

# First Christian Visitor

*"Where the Grace of God Awaits You."*

[www.fcc-bhm.org](http://www.fcc-bhm.org)

VOLUME X NUMBER 01 JANUARY 2, 2008



## NEW YEARS GREETINGS FROM YOUR STAFF

All of us on your church staff want to wish you a most joyful new year. May we all lay aside our fears and claim with joy the future that God has for each one of us. All of God's blessings in 2008.

<b>Edd</b>	<b>Mary Pat</b>	<b>Beth</b>
<b>Mary</b>	<b>Jennifer</b>	<b>Jan</b>
<b>Cece</b>	<b>Chris</b>	<b>Lloyd</b>
<b>David</b>	<b>Bill</b>	

## A WORD FROM YOUR PASTORS

Barbara Carpenter and I have been spending precious time together in the Baptism and Membership Class talking about the joy of being a Christian. One thought that we focus on is that God can always be trusted. Let me share with you some truths that lift up the glorious trust in God.

When He tells us that our sins can be forgiven, we can bet our lives on that and when He forgives them, He forgets them. We can put our mistakes and failures behind. Trust in God means that when He says He loves us, we accept that. We know there is nothing in the world we have ever done that could cause Him not to love us. To trust God means that He will provide for us what we need. He told us that He will help us face life. We can know that. In all of the difficult experiences we may have, He will help us. He said so. Trust in God means that when He says life is forever, we can fully believe that. Even death is not powerful enough to take life away from us.

The realization that God can be trusted. What a blessing! Thank you, Father.

*God Bless You, Edd & Mary Pat*

## WANT TO SCALE BACK??

Below is the **Calendar of Events to be held at First Christian Church:**

### Weigh-in Dates/times:

Sunday, January 6 – 11:30 AM- 2:30 PM

Monday, January 7 – 1:30 PM – 7:30 PM

### Weekly Classes/Support (Optional):

Each Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> – March 8<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-7:30 PM in the Farkas Room

### Mid-program Weigh –in (Optional):

Tuesday, February 12<sup>th</sup> – 6:00 PM -6:30 PM and 7:30 -8:00PM

### Weigh-out Dates/times

Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup> – 11:30 AM -2:30 PM

Monday, March 10<sup>th</sup> – 1:30 PM – 7:30 PM

For more information, contact Joye Taylor, Ginny

White, Deb Carpenter, or go to their website:

[www.scalebackalabama.com](http://www.scalebackalabama.com).

## END OF THE YEAR GIFTS

Every year we are blessed with end of the year gifts to our church general fund. If you can share an end of the year gift through a sale of stock or a special love gift from the blessings you have received, please contact Cece. Thank you for your love, prayers, and support of the church.

**"CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?"**

**(Discerning God's Call to Transformation)**

On February 8 and 9, 2008, the Region's Program Committee on Church Development is sponsoring an important event in the life of our Region that will help congregations in their journey of transformation for ministry in a new day. The event is being titled, "Can You Hear Me Now?" (Discerning God's Call to Transformation) Every congregation can benefit from participating in this event.

The Region will gather in worship on Friday, February 8, 2008, at 7:30 pm., at First Christian Church, Birmingham. Internationally renowned preacher, Dr. Fred B. Craddock, will be the preacher. On Saturday, February 9, 2008, a variety of workshops will be offered that will be helpful to both clergy and lay leaders. Leaders of these workshops include Dr. Craddock, Dr. Richard L. Hamm (former General Minister and President), and other leaders from the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region.

All of us at First Christian should consider attending this outstanding program at our church.

## CALLING ALL PLEDGE CARDS

Happy New Year! If you have not yet turned in your financial commitment card for 2008, I hope that is your New Years resolution. Cece, our office manager, has compared the records of those pledging and giving in prior years and reports that we still need to hear from many of you. In fact, the budget approved by Mission Council for the coming year requires \$460,793.40 in pledges from the congregation. To date, we have commitments totaling \$331,305.00.

The current budget is not unreasonable, as it is not much more than what was approved last year, and we have yet to receive commitments from 55 families who pledged or gave regularly in 2007. It does include some "improvements" for 2008, such as a summer intern to work with our children and youth, staff raises, and increased local outreach giving, just to name a few.

It is my hope that we will hear from those who have not returned commitment cards soon, so that your leadership can put into action our present plans for programs in 2008. As stewards of your gifts and the church's finances, we will review the pledges in relation to the currently approved budget in late January or early February. If our commitments are not adequate to support what has already been approved by that time, we may have to reduce funding for some of the programs submitted by the church's missions.

Please join me in stepping forward in faith and return your commitment card for 2008. Our missions and programs depend on you.

*Libby Carpenter*

First Christian Church  
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Birmingham, Al. 35242

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FIRST CHRISTIAN VISITOR (UPS 0195-880) IS PUBLISHED WEEKLY EXCEPT A WEEK IN DECEMBER AND A WEEK IN JULY, BY FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH. PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT BIRMINGHAM, AL, 35203. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO: FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, 4954 VALLEYDALE ROAD, BIRMINGHAM, AL 35242.

Life In Our Community This Week

Sunday, January 6

- 9:00 Sunday School
- 10:00 Worship
- 11:30 First Scale Back Alabama Weigh-In
- 4:00 Bell Choir
- 5:00 Chi Rho Music Group
- 5:30 Youth Groups
- 5:45 Praise Kids
- 7:00 Snack Supper

Monday, January 7

- 7:00 Men’s Bible Study
- 10:00 Staff Meeting
- 1:30 Scale Back Alabama Weigh-In

Tuesday, January 8

- 9:45 Chapel
- 7:00 Finance Council

Wednesday, January 9

- 9:45 Chapel
- 6:30 Choir Practice

GRACE NOTES

- ✝ Our prayers are with Inez Sikes, who is in Shelby Ridge.
- ✝ Our prayers are with Hal Edwards, who is back Home.
- ✝ Our prayers are with Robert Steele, who had successful surgery at the VA hospital.
- ✝ Our prayers are with Lois Conwell, who is recovering at home from surgery.
- ✝ Our Joy is with Bill Willis, who received good news from his heart test.
- ✝ Our sympathy is expressed to Hubert Nall upon the loss of his brother Bill.
- ✝ All members of First Christian are invited to an early morning Bible Study that meets every Monday at 7:00 am in the Fireside Room. We will begin a new study on the Old Testament book of Job on Monday, January 7.
- ✝ All adults are invited to a Sunday evening Bible Study that begins Sunday, January 13 at 5:30 pm in the Genesis Room.

YOUTHTOPIA 2008

(For Youth in Grades 6 – 12)  
January 25 – 27, at YMCA Hargis, Chelsea, AL. Special Guest: Mark Briley, Youth Minister, Geist Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN.  
Theme: “And You Shall Be My Witnesses”  
Cost: \$85.00  
Registration forms are in the narthex

WEEK OF COMPASSION UPDATE

A recently released report by the British-based ngo (non-governmental organization), Oxfam, confirms what many in the disaster response community have suspected for some time – the number of natural disasters occurring in the world is dramatically on the rise. Indeed, the Oxfam study found that the number has more than quadrupled over the past two decades. In the early 1980’s the world experienced about 120 disasters per year compared to current figures of around 500 per year. The number of people affected had swelled by almost 70% - from 174 million a year between 1985 -1994 to some 254 million a year between 1995 - 2004. And as one might regrettably surmise, it is the world’s poorest and most severely impacted.

Here at Week of Compassion 10 – 15 years ago, Disciples through WOC typically responded to disasters and emergencies on average of about once every 5 – 7 days. Now we are responding annually about once every 1 – 2 days.

A logical question that follows might be: what can we Disciples do? Of course, there are some simple things – give to WOC (gifts earmarked for the Compassion Response Fund are used 100% for disaster response); prepare CWS “Gift of the Heart” kits (stocks for many of the kits are essentially depleted as requests from partners throughout the world continue to grow each year); make sure your congregation has and maintains a WOC interactive map/poster (a great way to track disasters as they happen and how we Disciples respond). Stay informed – many disasters remain under-reported, even unreported, by so much of the popular media.

YOUNG ADULT RETREAT

(Ages 18 and Over?)  
January 18 – 20  
YMCA Hargis, Chelsea, AL (Bernard House)  
Keynote Speaker: Diane Wood. Cost: \$ 60.00  
Registration forms are in the narthex

LAST SUNDAY’S ATTENDANCE

WORSHIP 148  
SUNDAY SCHOOL 48

CHRISTIAN COMRADES SUNDAY LESSON

“Inspired to Inquire!”  
Luke 2:41-52

GOT AN ARTICLE FOR THE VISITOR?

If you have an article for the Visitor, please get it into the office the Friday BEFORE the Tuesday mail-out. Thanks!

PEPP RETREAT

**(People Enriched, Prepared, Productive)**

February 1-2, 2008

at YMCA Hargis Retreat Center, Chelsea, AL

Theme: "Pastoral Tools for Conflict Management"

Retreat Leader: Melanie Barton

Disciples Minister and Pastoral Counselor

Cost: \$30.00 Per Person

All past and present PEPP students and teachers are invited. Registration forms will be mailed in the January Leader's Packet.

**YOUNG ADULT RETREAT SET FOR JANUARY**

Young adults (18 and over) are invited to a three-day retreat sponsored by the region January 18-20, 2008. Diane Wood will be the keynote speaker for the event which will be held at the YMCA Hargis Retreat in Chelsea. Registration is \$60 per person. Deadline registration is January 7. Forms can be picked up in the church office.