



The *Spirit* of Strawberry Baptist Association

Rev. David Timma- Moderator

Vernon DeLong – *Interim Secretary*

Vol 54 No. 12 Dec 2023

Merry Christmas!

It is that time of year again, kids love it, retailers love it, do you? It is ironic that the celebration of the Birth of Christ is so often surrounded by hectic, frantic scrambling to make the time ‘special’. Of course, maybe that is the challenge of all our holidays. The Holy Days of Israel were meant to be interruptions to daily life. They were meant to remind Israel of who God was, and that we owe Him our allegiance, our trust, our lives, and well, everything. Life is not meant to be lived without God as supreme, and these interruptions are needed, because we get too comfortable in our own routines and forget the need for a Holy disruption!

There is a wonderful analogy in the field of medical treatment. For centuries people have dealt with the same physical ailments we have today. But, dealing with them is not the same as treating them or healing them. And what shortened lives or created immense pain we can now heal IF we have a physician who can diagnose, and we will allow the treatment. Often in life, we who by nature are sinners, deal with sin by having a ‘good enough for me’ attitude in which we get by. We live our lives, have moments of joy and sadness, and die. Meanwhile our God who offers life and healing of sin, is casually ignored because we don’t have time for a real solution, or see the fix to the sins which cripple us. So Holy days come along and remind us – life can and should be better. And God is the means. It is for His Glory we live, and He is glorified when we live well! Romans 11:36 reminds us that, “from Him, through Him, and To Him are all things, to Him be glory forever. Amen!” So, we need the interruptions to remind us to look up, remember why we are here and how much God has done to redeem us. And as redeemed people – we should live like it!

So as Christmas comes, remember it is about the Incarnation. It doesn’t mean that we don’t decorate and buy presents; but that every decoration, every present is meant to be given and received to God’s glory! Let it all be done so that the world sees that we celebrate God taking on flesh. We have more reason than anyone to rejoice, so let our holiday season be one in which people see and hear our joy. And remember that Christmas is a major evangelistic moment in which God comes into a lost world to seek and save. So, we ought to do likewise, use the season to share hope with neighbors and friends. Be aware and teach your children the greatest gift isn’t under the tree – but in the person of Christ!

David

The Birth of Jesus



750 years before our Savior was born, God spoke through the Prophet Isaiah. ***“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)***

As a contemporary of Isaiah, the Prophet Micah prophesied where the Messiah would be born, in Bethlehem of Judea. ***“But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah; Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One who is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” (Micah 5: 2)***



God’s Word Never Fails! After 450 years of silence from God, an angel spoke to a young couple from Nazareth who were planning to get married. **Good News! Good News!** They would be the parents of the Messiah. But it would require the assistance of the Roman government. God had a Purpose, God had a Plan.



And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into Heaven; that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. (Luke 2:1-20)

The Christmas Carol ***“O, Little Town of Bethlehem”*** was written by Phillip Brooks in 1868 after hearing children singing Christmas Carols at a Christmas Service. The 3rd verse speaks powerfully to us in the midst of this hectic season.

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous Gift is giv’n!
So God imparts to human hearts, the
blessings of His heav’n. No ear may hear His coming,
but in this world of sin, Where meek souls
will receive Him still the dear Christ enters in.*

Around the Association

Bedford - is committed to providing Shoe Boxes for the Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Campaign, and we exceeded our goal of 200 with 216 boxes.

*We will host the Bedford Area YMCA's 44th Annual Christmas Classic on Dec 2nd. Come out and cheer the runners/walkers along the "LOOP", at 8:30 am.

*Our Children's Christmas Program will be Dec 10th and the Adult Program will be Dec 17th, during Morning Worship. Come out for our "Live" Nativity Scene on Dec 17th between the hours of 5--7 pm.

*On Christmas Eve, we will have Morning Worship and an Evening Service for anyone looking to fill their hearts with the true meaning of Christmas.

*The Outreach Committee is working on a New Year's Eve event. **Merry Christmas to everyone.**

Pecks - celebrated Thanksgiving with a Candlelight Communion Service on Thanksgiving Eve.

*Our Christmas Cantata, "Beautiful Star," will be presented Sunday, Dec 3rd at 6:30 PM.

*We will have a Special Christmas Eve Service Sunday, Dec 24th, during the 11:00 AM Worship Service.

Trinity - will present their Christmas Cantata, "Christmas - the Story of His Love," on Sunday, Dec 10th, during the morning Worship Service

Timber Ridge - Youth attended "Hearts Afire" Youth Conference in Pigeon Forge. They heard speakers and worship leaders who encouraged and challenged them to grow in their walk with the Lord.

*AWANA's enjoyed Hero Night with Gary Arrington, from the Bedford County Sheriff's Department, and Director for Hunters for the Hungry.

*Timber Ridge and Free State Academy enjoyed a Thanksgiving meal together, with several young people being baptized.

*We collected and delivered Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes to the drop-off site in Bedford.

*WMU is currently collecting toys and other items for the Bedford Christmas Station.

*We continue to focus on the **Lottie Moon Christmas Offering** and how it is important to missionaries who are sharing the Gospel all around the world.

*Our Ladies Bible Study group will be putting together Christmas baskets for our shut-ins, nursing homes and elderly members in our church family.

*Our ladies Sunshine Committee hosted a Pajama Party Fellowship featuring the movie, "I Heard the Bells." Many were decked out in their Christmas PJ's, they were treated to snacks, Hot Cocoa Bar and a gift exchange game.

*Our Choir will present their Christmas Cantata on Sunday, Dec 17th during the Worship hour, with our annual Christmas meal following the service.

*Our Children will present their Christmas Play on Sunday, Dec 10th during the Worship hour.

Mentow - Since the WMU was organized in 1910, Mentow has focused on state, national and international missions. However, in recent years, we realized that while we were doing local missions in a small way, there were many needs in our backyard which needed our help. Just recently, sizable monetary donations have been made to Bedford Christmas Station, Huddleston Elementary School, Huddleston Volunteer Fire Department, Huddleston Volunteer Rescue and Life Saving, Bedford County Sherriff's Office "Toys for Kids," Lynchburg Area Veterans Council, Altavista Police Department's "Shop with a Cop," and individuals/families. These are just a few. And worldwide, we again participated in the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child with 100% success.

*We helped host the Community Trunk or Treat and had our annual Homecoming/Fellowship Day. We also had a Music/Pizza Event, with a full house.

*Plans are being made for the Christmas season; and among other activities, a communion/candlelight service is scheduled for Sunday, Dec 17th, at 5:30. There will be a time of fellowship following this special service.

Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes Collected

Bedford	216
Bethlehem	15
Flint Hill	40
Suck Spring	48
Timber Ridge	100
Trinity	35
Hunting Creek	1,057



Total 1,511 Shoeboxes

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING

100% of your gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® enable gospel transformation among the unreached.

imb.org/lottiemoon



Strawberry Baptist Association
P.O. Box 91
Bedford, VA 24523



December

- 3 – 10** Lottie Moon Christmas Offering
for International Missions
- 5** Pastor's Conference
@ Trinity
- 25** Christmas

*May you have a Christ-Filled Christmas.
May the Joy of His Birth fill your Homes.
May the Love of God fill your Hearts.
Merry Christmas to All!*