

WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Wednesday, December 14, 6:15pm

Jesus, Light of the World—Children's
Choir Christmas Program (Sanctuary)

Sunday, December 18, 10:30am

Fourth Sunday of Advent—Tony
Hopkins, Bell Tower Ringers, Jayne
Womack and Sanctuary Choir
(Sanctuary)

Sunday, December 18, 6:30pm

Candlelight Service of Lessons and
Carols—Sanctuary Choir and Brass
(Sanctuary)

If you can't worship with us in person, join us by radio at 89.3-HD4, 91.9FM or 92.9FM. Visit our church website, firstbaptistgreenville.com, or our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/fbcgreenvillesc/>, to view online.



The Advent Conspiracy

Dear Church Family,

As we journey through Advent together, I want to share something which I've found very meaningful. It is the Advent Conspiracy, which is both a book and a movement (www.adventconspiracy.com). Having observed that Jesus is increasingly at the periphery of Advent and Christmas—while consumerism is increasingly at the center—a group of ministers asked a strikingly simple question: How can we help Christians and churches move toward the true meaning of Christmas? Their four-fold answer was also striking, both in its simplicity and in its depth.

Worship fully. If Christmas is to be about Christ, it begins with making time for private devotion and corporate worship. (I trust you know that there are resources for both right here at FBG!) Relationships strengthen when we invest time and energy in them, and no relationship is more important than this one.

Spend less. Last year global spending related to Christmas topped a trillion dollars (yes, trillion, with a tr-), and most of that was spent on people like us, who have everything we need and much of what

we want. (That's why it's so hard to shop for our family and friends, because we all have so much.)

Give more. Instead of giving affluent people things they don't need, what if we gave generously to help those who don't have the things we often take for granted? In our context, our Mission and Ministry Plan provides people in our community with food, shelter, medical care, and more; and the Lula Whilden World Missions Offering helps provide those things for people literally around the world.

Love all. While we tend to focus on family and friends, Jesus spent his life pushing the boundaries of love beyond family and friends to include all people. Remember, love is not merely a feeling; it is demonstrating compassion and caring through personal behaviors and meeting people's needs. What better way could there be to celebrate the One who is love incarnate?!

I wish you a very meaningful Advent and a very joyful Christmas!

—Tony



Wednesday, December 21, 6:15pm
Longest Night Service
Sanctuary

Saturday, December 24, 5:00pm
Christmas Eve Service of Communion
Sanctuary

Two Ways to Support Missions

The Lula Whilden World Missions Offering at First Baptist Greenville supports the work of three missions-focused partner organizations: Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), CBF of South Carolina, and the Alliance of Baptists. The Missions & Affiliations Committee invites you to learn about, pray for, and consider making a financial gift to support these organizations' ongoing work with communities in our state, region, nation, hemisphere and world. During the Candlelight Service on December 18, 100% of that evening's offering will go to the Lula Whilden World Missions Offering.

Our Local Relief Fund is used on those occasions when a member of the Greenville community

has run out of options for themselves and their family and must turn to nonprofits and churches for assistance. While several line items from our general Missions budget go to support the local work of nonprofits like United Ministries, we as a church also engage in direct relief and benevolence on a case-by-case basis. Recent examples include covering a power bill for a family whose electricity was close to being shut off, assistance with rent to prevent an impending eviction, and a grocery order for a family struggling to provide a Thanksgiving meal for their loved ones. I oversee this account and when the decision to give or not isn't straightforward, consult with



other members of the Pastoral Staff and trusted nonprofit leaders. During the Christmas Eve Service on December 24, 100% of that evening's offering will go to replenish our Local Relief Fund.



To donate, use this QR code or give in person at the special services on December 18 and 24.

Peace, hope, faith and love,
Matt

Forum@First Continues in January with a Survey of Christian Theology!

Rev. Carrie Nettles and I will be co-leading "Intro to Christian Theology: Theological Controversies Through the Centuries." How and when did early Christians decide if Jesus was a human, divine, or something in between? Where did we get the doctrine of the Trinity? (*Spoiler—one church council in 335 got so heated over the Trinity that there was a murder!*) How did medieval female mystics change the way Christians define prayer and a personal connection to Jesus? How did understandings of God and suffering change after the Holocaust? We will explore the ways the remnants of these theological debates and issues have shaped our worship practices and where these controversies are alive in today's church landscape.

We will gather on Sundays, January 8–February 12, in the Fellowship Hall from 9:30–10:15am. Come early for coffee! All sessions will be livestreamed and archived for later viewing. No registration is required.

Not sure of your January or February plans? Tony Hopkins will lead a series on the Gospels from March 5–26, and Matt Rollins will lead a series on Baptist History April 16–May 21.

If you would like to watch sessions from Fall 2022, videos are available on the church website on the "Adult Sunday School" page or at this link: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/9750247>.

Forum@First courses are open to all community members of any church affiliation or faith tradition. Courses meet in the Fellowship Hall from 9:30–10:15am on Sundays for six weeks at a time. The Forum program is an additional theological education option at FBG intended to grow community relationships and dive deeper into theological content you might find in a seminary curriculum. All are welcome!

—Camille

Not Feelin' It?

You're not alone. Despite the hoopla around us, the holiday spirit can elude many who dread being asked to be happy when sad, to be together where relationships are strained, or to face painful memories the holidays bring up.

The church never wants to add a burden to already-burdened people. While we celebrate the season, we also want to offer you a safe and compassionate space for addressing those less-than-joyful feelings.

Last Saturday some gathered with counselor Marjorie Avent to get some help "Befriending Our Grief," and those who attended may have some encouragement to share with those who did not. Our ministers' doors remain open for honest conversations about grief. Caring Stephen Ministers are available, and resources are at your disposal. Please don't suffer in silence!

Another opportunity comes on Wednesday, December 21, when we have our Longest Night Service (Sanctuary, 6:15pm), a beautiful time of bringing honest feelings before God in the presence of others who empathize.

Sometimes pain is exacerbated by the loneliness of too much self-focus. A new book called *Wonder Drug: 7 Scientifically Proven Ways That Serving Others is the Best Medicine for Yourself* (Trzeciak & Mazarelli) uses science to make the case for what "wise men" and wise women have known for centuries.

Maybe the best step toward that glimmer of light on the horizon would be to move toward someone who needs what you have to share. We ministers will be delivering Advent Gift Bags to those members who can no longer come to church, always a joyful, uplifting experience for us! Would you like to come along? Or go on your own?

Christ was born to bring rest for the weary, not stress. Can you receive that?

—Kyle

Save the Date(s)!

- Sunday, January 22
3:30-5:00pm
- Sunday, February 5
3:30-5:00pm
- Sunday, February 26
3:30-5:00pm

Each conversation will take place in the Fellowship Hall. The meetings are part of a critical process of self-study in our senior

The Senior Minister Search Committee invites you to join in a sacred process of discernment in congregational conversations.

minister search. They will focus on our church's past, present and future, as we develop both a *congregational profile*—capturing who we are as a church family—and a *pastor profile*—capturing the qualities that we as a church believe would make the perfect match in our new senior pastor.

These discernment conversations will be conducted in small,

facilitated groups. If you can, please attend all three meetings. If you can't make them all, please come to as many as you can. Childcare for children birth through grade 5 will be provided.

Please be present for these important events, so all can benefit from your wisdom and insight.

—Senior Minister Search Committee

Opportunities to Serve in our Children's Ministry

We need additional volunteer support on Sunday mornings: Sunday School substitutes and teachers, pianists for Preschool Worship, and Worship Shepherds. Children's Ministry is a wonderful and fulfilling place to serve, and we would love to have you be a part of impacting the lives of our youngest ones.

Each person who volunteers with our children will need to complete Protecting Our Children, but we are happy to help you through that process. Please contact me (bridget.kokolis@firstbaptistgreenville.com) if you are interested in volunteering or if you have any questions.

—Bridget

Upcoming Events

WATCH indicates worship experiences broadcast via Vimeo and Facebook Live.

- 12/13 8:30am** Holy Rollers to Shop at Asheville Outlet Mall
- 12/14 Wednesdays at First Activities**
WATCH 6:15pm MidWeek Fellowship (Sanctuary) with Children's Choirs Christmas Program
- 12/15 6:30pm** Shine a Light featuring Arielle Nakdimon, President of Greenville Jewish Federation, Rabbi Sam Rose of Temple of Israel and Ana Sazonov of the Columbia Jewish Federation (Fellowship Hall)
- 12/16 6:30pm** College Christmas Party (Home of Ray and Wade Bryant)
- 12/18 WATCH 9:30am** Advent Sunday School Series: Magnificat Messages—Village Engage (Fellowship Hall)
- 9:30am** The Bridge Exploring Advent (AYMC Lobby)
- WATCH 10:30am** Fourth Sunday of Advent Worship Service (Sanctuary) with Proclaimer Tony Hopkins

LIVING GENEROUSLY

Financial Needs as of 12/10
\$2,732,681

Receipts as of 11/30
\$2,204,682

Lula Whilden World Missions Offering

Goal: \$100,000

Receipts as of 11/30
\$60,497

Pastoral Care On Call Nights and Weekends

December 12-18
Kyle Matthews
864-551-0829 (m)

December 19-25
Camille Loomis Rehnborg
703-501-6425 (m)

If you are unable to reach this minister at the above number, please call the Church Office, 864-233-2527, and leave a message by pressing the number "2" for "Pastoral Care Emergencies."

Wednesdays at First Schedule

Exceptions and details noted in calendar

- 3:00-6:00pm** Youth Hang Time (AYMC Terrace Level)
- 5:00-6:00pm** Supper Serving Lines Open (Fellowship Hall)
- 6:00-7:00pm** Preschool and Children's Music and Missions (C300 and B400 halls)
- 6:00-7:00pm** Youth Bible Study (AYMC Terrace Level)

WATCH 6:30pm Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols (Sanctuary)

- 12/20 6:30pm** The Bridge Crazy Sweater Cookie Swap (Home of Ben and Stacie Snyder)
- 12/21 WATCH 6:15pm** The Longest Night Service (Sanctuary) with Proclaimer Kendra Plating
- 12/23-27** AYMC and Church Offices Closed in Observance of Christmas
- 12/24 WATCH 5:00pm** Christmas Eve Service of Communion (Sanctuary) with Proclaimer Tony Hopkins
- 12/25 WATCH 10:30am** Christmas Day Worship Service (Fellowship Hall) with Proclaimer Tony Hopkins—No Sunday School or Childcare
- 12/31-1/2** AYMC Closed
- 1/1 WATCH 10:30am** New Year's Day Worship Service (Sanctuary) with Proclaimer Tony Hopkins—No Sunday School; Preschool Childcare Available
- 1/2** Church Offices Closed

Sympathy

...to the family of Bill Goodlett.

Thank You

What a joyous way to close my time on staff at First Baptist and begin my new chapter in life! Thank you for your lovely reception honoring me and Gail House. It meant so much to me to talk with so many of you and to hear from others through cards and texts, drawings and notes. Your generous love offering is overwhelming! I have so enjoyed serving my beloved church and look forward to ministering beside you in the future.

Love, Becky

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Wednesday Night Supper

Make reservations by noon on Monday at <https://firstbaptistgreenville.com/wednesdays-at-first/>

December 14

Adult: Chicken Divan w/Rice, Grilled Veggies, Salad, Roll, Dessert

**Wednesday Night Supper
Returns on January 4.**