

First Christian Visitor

"Where the Grace of God Awaits You."

www.fcc-bhm.org

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AN ADVENT WORD FROM YOUR PASTORS

An elderly couple was in a card shop looking for Christmas cards. The wife said, "Here is one I like, but I don't care for the words." Her husband replied, "That doesn't matter, because today, nobody bothers to read the message anyway."

Maybe we too are so busy that we don't read the message in the Christmas card. Also, maybe sometimes we don't read the message from the Word of God. A message that is very important, for it is a message of good news. "For in the town of Bethlehem a Savior has been born to you." A Savior, that is a message of good news for all people. Praise the Lord.

Merry Christmas, Edd & Mary Pat

BELIEVE IN MIRACLES!

This past August our youth went on their annual planning retreat. There they made many suggestions to what they wanted to study this year, what worship experiences they wished to participate in and be a part, what types of recreation they wanted to do, and what types of outreach projects they wanted to carry out both for our church and for our community. They had several projects in mind to carry out for FCC; the one that got the most votes was to start working on getting a new church bus since the old one has seen its best days and actually it is not safe for passengers. So they committed to the project, made a video, painted and cut out an extra large poster, which is in the narthex with photos of all the children in the youth groups and recently added the Young at Hearts seniors group. Most important the youth committed to give 10% of everything they make this year to go towards a new bus. Next they shared with you that we have a need for a new bus and asked for your one time gift. Several of you have responded with your gifts and your generosity, for this we are in deed thankful because we believe in miracles. We know miracles still happen. In fact, ***we are ecstatic to announce*** that thanks to some of ***God's special angels*** (some of whom wish to remain anonymous) we have a new church bus sitting in our parking lot, ready to travel to a youth conference in Gatlinburg. We want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank everyone who has made a donation to the Bus Fund. The new bus is a Miracle, and we thank all of you for supporting the youth and turning this dream into a reality and a Miracle. We have established a permanent fund that will pay for the upkeep and gas. Please know that we still would appreciate your gift that will enable our children, youth and seniors to travel in safety and comfort. Note on your checks for: "Church Bus Fund". All gifts are greatly appreciated. You are invited to tour the new bus this Sunday, December 20th immediately after church.

Thank you, FCC Youth Group

**COLLEGE RECOGNITION SUNDAY
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27**

Traditionally, the last Sunday in December is set aside as College Recognition Sunday. It is a time that we recognize our college students and invite them to lead us in our worship service. We are blessed here at First Christian with young adults who have volunteered and agreed to lead us in worship on this special Sunday. We are looking forward to hearing Laura Langley, who will bring us the morning message. Also, college young adults will serve as worship leaders. Their names will be in next week's Visitor.

SHARING OUR BLESSINGS

Many of you share end of the year blessings with the church. Maybe the Lord has blessed you with abundance and you would like to share a portion of it with His church. You may contact Cece with your gift of stock, real estate, or other financial blessings. Thank you for all you do for the church.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT COMMUNION SERVICE

On Christmas Eve we will have two worship services to celebrate the birth of Christ.

The first service is at 7:00 pm. It will be a Contemporary Service that will be family and child friendly. This service will include the song, "Come On Ring Those Bells", and everyone is encouraged to bring your favorite bell to church to ring in honor of the Lord's birthday. The service will also have a children's moment, Holy Baptism, an upbeat anthem by the choir, "Advent Jubilation", and a dialogue drama sermon by Edd & Mary Pat. The nursery will be open.

The second service will be a Traditional service at 11:00 pm. This service will be more formal and will be by candlelight. The only light in the sanctuary will be the Christmas Tree and candles. This service will consist of a solo of "O Holy Night", by Jan, along with a sermon by Edd.

Both services will have the worshippers walking forward to receive communion. Also, they will both end with the congregation singing Silent Night by candlelight.

Invite a friend to one of these special services. They will be a blessing as we prepare for Christmas morning.

OH COME ALL YOU FAITHFUL 2009 CHRISTMAS OFFERING

The Christmas offering will be received this Sunday, December 20. One hundred percent of this offering will go to support the ministries of the AL/NW Florida region. Please share generously.

► *Please note - we will not publish a Visitor the last week of December (28-31) per our bulk mail permit.*

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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 PLEASE SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO: FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, 4954 VALLEYDALE ROAD, BIRMINGHAM, AL 35242.

Life In Our Community This Week

	<u>Sunday, December 20</u>
9:00	Sunday school
10:00	Worship – Christmas Offering
2:00	Children’s group going to The McWane Center
5:30	Youth Christmas Party at Edd & Mary Pat’s
	<u>Monday, December 21</u>
7:00	Men’s Bible Study Christmas Breakfast at the International House of Pancakes
10:00	Staff meeting
6:30	Mission Council Christmas Party At Libby Carpenter’s
	<u>Tuesday, December 22</u>
7:00	Elder Calls
	<u>Thursday, December 24</u>
7:00	Contemporary Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service & Baptism
11:00	Traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service

GRACE NOTES

- † Our sympathy is expressed to Charles, Jennifer and family in the loss of Virginia Powell. Her memorial service was in the sanctuary on Monday, December 14.
- † Our prayers are with Gordon Goodall, who is home after receiving a pace maker.
- † Our prayers are with Margarite Sebastain.
- † Our prayers are with Dronnie Chandler, who is at St. Vincent’s for back surgery.
- † The Adventure Nook (TAN) is collecting children’s books to be given to needy children at Christmas. Please bring your books to the church office. Thanks so much for helping TAN help others in need.
- † We missed George Dudley’s birthday in December. We wish him a happy birthday.
- † Our joy is with Kayla Vaughn, who is engaged to Caleb Kirk. They plan to be married at First Christian on October 9, 2010. May God richly bless them.

SHARING YOUR GIFTS

Please help with planning our year of worship and study and turn in your pledge cards.

SUNDAY’S ATTENDANCE	
SUNDAY SCHOOL	76
WORSHIP	205

CHRISTIAN COMRADES SUNDAY LESSON

Sunday, December 20th
“Emmanuel is Born”
Matthew 1: 18-25

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What is a Sabbatical?

Over the next several weeks we will be writing articles on Sabbatical leaves.

The word sabbatical has its roots in the biblical concept of Sabbath (“to rest” or “to cease”). Sabbath keeping is setting aside time that God consecrates and makes holy.

Sabbatical leave is a time for our pastors to shift gears in order to rest, disengage, study, reflect, and travel in order to return to minister among us refreshed and renewed in body, mind, and spirit. (It is not a time for routine work, mid-career assessment, job search, retirement planning, or terminal leave).

Our Pastors Edd, Mary Pat and Jan’s letter of agreement with First Christian specifies that they have available sabbatical leave after five years of continuous service. The year 2009 marks that time.

Sabbatical is more than a vacation from meetings, budgets, sermons, and people in need. It is a time for our Pastors to receive spiritual nourishment and a change in perspective, to deepen their relationship with God, themselves, and their family--a season of spiritual growth. This special time will also be a season of growth for the entire congregation as we intentionally engage in a time of prayerful discernment for our future together in mission and ministry.

Steve Pasky, Chair, Sabbatical committee

COLUMBARIUM INTRODUCTORY
PRICE PERIOD ENDS SOON!

If you are considering having your cremated remains inurned in our beautiful new Columbarium after your death, now is the time to make that known in order to take advantage of our reduced “introductory” price for the niches. In January, niche prices will go up to the standard rate of \$1500 each. You can convey your interest in the Columbarium and realize the introductory \$1000 per niche price by completing the commitment forms provided to each family last summer (extra copies are available in the FCC office). The introductory price can be honored only if you pay at least \$250 towards the price of each reserved niche by Dec. 31. Payment arrangements for remitting the balance due for all reserved niches by the end of 2010 can be made with Cece. The selection and reservation of your specific niche(s) will be done upon payment in full. For any questions, please contact a member of the Columbarium committee: Jim and Ann Langley, Clarissa Harms, Jim Baxter, Hugh Henderson.