



AT FIRST BAPTIST

DAN MCDOWELL
Senior Pastor

MILLARD COOK
Asst. Pastor Senior/Adult Ministries

SUE NEELY VANBRUNT
Minister of Music

BRUCE LAVERTY
Director of Family Ministries

ROBERT FAULDS
Organist

PENNY SOROKES
Church Secretary

MICKI ELLIS
Audio Visual Specialist

BONNIE KETTLE
Financial Secretary

GERALD NUTT
Custodian

'TIS THE SEASON!!!

LADIES: You are invited to a Christmas Retreat on Saturday, December 5 beginning at 10 a.m. with an inspiring Christmas message from our Guest Speaker Wendy Pope titled "The Present of Jesus – a Present to Open Every Day."

Afterward, we'll gather to sing a few carols, enjoy a holiday brunch and fellowship time, fun and door prizes! The cost is just \$15/person til November 30; \$20 December 1-5. Tickets are available in the Church Office.

We are also asking everyone to bring six (6) Homemade Christmas Cookies as a donation to Gift Trays for our Emergency Response Professionals in Olean.

Join us as we "Adore Him" and celebrate this special season!! Be sure to get your ticket SOON! This event is open to the public --- Come and bring your friends!!



Donations for the flowers and decorations for the sanctuary will be received in the church office until December 13. Please indicate, along with your check, who you would like to have honored or remembered. Plants will be delivered to our shut-in/home-bound members early in the Advent Season so they can enjoy them during the days leading up to Christmas.

. A donation of \$10 per plant is suggested.



CHRISTMAS
Cantata
Sunday,
December 20
9:30 a.m.

Our Senior Choir will present the cantata "Mary, Did You Know?" during the 9:30 a.m. worship service on Sunday Dec. 20th. This stirring song provides the theme for this musical that includes many traditional carols and a few contemporary favorites accompanied by piano, flute and guitar. Stirring narration provided by David Torrey and Heather Schultz- Piche helps to retell the wonderful story of the Savior's birth. Invite your family and friends to enjoy this special Christmas service.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT DECEMBER 20

This year the annual Christmas Pageant will be held during worship on December 20. The Birthday Party for Jesus will be held in Fellowship Hall during the Sunday School hour. Both the Children's choir and the Junior Bells will share some special music at this family event. Our birthday presents to Jesus will benefit the Genesis House. Suggestions for Birthday Presents for Jesus include: Laundry detergent, dishwasher soap, coffee, spices, paper products, ketchup, mustard, and pillows. Please bring your unwrapped gifts to the Birthday Party for Jesus.



Since Christmas Eve is a time for music, there will be a special 15-minute instrumental prelude before the service, beginning at 6:45 pm. This will give you an opportunity to stop and reflect in the midst of all hustle and bustle of the holiday.

The Senior Choir and the In One A'Chord Handbell Choir will present Christmas anthems.

Pastor Dan will offer some reflections on Luke 2:8-20 encouraging us to touch and connect with those who are often overlooked.

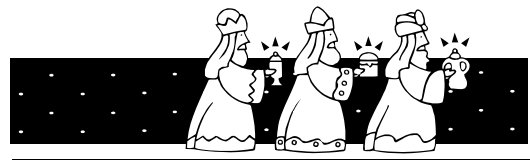
A wonderful First Baptist tradition continues at the close of the service as we share the light of the Christ Candle by passing it to all individuals throughout the sanctuary while we sing "Silent Night". This service will fill your heart and encourage your spirit. You'll want to invite your family and 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 6 and January 17. 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 2015. Fellowship Time will be held after the meeting. The January Corporate meeting will review the annual reports from 2014 and enact a budget for 2016. Church members are expected to attend both meetings.



Christmas Offering

The Christmas offering this year will be dedicated to the GOAC Community Warmth Fund to provide energy efficient heaters to those struggling with cold weather.



RADIO MINISTRY

If you would like to be a part of this important ministry at Olean First Baptist by sponsoring a \$55 radio broadcast in 2016, 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.



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 6. 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!



STEPPING OUT **IN FAITH???**

The returns on our stewardship campaign through November 15th have been nothing short of inspiring! As of that date, we have received pledges totaling \$147,901... or nearly \$4,000 above the goal set by the Board of Trustees! And there are still several families who have yet to return their commitment cards. Adding to the excitement, pledges to the Mission Budget now stand at \$26,663!! Both amounts are significantly above what was pledged last year and will allow the Budget Committee and the Board of Trustees more flexibility in setting the budgets for the various Boards and Committees as well as in establishing any salary increases for our staff members. Further, if we indeed have a surplus in 2016, we will be able to set money aside for known future major expenses; such as installing a new roof, installing an upgraded boiler, replacing the carpet, and possibly installing an elevator!

To those who have returned their commitment cards, THANK YOU!! To those who have yet to make their 2016 commitment, your contributions toward God's ministries at Olean First Baptist Church are still very important... and needed!

In closing, it is very clear that God has touched the hearts of Olean First Baptist Church members and that many stepped out in faith by increasing their contributions to the ministries and programs offered by the church. Obviously, our membership wants our church to be more than ordinary. We want our church to thrive!



REMEMBER:
Retirees Luncheon
With Pastor Dan
Monday, Dec. 14 @ Noon
Sign up by 12/10



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. Also, new this year, are T-Shirts...iris blue color with black inscription and adorned with the Genesis House logo for \$12. Please contact Donna DeLong @ 557-8323 or the Church office. Orders are due by Dec 1.



VACATION BIBLE
CHRISTMAS
MONDAY, DECEMBER 28
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 Thursday evening, December 31st, a wonderful 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!!

The Family of God

CONGRATULATIONS.....

To Matt and Jeanette VanBrunt Butler on the birth of their daughter, Eden Evelyn, on Friday, November 6. Eden weighed 8 lbs. 14.5 oz and was 22" long at birth. Lyla is Eden's big sister; her grandmothers are Violet Butler and June Turek. Her great-grandparents are Ed and Sue Neely VanBrunt.

DIRECTORY CHANGES

Gloria Spiller
200 Summer Breeze Way
Apt. 133
St. Augustine, FL 32086

Thank You....

...for your generous gift of food. Donations such as yours enable Genesis House to continue ministering to temporarily homeless people.
~Linore Lounsbury, Director

A very special THANK YOU to each of you who donated for the White Cross project. Cammeron Community Missions and the Reeds and Chettis will appreciate your gifts very much! Also thanks to all who helped in any way for the roller bandages request. The hospitals in the Congo really need these.
Thanks and God Bless You!
~Rita Wymer



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.

FORCED 'DOWN TIMES' YIELD UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS

By Deb Wuethrich

No one ever wants to sit on the sidelines. It's more fun to be going, being, doing—living an active life. But sometimes, limitations bring setbacks or even long-term changes that we have to accept and adapt to. Recent cataract surgery did that for me. The majority of these work out fine for people, as some report, "I've never seen so well before!"

I did not have such results, with underlying issues creating distortion, especially after the first eye was done. It virtually put me on the sidelines. I was forced to experience some down time. I didn't like it. I couldn't drive. I couldn't read, which is one of my passions as anyone who has visited my book-filled home can attest. It hurt to try to watch TV, even with dark glasses. I was on the verge of depression.

Something began to happen, however. As I lounged on the couch, trying to convince myself, "It takes time to heal," I found I was spending more time with God than I might have otherwise. I really began to sense His Presence. I prayed. I cried. I felt His compassion as He offered comfort, even encouraging thoughts He laid on my heart.

I soon felt better but still couldn't do much and just sat in the house. But one day, the mail brought an audio book series of my favorite author. I had ordered it myself, but God provided perfect timing for its arrival. I listened to that and Family Life radio while I rested my eyes. I prayed and talked with God some more.

Since I still had doctor's appointments, groceries to get and even a night meeting with our Christian writing group, kind souls made offers of rides. When you are used to doing things on your own and having independence, it's hard to ask for help. But I learned it is sometimes necessary. It is also a blessing to realize that God will provide through other people. Dave and Nan Torrey drove me to church for a couple of weeks, and it was a good opportunity to get to know them better. Pastor Dan and Pastor Millard both have spent time visiting and encouraging me. I received cards, phone calls and prayers from many, many people at Olean First Baptist and elsewhere.

While my second surgery yielded a better result than the first eye, things are still not ideal as I wait for new glasses to be prescribed in a few weeks. I may still face a future visit to a specialist. But I have learned something from my experience. There are blessings—and lessons—in forced down time. I know now that by God's grace, I can cope, even with being sidelined. I've learned that He WANTS to be in fellowship, not just when things are going wrong. I've also learned that the decision to reunite with the church family that nurtured me in my youth was the right choice. I am grateful for the care, concern and blessings from my present day church family. Thank you OFBC!



LOOKING AT THE LORD'S SUPPER

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it,

and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. (Mat. 26:26-30)

Each month we observe the ordinance of the Lord's supper. I am sure that none of us would ever want it to become just a habit or a ritual. So I would like to take this time to focus our minds upon the table and all that it means to us. This significant ordinance crystalizes the gist of the gospel. It symbolizes the substitutionary and redemptive death of the Son of God. With reverent awe let us look at this ordinance in several different ways as we prepare to participate in a worth manner.

I. We should look backward

With deep meditation and in complete consecration we should look backward to the atoning Christ whose body was slain and whose blood was shed for our redemption from sin. I John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Also read Heb.9:22-26 and I Pet. 1:18-19. These passages show the high value we need to place upon the shed blood of our savior. So we look back and remember that He did that for me and He did that because of my sin. Therefore He made a way to put that sin under His blood that we may have eternal life with Him.

II. We should look upward

With an attitude of reverent submission we should look upward to the Christ who has been exalted to a position of Lordship over all things. Phil. 2:5-11 tells us how God has exalted to such a place that every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue will confess that He is Lord. The Christ

that died on the cross now sits on the throne. We are to allow Him to occupy the throne of our heart as well. He alone is worthy to have complete sovereignty over our will. If we are to properly partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper we must earnestly seek to make Him the Lord of our life.

III. We should look inward

We are told in I Cor. 11:26-32 to examine ourselves prior to partaking of the Lord's Supper. With the purest motives possible we should look into our own hearts and request divine help to purge out every attitude or ambition that is contrary to the mind and spirit of our Lord. In sincere repentance, with genuine love, and with deep gratitude we should recall how Jesus Christ died that we might live. He became poor that we might be rich. He gave His all that we might have all of the grace and goodness of God.

IV. We should look forward

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (I Cor. 12:26) We look forward to Christ's coming as Lord of Lords and king of kings. He will come in great power and put down every enemy of the faith. He will come to restore all things as they were created be. It is with that hope that I partake of this great ordinance.

So the next time we gather at the table together may we each look backward at the great sacrifice Christ offered for us. May we look upward and place Him as Lord of all. May we look inward to confess our unworthiness and receive His grace. May we look forward to great culmination of all things when Christ will reign as Lord of all.

~Pastor Millard

*Merry
Christmas*



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.

Louise Croft: 1304 Old Rock City Rd; Olean 372-7764

June Heineman: 331 Tompkins St. Olean 372-1180

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

Marilyn Piepho; 1979 Dugan Rd; Olean 373-7554

Gen Rinus: 210 N. 19th St. Olean 372-5479

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

Marian Voigt; 1120 Promised Land Rd.; Olean 372-1180

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

THE PINES - MACHIAS
Gloria Button

THE PINES – OLEAN
Pete Cole
Vi Eddy

EDEN HEIGHTS
John Garey
Ethel Hopkins
Marie Johnson*
Jeanne Taylor

ECMC – Long Term Care
Dave Hollander*



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



From the Pastors Heart...

The problem with writing a column like this is it has to go to press long before the Christmas season actually begins. As I sit

at my desk to write this, I just got done cleaning up after the Veteran’s Day breakfast. Thanksgiving still seems a mile away and Christmas is hardly even on the horizon.

Nevertheless, you know that it will come rushing upon us like last year’s “Snowmageddon” in Buffalo. The question is, what will we make of it? Will it be a blizzard of shopping, decorating and baking or will it focus (at least somewhat) on the deeper meaning of the incarnation of our Savior?

The choir and bell choir will be working diligently to make sure that our Christmas celebrations are appropriately lifted up in song and I will be bringing several messages from the Old Testament that reflect the sounds and symbols of Christmas found in the words of the prophets.

It’s important to remember that the coming of the Messiah was awaited even longer than His coming has been celebrated. If you are as old as I am you may start to take certain things about Christmas for granted. When you have heard Luke 2 read as often as I have... When you have seen the Nativity acted out hundreds of times on television and in person... it may become simple rote tradition. Almost as familiar as “God is great, God is good; Let us thank Him for this food.”

But God coming off His throne in Heaven to dwell among us, befriend us and show us the way to eternal life? That is nothing to grow bored with!

I know that cramming another activity in the midst of everything else that is going on during the holidays can be stressful and unwanted. But let’s face it; we only get so many of these seasons in our short lives. As we are often reminded “Christmas is not YOUR birthday”. It’s His.

By the time you read this, I will have celebrated birthday number 56. At this point, it is not about the presents or the parties for me on my birthday. It’s about connecting with friends and family who simply tell me (in a variety of ways) they are glad that I was born.

I imagine Jesus feels the very same way. O come let us adore Him!

~Pastor Dan

'BOTH PARTS' OF CHRISTMAS

by Deb Wuehrich

Sometimes I watch my DVDs of an old TV series. "Northern Exposure" was a quirky series, but there are so many episodes that make me think. In one, the resident philosopher and radio deejay, Chris, was waxing poetic, as he often did, and said each of us experiences Christmas in our own way. He said it's a little bit like Santa's bag. There's something down in there for everybody.

For those of us who've lost loved ones, we sometimes have to dig a little deeper into the sack to access those gifts — the happy memories, the best of times — but I believe they're down in there. If we try, we can find the joyful moments of seasons past. I frequently relive one such occasion when I think of a Christmas with our little girl, Michele, who had Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). She used a wheelchair all her life, but her mind was sharp and she often came up with some thought-provoking questions and comments.

"I like both parts of Christmas," Michele announced one December. Digging a little deeper, I learned that she had divided the holiday into two distinct segments, not unlike what other people sometimes do. One was made up of Santa, snowmen and reindeer, largely displayed in her art projects.

"But I like the baby Jesus part, too," she informed me that year. I'd been noticing all the drawings depicting manger scenes and hovering angels with golden halos. It was as if she were digging down deeper in Santa's sack herself that year, seeking something more. We weren't regular church-goers in those days, I regret to say, but my husband and I had both been raised in Protestant churches and attended Sunday school classes. Michele enjoyed Bible stories at bedtime from a large volume she'd once received as a gift.

We lived on the Michigan State University campus where her dad was a graduate student, but every holiday, we'd hit the interstates and return to our hometown in Olean, to spend Christmas with our families.

Michele was seven that Christmas season, and we decided to attend a candlelight service at The First Baptist Church. Since I'd gone there as a child, I felt that the Christmas Eve service would be a good experience for us, especially with all of Michele's questions and ponderings. We could not have selected a more appropriate year for that service, and I now believe God led us here for a special reason.

That year, the church held a cantata, John W. Peterson's "Night of Miracles." Because of her SMA, Michele was small and wiry. We left the wheelchair home that night and I carried her into the sanctuary.

"I'm afraid," she whispered when the lights dimmed and organ chimes echoed over the pews.

"It's okay," I assured her. "They want us to feel what it was like for baby Jesus in the stable the night he was

born among the livestock." Michele knew about livestock. Her dad raised sheep. One was hers. The image seemed to settle her.

As the cantata commenced, Michele got into the spirit of the storytelling through music.

"It's kind of like the operas on 'Mister Rogers,'" she whispered and then giggled. I nodded. "Yeah, I guess it is." I watched her slim finger following the words in the program. Her other hand clutched a fistful of change she'd insisted on holding herself. She giggled again at the clinking sound her offering made in the collection plate when it came around.

When we stood for the ceremonial candlelighting, Michele watched in awe as candles were tipped, one by one, each bursting to sudden life from a neighbor's flame. Her bright eyes followed the glow down our row toward her Aunt Robin from whom we would take our light. As we tipped our taper, Michele tightly gripped the candle beneath the little paper skirt that would collect the hot drips as I tried to support her hand and arm at the same time, while also shifting her weight on my hip. She was insistent that she could hold it. Reflected light twinkled in her shiny blue eyes as she offered her grandmother the light, then watched it go on to her dad. When it was time to sing "Silent Night," an amazing thing happened. All candles were raised toward heaven for what must have seemed an eternity to a little girl with atrophied muscles in her arms. She did not let go, however, I could feel the tension in her little body as our candle nested in her care. Instead of releasing her hold, an incredible strength surged through Michele. I could feel it. She did not complain. She did not fear the hot drips. She held her light high for all to see. She was not a child with a disability at that moment. She seemed to know she was a child of God and praised Him in this extraordinary moment of strength and power. And she was an integral player in the "baby Jesus part" of Christmas.

That moment is burned into my memory now. It is a holiday I will never forget. We lost Michele a few years later, but I often think of that night and what it meant to all of us. I believe God made it special as a demonstration of his love.

Author Kahlil Gibran once wrote, "Have you remembrances, the glimmering arches that span the summits of the mind?" For those who have lost loved ones, our memories of times past are as strong as any steel, linking the past with the present along with a promise for the future. Those "glimmering arches," I believe, are made up of a love that never dies — and love is God's gift, at Christmas and every other time, linking souls from here to eternity.

**“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 Baptist 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!

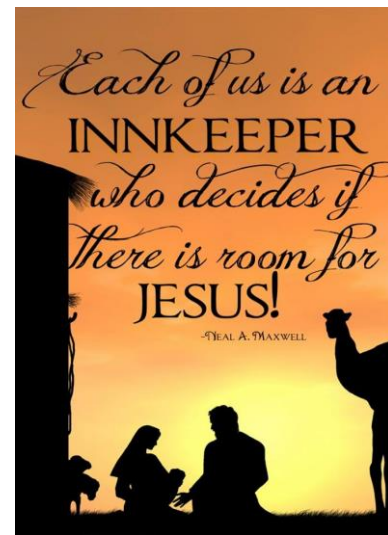


DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 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, 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. 10