



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Nickelsville

11606 Nickelsville Highway, Nickelsville VA 24271

Fall 2021

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“Christmas is a Time for ...” Luke 2:1-20

To say that we, as Americans, are confused is surely an understatement, is it not? And, might I add - Christmas is no exception. Yes, I think all of us, as Jesus followers, can see how secularized the holidays have become in the course of a few short years.

Looking backward I can well remember when Christmas focused on three simple things that are certainly misplaced, if not overlooked altogether in by modern society. What are these things? Our faith, our family, and our friends.

Yes, these are the most important things in life and Christmas is God’s annual reminder and opportunity for us to refocus, renew, and reenergize these areas of life that are screaming for our attention.

Recently I was reading a poll that focused on Christmas and our beliefs as Christians. That poll revealed that a whopping 79% of those polled believed in the statement “I believe Jesus is the reason for the season.” Interestingly enough that same poll revealed Jesus to be 20% more popular than good old Santa. Like it or not, this is where we are in our nation. With that said - it looks like we have our work cut out for us in sharing the good news about the Savior whose birth and life certainly changed the world! But how do we accomplish this, especially during the time of a worldwide epidemic?

Now let’s remember - there are always skeptics in our midst who say, “Don’t tell me how to spend my time. You know nothing about my calendar. I don’t have time for anything I want to do and now, you’re suggesting that I take on another job, during Christmas!” Well, let me simply say there are some things in life we cannot afford to overlook. What are they? Again, let’s get back to the simplicity of Christmas - Faith, family, and friends.

In looking backward at that first Christmas we enjoy the privilege of seeing the whole story ... or do we? Let’s take a peek and see what happened according to Dr. Luke. In his writing Luke revealed a decree from the big kahuna himself ... Caesar Augustus ... for the purposes of taxation. Now certainly all of us can relate to this, can we not, especially at this time of the year? So we have a pagan king issuing an order for all people to travel to the city of their family’s heritage. As such, Joseph and Mary make their way to Bethlehem because he was of the household and lineage of David. What is that saying to us? Was this gathering for the
Please see “Christmas is ...” on Pg. 2

A "BIG HELLO" To To all Our Church Family

From First Baptist Church

UPCOMING ITEMS OF INTEREST AND OPPORTUNITY

- ◆ GA’S meet- 1st. & 3rd. Tuesday of the month. FLC 3:30-5:00 PM during school months.
- ◆ Christmas Eve Service - Friday, December 24th @ 7:00 PM.
- ◆ Children’s and Youth Play will be on Sunday, December 19th at 6 PM.
- ◆ Dinner Church on Tuesday, December 28th from 4:30-6:30 PM. FLC



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Church News	2 - 3
Missions News & Holy Humor	4
Church Information & Schedule of Services	4

“Christmas is ...”

Cont. from Pg. 1

purpose of taxation not actually a gathering of family and extended families, all from the lineage of David? So, let’s trash the idea that Joseph and Mary traveled to a place where they didn’t know anyone? It’s possible that she hadn’t yet met a lot of Joseph’s extended family but she surely would when they arrived at their location and also in the ensuing days after Jesus was born.

So here we have family, family gathering for a specific purpose. Again, looking backward I can remember our family traveling pretty good distances in extenuating circumstances to be with “extended family” especially at Christmas. How about you? How many family members do we have that our children and grandchildren have never met? And perhaps never will simply because life has gotten so complicated that we no longer take time to connect? Now there’s no doubt that all of us have “Cousin Eddies” in our families that we’re not too awful fond of, nevertheless they’re family and our God places great emphasis on the family, does he not?

But what about friends and friendships? Do you think Joseph and Mary encountered any friends when they traveled to Bethlehem? But what about us? Goodness sakes, have the last two years not really tested and strained friendships? Before the pandemic we were a getting-together, handshaking, hugging, bunch of people that greeted one another every time we came together in similar fashion. And overnight we became “lone rangers” who quickly adapted by mastering the art of social distancing, complete with an array of face coverings that not only hid our faces but cut off all communication with those who have impaired hearing. The handshakes morphed into fist-bumps that resemble two opponents in a boxing ring. But hey, we’re surviving a worldwide pandemic, aren’t we?

Let me remind you that there are many things worse than death but let me also remind you that God never calls his people to go enter into survival mode. Yes, God has given us the sense to practice good health manners but some of the things I’ve witnessed and experienced from “friends” is downright ridiculous and non-Christian to the core.

Do you have any friends? Now don’t misunderstand me? Here’s the bottom line - if you were bold enough to host a get-together at Christmas and invite all of your “Facebook friends” how many would actually show up at your venue? Yes, “friendship” is a hard word to describe and define right now, is it not? There’s no doubt that we’ve adapted and adapted well but where will it all end? So, we’ve talked about family and friends but let’s get to this last thought - our faith.

Where were Joseph and Mary traveling to? Was it not Bethlehem? Which was according to Luke “... his own city ...”? Well literally speaking it means “house of meat” or “house of bread” but looking backward from the spiritual objective here is what it means - Bethlehem was the place that God himself chose to make his entrance into our world, thus Advent. This is where faith enters the Christmas story.

Who is our object of faith? At Christmas? Now before you answer that let me reference once again that poll that I mentioned at the beginning of the article. When participants were asked if they encouraged belief in Santa Clause or Jesus Christ as savior during the Christmas season, only 20% more of the respondents identified Jesus as savior above Santa . What does this say of our faith?

Please see “Christmas is ...” on Pg. 3

Hurley Flooding Response Progress

As most of you know, our neighbors in Hurley Virginia experienced major flooding just before Labor Day weekend wherein more than 7 inches of rain fell on selected areas of that region.

In conjunction with the Virginia Baptist Disaster Response teams, see <https://bgavdr.org/volunteer/> we responded, and deployed immediately, offering counseling, feeding, housing, showers, and flood recovery efforts.

For the last three months our church has provided volunteers there assisting families with “mudouts” and rebuilding efforts. Through your generous gifts we have been able to assist numerous families in their rebuilding efforts by providing much-needed manpower and thousands of dollars worth of materials to get them back into their homes. This is a collaborative effort involving every person who has provided support in many fashions. This is who we are as a church.



Two pickup trucks that survived the flood



**Excavation work in progress
To support this work click on our link below:**



[Online Giving Portal.htm](#)

“Christmas is ...”

Cont. from Pg. 2

Before you blow a gasket let me say this - I don't believe that we have a single person in our church or community that would even remotely consider Santa Claus to be the savior that was born on Christmas day. Neither can I grasp the idea that any of the people who make up our church family have no friends whatsoever. And the family matter, let's just say that you didn't drop in out of the sky. No you are a product of your parents, whether you like it or not.

But what about this faith matter? How can we visibly express our faith as a body of believers during a worldwide pandemic? First, gather with your faith family - either in person or online. I think all of us realize that there are certain people who are perhaps more susceptible to the coronavirus than others. And there are definitely those who have greater risk factors than others? For many the virus has proved to be deadly, for others who have been infected they appear to have overcome quickly and yet others have experienced short or long term hospitalization. Either way, let's choose to continue to love one another and honor the decisions of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Please listen closely - when you encounter those, either online or in person, who have practiced social distancing during the pandemic by being choosing not to gather with us physically in worship or bible study, do not treat them any differently than you would if you saw them in church last Sunday. Sometimes, if we are not extremely careful, we come across in a condescending manner that ensures that person will never be back with us. Whether you choose to believe it or not, those who join us in worship online are really worshipping with us and they're really engaging in bible study also. Let's make sure we treat them as such.

And last and certainly this applies to all of us, especially as we visibly live out our faith in a world of darkness. Let's make sure we continue to be supportive of our church and the advancement of the kingdom. And please know how appreciative that we are of everyone's continued support. This is a vibrant expression of our faith during troublesome and trying moments.

As we were walking in the Nickelsville parade last week a brother pastor and his wife said, “We will probably be up to worship with you soon.” I inquired, “Aren't you still pastoring?” His response came quickly, “No, our church has closed! And it's permanent!” How sad it that? But that's the story all across our country. Churches are closing at alarming rates. Why is this? I think the reason is simple - many chose to look upon technology and online services as being something nothing less than the devil's work himself, thereby sealing their fate and destiny.

In contrast to that we recently had first time guests with us from the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. Why? Because they like what they see and experience weekly as they join us online in worship but they are also partnering with us to help others. And this particular ministry of our church continues to grow by leaps and bounds.

Let me wrap this up with a few words - In this life and at the close of this life there are but 3 things of paramount importance: our faith, our family, and our friends. And Christmas provides us with the opportunity to refocus, renew, and reenergize these areas of life that desperately need our attention. Let's seize the opportunity!

From our family to yours - have a great Christmas!

Brother Steve



Ila Gray's First Trunk or Treat



Trunk or Treat Pros



Christmas Parade

Worship Opportunities

SUNDAY MORNING

8:45 AM - Early Worship

10:00 AM - Life Groups (all ages)

11:00 AM Morning Worship (Streamed Live)

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Choir practice 5:45 PM

Bible Study @ 7:00 PM

Our Annual Trunk or Treat was a great success this year as we had our highest attendance ever.

WMU

We held our annual Christmas get-together on Sunday, December 5th at 4 PM and had a great time of food, fellowship and fun.

50th Wedding Anniversary

On Saturday, December 18th beginning at 4 PM everyone is invited to attend a reception in their honor at First Baptist Church FLC, Nickelsville. No gifts just your presence maybe a card with your kind words. 50 Years is a blessing from God. May they have many more. Happy Anniversary to you both.



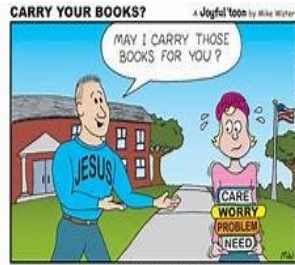
Christmas Cantata

Our choir will be presenting their Christmas Cantata on Sunday, December 12th in both worship services at 8:45 and 11:00 AM.

Worship with Us on Christmas Eve

Our Annual Christmas Eve Service will be on Friday, December 24th @ 7:00 PM.

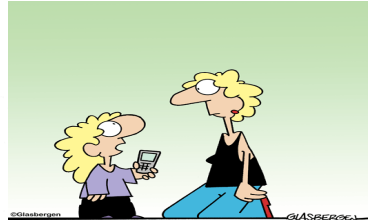
“Holy Humor”



"I looked, and the Ten Commandments don't say anything about running with scissors!"



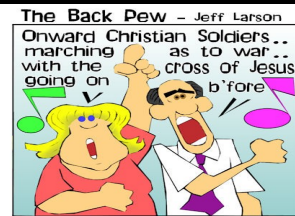
"Yes, the disciples followed Jesus... but not on Twitter."



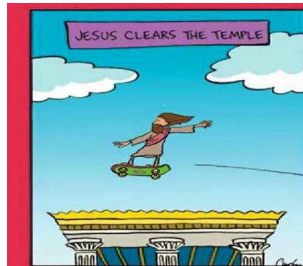
"If I send my prayer as a text message, will it get a faster reply?"



If there were cellphones at the Red Sea



We sing 'Onward Christian Soldiers' on Sunday, then go AWOL on Monday. - Max Lucado



JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE



"I don't know all Ten Commandments. The only ones I remember are 'settle down', 'act your age' and 'take that out of your mouth.'"



"My parents believe that a cat has 9 lives, but I'm not as religious as they are."



"Ever since they invented cloud computing, I keep getting data stuck between my toes!"