

A Touch of Grace

A Ministry of Grace Baptist Church

December 2009

Volume 11 Issue 10

Rev. Todd E. Hill, Senior Pastor
Jason Potts, Youth Director
Ellen Owens, Secretary

55 Rosemar Rd, PO Box 4267
Parkersburg, WV 26104
304-485-4071

GBCparkersburg@casinternet.net
www.gbcparkersburg.org

From the Pastor

Christmas is coming and will be here before we realize it. Each year it seems to come more quickly than the year before. It's not that most of us mind how quickly it arrives, it's just that we become more and more overwhelmed by the worldliness of the season. After all, most of us do not mind the decorations and Christmas carols, it's just having those decorations and carols from October through December can be a little much. We become desensitized to the reason for the season. So let's remind ourselves what Christmas is all about.

Recently the electrical power went out in our small "neck of the woods" for more than four hours. The thing that impressed me most was the darkness. We become so accustomed to the light we forget sometimes how overwhelming the dark really is. After all, in our world of glowing clock radios, night lights and illuminating appliances, we sometimes don't realize the power of darkness. Rarely do we ever find ourselves completely in the dark; in a state of complete absence of light. But that is just what sin is: darkness. Complete darkness that is death. Every one is born in that condition. That is why Christmas is so very important; it is about light. The light of God's



The Bethlehem Project

Children's Cantata

Sunday, December 6, 6:00 p.m.

Fellowship following service.

One Small Child

Adult Cantata

Sunday, December 13, 6:00 p.m.

Live Nativity

Friday & Saturday, December 18-19, 7-9 p.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Thursday, December 24, 6:00 p.m.



**From your Pastor,
continued from page 1**

salvation and forgiveness manifested in true joy. I turned on a flashlight and the darkness was chased away. I lit a candle and immediately the darkness was removed. Light really does chase away the darkness and that is just what the birth of Jesus does. It chases away the darkness with light and love of the very person who is God.

Charles Lowery tells about an elderly man in Florida who called his son in Boston and told him that he hated to ruin his day, but he and his mother were divorcing. He said that forty-five years of misery was enough. The son screamed into the phone, "What are you talking about?" His dad replied, "We can't stand the sight of each other and we're tired of each other. Call your sister in Chicago and tell her." The son frantically called his sister who exploded into the phone receiver, "No way are they getting a divorce. I'll take care of this." She immediately called her dad and screamed at him that they were not getting a divorce and not to do anything rash until she arrived in Florida. She then called her brother back and told him that they needed to get to Florida ASAP! As the old man ambled back into the living room, he smiled at his wife and said, "The kids are coming for Christmas, and they're paying their own way!"

God paid the way for you to know forgiveness. ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."*** (Jn. 3:16, NKJV) God made His presence vividly known some 2,000 years ago on that Christmas night as the angels sang and the sky was lit up with a wondrous star; for ***"the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."*** An event that seemed rather insignificant to the rest of the world was in actuality an event that was laid before the foundations of the world. An event that was to have the greatest impact on the world such as it has ever seen or will see again till the coming of Christ in judgment. God chased away the darkness with the light of the very person of the Word: Jesus.

Every gift, every light, every song sung points to the wonderful truth that God has given us salvation. Probably one of the most understated verses of scripture in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 9:15. It is just eight words. Yet within those words is a powerful truth. ***"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."*** It is in this wonderful verse that we find the truth of Christmas. God has given to us the inexpressible gift of Jesus. The word "indescribable, inexpressible or unspeakable" reveals an awe and wonder that should never leave us. We should never cease to be amazed at the reality of a Savior. We should always be in astonishment that God would forgive us and redeem us from the guilt and power and punishment of sin. Like all

true gifts, God has given to us a gift that is unmerited and undeserved. After all, the scriptures states that we deserved nothing more than death and the full blast of hell. Yet who would have thought that God would choose to love us even before He laid the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). It is this awe and wonder of Christmas that makes giving so special. It is the blessings of knowing the truth of darkness and the truth of light that makes Christmas so very real. It truly is the greatest of gifts.

I'm reminded of the man who said that his wife wanted to travel for Christmas, so he gave her a map. Or another man whose wife wanted flowers for Christmas and he gave her seeds. Or the man whose wife said "surprise me" when he asked what she wanted for Christmas. So at 2 a.m. on Christmas morning, he woke her up by saying "Surprise, Merry Christmas!" The world's view of Christmas is all about giving of gifts. Each Christmas that passes is associated with the gifts that were received or given. We all can remember that perfect gift that was received, the joy and thankfulness that followed. Though there is much joy in receiving, there is without a doubt a greater joy in giving. I don't think that is an accident. I believe that our creator naturally made us that way. Our wonderful loving God, in whom we are made in His image, is a God who gives to us. He gives us light in a person, Jesus Christ. He chases away the darkness with His very person who is our salvation.

How should each and every Christian celebrate Christmas? The best celebration is to join the original celebration some 2,000 years ago. That celebration has never stopped for it continues day and night each time a soul is converted and a new creation is formed by the wonderful grace of God. We celebrate as the Shepherds did by telling others of the wondrous birth in the manger and the wondrous new birth in our lives.

We must never cease to be amazed at God's grace and the unlimited extent it has on our lives. We must constantly preserve the wonders of God's love in our hearts and continually praise and glorify Him who "condescended to live among men." Let this Christmas Season be a time of renewal and revival in your life as you cause yourself to reflect upon God's love and work around you and in you. Don't let the darkness overwhelm you. Chase it away with the light of Jesus. Let your life truly reflect, ***"Glory to God in the Highest."***

Have a wonderful Jesus filled Christmas, and I look forward to seeing you this Sunday,

Pastor Todd



Bible Study Fellowship

(Ladies Only)

On December 3rd there will be an Introduction Class for guests who would like to join Bible Study Fellowship or perhaps just experience what the class is like. BSF always begins at 9:10 a.m. and concludes at 11:00 a.m. Go to the sanctuary when you arrive. Feel free to bring friends to the Intro Class. Children can only attend after they have been officially registered. The next Intro Class will be on January 7th.

Prayer has been Answered! Two teachers are already training to teach the new Under-Two Program. Five Children are pre-enrolled and more are expected. The Under-Two program will enable infants, toddlers, and mothers with nursing infants to attend Day Women's classes. The new program is in response to the earnest plea of younger women who want to come to BSF. It was determined from the start that the program for the under two-year-olds would be more than caring for their physical needs. The purpose is for God's Word to influence even the youngest child's heart and mind as the children's leaders pray, teach and sing hymns in their classroom. Help spread the word!

As members of Grace Baptist Church, please remember to pray for the safety of the ladies as they move about the parking lot and inside the building—especially as winter weather arrives. Pray for souls to be saved and for spiritual growth for everyone. Please pray for everyone to have good health including family members so that the attendance can remain high. Also pray that the pressures of the approaching holiday season would not rob the ladies of their focus on God's Word. It is a privilege for us to host this Bible Study as one of our community projects. God is doing GREAT things and changing lives and allowing us to be a part! Thank You, Lord!



Stockings for the Salvation Army

The Senior Ministry needs your help filling 50 stockings for children—infant through 12 years old. Items are due this Sunday, December 6th. Please place your donations in the box in the foyer on the display table.

Senior Luncheon

Join the Seniors Tuesday, December 8th, 12:00 noon at the church. Ham and baked potatoes will be provided. Please bring a potato topping or dessert. We will eat and fill the Salvation Army Stockings.



Men's Breakfast

Saturday, December 12th, 9:00 a.m. Please sign up on the bulletin board in the hallway.



Christmas Food Baskets

We are doing Christmas food baskets this year. Anyone in need may contact the church office to sign up for one. Deadline is Friday, December 11th.

LIVING NATIVITY

We need your help with the Living Nativity, Friday and Saturday, December 18th and 19th from 7 to 9 p.m. Sign-ups will be on the bulletin board.



NEWS FROM THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT, LINDSAY NORRIS, CHAIRMAN



A Variety of Holiday Music is Planned to Help you Enjoy the Christmas Season

During the month of December a great variety of music is planned! Every one of our choirs, including the Preschool Choir, will sing. We will have another beautiful piano duet, a father and daughter duet, numerous solos, and the youth will join the adult choir again. It's all planned to assist you in worship of our Lord and Savior as we celebrate His birth and all that it means to us.

Help is still needed with decorating the church. The sanctuary looks wonderful and is ready for the Children's Musical this coming Sunday evening. Remember to bring finger foods for the fellowship that will follow the musical. This year, the Chrismon tree has been placed in the front window near the Rosemar Road entrance. The ornaments on the Chrismon tree are only in white, gold or a combination of both. The colors are to remind us of Christ's deity and of His purity. The design of every ornament points to Christ. Some refer to the parables that He told and others are more obvious in meaning. Please take time to reflect on Jesus as you study the various ornaments. You can use the tree as an opportunity to teach children about Jesus. *We still need to assemble 3 trees for the Adult Cantata on Saturday morning around 11:30 a.m.* The addition of the much needed elevator has changed a number of arrangement options in the foyer. This year, we did not have a place to temporarily place the Adult trees

before they are needed in the sanctuary.

Please be on guard that you do not allow any of the beautiful Christmas decorations in the sanctuary to distract you from focusing on the worship of God during our services. Please feel free to bring your camera from home and use the Christmas decorations as backgrounds for your family pictures. The best time to take pictures is after service, because the sanctuary is often in use before services.

We began using the Advent Wreath on the last Sunday night of November. A different candle will be lit for each of the 5 Sunday's prior to Christmas. They are designed to help us focus on one aspect of the Christmas story each week. Please call Ellen and volunteer to light the wreath for one of our services.

The beautiful Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will begin at 6:00 p.m. The service lasts only one hour, so you will have plenty of time to gather as families, open presents, and have dinner. This is always a meaningful and very well attended service of carols and Scripture. Come early and bring your family and friends. Lovely music is already planned.

Before we know it, the Christmas season will be over. *On Monday, December 28th we will remove all the Christmas decorations and carefully store them.* Please check the bulletin for the time. Your help is needed—many hands make the work light for everyone!

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
from the Music Department**

PRAISE MAKERS CHOIR
TO PRESENT
THE BETHLEHEM PROJECT
DIRECTOR, MARY HILL

We are hard at work preparing for the **Bethlehem Project** which will be presented on Sunday, December 6th at 6:00 p.m. Begin now inviting your friends and family to join us for a night of celebration as *Bethlehem* and *Shepherd* kids come together to celebrate the birth of *their* Messiah. Come out and support our children!



All choir members please refer to the sheet that was handed out Sunday night for all of the details regarding rehearsal information.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the children and parents for dedicating your time and effort to support this ministry. A big thank you to Liz and Cheryl who have given assistance on Sunday nights as well.

May each of you have a wonderful Christmas season as you also celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. Thank you for helping make another year of choir so fun!

We are going to have a Christmas party at the church on December 20th from 5:00-7:00. I will give out details with a hand out after our musical.

Remember, we will take the remaining month of December as well as January off to rest and enjoy all the snow we are going to get!!



ADULT CHRISTMAS CANTATA
Director, Patrick Greene

The Christmas Cantata, **One Small Child**, is coming up quickly! Make sure you've marked the date on your Calendar, Sunday, December 13th at 6:00 p.m.

For those of you in the cantata, we only have a few practices left! Can you believe it? Our practices will be :

- Saturday, December 5th, 10-11:30 am. Meet in the choir room. We'll be making sure that everyone has a robe to wear.
- Sunday, December 6th, 4:45-5:50 Meet in the choir room.
- Friday, December 11th, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Meet in the sanctuary.
- Sunday, December 13th, 4:00-5:00 p.m. Meet in the sanctuary for one final rehearsal. 5:00-5:45 We'll eat a light meal in the fellowship hall. 5:45-6:00 Put on robes and line up in the foyer for the performance.

Remember—listen to your rehearsal CD everyday!!

*Grace Baptist Church
P O Box 4267
Parkersburg, WV 26104*



Non Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Parkersburg, WV
26101
Permit #73



Can you help us find the Missing Persons?

People have always been missing from God's kingdom. But this year it's even worse because Southern Baptists, impacted by the U.S. economy, were unable to give as much as previous years to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering®. This means fewer Southern Baptists were able to take their places overseas to do their part in helping reach God's missing people.

We can help find the Missing Persons!!

This year's offering is exceptionally important! Your gifts help:

- Journeymen do community outreach by helping struggling farmers in East Asia.
- Two-year missionaries return to the classroom in Spain and mentor semester interns.
- IMB leaders continue work among priority peoples and start new work areas—and not have to choose between the two.
- Literally millions hear Jesus' name for the first time.

Help us reach our goal of \$2,800!!