



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

505 N C STREET | FREMONT | NE | 68025

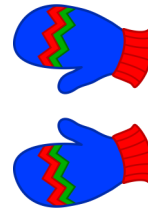
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first star is visible? When the sky has turned fully black? And then there is the definition of work. Is cooking supper work? What about feeding your animals? Different groups had different views on some of these things and they were regularly debated. When Jesus asked whether someone would leave a donkey that had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath or rescue it, the answer would have depended on which group was giving the answer—those at Qumran apparently thought it should be left there until the next day.

Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots—perhaps called Sicarii, the Herodians, Essenes, Hasidim, the School of Shammai, the School of Hallel, the Priesthood in Jerusalem...all seeking to understand clearly how to follow God's commands properly, because who wants to end up like Nadab, Abihu, and Uzzah? This was the context of the debates into which Jesus enters as he discusses what Moses taught and what God desires of us. It is the kind of world in which we exist as well. Some things in the Bible are extremely clear, such as the divinity of Jesus, salvation and forgiveness being available only through him, etc. Some others require interpretation (such as when Paul points out that some felt free to eat meat sacrificed to idols while others did not) and interpretation can vary in many ways. It is important, therefore, as a student of God, to seek diligently to follow scriptural teaching to the best of our understanding, but to also be open to the possibility that we can learn from another's different perspective on things that require interpretation. After all, I suspect that none of us knows all the answers yet, right? At least, I don't! But I love learning.



JANUARY 2026

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Fremont, Nebraska



Lead Pastor - Richard Crooks | Music Director - Sasha White | Youth Leader - Jesse Kracht

Pastor's Notes

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. —Matthew 24:14


As I write this article, in the final moments of all the Christmas celebrations, and on the verge of a new year, I am mindful of the coming days when two of our young adults and our youth minister will be attending the 2025 Urbana Conference in Phoenix, with Nola and I along to help as a logistics support team. Urbana is a conference (so named, because for years it was held on the campus of ULLINI in Urbana/Champagne, Illinois. It is a conference at which literally thousands of college age young adults will gather to learn about Christian mission work around the world, with an emphasis on considering how they might serve God as missionaries themselves or in support of Christian mission work from here at home.

The conference is sponsored by the non-denominational para-church organization Inter-Varsity Fellowship, which works primarily on college campuses for outreach and support of young Christians in college as well as faculty. Founded in 1941, they have ministries on some 772 U.S. college campuses, supporting over 1,000 local chapters. I first learned of Inter-Varsity when I was in college at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, and have regularly valued and shared some of their publications, most recently sharing the booklet "Tyranny of the Urgent" with the young adult group here. Our denomination has regularly had booths representing opportunities in mission and mission education options. I attended Urbana back in the 80's when I was in seminary, helping host Central Seminary's booth at the event, and consider our church and count myself privileged to be going now with our young adults in connection with the International Ministries of the American Baptists. I hope I can share with you the excitement of what this conference is about.

The verse above is just one of the times Jesus mentions our commission to take the good news of his salvation to every corner of the world. There is much work to be done, for there remain literally billions of people who have not yet heard the Gospel in Muslim countries around the globe, in China or India, or Japan and southeast Asia. And yet, this is an incredible time of God's Spirit moving in our world. The gospel and the Bible are being taken to remote areas of the world via recordings that can be played via solar or manual power, critical for people who cannot read. Cell phone access to the internet has provided opportunities for people to be able to hear the Gospel who would have otherwise been isolated from it. As a result, we have been able to have individuals attend our Thursday Zoom Bible study from Pakistan and India without ever leaving our church building!

We live in an era when more Muslims are coming to know Christ than ever before, this in spite of the fact that very few resources are dedicated to that

arena of mission. But I believe it is more than just the move of God overseas...God is moving here in the U.S. as well, including our own church. First of all, we are directly involved around the globe because of our active support of the missionaries in our budget and through our mission offerings. In our own community, we are investing in people outside our walls and within, as we meet new individuals coming to our church from a wide variety of backgrounds, as well as our work with the children and youth God brings to us. And God is at work even our support of these 3 young adults to Urbana (and there are others we are looking to send in 3 years for the next one!), any one of whom might change the world in ways we cannot imagine.

 Whenever I hear that one of the big Omaha churches is trying to start a “campus church” here in Fremont, I always say, rather tongue-in-cheek, that we definitely need more churches here since we only have 50+ already, and they definitely need to be here, since they have already won everybody in Omaha to Christ through their evangelistic work, right? No, they have not. But then, we have not reached everyone here in the Fremont area either, have we? We live in an exciting time of the move of God...if we but have the eyes, heart and commitment to recognize and be part of it. Go God!

Watching for God to work in 2026,

(p.s. You will have opportunity to learn some of the things our young adults discover at Urbana in our worship on the first Sunday of January, 2026...don’t miss it!)

Richard

TUES
DEC 23
2025

PROMISE OF LIGHT

READ John 1:1-14

Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."*
— John 8:12 (KJV)

After nearly 100 years, the beautiful stained-glass windows in our church needed repair. Plywood panels temporarily fill the empty spaces, and our sanctuary is much dimmer now. We're not sure how long the repairs will take, but we look forward to once again seeing the glorious hues of the windows in our sanctuary.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
When the world seems dark, I will look to Jesus, the Light of the world.

Sometimes I allow my own outlook to become dimmed by the condition of the world. It's disturbing and almost overwhelming.

— the wars, injustice, poverty, crime, prejudice, and religious and political strife. So many problems seem to darken the world; many seem to have no solutions.

However, just as I know the sun will once again shine brilliantly through our stained-glass windows, scripture assures me of the promise that one day all will be revealed. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:12 that we are seeing things "through a glass, darkly" but that one day all truth will become clear. Through faith and hope we anxiously anticipate the fulfillment of God's promise that one day we will understand and live in God's Holy Light.

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you for the assurances you give us in your holy word that help us when we feel overwhelmed by the world. Amen.

Steven Schlesselman (Oklahoma, USA)

64 Prayer Focus: THOSE WHO FEEL HOPELESS

A New Year's Prayer

May God make your year a happy one!
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,
But by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;
Not by making your path easy,
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from you,
But by taking fear from your heart;
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping your face bright,
even in the shadows;
Not by making your life always pleasant,
But by showing you
when people and their causes need you most,
and by making you anxious to be there to help.
God's love, peace, hope and joy to you
for the year ahead.

~Anonymous



“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, -Exodus 20:8-10a

This 4th of the Ten Commandments I suspect most of us are familiar with, and consider it important, as we do the

others, as have the Jewish people for centuries. This month I’d like to help you understand the controversies about the Sabbath that the Jewish leaders had with Jesus, by offering some context.

Do you recall the episodes in the Bible where Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu made offerings to God on the Tabernacle altar that were not ones specifically commanded by God, and as a result fire from God destroyed them (Lev. 10)? Or remember the time David had the ark brought to Jerusalem, the ark which has very specific instructions as to how it was to be moved, but when the oxen stumbled it almost fell, Uzzah reached out to steady it and instantly died as a result (2 Samuel 6)?

Witnessing these kind of incidents would make one be concerned and cautious about not accidentally violating God’s commands, right? After all, was Uzzah supposed to just let the ark fall to the ground? This lesson was driven home in such a way that being careful to not violate them led to the need to clarify how to properly follow them. If you read the commands of Moses in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy carefully, you will discover that there are clearly things the Israelites were commanded to do, such as the various offerings. What is NOT there, is exactly HOW to do them. Do you cut the meat in a certain way? Is there a specific fuel you are to use for the offering fire? Things like that.

Somebody must have told or shown somebody how to do things like that, one way or another, right? After all, who would want to do one in the wrong way after the incident with Nadab and Abihu? Somewhere in the mists of history, those kinds of details were provided for the people, according to tradition, by word of mouth originating with Moses. These sayings were collected and officially selected out of the many in existence by Judah ha-Nasi decades after The New Testament was written, and is now called the Mishna. The teaching is that Moses provided both the Written Law (the Torah...the first five books of the Bible) and the Oral Law. In addition, the various groups that developed (perhaps similar to what we call Denominations) had varied emphases and interpretations, sometimes due to geographical location. A Jewish community remained in Babylon long after the exile ended and developed a collection of guidance regarding the laws, and another in Jerusalem who did the same. The Qumran Community (collectors and/or writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls and which existed during Jesus’s lifetime) rejected many things the Jerusalem leadership followed, and so went out into the wilderness by the Dead Sea to seek a more careful obedience.

Some of the things discussed would have been around the Sabbath. For instance, if you are going to keep it holy, it is important to know what time frames consist of the Sabbath....we think in terms of 6 p.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Saturday....but before clocks and standardized time zones, how was one to know when “6 p.m.” officially came. When the sun slips behind the horizon? When the

December History Puzzle Answer:

The date of Dec. 25 for Christmas gradually became the practice of Christians around 200-300 A.D., with the first firm record being a Roman Almanac from 354 A.D. (Other dates that had been used previously included May 20, and dates in April or November.) While Constantine was emperor, John Chrysostom indicated in 336 that Dec 25th had been used in the Western Church for at least 10 years. Antioch and Egypt didn't endorse the date until several decades later. There were a variety of reasons for the choice of this date, including the pre-existing solstice celebration by the Romans, but also because of the symbolism of Christ as the Light of the World at the begin of the lengthening of days at solstice, as well as beliefs about the date prophets die in relation to when they were born. Other factors came to play as well. About nine centuries later, St. Francis started creating the first living Nativity scenes. Which began an entirely new tradition as well.

January History Puzzle:

Many people think of the two main branches of Christianity as being Catholic and Protestant. However, that is actually pretty inaccurate. There are several branches of Christian Churches that are neither, including Baptists. Do you know why Baptists are not actually Protestant? Or what some of the other branches might be?



Bring your Dinner, Bring a Friend,
and Bring your Comfy Vibes!
Movie Night & Brown Bag Fellowship
happens every **Second Sunday** of the month
— we'd love to see you!
6pm in the Family Center



WHAT DO YOU WANT MORE OF THIS YEAR -
AND WHAT ARE YOU READY TO LET GO OF?

BIRTHDAY	PHONE	DAY
Mary Ann Ritthaler	402-721-1623	4
Marilyn Hillrichs	402-721-0949	14
Deb Peterson	402-727-4034	21
Joyce Jokumsen	402-719-4857	27
John Dennert	317-577-0623	29

December Bible Puzzle Answer:

There were two times individuals heard a voice from heaven declaring Jesus to be God's Son: at Jesus's baptism (Matt 3, Mk 1 and Luke 3) and at his transfiguration (Matt 17:5, Mk 9:7). In the first case John the Baptist, his followers and Jesus would have been the ones who heard. In the second case it would have been Peter, James and John on the mountain with Jesus who heard God's voice.

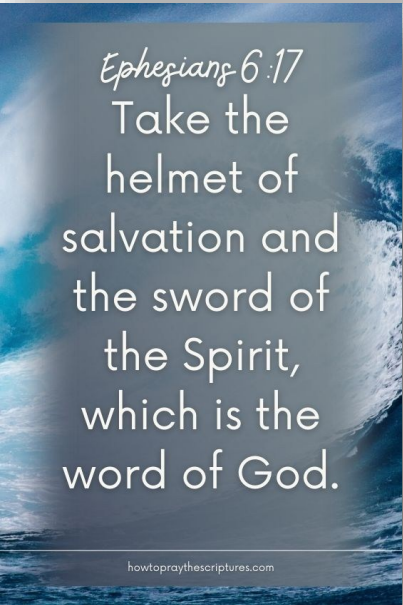
January Bible Puzzle:

Following up on December's question, what other New Testament stories mention a voice being heard from heaven (not angelic appearances), and what were the context of those incidents?



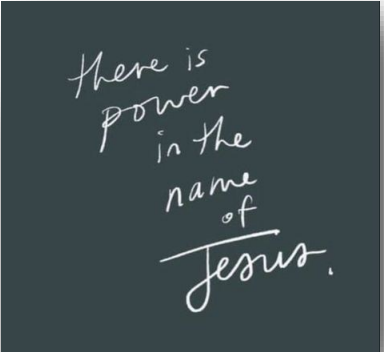
MEETINGS

Esther Circle - January 12 @ 11 am
Hannah Circle - No Meeting
Naomi Circle - January 22 @ 12:30 pm



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WORSHIP SERVICE
CHIMES | PICTURES
GIVING | OUTREACH



JOIN US FOR OUR MONTHLY
BIBLE STUDY!!
January 17TH @ 9:30am

VISION TEAM: December 13, 2025

Attendance: Mike Raasch, Marcia Hill, Joel Foreman, Randy Cash, Eileen Cash, Alan Holzerland, Pastor Crooks.

Opening Prayer: Mike Raasch



- Joel - ABM: No report as they are wrapping things for the year.
- Marcia - Children/Youth Ministries: Last night for Wednesday activities before Christmas break was on 12/10/25. A Christmas puppet show was put on for the kids (voiced by our Youth kids: Asa, Ryan, Lexi and Lily) following up with crafts and putting together stocking that were taken to the Bridge. Terry Woodman made ornaments out of a tree branch that was used for part of the crafts. The youth group helped serve at the Harvest dinner on Sunday, 11/23/25 and raised \$229.00 towards their account. Marcia reported the youth had a separate friend/family Thanksgiving dinner on the same night, 11/23/25, in which some of the leftover food from the Harvest Dinner was provided. The youth kids are planning on going caroling on 12/21/25 from 5:30pm - 7:30pm.
- Marcia reported on behalf of Mark & Vickie Anderson (Outreach): Thank-you cards were sent out to Costco (\$50.00) and Target (\$100.00) for donating gift cards that were used to purchase snacks given to the designated schools (Washington, Grant, Linden) during testing. There are 2-3 trash cans full of coats that are still available to be given to children in need.
- Eileen - ABW: Eileen expressed her appreciation to the church for the prayers, calls and card during her recovery. Eileen announced after 57 years, Cordova will discontinue their bazaar they hold to help raise money. The cost of postage has gotten too expensive to ship donations. Cordova will ask for cash donations instead. Nola spoke to Greg (American Baptist) regarding the Maple Crest Home in Omaha which are collecting items for bingo, any kind of cards (new or used), prayer shawls and lap robes.
- Randy (Treasurer) reported nothing out of the ordinary. Money collected for the youth during the Harvest Dinner was around \$229.00. We raised \$1000.00 to put towards the Harvest Dinner. Mission payments have stopped being sent to Doane College as the filed for bankruptcy.
- Pastor Crooks shared for the personnel team we have started looking new organist. On the last Sunday of the month, Richard and Nola will be in Arizona with Gabby and Ali for the conference. Pastor Richard will be taking some vacation time as well. On February 22nd, 2026, Avi Snyder with Jews for Jesus will speak in during the Sunday service. March 14th, 2026, Prairie conference (central seminary) to come speak. Nominations for the different committees were pushed back to the first of the year. The budget for 2026 will be announced to the congregation on 12/14/25 with a separate business meeting to be held Sunday 12/21/25 to discuss and vote on the 2026 budget. Pastor Crooks ask for opinions on whether he should continue with "People of Faith".
- Joel presented the budget for 2026. Changes were discussed to replace Bacone College to Life Choices and change the budget amount for the ABC union Mission to be divided by 12 months.
- Eileen made a motion to accept the 2026 Budget with the corrections discussed. Marica second. Motion passed.



January

- He Makes Things New -

Meditate and journal about how God is doing a new thing in your life...

Day 1-Numbers 23:19-20

Day 2-II Samuel 22:32-37

Day 3-Job 8:5-7

Day 4-Psalm 23:4-6

Day 5-Psalm 27:10-14

Day 6-Psalm 30:2-5

Day 7-Psalm 40:1-3

Day 8-Psalm 77:10-15

Day 9-Psalm 84:5-7

Day 10-Psalm 103:1-5

Day 11-Psalm 126

Day 12-Proverbs 16:9

Day 13-Ecclesiastes 3:11

Day 14-Isaiah 43:18-19

Day 15-Isaiah 62:2-4

Day 16-Isaiah 65:17-19

Day 17-Lamentations 3:19-26

Day 18-Ezekiel 36:24-26

Day 19-Malachi 3:6

Day 20-Romans 8:17-18

Day 21-Romans 12:1-2

Day 22-II Corinthians 3:17-18

Day 23-II Corinthians 4:16-18

Day 24-II Corinthians 5:16-21

Day 25-Ephesians 4:22-24

Day 26-Philippians 1:3-11

Day 27-Philippians 3:13-14

Day 28-Colossians 3:1-4

Day 29-I John 3:2-3

Day 30-Revelation 2:17

Day 31-Revelation 21:1-4



Questions to Ask: How does God change us? What does He make new? How is He trustworthy? How does He fulfill His purposes in our lives?

FBKIDS | FBYOUTH

***FBKids K-6 / Wednesdays - 6:15p Meal & 6:45p Groups**
***FBYouth 7-12th / Sundays - 6p Meal & 6:30p Groups**

What a year it has been for FBC Youth! As we wrap up this year and look forward to what God has in store for us next year. I thought it would be a good idea to highlight some of the key things that had happened this year. During the first part of the year, the youth and I had the opportunity to travel to Des Moines, Iowa to an event called "Winter Jam" a Christ centered concert that brought the heart of revival alive to all that attended. Later in that month, the students had the opportunity to attend Camp Moses Merrill for a weekend retreat, where our region pastor Greg Mamula gave an amazing word. During the heart of the year, in June, over 20 youth students and leaders had the opportunity to attend Camp Moses Merrill for a youth camp. That week was spent learning about the heart of God and the love that He has for all of us. Over 8 youth students from our church gave their life to the Lord or rededicated their lives to the Lord during that camp (Praise the Lord). To end the year, the youth and I had the opportunity to go Christmas Caroling to some of the members of the congregation, truly we did make a "joyful noise" for the Lord. From the major events to the minor events, the Lord's presence and supervision has been blanketing our youth. To close, from the bottom of our hearts, all of us at FBC youth thank you all for all of the continued prayers and support that you have given us this past year. As always, we look forward to what God has in store for us in the future. May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. In everything you do, say and wherever you go.

Signing off for 2025, Jesse Kracht



Even youth grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.—Isaiah 40:30-31 NIV



FBYOUTH WAS OUT SPREADING SOME CHRISTMAS CHEER BY GOING CAROLING! FROM JOYFUL SONGS TO SMILING FACES, IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL REMINDER OF THE SEASON'S SPIRIT. THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO WELCOMED US AND HELPED MAKE THE NIGHT SO SPECIAL!

- Alan spoke for Property and Finance and shared the big window above the choir loft, and the two adjacent windows need to be replaced. Of the options presented, it was agreed upon to take out the window and replace everything which will run approximately \$78,000.
- Eileen made a motion to spend the extra money to replace all three windows on the south side of the church instead of replacing the two smaller windows with color glass. Shelly second and motion passed.
- Closing: Mike Raasch

As there was no other form of business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Shelly Bowen, clerk



Business Meeting December 21, 2025

A business meeting was held after the first service to present the 2026 budget. Mike Raasch presented the budget to the congregation. A question/answer period was provided. Mike asked for a motion to accept.

- Linda Raasch made motion to accept the 2026 budget as is. Marica Hill made a second. Motion was passed.
- Alan Holzerland presented the special project of repairing the three windows on the south side of the church. Alan shared the extent of the repairs needed to repair the windows with the congregation. Sasha added she is actively looking for grants we may be qualified for which ask for a match on our end. Sasha commented that the grants, if received, would not be applied towards the South window but could be applied to replacing the windows on the side. due to the church being a historical building and the need of getting them replaced. It was relayed that the references provided were called and they all gave reviews that they were very pleased with the work and the communication received.



Question/Answer session was provided.

- Eileen made motion to move forward with the start of the special project for repairing the windows. Linda Raasch second. Motion passed.
- Mike and Joel presented the 2026 budget during second service (11:00am). Question/answer session was provided.
- Mark Anderson made motion to accept the 2026 budget. Roxanne second. Motion was passed.
- Alan Holzerland presented the special project to repair the windows which would be through Scottish Stained Glass. Sasha shared she is actively looking for grants which are mostly on a 1:1 match. If received, grants would help repair the side windows.
- Question/Answer session was provided. One question was asked on what the reselling value of the church building was. The concern was raised on whether it was worth putting that much money into the building. It was requested that the church be appraised. Alan stated he would take that question back to the Property and Finance committee to be discussed.
- Alan asked for motion to proceed with the special project for repairing the windows.

Jim Peterson made motions to start working on the project to repair windows. Vickie Anderson second. Motion passed.

JANUARY 2026

Things Change, its always a good idea to check times and dates of events.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><i>“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” - Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV</i></p>				1 Office Closed Happy New Year! 	2 9a - Men's Coffee 10a - Nye Sq. Bible Study	3 7a - ABM Bible Study 8a - ABM Breakfast 9a - Property Team 6p - Fun & Fellowship
4 COMMUNION Urbana Focus 9:30a - Traditional Service 11a - Casual Service No FBYouth	5 Handwritten Copy of Annual Report Due 9a - Men's Coffee 6p - Woodcarvers	6 7p - AA Meeting	7 6:15p - Meal 6:45p - FBKids K-6th 7p - Bible Study	8 5:30p - Kay Circle Mat Weaving	9 9a - Men's Coffee 12p - Bible Study in Parlor	10 8:45a - Personnel Team 9:30a - Vision Team
11 9:30a - Traditional Service 11a - Casual Service 11a - Bible Study in Parlor 6p - Brown Bag/ MOVIE NIGHT 6p - FBYouth Snack 6:30p - FBYouth Groups 7-12	12 Digital Copy of Annual Report Due 9a - Men's Coffee 11a - Esther Circle	13 No Hannah Circle 7p - AA Meeting	14 6:15p - Meal 6:45p - FBKids K-6th 7p - Bible Study	15 10a - Pastor-Led Bible Study to include Zoom	16 9a - Men's Coffee 12p - Bible Study in Parlor	17 9:30a - ABW Bible Study
18 10a - Combined Worship Service 11a - Annual Meeting 6p - FBYouth Snack 6:30p - FBYouth Groups 7-12	19 Office Closed 9a - Men's Coffee  6p - Woodcarvers	20 7p - AA Meeting	21 6:15p - Meal 6:45p - FBKids K-6th 7p - Bible Study	22 12:30p - Naomi Circle 5:30p - Kay Circle Mat Weaving	23 9a - Men's Coffee 10a - Nye Sq. Bible Study 12p - Bible Study in Parlor	24
25 9:30a - Traditional Service 11a - Casual Service 11a - Bible Study in Parlor 6p - FBYouth Snack 6:30p - FBYouth Groups 7-12	26 9a - Men's Coffee	27 7p - AA Meeting	28 6:15p - Meal 6:45p - FBKids K-6th 7p - Bible Study	29 10a - Pastor-Led Bible Study to include Zoom	30 9a - Men's Coffee 12p - Bible Study in Parlor	31

Please turn in your Handwritten Annual Report by January 5 & Digital Copies by January 12th. Thank you in advance!! Amity :)

Cookies & Coffee
4 - Hannah
11 - Esther
18 - Naomi
25 - ABM

FBYouth Snack
11 - Amity Bruce
18 - Tobi Hill
25 - Marcia Hill