

# First Baptist Regina Weekly News

*For the Week of January 3rd, 2021*

New Year's Eve in Saskatchewan, to me, is at odds with the reality of winter. There is nothing "new" happening here in January. Or February. All the evidence points to months of dormancy and people stuck indoors. It would make so much more sense if the new year began in April or even May. Everything is waking up and starting to grow again during those spring months. Everywhere you go, people are out and about, enjoying the end of winter and the newness of spring. Right now, something new is a matter of faith.



Remember when God said to Abraham, "Look up at the sky and count the stars. So shall your offspring be." Abraham and Sarah were past the age of childbearing. God's message was at odds with the facts. What's more, others have observed that when God told Abraham to look at the stars, the sun was still up! He couldn't count the stars because there were none! I'm sure he knew the stars were there. It serves to underline an important lesson. The evidence at hand does not always point to what is coming. God is faithful.

We have a ways to go through this winter, but the spring will come. No one can see it coming at the moment, but we know it will. We also have a ways to go through the virus and all the restrictions, but the end will come. New life will come.

Let us therefore remain faithful to God, behaving with patience, hope, and love, because we know that God will be faithful to us.

With love,



Pastor Joel



## **In Memoriam, [Ring out, wild bells]**

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light:  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times;  
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind  
For those that here we see no more;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring in the valiant man and free,  
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
Ring out the darkness of the land,  
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

—by Alfred Lord Tennyson

## **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](#) for the link.

## **Christmas Greetings from Africa**

I greet you all in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I hope everyone is fine by the Grace of God. From our side we are fine as well.

By the Love, Grace and Mercy of God we are able to finish this year 2020, my family and I wish you all Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. May the year 2021 be a year of protection in your families by the blood of Jesus Christ, and I pray that the mighty hand of God be upon you all.

Thank you, we love and may God bless you all.

Your Brother and Sister in Christ,  
Nganga and Faida G

## Our Condolences

We extend our condolences to the family and friends of Susan Cowen, who passed away on Wednesday, December 9, 2020. Susan attended First Baptist for many years. A loving soul with a great sense of humour, she liked showing up early to church and visiting with friends. She helped with Achievers luncheon for several years. She had been struggling in recent weeks with her health, but never lost her positive attitude. She will be missed.



## Voice

The votes are in! The book chosen for Voice's novel study is "Becoming Mrs. Lewis" by Patti Callahan. Our discussion will be held online on Saturday, January 16th at 10 am. If you're interested in joining the group, please contact Laureen S or Bonnie AW, send an email to [the church](#), or call (306) 359-1450. For more information about Voice, see page 4.

## 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. If you know someone who might like to use this service, please pass this information on to them.

**Dial-the-Sermon (306) 992-1912**



My resolution was to read more, so I turned on closed captioning on my TV.

An optimist stays up until midnight to see the New Year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.

My grandparents had resolutions like donating more time and money to charities. I've decided to make my own coffee once a week.

My New Year's resolution is to get better at pretending to know the words to "Auld Lang Syne."

Youth is when you're allowed to stay up for New Year's. Middle age is when you're forced to.

## **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, contact [Pastor Kayely](#).

### **Youth**

The youth met on Saturday, December 19, for a virtual meal together, some fun games along a Christmas theme, and a time of prayer for each another. Their next event will be in January, 2021.

Please continue to pray for the youth as they deal with the challenge of having to meet virtually rather than in person. For more information, please contact [Pastor Chris](#).

### **Adults**

**Learning for Life:** The class is taking a short break over Christmas/New Year's, 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, starting on January 24, on the life and teachings of Jesus: "Jesus' Earthly Ministry: Revealing the Heart of God."

**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. Voice is taking a short break and will resume in January, 2021. For more information, contact Laureen S or Bonnie AW, visit [our website](#), send an email to [the church](#), or call (306) 359-1450.

**Reading through the Old Testament:** This group is taking a short break and will resume in January. The group meets weekly, via Zoom, on Thursdays at 10:30 am. For more information, please visit [our website](#) or contact [Pastor Richard](#).

**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, please visit [our website](#) or contact [Pastor Richard](#).

## Spiritual Disciplines Series: Practicing the Presence of God

Most of us probably believe that God is active and present (though sometimes we may wonder what he is doing). Yet how often in the run of the day do we think about God? The Psalmist writes of God:

“Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;  
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me fast.”

Here the Psalmist knows there is no place he can go to be away from the presence of God; in one sense, there is no place where God is not. The Psalmist further states that this God who is present is also a God who is mindful of him: God knows when he sits down and when he stands, has written each day of the Psalmist’s life in his book, and in fact knew the Psalmist even before his birth. Are we aware of this God in our day to day lives?

In *The Practice of the Presence of God* written by Brother Lawrence (17<sup>th</sup> Century) readers are encouraged in practicing God’s presence in the mundane of the day to day. Brother Lawrence taught that whether one was doing normal chores (cooking, cleaning), going for a walk, or other regular duties, these could be (in fact were) opportunities to be communicating with God. Practicing the presence of God was not something to be reserved for church services, prayer times, or other special events but rather was to be practiced in all of life.

Some tips for practicing the presence of God:

- Begin your day intentionally recognizing a God who is present.
- Practice turning the mundane into holy moments: tasks that you need to get done that are somewhat mindless are great opportunities for prayer or to reflect on God.
- Stop mid-day and pray (converse with God), interrupting your regular routine to pause and acknowledge a God who is aware of you.
- Another practice, the Daily Examen, is a way at the end of your day to reflect on where God was knowingly present in your day and where he seemed not to be present; reflect on both and ask why this was.

With the teaching and encouragement of both Brother Lawrence and Frank Laubach (20<sup>th</sup> Century), we are challenged to train ourselves to think more often of this God who is present throughout each and every day. Laubach challenged himself to think of God every moment of every day. What would life look like for you if you were more mindful of God each moment of every ordinary day?

—Pastor Richard



# The Spirit of Christmas

Pastor Joel's sermon from Thursday, December 24, 2020 (A summary)

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38; Mary's Song - Luke 1:46-56

How many of us have watched Christmas movies? I guess it's likely that many of us have watched at least a few. But it wouldn't surprise me if some of us have never watched any, or if it has been a long time.

One reoccurring theme in these movies is the "Christmas spirit". The movies search to understand the spirit of Christmas? What is it? Can we lose it? Can we gain it? Can all the stuff we do at Christmas ruin it?

One person will be excited and cheerful and want to decorate and share gifts. The other will be busy with work, or grumpy all the time. "Where's your Christmas spirit?" people will ask.

Or another person will be so determined to make everything perfect—the lights, the food, the gifts—that they end up tense and angry. "No!" people will tell them, "You're missing the spirit of things!"

Christmas? It means deadlines and frantic shopping and late night wrapping. It means going into debt—right? No. that's not it! You've missed the spirit of Christmas.

Christmas? It means a huge effort to host an awkward, extended family dinner where people try to put up with each other politely for one meal. No that's not it! You've missed the spirit of it.

Christmas means we've got to get all the decorations up, inside and outside. Everything has to be perfect or Christmas will be ruined. No that's not it. You've missed the spirit of it.

This year? Christmas means being kept apart from the people you love, missing out on specials events and meals, fewer presents. There is no Christmas this year. No that's not it. You've missed the spirit of it.

Christmas can be relaxing or exciting, quiet or busy, over the top or understated.

No matter how it goes, Christmas should help us become a little kinder and more compassionate, and more patient. Christmas should encourage us to be generous and grateful for what we do have. No matter what we do to celebrate Christmas, if we don't treat others with a bit more love and joy, we don't know the spirit of Christmas. That's a pretty good message, isn't it? Sometimes, the movies even remember to connect this back to the source, to God's goodness and to Jesus' birth.

What about Jesus? How do you know if know you him?

Does Jesus mean impossible standards? Does Jesus only take away things you like? No, that's not the Spirit of Jesus.

Does Jesus mean long, boring church services and sermons? Does Jesus mean a list of obligations and duties? No, you've missed the point.

Does Jesus mean that everything will be easy? That everything you do is okay? No, that's not Jesus either.

Is Jesus just a story?

Or, is the Jesus you know like a light in your heart? A light in the lonely and fearful times? A light even when death is near? That is Jesus. He is alive.

Is the Jesus you know full of wisdom? Does he correct you when you've done something wrong? Does he guide you when you don't know what to do? That is Jesus. He is Lord.

Does Jesus walk with you in nature? Does he show you his love for every person you meet? That is Jesus. He died for us and all creation.

Does the Jesus you know give you courage and strength during the hardest times? Does he comfort you in grief? Does the Jesus you know forgive? That is Jesus. And that is God.

To know Jesus, is to know God.

There is one God, creator of heaven and earth.

God is faithful. Which is to say that God doesn't do things one way one time, and another way a different time. God always is who God is. God is one.

All we experience of God is the one thing God is. If we were able to travel to any point in human history or future, the God we would encounter would be the same.

How God works at the end is how God worked at the beginning is how God works in the middle.

Therefore, when we look at Jesus, what we see is how God has always worked and how God always will work. We are seeing who God is.

When we look at Jesus, we see how the world will end. When we look at Jesus, we see how the world came to be.

This is what we mean when we call Jesus the first and the last, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end.

The love and gentleness of Jesus' birth, the forgiveness and wisdom that we see in Jesus' life, his self-sacrifice on the cross, that is how God made the world and that is how God will complete the world one day.

Is that the God you know?

I know these are tough times. And they are not over yet. We are going to make it but we've got a ways to go.

Don't face a single day without Jesus. The spirit of Jesus is the source of all joy, peace, hope and love, through all the seasons of life.

## The Escape to Egypt

Eric Warren's sermon from Sunday, December 27, 2020 (A summary)

The Nativity Story is beautiful and deeply meaningful. But there is a dark side. According to Matthew, sometime within two years of Jesus birth, murderous King Herod of Judea sent out a death squad to slay Bethlehem boys under two years old. From the 5th century AD, the Feast of the Holy Innocents has been observed in the Western Church on December 28th. The Feast is also a reminder that the death of innocent but inconvenient children continues today at the hands of people who have power over them and who do not see their inherent worth.

For Mary and Joseph, the peace of the Nativity is shattered yet again when Joseph is woken from sleep by a dream in which an angel of the Lord commands them to escape, with Jesus, to Egypt that very night. The chronology of the visit of the Wise men and the flight to Egypt is complex with no certain answers. How old was Jesus when he visited Egypt? Estimates vary from a few weeks to two years.

Egypt is featured in the Biblical stories and promises of the redemption of Israel and ultimately, humanity in both the Old and New Testaments. As it was called upon to save Jacob's family from famine, it is called upon again to provide a safe haven for God's son.

In 2009, our son Brian and I visited Egypt and Israel. I was interested in the history of Christianity in Egypt and especially Coptic traditions of the Holy Family's time there. Meaningful traditions often fall short of scientific accuracy, but they usually start *somewhere based on something*.

The Coptic Orthodox church traces its roots back to the arrival of Mark (the gospel writer) at Alexandria in 58-60 AD. Indications are that he was martyred there after nearly 10 fruitful years of ministry. By the 4th century, Christianity had almost entirely succeeded 3000 years of Egypt's established religion and was dominant until the Muslim conquest in the mid-7th century. Annually, on June 1st, 10 million Coptic Orthodox Christians celebrate the arrival of the holy family in Egypt. They chant: *"Be glad and rejoice, O Egypt: and her sons and all her borders, for there hath come to Thee the Lover of Man, He who is before all the ages."*

Coptic tradition holds that there are 22 locations where the Holy Family stayed in Egypt beginning with modern Zagazig, 400 km from Bethlehem in the Southeast Nile delta. There, they were hosted by a man named Aqloum. Some of the idols there crumbled at the family's presence which Copts believe was foretold in **Isaiah 19:1**.

Instead of travelling directly Southwest to the nearby Fortress of Babylon (which is now in Old Cairo), they appear to have taken a 300-400 km detour, first moving North, then West across the Nile Delta, stopping at five other traditional locations along the way, including El Hamraa Lake and the Wadi Natrun on the West side of the Delta. One reason for the detour may be that Herod, responding to possible rumours of their escape, may have sent spies to Egypt and sent word to allies in the Roman army to watch for the family.



Thirsty, as they neared the El Hamraa salt lake, the family noticed a sweet water spring miraculously appear a few steps into the lake. Travellers and Pilgrims can see the spring today. From Wadi Natrun, the Holy Family now headed Southeast toward the Fortress of Babylon (Old Cairo). Along the way, it's very likely that they saw the Pyramids. On the East side of the Nile River, within sight of the Pyramids, stood the Roman Fortress of Babylon. First built in the 4th century, St. Sergius Church claims to be built over a site where the family stayed. This location is seen as a typical fulfillment of **Isaiah 19:19**.

Jill Kamil writes: *"From Old Cairo they went south to Maadi by the Nile and stayed with some well-connected Jewish families there. Joseph became acquainted with some local fishermen there and hired a boat to transport them to southern Egypt. The tradition is that they paid for the boat with Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh..."*

As the family sailed South on the Nile, they stopped at many places, finally settling in Deir el-Muharraaq or Asyut, about 400 km south of Old Cairo. By this point, they may have travelled at least 1200 km from Bethlehem by foot, animal and boat. After six months there, the angel appeared to Joseph and urged him to take the young child and his mother and return to the Promised Land. This time, they were able to take the most direct route back. Coptic Christians see this as a fulfillment of **Hosea 11:1**.

Coptic tradition believes that Jesus, Mary and Joseph stayed in Egypt for 3 and a half years (Muslims say 7 years). Some parallels can be seen between Israel's history with Egypt and Jesus' sojourn there. Both Pharaoh and Herod sought to kill the chosen people's male babies. Jesus and Moses were saved from death in Egypt. Both Moses and Jesus flee their homelands and return when *"all those who have sought your life have died."* (**Exodus 4:19** and **Matthew 2:20**)

As western Christians, we tend to focus on the land of Israel and its importance in our faith history and future, as well we should. But Jesus' trip through Egypt, including his possible long detour to the Nile may not have been to avoid Herod's spies. It may have been to demonstrate God's plan to include the entire Egyptian people in his desire to save all nations. Egypt and the Promised Land were honored with his actual presence. Coptic Christians through nearly two millennia have taken great comfort from Isaiah, who foretells a day when nations like Egypt, Israel and Assyria are favoured by God. (**Isaiah 19:23-25**)

In our day, it's hard to imagine the geographically corresponding modern nations of Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, parts of Iran and Turkey, worshipping the same God together. But through the eyes of faith, nothing is impossible for God. The presence of Coptic Orthodox Christians today in Egypt is an eloquent testimony to the continuing outcome of the foundational presence of the chosen people, Jesus, Mary and 2000 years of Christianity in Egypt. Sources:

Jill Kamil, *Christianity in the Land of the Pharaohs* (Cairo, American University in Cairo Press, 2002)

Dr. Edouard Lambelet (Technical Adviser), *The Escape to Egypt* (Cairo, Lehnert & Landrock, 1993)

## 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](http://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](mailto:main_fbcregina@sasktel.net) for further details.



"Hurry! Our New Year's resolutions start in ten minutes."

Q: What is a New Year's resolution?

A: Something that goes in one year and out the other.

Q: What happened to the man who shoplifted a calendar on New Year's Eve?

A: He got 12 months!

Q: Where can you find comedians on New Year's Eve?

A: Waiting for the punchline.

Q: Where can you go to practice math on New Year's Eve?

A: Times Square.