December 3, 2023



Ferguson Avenue Baptist Church

10050 Ferguson Avenue ❖ Savannah, Georgia 31406

Where Christ Is Exalted and the Fellowship Is Exciting

Announcements

Poinsettias

If you would like to grace our church with a beautiful poinsettia in honor or in memory of someone, please contact Dawn or Janice in the office. Poinsettias are \$20 each.

Choir Practice

Tonight at 5:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. This is our last practice before our presentation on next Sunday, December 10!

Wednesday Night

This Wednesday, the menu is **Salisbury Steak**. Supper is at 5:30 p.m., Adventure Club is at 6:20 p.m., Youth is at 6:30 p.m. and Adult Bible Study is at 6:45 p.m. Sign up in the hall for the meal!

Men's Breakfast and Book Study

The first session of a Men's Two-Part Breakfast series discussing the book, *The Masculine Mandate* by Richard Phillips, is this Saturday, **December 9**, at 8:00 a.m. We still have a couple of books left if you would like to join!

Special Called Members' Meeting

There is a Special Called Members' meeting the afternoon of Sunday, **December 10**, at 5:15 p.m. The deacon nominees are Bill Bailey, Danny Edwards, Cole Morris, and Jay Rowe. We will also vote on new members. Candidates are Daniel and Marsha Lockett and Wally and Karen Law.

Christmas Cantata, All Is Well

The Adult Choir will present our Christmas Cantata in Evening Worship on **December 10**, at 6:00 p.m. Join us!

Christmas Banquet Signup and Bus Service!

Our annual Christmas Banquet is Wednesday, **December 13** at 6:30 p.m. Menu will include Prime Rib, Barbecue, Ham, Vegetables and Desserts. \$7.00 per adult, \$4.00 per child over 3, and no family need pay over \$25! Sign up in the hall. We are offering bus rides to those needing or wanting them. Sign the hall bus list by **December 6** if you live relatively close by and would like to take advantage of that!

Continued on p. 4

FABC Elders

Bob Dimmitt Senior Pastor 912-398-4363 bob@fabchurch.com Tom Keller
Assoc. Pastor/Senior Adults
912-308-3767
tom@fabchurch.com

Church Phone: 912-355-0949 office@fabchurch.com www.fabchurch.com

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship Psalm 24:7-10 Pew Bible p. 459

Hymn #100, bulletin p. 5

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

Prayer of General Confession Steve Posner 1 Peter 1:3-5 Pew Bible p. 1014

Hymn #84, bulletin p. 6

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

Scripture Reading Luke 1:26-45 Bobby Deloach Pew Bible pp. 855-856

Hymn #83, bulletin p. 7

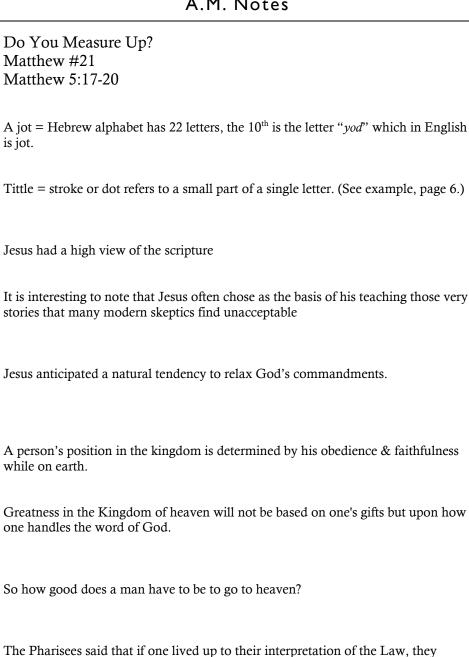
"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Message
Bob Dimmitt
Do You Measure Up?
Matthew #21
Matthew 5:17-20, Pew Bible p. 810

Hymn, bulletin p. 8

"Now unto Him"

A.M. Notes



would be acceptable to God.

Continued from p. I

Christmas Book Giveaway, The Four Emotions of Christmas

Many come to the Christmas season thinking it's the most wonderful time of the year. Others approach it just hoping to make it through December. The good news is that anyone can bring their emotions, whatever they are, to the heart of the real Christmas story. With care and compassion, Bob Lepine diagnoses the emotions one might be feeling and helps trace those back to the first Christmas. This is a wonderful, short guide to helping one face this season by pointing them back to the person at the center of it all, Jesus, and ultimately back to joy. Get this book for yourself, for your friends and for your family. "The Four Emotions" clearly communicates the message that because of Jesus' birth, joy has dawned upon the world.

Trip to Visit Shelma Lewis

Tom Keller is planning a trip to visit with Shelma Lewis in Jesup on Tuesday, **December 19**. Details and signup sheet to come. Christmas cards and/or small gift cards are welcome. If you cannot make the trip but wish to send her something, these things can be delivered for you.

Life Line Screening

Life Line is conducting their ultrasonic health screenings here in the Fellowship Hall on Saturday, **December 16**. There are flyers on the podium and bulletin board with all the info, and we were gifted several vouchers for \$85 off. Let Dawn know if you would like a voucher, and contact Life Line to make an appointment.





Important Upcoming Dates

December:

6	Adventure Club Christmas Party	
6	Youth Christmas Party	
9	Men's Book Study, Session I	8:00 a.m.
10	Special Called Members' Meeting	5:30 p.m.
10	Christmas Cantata	6:00 p.m.
13	Christmas Banquet	6:30 p.m.
15	Young Adult Christmas Party	
16	Life Line Health Screening	
18, 20	Caroling	
19	Joy Class Christmas Party	10:00 a.m.
24	Christmas Eve Service	5:00 p.m.
31	Annual NYE Cookoff: Chili	7:00 p.m.
4		



Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus



A tittle is a letter extension, a pen stroke that can differentiate one Hebrew letter from another. An example can be seen in the comparison between the Hebrew letters resh and daleth (or dalet):



The resh (on the left) is made with one smooth stroke. The daleth (on the right) is made with two strokes of the pen. The letters are very similar to each other, but the distinguishing mark of the daleth is the small extension of the roof of the letter:





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Christmas Doxology



Articles

God's Lavish Mercy for Sinners

From beautifulchristianlife.com

Upon hearing the gospel some people think, "I'm not that bad. I don't need that much mercy." Other people think they are too bad—too unworthy, too far gone for mercy to reach them. What does the Bible say?

Before the apostle Paul became a Christian, he was a "blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent" of Christ's church (1 Tim. 1:13). Yet, Christ's mercy covered all Paul's sins and his mercy forgave all Paul's sins, every last one:

This saying is trustworthy and worthy of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," of whom I am the worst. (1 Tim. 1:15)

And so it is true for all who trust in Jesus alone for their salvation. And why can Christ's mercy perform such wonders? How can he be so merciful? He can because he suffered the full punishment for the sins of his people. As the righteous one, Jesus was nailed to the cursed tree. He was exposed to the reproach of God's enemies. Jesus lived a perfect life, but in his death he bore in his own flesh the punishment for your sin, so that his mercy might cover all your sin. This is the surpassing glory of Christ's mercy.

We may tell ourselves that we are too bad—too unworthy, too far gone for mercy to reach us. We can fall into despair, fall prey to hopelessness, and be tempted to believe that Christ just can't forgive whatever we have done. The thief on the cross was a man who lived a life of crime and wickedness. He was a criminal who was suffering the just consequences of his actions. Yet, even upon one like this thief, in the agony of his sin, Jesus smiled. The thief prayed in faith, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And to this prayer of faith Jesus responded with the sweet words of mercy, "Today, you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43).

Through faith alone by God's grace alone in Christ alone, we find forgiveness in the surpassing & sweet mercy of Jesus Christ who died for us. It is this lavish mercy that is your aid through the tragedies of life.

Indeed, so many chapters of our lives have sad endings. But Christ's mercy says, "Do not despair. Do not lose hope, for you have living hope in Christ, an imperishable and incorruptible hope."

May you rejoice in this hope, and may you embrace it in faith. Every Christian has the sure hope of the forgiveness of sin and the resurrection. In Christ the end of your story has already been written, and it is not a tragedy but rather the best of all endings—resurrection from the dead and a life everlasting to glorify God.

*

The Real Story of "Christmas" - How the Observance of Our Savior's Birth Became a Winter Festival of Holly, Deck the Halls, and Saint Nick!

Edited for space

The term "Christmas" - The word "Christmas" comes from the Old English term *Cristes Maesse*, first found recorded in A.D. 1038. In Dutch it is "Kerst-misse," and in Latin "Dies Natalis," from which we get the French word "Noël." The word "Yule" simply comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "geol," or feast, which was also the name of their month in which this feast took place.

As far as we can tell, Christmas as an observance of the birth of Jesus Christ, was not celebrated during the first hundred years of the Christian Church. The first evidence of the feast comes from Egypt. Sometime just before A.D. 200, Clement of Alexandria said that some Egyptian theologians set the year and the day of Christ's birth, placing it on 25th day of the Egyptian month Pachon, or our May 20th, in the twenty-eighth year of Caesar Augustus. However, Clement also tells us that the Basilidians celebrated the Epiphany, and with it, the Nativity, most often on January 6th. Indeed, this double celebration became quite popular, partly because the appearance to the shepherds was seen as a manifestation of Christ's glory, with the other being the worship of Magi from the East, which was already observed on that day. The December feast day did not reach the rest of the Church in North Africa until around the Third Century A.D.

What Was the Month and Day of Christ's Birth? - In which month and on what day was Jesus born? Our present system uses December 25th, as we all know. And this date was universally accepted in the Fourth Century by the Western Christian Church, while the Churches in the East observed either January 6th or 10th. According to the old Julian calendar, December 25th was the shortest day of the year, and referred to in Rome and elsewhere as "the birthday of the unconquerable sun" or *Dies natatis invicti solis*. After that day, the sun began to rise on the horizon, and the days began to lengthen once again. As Jesus is the light of the world, early believers felt it was eminently fitting that the day of His birth should also be December 25th. This date was first placed on record in Rome in connection with Christ's birth in a chronicle dating from A.D. 354. The Christian writer Chrysostom said, "It is not yet ten years since this day (December 25) was made known. Even so, it is now just as seriously observed as if it has come to us from the beginning.

The feast of Christ's birth was brought into the official life of the Church and the Empire by Constantine as early as A. D. 330. The Christian historian, Epiphanius, writing in Cyprus near the end of the Fourth Century, asserts that Christ was born on January 6th, and the Christian churches in Mesopotamia observed the birth of the Savior thirteen days after the winter solstice; that is, January 6th. In Antioch in A.D. 386, St. Chrysostom tries to unite Antioch in celebrating Christ's birth on the 25th of December. Indeed, a large part of the community had already observed this festival on that day for at least the previous ten years. In the West, he says, the feast was thus kept, and goes on to say this was no novelty; for from Thrace (Greece) to Cadiz (Spain) this feast was celebrated.

Is the Feast of Christmas Simply a Cover for a Pagan Holiday? - It is clear that the origin of Christmas did not come simply from the Roman festival of Saturnalia. True, the Emperor Aurelian, during his brief rule, tried to institute a lavish festival around the Birth of the Unconquered Sun, on December 25th, A.D. 274, borrowing heavily from the Mithras observances of Persia. He pushed this celebration in order to breathe new life into Roman idol-worship, which was already dying out. And Aurelian's pronouncement came after Christians had already been associating this day with the birth of Christ for many decades in at least a few parts of the Empire. Indeed this "Sol Invictus" festival was almost certainly an attempt to create a pagan alternative to a date that was already of some significance to believers. Thus, Christians were not imitating the pagans, rather the pagans were imitating the Christians!

Where Did Some other "Traditions" of Christmas Come From?
Feasting and Partying - This did not come from the Church. In fact, the Church attempted to impose strict discipline on this festival, and make it day of worship and contemplation. Emperor Theodoric, in A.D. 425, forbade Circus games on 25 December; though not until the time of Justinian III, in 529 is the cessation of all work imposed throughout the Empire on Christmas. The Council of Agde in 506 orders Holy Communion be celebrated on Christmas regardless of what day of the week it falls. The Second Council of Tours in 566 sets the sanctity of the "twelve days" from Christmas to Epiphany, and the duty of an Advent fast. In England, Christmas was forbidden by Act of Parliament in 1644; the day was to be a fast and a market day; shops were even compelled to be open on pain of a heavy fine; plum puddings and mince pies were condemned as indulgent and heathen.

Nativity Scenes or The "Crèche" - The word "crèche" comes from the French word for crib or cradle. St. Francis of Assisi in 1223 set up the first crèche outside of church. Normally these nativity scenes, some quite small, others actually lifesize, were displayed only in churches, and mostly in the side altars. Almost immediately, however, these little replicas of the stable where Christ was born, along with the central characters of the story, became immensely popular in Christian homes and town squares throughout Europe.

Christmas Tree - In the Thirteenth Century, Gervase of Tilbury wrote that in England grain was exposed on Christmas night to gain fertility from the dew which then falls. In a Thirteenth Century French story, candles are portrayed on a flowering tree. In England it was Joseph of Arimathea's rod which was supposed to bloom at Glastonbury and elsewhere. Ivy, holly, mistletoe, and evergreen trees were all used by the ancient Druids as symbols of life in the dead of Winter. These were then appropriated by Christians for the same use.

From these various sources then came the practice of many types of greenery being used as decorations during the Christmas season. One of these customs developed into the Christmas tree. It is thought Martin Luther first brought an evergreen tree into the home and placed small candles on its branches to illustrate everlasting life coming from Christ, the Light of the World. However the first definite mention of such a tree is in 1605 at Strassburg. From there the custom entered the rest of France during the next century, and finally came to England in 1840 by way of the Prince Consort, Albert, the Lutheran husband of Queen Victoria.

Santa Claus and Gift-giving - It is said that the origin for the mysterious benefactor of Christmas night: Knecht Ruprecht, Pelzmärtel on a wooden horse, St. Martin on a white charger, St. Nicholas, or Father Christmas, comes from Saints stepping into the shoes of the pagan god Oden, who, with his wife Frigga, descended during the nights between 25 December and 6 January on white horses to bless both earth and people. Welcoming fires were set on the hilltops, houses were adorned with many kinds of decorations and lights, work and trials suspended, and great feasts celebrated during these nights.

Indeed, it was quite common for peoples once they converted to Christianity to incorporate their one-time pagan deities into many of the customs and traditions of the new Christian Church. However, that is only part of the story, and it would not be fair not to give due acknowledgment to the individual most certainly more responsible than any other for the "Santa Claus" phenomenon, namely, Saint Nicholas of Myra.

As with many heroes of the early Christian Church; i.e. those that lived during that period of nearly three centuries before the faith could be practiced openly and without persecution; the life and works of Nicholas have acquired a great many myths and legends, some of them quite fantastic. In fact, one could say he is perhaps the most honored and venerated of any of Saints of this period. These facts we know: He was born about A.D. 270 at Patara in Lycia in the Roman province of Asia, now modern Turkey, to well-to-do Christian parents. Both his parents died in a plague when he was quite young and left him very wealthy, and he was raised by an uncle who was the Bishop of Patara. From very early in his childhood he was known for his piety and zeal for the Lord and the Church. He underwent severe hardship and imprisonment during the intense persecution of the Emperor Diocletian, but survived to see the legalization of the Christian faith during the rule of Constantine. When the office of Bishop at Myra, the provincial capital went vacant, the people persuaded him to take on this office, even though he was still quite young at the time. He was said to have attended the great Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, and the story is that he walked right up to the arch-heretic Arius and slapped him in the face before the entire assembly. He is said to have died on December 6th, A.D. 343, in Myra, and buried there under the altar of his church. After the Muslim Saracens took over the area in the Eleventh Century, his bones were removed to the town of Bari in Italy, where they remain today.

Among the nearly countless stories of amazing miracles attributed to Nicholas, two stand out as explanations for why he became the model for Santa Claus. During a severe famine a man of Patara lost all his money and was about to lose his home and property. He had three daughters of marriage age, but because they had no dowry they had no prospects of finding husbands. The father planned, it is said, to force his daughters into prostitution so that the family could survive. Nicholas heard of his plans, and one night, tossed three bags of gold in though an open window where the daughters were sleeping. Finding the gold when they awoke the next morning, they now had their dowries and soon were married off successfully.

In some versions, the bags were given in three successive nights, or even years on the same date, and by some accounts the bags were thrown – where else – down the chimney. Another variant has the daughters wash out their stocking and hang them to dry, the gold bags landing in them to be found the next morning. All these vari-

ants were widely known throughout the Christian world as early as the A.D. 700s. Another story takes place during yet another famine. An innkeeper on an island just off the coast of Myra supposedly killed and butchered three little children, and put them in pickling barrels to sell them to unsuspecting guests. Visiting the island to give aid to the needy, Nicholas surmised the evil deed done by the innkeeper. He brought the children back to life and returned them to their parents, thus becoming seen as the special protector and benefactor to all children.

From these pious legends it is easy to see how Saint Nicholas could become so dear and important to people of many countries down through the centuries. That his "saint day" was so close to Christmas also lent itself to a close association between the two.

Of course, Christian believers, should, can, and do filter out all interference with their worship of the Christ-child, and the celebration of the great fact of Christmas, which is Immanuel – God with us! As the Apostle John writes so beautifully by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

A very blessed and joyous Christmas to one and all! *Pastor Spencer*

Featured Content from Right Now Media

This week, we are featuring two studies by Stephen J. Nichols: *Reformation Profiles* and *Jonathan Edwards*. We highlight both of these because they will be rotated out of the **RightNow Media collection after December 31.** But you still have time to watch them!

From the website, on Jonathan Edwards: Meet one of America's greatest theologians. One of the best avenues for helping you understand what you believe, why you believe it, and how to better communicate it is to seek out examples in those who came before us. That's the goal of the new six-part teaching series Jonathan Edwards by Stephen J. Nichols, which offers a relatable, instructive, and inspiring model in the 18th-Century minister and scholar who endured great hardships, yet always trusted God's redemptive purposes for His people no matter what.

On Reformation Profiles: People new to Reformed theology may wonder just what it was about a five-hundred-year-old historical movement that affects our thinking so much today. So join Dr. Stephen Nichols for an inviting, approachable take on "Reformation 101," as he explores the events of the Protestant Reformation from the perspective of important figures from each of four key countries in this new seven-part teaching series. More than a history lesson, Dr. Nichols helps believers understand why the Reformation mattered then and matters now.

Log in, find our church page by clicking on Ferguson Avenue Baptist Church on the top right menu area, and click the link under our "Bible & Church History" channel. Enjoy!



Missionary of the Week

ThriVe Express Women's Healthcare Savannah, Georgia

ThriVe Express provides NO-COST health care to women and couples considering abortion and provides life-affirming options and free services like pregnancy testing, life-saving ultrasounds, and more. Since their opening February, 2018, through October, 2023, ThriVe Express has seen:



1,291 abortion minded women choose to carry their babies to term.

969 women make a decision to commit or recommit their lives to Christ.

- 5,720 patient visits
- 2,500 pregnancy tests
- 2,456 ultrasounds
- 8,511 STD tests
- 2,995 Gospel presentations
- 1,354 Bibles given out
- 3,581 Abstinence conversations

ThriVe is looking for volunteers: Nurses, RDMS, Advocates, and Drivers needed Monday - Saturday. Check out unitedforlifetohisglory.org/volunteer.

New information cards are available on the podium steps. Feel free to grab one and remember to pray for this vital ministry!

ThriVe Express Women's Healthcare is under the umbrella of United for Life to His Glory.

Its Mission

- To provide life affirming alternatives to women in our community who are the most vulnerable to poverty, predators and exploitation
- Informing those in the Body of Christ of the current tragedy in our city regarding abortion, sexual exploitation of women and children, and how our children are being misinformed by the world.

- Introducing solutions and techniques that will allow the truth and the restoration power of Jesus Christ to influence those currently in harm's way.
- Inviting those who are able to see the vision to invest in the solutions!

Its Vision

 To encourage and engage the Body of Jesus Christ to stand UNITED for the eternal lives of those perishing and the lives of the unborn.

he resurrection of Christ has determined our existence for all time and eternity. We do not merely live out our length of days and then have the hope of resurrection as an addendum; rather, Christ's resurrection has set in motion a chain of inexorable events that absolutely determines our present and our future. Christ is the firstfruits of those who are his, who will be raised at his coming. That ought both to reform the way we currently live and to reshape our worship into seasons of unbridled rejoicing.

Gordon Fee

Christianity does not start with "Jesus saves you from your sins." It starts with "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

F. Schaeffer

Nursery December 3 Babies:

Rudy & Kayla Duero **Toddlers:**

Jan DeLoach, Rebekah Helmick **Preschoolers:**

Rachel Beatty, Amy Keller

Nursery December 10 Babies:

Lynn Ernst, Beth Lewis, Jeanie Groover

Toddlers:

Michael & Karrie Walker
Preschoolers:
Logan & Stacev Kelly

Logan & Stacey Keny

Right Now Media

If you would like a free subscription to Right Now Media use this link:

https://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/fabchurchga or scan this QR code:



If you have any questions concerning the message from today, or are interested in obtaining information about church membership, please see any of the pastors after the service,

drop a note in the offering plate indicating your desire to talk with a pastor, or call the church office.



Video and audio recordings of the messages are available for listening or downloading from

www.fabchurch.com/sermons

This Week at	FABC
Coffee Fellowship	9:00 a.m.
Sunday School	9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Choir Practice	5:30 p.m.
Joy Class	9:00 a.m.
Men's Bible Study	6:30 p.m.
Women's Bible Study	6:30 p.m.
Wednesday Supper: Chicken	5:30 p.m.

 Adventure Club
 6:20 p.m.

 Youth
 6:30 p.m.

 Bible Study
 6:45 p.m.

Thursday

Senior Saints' Bible Study 10:00 a.m. Women's Bible Study 6:15 p.m.

Hearing assistance devices for services in the sanctuary are available on request at the sound booth.

Lockup Deacons for December

Jimmy Kicklighter, Napoleon Martin

Sunday School Classes and Descriptions

Adult

"Systematic Theology"	Fellowship Hall:	Bob Dimmitt
"Young Marrieds"	Gym Overhang:	Tom Keller
"How Do We View the Lord's Day?"	Youth House:	Steve Posner
"Rahab"	Organ Overflow:	Tamera Smith

Children and Students

Babies	Room 3:	Kay Stanford, Saundra Bridges
Toddlers	Room 24:	Susan Su, Deborah Focht
Pre-K	Room 25:	Michael & Ruth Kleinpeter
K, 1st and 2nd Grade	Room 28:	John and Pam Humphrey
3rd-6th Grade Boys	Room 202:	Ric Zittrouer, Richie Mills
3rd-6th Grade Girls	Room 204:	Mary Ann Fowler, Amy Horton
Youth Guys	Room 206:	Bobby DeLoach, Shawn Champion
Youth Girls	Room 206:	Jessica Dimmitt, Avalon DeLoach