



## AT FIRST BAPTIST

**DAN MCDOWELL**  
Senior Pastor

**SUE NEELY VANBRUNT**  
Minister of Music

**ROBERT FAULDS**  
Organist

**PENNY SOROKES**  
Church Secretary

**MICKI ELLIS**  
Audio Visual Specialist

**MILLARD COOK**  
Asst. Pastor Senior/Adult Ministries

**BRUCE LAVERTY**  
Director of Family Ministries

**CAROLE LAVERTY**  
Family Ministries Associate

**BONNIE KETTLE**  
Financial Secretary

**GERALD NUTT**  
Custodian



### **CHRISTMAS** *Cantata* **Sunday,** **December 21** **9:30 a.m.**

This year's Senior Choir cantata, *Christmas Rhapsody*, will be presented during the 9:30 a.m. worship on Sunday, Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>. This musical retells the message of the Christ Child's coming to earth. You and your family will enjoy hearing some of the best loved Christmas carols as they are presented through stunning arrangements for choir and soloists, hand bells, piano, organ, flute and guitar. Favorite scriptures and stories behind the carols are presented as stirring narration. This would be the perfect time to invite family and friends to hear this life-changing story!



Donations for the flowers and decorations for the sanctuary will be received in the church office until December 14. Please indicate, along with your check, who you would like to have honored or remembered. Also let us know



if you will be taking a plant with you following worship on Sunday, December 21, or if we can deliver your plant to a shut-in/homebound member of our congregation. A donation of \$10 per plant is suggested.



Since Christmas Eve is a time for music, there will be a special 15-minute instrumental prelude before the service, giving you an opportunity to stop and reflect in the midst of all hustle and bustle of the holiday.

The Senior Choir will sing; the Handbells will ring, Pastor Dan will offer some reflections on the carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and why God chose Bethlehem (known as "The House of Bread" to host the birth of our Savior. We will partake in the Lord's Supper together.

A wonderful First Baptist tradition continues at the close of the service as we share the light of the Christ Candle by passing it to all individuals throughout the sanctuary while we sing "Silent Night". This service will fill your heart and encourage your spirit. You'll want to invite your family and friends!!

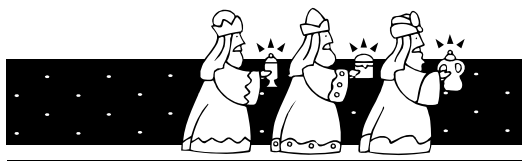


## ANNUAL REPORTS DUE

Please note that all annual reports from staff members, boards and committees are due in the church office by **DECEMBER 30** to allow adequate time to prepare the annual report. Electronic submissions are appreciated! Reports received after this date will not appear in the full report.

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETINGS

The Annual Meetings of our church will take place on December 7 and January 18. The December Congregational/Corporate meeting will be held in the sanctuary immediately following the 9:30 worship service. The purpose of this meeting is the election of officers, boards and committees for 2014. Fellowship Time will be held after the meeting. The January Corporate meeting will review the annual reports from 2014 and enact a budget for 2015. Church members are expected to attend both meetings.



## Christmas Offering

The Christmas offering this year will be dedicated to the

Wider Opportunities for Greater Olean, an organization being formed under Heather Schultz's guidance to offer assistance to those in our community who are seeking gainful employment.



## RADIO MINISTRY

If you would like to be a part of this important ministry at Olean First Baptist by sponsoring a \$45 radio broadcast in 2015, please telephone the church office at 372-5151 for available dates. This is such a nice way to honor or remember someone on a special occasion.



## Will God Find You Faithful??

We are pleased to report that the response to this year's Stewardship Campaign has been quite good. As of November 16<sup>th</sup>, we are at 90% of our goal for the general fund and are only a few hundred dollars short of our goal for the mission fund. There are still a few folks who normally pledge that have yet to return their pledge cards. We hope that their response will help us meet or exceed our goals.

Of greater concern is the amount of pledged offerings we have received so far in 2014. In response to the 2013 stewardship campaign, \$130,893 was pledged toward the general fund and \$19,140 was pledged for missions. As of the end of October, we have received only \$94,554 for the general fund and \$11,378 for missions. These amounts represent 72% and 59% of the amounts pledged for the general and mission funds, respectively. If the offerings for November and December are similar to those for the first 10 months, we will fall well short of our expected pledge income for 2014.

Please review your giving for 2014. If you have fallen behind on your pledge, please do what you can to get caught up before the end of the year. If you have questions about your contributions so far this year, Bonnie Kettle can provide you a full report on your 2014 giving.

As a reminder, your pledge is your faith promise to contribute to the furthering of God's kingdom here on earth.

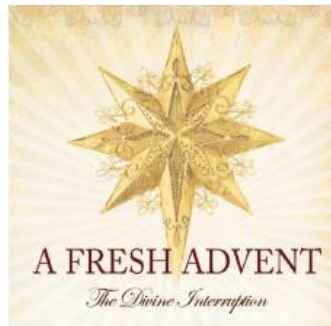
Will God find you faithful?



*During this season of giving, please be as generous as possible with donations to the Olean Food Pantry and The Bridge in Allegany. These organizations are especially helpful to folks in need of help with food, utilities, and bigger household items. The donation of your time is also appreciated*

## 'TIS THE SEASON!!!

**LADIES:** You are invited to a Christmas Party on Saturday, December 13 beginning at 10 a.m. with an inspiring Christmas video message from Beth Moore titled "A Fresh Advent: The Divine Interruption".



Afterward, we'll gather to sing a few carols, enjoy a holiday brunch and fellowship time, a game or two and door prizes! The cost is just \$5/person for the brunch. We'll also hold a Christmas Cookie Exchange. If you would like to participate, just bring 3 dozen of your favorite cookies to exchange for other's favorites. We will be collecting monetary donations for the Olean Food Pantry and the Southern Tier Pregnancy Center.

Join us as we "Adore Him" and celebrate this special season!! Sign up on the bulletin insert or call the church office by December 7. This event is open to the public --- Come and bring your friends!!



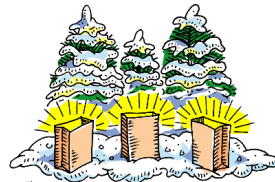
### JOIN US FOR AN EVENING OF CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Help us to make this holiday season a little more special for our homebound members by joining us for an evening of Christmas Caroling on Sunday, December 14. We will gather at the church at 6:00 and divide into groups that will carpool to the homes and care facilities on our homebound list. Then we will meet back at the church at 8:00 for cookies and hot cocoa and devotions together. Don't miss this great outreach opportunity!



## CHRISTMAS PAGEANT DECEMBER 21

This year the annual Christmas Pageant will be held during worship on December 21. The Birthday Party for Jesus will be held in Fellowship Hall during the Sunday School hour. Our birthday presents to Jesus will benefit the Southern Tier Pregnancy Care Center and Genesis House.



### Lighting of the Luminaria

December 21st is the longest night of the year. To the homeless person, it can be lonely and scary. Please help brighten our area by joining our

Annual Luminaria Sale to benefit the work of Genesis House. Kits are \$10 and include 10 bags, 10 votive candles, sand, and directions. Please contact Sue Keim at 372-7313 or the Church office. Orders are due by Dec 1.



## VACATION BIBLE CHRISTMAS MONDAY, DECEMBER 29

9 A.M. – 5 P.M.

FELLOWSHIP HALL

AGES 5 – 12 yrs.

FUN, CRAFTS, SPORTS!!

BREAKFAST &  
LUNCH PROVIDED



## MAKE YOUR NEW YEAR'S EVE PLANS EARLY!!

On Wednesday evening, December 31<sup>st</sup>, a New Year's Eve tradition continues as the community joins us for the **Annual New Year's Eve Concert at 7 pm** in our sanctuary. Each year the music varies, but the outcome remains the same....A thoroughly enjoyable evening filled with the beauty of music. Although the entire line-up has not yet been confirmed, we will be enjoying vocal and instrumental selections by some of the area's finest musicians. Plan other celebrations around this event because this is an evening you will not want to miss!!



St. Mary of the Angels will once again offer its Community Christmas Dinner on December 25 from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Home deliveries begin at approximately 11:00 a.m. This meal is free

and open to the public. For Reservations Call the St. Mary's rectory at 372-4841 by December 23. If you need additional information or if you would like to volunteer to help with the dinner, call Jean at 716-474-7402. Needed items: Sweet Breads, pre-packaged cookies, individually wrapped candies (hard or soft) and fruit pies (apple, peach, cherry, blueberry, etc. no cream, custard or pumpkin pies please). Cash donations are also welcome. Please make checks payable to St. Mary of the Angels –note: Christmas Dinner on your check or envelope.

## BOOK REVIEW

### "I Am a Church Member"

I believe coincidences are sometimes more than that, and such was the case in picking up "I Am A Church Member: Discovering the Attitude That Makes a Difference," by Thom S. Rainer (B&H Publishing). I sensed it was more of a holy nudge since, not only am I seeking to become a member of FBC, our pastoral leadership has been talking a lot about such concepts as "Every member a minister," and how that equipping takes place, largely with changed attitudes.

Rainer points out how many of the nation's churches are "unhealthy," with more members

complaining and taking an entitlement attitude (what can the church do for me?) than becoming involved through active participation in the church, even offering community outreach with a servant attitude.

In brief chapters, the author lays out six actions that could transform the churches across the world and the individuals who attend them. Each ends with a pledge readers can commit to, as well as questions to consider for the journey.

The chapters encourage readers to be functioning church members; unifying church members; to not let their churches be about their own preferences and desires; to pray for church leaders; to lead their families to be healthy church members; and to treasure church membership as a gift.

Some of the principles Rainer lays out include the importance of all members being necessary parts of the whole Body of Christ and how God equips members to use their spiritual gifts and talents to minister to others.

Regarding unifying the church, the author quotes Jesus' words in John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." He warns against gossip and negative talk, which can become a hindrance at many churches, urging instead forgiveness and unity.

Rainer notes the word "servant" is used 57 times in the New Testament, often referring to roles expected of us as Christians. Too many people, the author says, leave churches because things aren't being done their way or are looking for the church (and pastors) to serve them rather than acknowledge a personal role that involves giving, not just financially, but as service to others.

An old adage, "The family that prays together, stays together," came to mind while reading Chapter 5 on approaching church life as a family — your own, the local church, and the larger Church body. The final chapter is a reminder of what a gift it is — by grace — to receive salvation and be "placed by God" in a church (1 Cor. 12:27-28).

The 79 pages can be read in one sitting and would also make a good personal study to meditate on for a period. It received accolades from such notables as Rick Warren, who noted "this wonderful little book explains the power of belonging to a church family," and other well-known names who called it inspiring.

Several copies were available at McCarthy's Emporium in Olean, with the books also available online.

[Note: Reviewed books will soon be available on the lender's table at FBC.]

— *Reviewer: Deb Wuethrich*



## BEHAVE LIKE A CHRISTIAN

9 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is*

good. 10 *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.* (Romans 12:9-13)

Without a doubt there are many hurting people--not only in the world at large but also with the Christian community and even within our own congregation. People who are lonely, but unwilling to ever let others know how they feel; people who have had their feelings hurt by an untimely word, or some piece of gossip; people who have trusted someone to be there for them in time of need only to horribly let down;... The list could on, yet we know the pain is real and the scars can be very deep.

So what does Paul tell us to do that we may be a people that can lift and heal hurting people? First and foremost we must love others. That means putting their needs ahead of our own and this must be done in sincerity. Paul says “without hypocrisy” or rather not for show or to look good to others. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of this in Jer. 9:8 “friendly words for their neighbors come from their mouths. But their minds are things up ways to trap them.” You may know what people want to hear, but it does not take long for them sense the real sincerity of your words. We prove the sincerity of our words by our actions. To show concern for someone who is in real pain while you talk with them and then walk away never to think of it or pray about it again (it's not my problem) is hypocrisy. We are called to bear one another's burdens. Let us do that with love, honesty, and joy.

Secondly, Paul says live a life that is different from the worldly standards. Your likes and dislikes should be different as a Christian. I believe the best way to find out what a Christian should look like is to ask an unbeliever what he thinks a Christian

should look like. The world knows that we are not to look like and act like they do. We tell them that we have something better than this world can offer and our lives need show that what we say is true.

Though there is so much more in this short passage, let me conclude with verse 12. *“As we look to the hope that we have in Christ the things of this world become far less important. Therefore, with our mind set upon the things above we can endure the tribulations that may befall us.”*

I remember my time in the Navy and when anyone was within 100 days of getting out he had a short timer's calendar counting down the days to being a civilian again. With that in view, the little trials became only an inconvenience because the end was in sight. And so as we see the home prepared for us with all of its glory it will put into perspective the short time we have here. Even with the battles we may be facing, they will become far less important for the end is in sight. Yet, what are we told to do, “be steadfast in prayer”. Praying for deliverance, for protection, and for the proper perspective of whatever it is that we may be facing.

So with pressures of this Holiday season upon us let us love one another in sincerity. Let us cling to that which is good. And let us rejoice in hope. By this, may the hurting find comfort and a lost and dying world see the real reason for the season.

~Pastor Millard



## ESSENTIALS FOR A GREAT CHURCH

1. A regenerated church membership
2. A praying membership
3. A working membership
4. A cooperating membership
5. A membership with a vision and the faith to see that vision become reality
6. A membership where everybody is somebody.
7. A membership where nobody tries to be number one but everybody is willing to work for the common good.

# The Family of God



We extend our Love and Sympathy to Jean and John Kwiatkowski on the passing of Jean's mother, Ollene Smith on November 12; to Ted and Nan Norton on the loss of John Whitney on November 17.



On Sunday, November 23 Tim Sherlock, Deb Wuethrich, and Alex Gabler walked through the waters of baptism.

May God Bless you as you continue on your walk with Him.

## CONGRATULATIONS.....

to Jeanette VanBrunt and Matthew Butler who were married at FBC on Sat. November 15.

to Nick Sanders who was recently inducted into the National Honor Society at Olean High School.

to Christian Payne who recently complete Ranger Training in the United States Army.



## DIRECTORY CHANGES

Leroy and Victoria Lovell  
401 Alder St. Apt 18  
Olean, NY 14760

Carol Walker  
350 Front St.  
Aspen Towers #402  
Olean, NY 14760



## Thank You....

A heartfelt Thank You for filling the Christmas requests for Edna Martin Christian Center in Indianapolis, IN! The boxes are on the way to make many children joyful for the reminder that Jesus loves them and died for them. The school kits, sewing kits, and supplies have also been paid for and will soon be available to these people in need. Additionally, we received enough postage for these and the roller bandages to be made in January/February 2015. May God continue to bless you. ~Rita Wymer, White Cross Chairman

Thank You for attending my birthday party on November 15 and for the many cards, gifts, and good wishes. ~ Bud Fortner



During the upcoming Holiday season, remember the special blessing of our home-bound members and friends. Take time to make their holidays special with a visit, card, or phone call.

June Heineman: 331 Tompkins St. Olean 372-1180

June Hill: 610 King St. Olean 372-4264

Glenn Lowe 1721 Goodrich Ave. Olean 372-8450

Jim Molyneaux 05B3258  
CCF-Main P.O. Box 2001  
Dannemora, NY 12929-2001

Gen Rinus: 210 N. 19<sup>th</sup> St. Olean 372-5479

Helen Smith: 350 Front St. #206 Olean 372-3310

Harriett Wilday: 2744 Olean-Hinsdale Rd.  
Olean 372-7917

WELLSVILLE MANOR THE PINES -  
Ruth Osgood MACHIAS  
Gloria Button

EDEN HEIGHTS  
Ethel Hopkins  
Jeanne Taylor





## *.....From the Pastors Heart*

“Advent”: the dictionary tells me that advent is a noun and its definition is “the

arrival of a notable person, thing or event” such as “the advent of television in the 1950s”.

Of course it also refers to the first season of the Christian church year, leading up to Christmas and including the four preceding Sundays. In addition, it refers to the coming (or second coming) of Christ.

Some people are fond of reminding Christians that Christmas has ties to pagan holidays such as Roman “Saturnalia” and German “Yuletide” and that December 25 is in all likelihood not the true day when Mary gave birth to Jesus.

My response to such reminders is to simply say, “Thank God.” Our celebration of the birth of our Savior is not about making sure the date of that birth is commemorated, it is that Christ’s arrival life among us is honored. Incorporating some of the traditions and practices of ancient celebrations and redefining them into a Christian context was a wise way to help people translate faith in Christ into their culture.

It’s hard for us to imagine what it would be like to live in a culture where Christianity is not the prominent religion celebrated. We have seen a struggle in recent years as the diversity of our country has continued to grow and the influence of other religions has risen. Resentment over a specifically Christian holiday on the national calendar has caused merchants to downplay Christmas by using words like “Holidays” and “Seasons Greetings.” And we are well aware of the controversies and lawsuits regarding nativity displays on public property.

Many Christians have responded in a backlash to this, calling this resentment “The War on Christmas” and organizing boycotts and filing lawsuits of their own. It does seem ironically contrary to a celebration of the coming of “The Prince of Peace”.

If you study the history of how Christmas became a national holiday in the U.S. you will find considerable controversy. The Puritans considered many of the celebrations of Christmas to be decadent and even outlawed such celebration in the

early years of colonial life. It wasn’t until after the Civil War (during the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant) that congress passed a bill declaring December 25 (along with New Year’s Day, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Thanksgiving) to be national holidays. It might interest you to know that Christmas was far more popular in the southern states than in the northern states at that time.

And even then many Christians feared that creating a federal holiday would lead to commercialization and corruption of something that was (and is) considered to be a holy commemoration. Those concerns were prophetic it seems.

But the truth is Christmas is what you make it. Even before my dad died when I was little my family didn’t have much. I can’t say that I didn’t look forward to the gifts I would receive on Christmas (what kid wouldn’t?) but it has always been more about family togetherness – and food – for me. Before he died, my dad was working 2 jobs so we didn’t see that much of him. But he was home on Christmas. And usually we travelled to his parents’ house and gathered there with his extended family for a few days. And boy did my grandmother put on a spread!

After he died, we went to live in a house right across the street from my paternal grandparents and that is when I started to connect the dots between Christmas and Jesus. I don’t remember our small church ever having Christmas Eve or Christmas Day services but I vividly remember the pageants I participated in. They were always held on Sunday evenings and they involved costumes, lots of music and best of all – they made me feel like I was part of the Christmas story. That made the true meaning of Christmas real to me. And it sure didn’t hurt that it made the people I loved most proud to see me (and my brothers and sisters) participate.

So, in a way I think we are still translating faith in Christ into our culture. It seems that from the get-go, the origins of Christmas leaned toward raucous partying, consumption of alcohol and overeating. Then we added snowmen and candy canes, Santa Clause and reindeer, not to mention Christmas trees and wreaths... and “Black Friday”.

So join an Advent group, volunteer for our Vacation Bible Christmas outreach, help out with the pageant and make sure your kids and grandkids are here for the Birthday Party for Jesus! It is not the role of society to translate the true meaning of Christmas. It is up to you and me.

**“In everything give thanks; for  
this is the will of God in Christ  
Jesus concerning you.”  
1 Thessalonians 5:18**

This culture of gratitude – where spiritual leaders give thanks for the church’s fellowship and God’s followers give thanks for ministers’ and missionaries’ spiritual guidance – is deeply ingrained in the Christian faith.

Since the mid-1930s, American Baptist congregations have received a Communion Fellowship Offering on the first Sunday of each month to support needy and elderly clergy within their churches. In 1948, churches began donating to the November Communion Fellowship Offering, providing financial assistance to the denominations’ elderly ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses. In 1977, American Baptist Churches USA officially launched the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) to continue this tradition of thankfulness. Since 1980, MMBB has sent “Thank You” checks drawn directly from the MMBB endowment to eligible retired lay church employees.

The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering commemorates the anonymous gift in 1981 of a Vietnamese refugee woman worshipping with the First Chinese Baptist Church of Fresno, California. Not knowing the full intent of the offering, but understanding the words “thank you” printed on the offering envelope, she slipped off her wristwatch, her only possession of value, and placed it in the envelope.

The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering is a personal offering, one rooted in thanks for the countless ways ministers and missionaries guide each member of the church along their spiritual journey. It provides a tangible way for American Baptists congregations, to say “Thank you for ...” the commitment, service and spiritual guidance of retired ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses. The offering supports those who have devoted their lives to God’s service by providing emergency assistance in their times of need and, for those eligible, a “Thank You” check at the end

of each year. In 2013, RMMO provided \$1,141,295 in assistance and Thank You checks. For 2014, the national RMMO goal is \$1.2 million.

During the month of December our congregation will receive the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering. Please help us remember the denomination’s retired faithful servants with love and gratitude. Our goal is \$750.00, a chance to say...

*Thank You!*



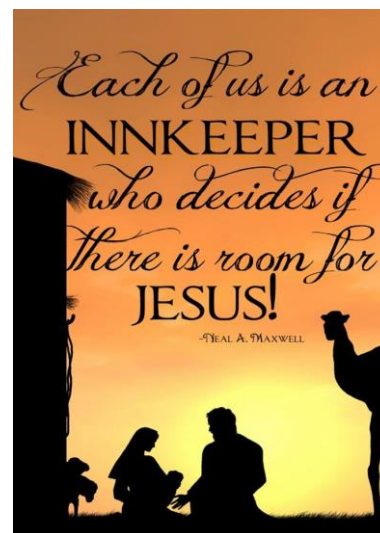


## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Hope Collins  
Millard Cook
- 8 Dave Taylor  
Mary Wichert
- 10 Xavier Laverty
- 11 Shawn VanBrunt  
Jack Ellis
- 12 Jim Molyneaux  
Jerry Reynolds  
Harriett Wilday  
Marcie Rust
- 13 Sandy Schultz
- 14 Alan Schultz-Cone
- 15 Bambi Farris  
Willie Milton
- 17 Kimberly Putt
- 18 Frank Hirsch
- 20 Carol Molyneaux
- 22 Megan Kane
- 23 Penny Sorokes
- 27 Ed VanBrunt
- 30 Matt Sage

## DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 10 Larry & Beverly Firth  
Ira Katzenstein & Carol Mahoney
- 25 Don & Willie Anderson
- 28 Cliff & Maxine Lucas
- 30 Bob & Maunie Ketchner



*Merry Christmas and  
New Year Blessings  
from the Church Staff  
Pastor Dan,  
Pastor Millard,  
Bruce, Carole, Sue, Bob, Penny, Bonnie,  
Micki and Jerry*

ARTICLES AND INFORMATION FOR THE  
JANUARY/FEBRUARY  
ISSUE OF  
AT FIRST BAPTIST  
ARE DUE TO THE  
CHURCH OFFICE  
BY DEC. 4