is a favorite service for many. The family-oriented service that celebrates the birth of Jesus the Christ, presents the story of a most humble family and grounds us in what our faith is and what it calls us to be. Please join us in the Sanctuary on December 24 for this special service.



### The Sanders Family Christmas

On Saturday, December 19, SSBC will be traveling to the Cumberland County Playhouse in Crossville, TN, to watch *The Sanders Family Christmas*. The bus will leave from SSBC parking lot at 9:00 a.m. and return around 9:00 p.m. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$23 for seniors, and \$12 for children. Tickets will be ordered this week. If you would like to attend, please contact Kris Roberts at: kroberts@southsidebirmingham.org.

## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

9:00 a.m. The Gathering, in Drennen Hall

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

11:00 a.m. Worship in the Sanctuary

6:00 p.m. Evening Service in Foster Auditorium

### DECEMBER 6

Second Sunday in Advent  
"Peace"

OT Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4  
NT Scripture: Luke 3:1-6

6:00 p.m. Evening Service

### DECEMBER 13

Third Sunday in Advent  
"Joy"

OT Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20

NT Scripture: Luke 3:7-18

6:00 p.m. Evening Service

### DECEMBER 20

Fourth Sunday in Advent  
"Love"

OT Scripture: Micah 5:2-5a

NT Scripture: Luke 1:39-45

6:00 p.m. Evening Service

### DECEMBER 27

"Forgetting the Past... Looking Into the Future"

OT Scripture: Psalm 148

NT Scripture: Philippians 3:13-16

6:00 p.m. Evening Service

## It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year

by Tim Kelley

"It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" by George Wyle and Eddie Polas, is a song heard often this time of year, and though it is a secular song, many of the lyrics speak to aspects of Advent and Christmas that embody why this season means so much to people of faith. Lines in the song such as,

*With the kids jingle belling,  
And everyone telling you be of good cheer  
There'll be much mistletoeing  
And hearts will be glowing  
When loved ones are near  
It's the most wonderful time  
Yes, the most wonderful time of the year.*

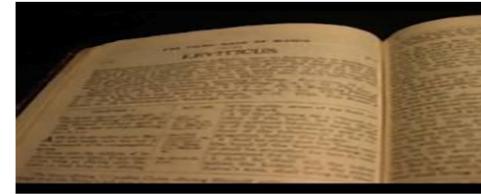
These lyrics create a mental image of a home filled with joy, laughter, happiness and love. Gatherings where individuals are bound by familial relationships, or perhaps linked together as kindred spirits, hearts' are warmed by being present with one another. I believe this is how we are to experience life, especially this time of year and certainly as a church family. Such love and concern for others is contagious. We are a family bound together by the love of God found in our relationship with Jesus the Christ. We are one in the bond of love; therefore, our hearts are warmed and love deepened as we gather together for times of worship, service and fellowship. There are numerous opportunities for such gatherings over the next several weeks but one is especially meaningful and a favorite of many of our church members and friends in the community. The 6 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service is a family-oriented service, partly because we are family, but more specifically because it is a service focused on the family of Joseph, Mary and the babe Jesus. It is the story of Emmanuel, God with us and even this is reflected in the song mentioned above in the lyrics "tales of the glories of the Christmases long, long ago /It's the most wonderful time of the year."

It is the most wonderful time of the year, and I hope you will make plans to attend all the opportunities for worship, service and fellowship, especially the Christmas Eve service when we gather as family, extended family and friends.

My prayer is that you will experience a most wonderful Advent and Christmas.

## "Living Levitically?"

by Kris Roberts



As many of you already know, I have always had a strange affinity towards the book of Leviticus. Regrettably, I have found few that share my appreciation! For some, the book of Leviticus has served as a tool for legalistic proof texting, while for others the book is seen as being outdated and irrelevant. Generally speaking, I have observed that these approaches tend to reinforce one another. And that's a problem.

But there is hope for Leviticus. As I was preparing a Bible study a few months back, I came across an article in the *Huffington Post* titled, "Living Levitically." The story was of a pastor in Boston, at the Park Street Church, who decided to teach on the book of Leviticus over a 30-day period. According to pastor Daniel Harrell, "Leviticus is that graveyard where read-through-the-Bible-in-a-year plans go to die." Harrell's challenge was daunting: to make a foreign and forgotten text relevant in the modern context. The good folks at the Park Street Church spent a month studying the text, but Harrell added a component that most do not. Rather than simply reading Leviticus, Harrell asked his congregation to live it.

Some members decided to stick to the dietary laws offered in the text, while others made ritual preparations for Sunday mornings in the form of dress and appearance. One woman even went so far as to create a replica model of the Tabernacle and place it in her apartment. I assume that her model was not to scale! When the study was over, the congregation was surveyed, and I would like to include several of their responses here. "Leviticus teaches us the idea of radical holiness," wrote one congregant. "We learned that God's grace was not something that was absent in the Old Testament, but a theme that runs throughout the Bible," replied another. The woman who constructed the model Tabernacle responded, "Initially it looked like a really strange piece of modern art, but after a while, I began to view the replica as a reminder of God's constant presence with me." Although this approach focused greatly on the particulars of Leviticus, in the end it was the principles that stuck with the congregation.

I think my fascination with the book of Leviticus is more of a quest to rescue a forgotten piece of Scripture than anything else. Leviticus is not an instruction to advance legalism, nor is it an ancient text that has nothing to offer a modern congregation. Rather, it is a reminder that God is with us, that God wants to be with us, and that the relationship that we desire with God is something that He has been seeking as well, not just since the days of Jesus, but from the beginning.

## WEDNESDAY EVENING SCHEDULE

5:30 p.m. - Fellowship Supper in Drennen Hall

6:00 p.m. - Bible Study in Drennen Hall

6:30 p.m. - Theology Roundtable at Brookwood Village

### December 9

Bible Study led by Ken Roxburgh: "The Living Lord"

Roundtable led by Kris Roberts  
"Joseph of Bethlehem"

### December 16

Christmas Party in Drennen Hall

### December 23

No Wednesday Night Activities  
Roundtable led by Kris Roberts  
"The Manger"

(will meet on December 21)

### December 30

No Wednesday Night Activities