



Cross and Spire

Newsletter of the First Baptist Church

P.O. Box 331, 13 School St., Lebanon, NH 03766

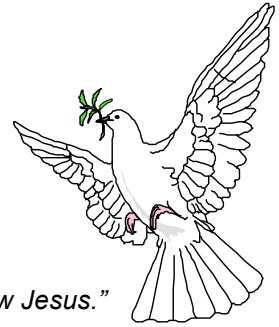
Pastor: Rev. Dale Edwards

Phone: 603-448-5618 Email: soulman@lebfirstbaptist.com

www.lebfirstbaptist.com

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"Not a perfect church, not a perfect people, just a simple desire to follow Jesus."



The State of the Soul

Pastor Dale Edwards

As I look ahead to Christmas, and look over my shoulder at fall, I cannot help but feel tremendous gratitude toward the God of the universe, who gave us His Son, Jesus Christ. Sometimes my soul can feel so distant and disconnected from God. Noise and distractions surround me, calendars and clocks, and now e-mail and a cell phone, compete to rule my day. Sometimes God is at work, the Kingdom is breaking in, and I don't even notice. My inattention to God reminds me that the world was not overly attentive to Jesus' birth. If it hadn't been for the angel's announcement to the shepherds, who would have shown up in Bethlehem? Why don't I pay attention when God's grace is abounding all around me?

The Gospel of John speaks to us so well when it says, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth." When I do pay attention, there is Jesus with me; there is the warmth of the Holy Spirit, and the Father's lap to crawl into. The holiness and love of God welcomes me like no one and nothing else. Jesus Christ was really born, and lived and died and rose again. WOW! How do I even begin to digest this? God showed us Himself in the person of His Son, forgiving us our sins, healing our brokenness, and calling us into a new, radical community called the Kingdom of God. Why then is my most pressing thought of the day about getting my snow tires on? God must both laugh and cry at my antics. God knows my frailty well, because in His love, knowing my state, He sent His Son to open the way and lead me back to Himself. Sometimes I cannot express my gratitude for such grace. Wordless

worship? I stumble over myself sometimes trying to explain how real Jesus is to those who have not met Him yet. I hope, I trust, that my frail feeble efforts and words serve God, and show the Christ to other people.

God comes for us, 2000 years ago, in breathtaking humility and holiness, born of a love for a lost humanity. "Those who lived in darkness have seen a great light". But I don't see when I don't look. And I want to see more deeply, and in more detail, in holy moments, Jesus Christ. I want to know Jesus, I desire Christ to reign, I want the gospel to capture the hearts of everyone who hears. I want the presence of mind to notice, and take in, the work of my Lord and Savior.

I don't want to live as though I am dumbing down Jesus to accommodate my own delusional comfort level. But I struggle, I get distracted. The goodness and grace slip by me, because there are important mirages to pursue. If only I can stop, and bow my head and heart before Jesus Christ, all will be well and safe with my soul. Like a shepherd on a cold hill, can I be caught up into a heavenly worship of the Word become flesh, the Savior who is Christ the Lord?



**Christmas Eve
Candlelight
Services
6:00 PM &
8:00 PM
Invite Friends & Family!**

MIRACLES STILL HAPPEN by Eleanor Farr

The Christmas play at Quinn's school was a miracle. It happened by the grace of God.

Susan told the teacher she would get the costumes and do the sets for the play. She asked me to help. There were 17 children we had to get costumes for. We had 20 days to get this done. It was not enough time and we were hard-pressed to get it done.

Susan canvassed every second hand shop for miles (Salvation Army, Listen, etc.). I sewed. I made the Mary costume, purple king costume, servants costumes, and altered several others. It was quite an undertaking.

I had a sick husband at the time and there was one thing after another which got in the way of preparing costumes for the Christmas play, one of which was my husband's illness. At this time our water heater ceased to work and we had to jury-rig our water heater. We had a very bad winter storm and people lost their electric power. My daughter, Susan, and her family had to stay at my house one night and that added to the confusion. I was fortunate as I had power and could sew.

There were storms, which made it hard to shop for costumes. My husband went in the hospital and that took time. I stayed up until 2:00 AM and made four hats and finished them in the hospital. You cannot tell children you didn't get their hats done.

The day of the play there was another snowstorm. The children were all at the church and the play went off without a hitch. The children knew their lines and the costumes were beautiful. I was very proud of those children.

Some of the children were poor and some have learning disabilities. At the end of the play the children sang "Mary Did You Know?". It was beautiful and I almost cried. My husband Harvey, Quinn's grandfather, made it to the play and Quinn was delighted. Christmas doesn't get any better than that!

I believe in miracles and that play was one. There are many miracles in this world. You just have to put the pieces together. One was that I did not lose my electric power where others were out of power for 9 days. Another miracle was that Grandpa came to the play, weak but healthy. I hope there will always be miracles, as we need them.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT DECEMBER 13!

"The Christmas Bells. . .

What's So Great About Christmas?"

Both Sunday School students and adults are excitedly getting ready for this year's Christmas pageant. The pageant will be held on Sunday, December 13 at 10:00 AM. Rehearsals are scheduled for December 6 at 9:00 AM and December 13 at 8:30 AM. All children are welcome to participate!

SARA GROVES IN MANCHESTER

Christian recording artist Sarah Groves will be bringing her "O Holy Night" Christmas Tour to Manchester Christian Church on Sunday, December 6. The concert will begin at 6:00 PM, and the church is located in Manchester, NH at 1308 Wellington Rd. Cost is \$15. For tickets or more information, go to www.thelighthouseevents.com.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL POINSETTIAS

If you would like to have a poinsettia on the altar in memory or in honor of a loved one on Christmas Sunday (December 20), please fill out the green insert in your Sunday bulletin and return it with payment by Sunday, December 13. Cost this year is \$7 per plant.

CHRISTMAS DINNER AT SACRED HEART

There will be a free community Christmas Dinner at Sacred Heart Church at noon on Christmas Day. Anyone who would like to enjoy a meal with others is welcome.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Lebanon First Baptist Members:

This spring the older computer that had our financial software on it crashed, we were able to get a new computer and an upgraded version of MembersPlus, the church's financial software. As of to date, we have not worked out all the kinks from the upgrade. We are asking all those that need their year-end giving report immediately after the year closes to please let Pastor Dale or Laurie know so that we can expedite your report. Please bear with us; this is going to take us a while as we have to do everything by hand as far as the yearend reporting goes.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work out this problem.

In Christ,
Rosalie Gilbert
Gail McCoy

THANKS FOR PRAYERS

I want to thank everyone for praying for me the last 11 months. God answered my prayers and yours, as I received a "clean bill of health" when I had my colonoscopy November 22nd. Thank you and God Bless you all!

Edythe Slayton

THANKS FOR GIVING!!!

Our Sunday School packed up 46 shoeboxes full of gifts for Operation Christmas Child in late November – thanks to everyone who brought in items for this mission! Thanks also to everyone who supported the Giving Tree – we were able to provide Christmas gifts and food certificates to about 20 children and senior citizens this year! Thanks to Jeanne Lang and family for organizing this year’s tree! Also our fall Clothing Giveaway provided free clothing to about 100 individuals! Thanks to Cheril Maynard, the youth group, and all who helped with their time and clothing donations!

SOLES4SOULS

Lebanon United Methodist Church is collecting shoes for the mission field. Donations of used & new shoes may be left on Mrs. Watson’s front porch – the beige house behind the church at 3 Green Street.

AREA CHOIR FESTIVAL

An area choir festival is being planned for January 24 at 4:00 PM at the First Congregational Church in Lebanon. Church choirs or individuals are welcome. Participating choirs will perform separately, then all will join together in a combined choir. Large group rehearsal at 2:00 with Hal Sheeler, individual choir rehearsals at 3:00. For info. on combined group pieces call our church office (448-5618). For more details, contact Steve Teeter (448-4529 or jsteeter@valley.net) or Ruth Friend (448-5643).

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

If you would like to make a special gift to First Baptist this Christmas season, a special Christmas offering envelope is included in this issue for your convenience.

RECORD YEAR FOR BAZAAR!

Thank you to everyone who helped make our Christmas Bazaar such a success!! The Bazaar raised \$2081.89 to purchase food for our Raven Box Food Pantry. Thank you to all who worked, provided items to sell, and supported the bazaar by shopping that day. A special thank you to Terry Bolduc for all her hard work in chairing and organizing it!

SUNDAY SCHOOL BREAK: There will be no Sunday School December 20 & 27.

ADVENT PRAYER SERVICE DEC. 17

There will be a special Advent prayer service on Thursday, December 17 from 6:30-8:30 PM. A quiet, candlelight service of individual prayer and reflection. Come for the whole evening or participate as long as you can. Get away from the hustle and bustle of the season for a time of prayer and contemplation of the Savior’s birth!

NO WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP IN DECEMBER

Be on the lookout in your Sunday bulletin for details & date for our next dinner in January!

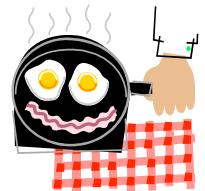
REMEMBER THE FOOD PANTRY!

When you’re grocery shopping, please keep our food pantry in mind. We are seeing record numbers of families coming in for groceries these days. We are always in need of canned fruit, canned pastas (spaghettios, etc.), spaghetti sauce, tuna, canned meats, cereals, hash, stew, etc. Thanks for your help!

ANNUAL MEETING IS COMING JAN. 31!

Attention church officers, board chairs and/or

MEN’S BREAKFAST
Saturday, Dec. 12
7:30 AM
ALL MEN WELCOME!!



secretaries:

Annual reports are due to the church office by January 17th!



The Christmas Bells –
What’s So Great About Christmas?
Pageant – December 13
10:00 AM
All Welcome!

CHRISTMAS SUNDAY
WORSHIP
Sunday, December 20th
10:00 AM - Join Us!

