

First Baptist Regina Weekly News

For the Week of December 13th, 2020

Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love

These four words will appear over the four Sundays of Advent in our worship. They are a modern way of meditating on Jesus's birth in our world and in our hearts.

These words can all be used to describe feelings we have. We need times when our hearts are filled with positive emotions such as these. It is healing and renewing. Christmas is usually a time when we experience many sources of feeling hope, peace, joy, and love: Beloved music, favourite stories, friends and family, gifts, great food, happy memories, and, most of all, good theology. Did I lose you with that last one?

I suppose plenty of us enjoy the thought of our favourite Christmas songs or a family dinner, but not so much the thought of sitting down with a good theological book.

Good theology is a conduit that connects our feelings to the deepest reality, to God and God's purpose for us and our world. This year, that connection might be more obvious than usual. We are being stripped of so many of our customary joys. There are rules and restrictions everywhere. Our reason for celebrating, our reason for hope, peace, joy and love has not changed.



Jesus is born. God did come and live among us. God did, once and for all, act in history to set things right.

I pray that God would confront whatever challenge or burden you are carrying with the truth of Jesus' birth. May God visit you and be a light in your heart.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. M. M. L.' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pastor Joel

First Baptist Church Regina Update

First Baptist Church Regina continues to offer in-person worship services. We are limiting attendance to 30 people. If you have access to the internet, a good alternative to attending in person is to join us on Zoom. Go to [our website](#) and click on “JOIN our Worship Service.”

Music@First

Christmas Glory 2020 – Live Music and Archival Audio Recordings

This glorious tradition of Christmas music and special readings will happen on Sunday, December 13, 2020 at 7:00 pm. Due to the pandemic, it will be online—over Zoom and on Facebook Live—this year.

First Baptist musicians and friends, both past and present, are coming together in unique ways to present the telling of the Christmas Story through bells, carol singing, choirs, instrumental and vocal solos/duets/trios, and special readings. Be sure not to miss this opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. *Invite your friends* to join in as well. Go, spread the notable news and experience the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of this special season!

To join or view the concert, go to [our website](#).

Christmas Reflections

During Advent, a number of previous Christmas Glory concerts will be available to watch online. One or more will be uploaded each week. To view, go to [our website](#). Please share these with others!

Christmas Music to prepare for worship

For the four Sundays of Advent, there will be 10 to 15 minutes of Christmas music before the worship service, beginning at 10:45 am. Featured will be both archival recordings performed in years past, plus LIVE selections from Christa W and Mark A. The archival recordings will feature Gifts of Music from the Sanctuary Choir, Exaltation, juBELLation, soloists, and instrumentalists. If you're joining the service via Zoom, be sure to tune in early to enjoy this special music.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to Hilary R, Kevin R, and Music Minister, Pastor John Nelson, for the many hours of work they have put into preparing this music for our enjoyment.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Our Christmas Eve service will be on December 24th at 6 pm, on Zoom and in person.

This is one of the most beautiful and meaningful services of the year. There will be scripture lessons and carols celebrating the Incarnation. Light some candles in your home and prepare communion and we will celebrate Jesus' birth together.

Please note: Due to the current restriction of thirty people, *registration will be required*. If you plan to come, please call (306) 359-1450 or send an email to [the church](#). Preference will be given to those who are unable to join over Zoom.

Is Christmas a difficult time for you because of a loss?

On Monday, December 21, we will be having a Blue Christmas Service at 6:30 pm, over Zoom. In this service, we will take time to recognize that for some, Christmas is a difficult time of year, due to loss.

This year, with the pandemic, loss has been experienced in many ways. Not only in the loss of loved ones, but also in the loss of employment, family connections, and simply being together. Then there is also the loss of things left undone, and the unresolved areas of our lives.

Another component of this service is hope – the hope we have as we anticipate the coming of Christ, and what this means in light of our loss. The service will give us an opportunity to recognize loss in our lives this past year through select readings, candle lighting, song, and a short message.

Watch for more information on our website and/or Facebook page, or contact [Pastor Richard](#).

Replenishing the Benevolent Fund

This year has been challenging for many in a variety of ways. Until now, the money in our benevolent fund has been sufficient to meet the needs that have come to the pastoral team. As your staff team met this week, we identified some needs that we are hoping we can meet prior to yearend. To do that, we would need some additional funds.

Several people have approached staff over the last months indicating their desire to help others in our congregation. It is with these offers in mind that we make you aware of this need. We understand that a number of individuals do not have extra funds to give right now. If this is you, please feel no pressure at all to give. If, however, God has laid it on your heart to give something extra, we would welcome your extra donation to the Benevolent Fund at this time in order to bless our congregation this month and have some funds ready to meet the needs that arise this winter. Please indicate on your donation that it is for the Benevolent Fund. For ways to give, see page 10.

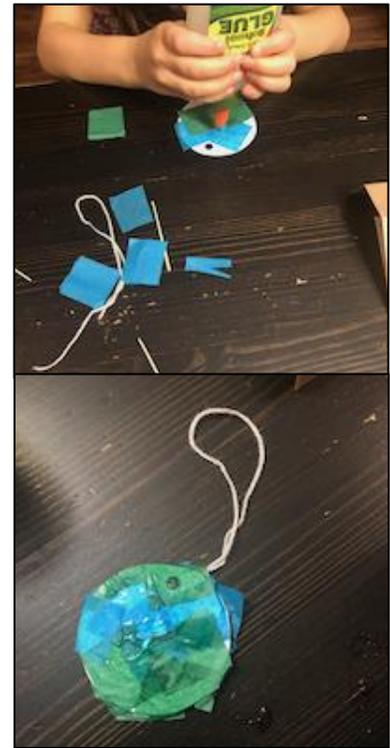
Thank you, in advance, for your care of one another.

Children's Ministry – A Journey through Advent

Julie and Kayely enjoyed connecting with some families in person from September to November prior to returning to an online format again. I think the highlight of the last few months was being able to drop off the “Jesse Tree” Advent activity boxes to our church families.

The “Jesse Tree” program is a way of preparing for Advent by journeying through the Bible stories about Jesus' family tree. Each day from December 1 to 25, the kids have a Bible story and short craft that reminds them of that day's story.

Christmas will look different this year. We've been making an ornament every day, which has been a positive encouragement for the kids. The activity boxes take families from the story of creation right up to Jesus' birth. The readings are included in each newsletter so others in our church family can also take part in what our kids are learning, as they see how the Old Testament story points us to Jesus.



An invite from FBC Kids to our whole FBC congregation:

While we are not able to make enough crafts for all the adults in the congregation, we would like to invite you to follow along with the Bible readings from December 1st to the 25th. Here are this week's readings:

Dec 13 - Isaiah 11:1-5

Dec 14 - Isaiah 11:6-10

Dec 15 - Isaiah 9:2,6-7

Dec 16 - Isaiah 40:11; Psalm 23:1-2; John 10:27

Dec 17 - Isaiah 53:4-7, 9, 12b; John 10:14-15

Dec 18 - Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 9:15

Dec 19 - Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 2:4-7

Dec 20 - 2 Kings 17:7; Daniel 3:1-6,12, 19-29; Jeremiah 1:8

For more information, please contact [Pastor Kayely](#) at or call (306) 359-1450.

—Pastor Kayely

What's happening at First?

Morning Prayer

Join us each morning, Monday to Friday at 7:15 am to begin your day with scripture and prayer, via Zoom. Visit our [website](#) for the link.

Children

Our children's ministry is online. For more information, see page 4.

Youth

Pastor Chris: "Last week the youth and I were able to meet on Zoom. We played a fun game called "Word Association". It is an elimination game where people have to associate a word to the word that is said before them with certain limitations (time, not repeating a word, and it being a word that that makes sense based upon the word that was previously said). It was fun and the winner was sent a meal through Skip the Dishes as their prize.

We also had time to pray, catch up, and watch the new Lego Star Wars Holiday movie. It was really funny.

We also received some very encouraging news from the Heartland Area Ministry this week; Mark D and Cindy E let us know that they are sending us some extra funds for the youth program to just bless us during a time where ministry with youth has been different, and sometimes more difficult. That was a real gift of encouragement and we are grateful. We will use the funds to do something "Christmassy" in the next week or two.

Please continue to pray for us as we navigate online community, and try to encourage a depth of faith in Christ that allows us to shine and reflect His light at a time like this." For more information, please contact [Pastor Chris](#).

Adults

Learning for Life: The L4L Romans Class (led by Annabel R) finished on December 6. L4L will be taking a short break over Christmas/New Years, resuming again on January 10, 2021. Ron P will be leading a mini-course on January 10 and 17: "Satan and the Christian." This will be followed by a course by Pastor Richard on the life and teachings of Jesus ("Jesus' Earthly Ministry: Revealing the Heart of God"), starting on January 24.

Voice is a small group for women who like to read and enjoy lively conversation. Voice meets every second Wednesday from 7 to 9 pm, using Zoom. At present, the group is reading *Jesus Among Other Gods* by Ravi Zacharias. For more information, visit [our website](#), send an email to [the church](#), or call (306) 359-1450.

Reading through the Old Testament: In this online reading group, participants will read through the Old Testament chronologically. The group will be meeting weekly, via Zoom, at two different times: Sundays at 4 pm and Thursdays at 11 am.

Gospel of John small group study: Pastor Richard is leading a small group online that is looking at the Gospel of John. This group is meeting, via Zoom, on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 7 pm, and the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month at 10 am. For more information about this group or the Old Testament group, please contact [Pastor Richard](#).

Offering Envelopes

If you wish to receive offering envelopes for 2021, please contact Tracy S, send an email to [the church](#), or call the church at (306) 359-1450.

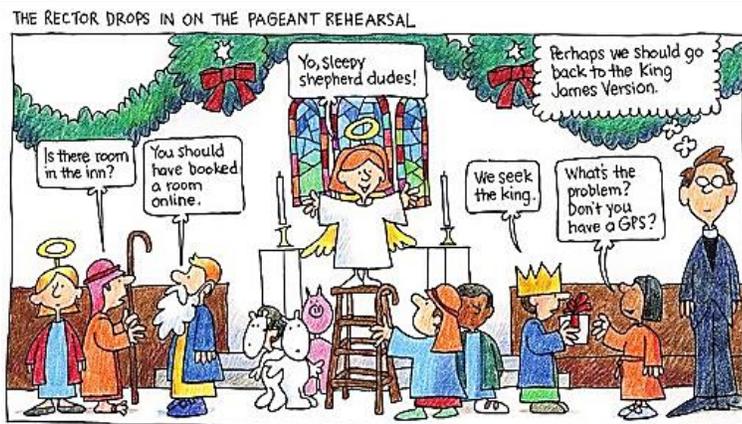
Because many people have switched to online giving, envelopes will *not* be printed unless you request them. ***Regardless of your method of giving, you will receive a tax receipt for it, as long as your name is indicated on your donation.***

Sermon Audio by Phone

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our church and affected many of us in different ways. Those of us without the devices, computers, and knowledge to connect to the Internet are feeling even more isolated. To help address this, First Baptist Church has implemented a service called “Dial-the-Sermon”.

A recent sermon is available to listen to on your phone—any landline or cell phone—by dialing (306) 992-1912 (toll-free within the Regina area). This is an easy way for anyone who is limited to a telephone for communication, to hear the sermon from a recent worship service. This number takes you straight to the sermon recording—there are *no* menu or option choices that you will be required to make. If you know someone who could benefit from this service, please pass this information on to them.

Dial-the-Sermon (306) 992-1912



One Hanukkah, a husband said to his wife, “I think there’s something wrong with these latkes, dear. They taste awful.”

His wife replied, “That shows you what you know. The recipe book says they’re delicious.”

Not sure if you have noticed, but I love bad puns. That’s just how eye roll.

Spiritual Disciplines Series: Shalom

The Hebrew word “Shalom” is often thought to mean peace, which is not a wrong understanding of the word – but it has much more depth than perhaps this one word can hold. Randy Woodley, in *Shalom and the Community of Creation*, suggests that defining Shalom as peace is correct “only if you consider it correct to call the Grand Canyon ‘a large crack in the ground’ or the Pacific Ocean ‘a large pool of water.’” Woodley goes on to explain: “Not only does shalom express much more than ‘peace,’ but the kind of peace shalom represents is active and engaged, going far beyond the mere absence of conflict.” Cornelius Plantinga, Jr, simply states that shalom “is the way things ought to be.”

The term shalom, as used in the Old Testament, is broad in application. It refers to physical well-being (Genesis 37:14, Jeremiah 14:13), peace in relationships (whether between nations as seen in 1 Kings 5:12 or between friends as seen in Jeremiah 20:10), and also has a moral or ethical application. In Psalm 34:14, the reader is instructed to “Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it” (ESV). To pursue shalom is the opposite of pursuing what is false or evil; it is to be upright and honest in one’s endeavors (see Psalm 37:37). The work of shalom, in the moral sense, is “working to remove deceit and hypocrisy and to promote honesty and integrity, and straightforwardness,” notes Perry Yoder. Within the New Testament, this concept of shalom is continued in the word εἰρήνη. Yoder goes on to note this word is used in much the same way as shalom – “for material or physical well-being (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 6:23), good relationships (Acts 24:2; Romans 14:19), and moral character (Romans 8:6; Galatians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:11).”

One significant difference, however, that Yoder notes between the concept of shalom in the Old Testament and εἰρήνη in the New Testament, is that εἰρήνη is used theologically in such ways as stating that God is a “God of peace” or speaking of the “gospel of peace.” Yoder states, however, that the theological significance of εἰρήνη comes to a peak in reference to the results of Jesus’ death and resurrection, through which he made peace in two significant ways: Firstly, Jesus brought peace to the relationship between humanity and God by means of justification through his blood. This was an act of love, by God, to his enemies. (See Romans 5:1-11) Secondly, the death of Christ also brings the possibility of peace between human beings. We see this beautifully illustrated in the words of Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus: “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.” (Ephesians 14-17 NIV)

Nathan Hunt, in his blog, *The Gospel in 5D: Shalom Spreading*, states that he is convinced that the character of the Kingdom of God is, in fact, Shalom. He writes: “This word is one of the most evocative in all of scripture. Shalom exists when all people equitably experience peace and justice, a comprehensive rightness in the relationship between all things... Shalom is a function of the two greatest commandments being worked out through the life of the Church: Love the Lord your God with all your heart soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:37-39).”

Shalom!

—Pastor Richard

Preparing our hearts for God's word

Pastor Joel's sermon from December 6, 2020 (A summary)

Scriptures: Luke 1:57-79

Zechariah provides a contrast with Mary, whom we will be looking at next week. An angel—which is simply Greek for “a messenger”—came to both Zechariah and to Mary, and both were told that they would have a son. However, only Mary believed.

Zechariah was a priest. He knew very well that all things were possible for God, but he could not believe. Perhaps those of us who've spent years in church, listening to stories about God acting and speaking, can sympathize. In our own lives, God's activity can seem rare. We know God is faithful, and we trust that God is present, but if we were to have a messenger arrive and tell us God was about to do something new, perhaps we too would doubt.

For Zechariah, God doing something new was impossible. Zechariah looked at the circumstances, he looked at what he was capable of, he thought how in all his years he had never seen God act, and so, he did not believe. Zechariah had no hope that God would fulfill his promise.

His neighbours and relatives also did not think something new was possible.

Then, even though Zechariah was old, even though Elizabeth was well along in years, they conceived. When the child was born, Zechariah wrote out that his son would not be given a family name, that God was indeed doing something new, and his son's name would be John. After a full year of being mute, Zechariah's tongue was loosened. His mouth was opened and he began to praise God out loud.

Zechariah's newfound faith and belief in God unlocked faith in others. Suddenly, the friends and the family were no longer looking at the child with their own agenda. They looked at the child with new eyes and they wondered, “What then will this child be?” As parents and as a church, this is how we should look at our children.

Zechariah's song of praise tells us what John's birth meant to them. Even though they had not believed, God had visited them. God had a tender mercy for them. It was like the sun rising in the darkness. God had taken away their disgrace. It meant redemption. It meant no more hate, no more enemies, and no more fear. They were free from sin to live holy lives. They had hope in the face of death, and God was leading them into shalom/ peace: that whole and fulfilled life.

When God visits us, this is what it is like.

This Christmas, as we read scripture, gather for worship, and read our advent devotions, let us remember that all of these are messages from God, meant to prepare us for Jesus' coming. Will we believe the words of the messengers?

Is there any darkness in your life? Is it impossible that God will visit you and bring you light? Is there any disgrace or shame? Is there any fear, worry, or anxiety? Is there hate? Do you feel that you have enemies? Is there sin? Is death's shadow touching you?

Zechariah sang about redemption, even though all his problems were not solved, and the darkness had not vanished completely. In this life there will be darkness. There is indeed a dawn coming, after which will follow no night.

But for now, in this world, there is darkness.

God is a light shining in the darkness. God has tender mercy for us. God visits us. Will we believe this message? Our preparation for Christmas is to believe the word of God, the words of God's messengers.

We might look at the circumstances in our world, in our lives, and think, "There is no hope." We might look at our own abilities and think, "I can't do it. I can't carry on." We might conclude that God has never done anything new in our lives.

This Christmas, remember that God is like a light in the darkness. Let us wait, watch, pray, and hope. Let us sit with God's word. Let it be a light rising in our hearts. Let us remember Jesus' promise to us:

"Those who seek will find and to all those who knock the door will be opened." Amen.

Please note: To hear the full sermon on your phone, call our "Dial-the-Sermon" line at (306) 992-1912.

Give & Take

For some time now, we have had a "Give & Take" section on our bulletin board where First Baptist folks can list items they would like to give away or items that they need. However, since very few have the opportunity to see the list these days, we will now include this information in the newsletter. Here are some items that folks would like to give away:

1. Hide-a-bed (Contact person: Pearl B)
2. Printer – Samsung ML-1710, Black & white, needs cartridge
Coffee maker & filters – Sunbeam, 6 cups
Ironing Board
(Contact person: Enosh)
3. Winter coat – full length with hood, fur trim; wool/cashmere, dark plum, size 6
(Contact person: Diane)
4. Two Metronomes – 1 wooden, 1 plastic cover
Picture frames – many sizes, colors, materials
(Contact person: Marilyn P)

If you can use any of these items, please send an email to [the church](#) or call (306) 359-1450 and we will notify the contact person. Or, if you have items either to "Give" or "Take" (something you need), please contact us and we will list your items here.

Tithing during the pandemic

With the COVID-19 crisis limiting contact with others and restricting meetings of groups, please do not neglect the financial needs of our church.

We have several ways to provide your regular tithes and donations to the church:

1. Mail your gifts to the church or call and leave a message at (306) 359-1450 to arrange for an in-person pick-up. Please place your cheque in your regular offering envelope (or any envelope marked "Offering"), and seal that inside another envelope addressed to: First Baptist Church, 2241 Victoria Ave, Regina, SK S4P 0S4.
2. Establish a **Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR) Plan**. This will automatically transfer funds from your account into the FBC Regina account on a regular basis. Please email the church or contact the Treasurer if you would like to set up PAR, or change your commitment.
3. Make an online donation:
 - Use **Interac e-Transfer** to donate from your phone or computer to FBCRegina@gmail.com (*no fee or cost to the church*)
 - Use a credit card with a PayPal account via the **PayPal Giving Fund** (*no fee or cost to the church... 100% of your donation reaches us and contributes to our mission*)
 - Use a credit card or PayPal via **CanadaHelps** (*a fee of 4% is deducted from the donation*)
 - Use a credit or debit card via **FBC ChurchTrac** (*the church is charged a fee of approximately 3% for each donation*)

PLEASE refer to our website at firstbaptistregina.ca for more specific information on these contribution methods. You may also contact the treasurer at (306) 775-1497 or email the church at main_fbcregina@sasktel.net for further details.



Q. What's Santa Claus's favorite track & field event?

A. North Pole—vaulting!

Q. How does the snow globe feel at this time of the year?

A. A little shaken.

Q. Who is a Christmas tree's favorite singer?

A. Spruce Springsteen!

Q: What kind of Christmas music do elves like?

A: "Wrap" music.