



## Cross & Spire

Newsletter of First Baptist Church

P. O. Box 331, 11 School St. Lebanon, NH 03766 Interim Pastor: Rick Pinilla  
Phone: 603-448-5618 Email: office@lebfirstbaptist.com www.lebfirstbaptist.com

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

### ***Upcoming Events:***

*Women 2 Women:  
Saturday,  
December 2 at  
2:00pm*

*Men's Breakfast:  
Saturday,  
December 9 at  
7:30am*

*Christmas Party  
Saturday,  
December 9 at  
5:30pm*

*Children's  
Christmas Party  
Sunday, December  
24 during Worship  
at 10:00am*

*Christmas Sunday  
Service: Sunday,  
December 24 at  
10:00am*

*Christmas Eve  
Service: Saturday,  
December 24 at  
6:00pm*

*Annual Business  
Meeting  
Sunday, January 28  
at 11:30am*

### **A Word from Pastor Rick**

Dear Friends,

One of the striking features of the Christmas narratives in the Bible is joy. This is all the more remarkable when you realize that for the people rejoicing there was no *material* difference in their lives because of the events they celebrated. Joseph and Mary were still in the stable and had to live far from home for years. The Shepherds were still a part of a despised class and they had the added burden of realizing that their witness to the Angels and the Messiah was largely ignored. Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, lived out the rest of their lives in the same obscurity they had. All of them suffered under the burden oppressive foreign rule by the Romans who hated them and of their own religious and civil leaders who used their positions to enrich themselves.

This was even true of the people who first heard the promise of this day. Isaiah the prophet was called by God in the eighth century before Christ to speak for God in a time of declining fortunes and looming disaster for the people of God. Because of centuries of growing unfaithfulness to God the nation of Israel was beginning to experience the judgment of God: conquest and exile. Isaiah's job was to preach to these people and warn them to turn back to God or the blow would fall; but he was told plainly that they wouldn't listen. Isaiah and those who had remained faithful to God would be caught up in the disaster. It was to them that God first gave the promise of the birth of a King and Savior: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold the virgin will be with Child and give birth to a son, and shall call his name Immanuel....The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness on them has light shone.....For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be on his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this (Isaiah 7:14; 9:2, 6-7)." The promise of restoration through the Messiah had been given; but the believers went through the disasters of the 8th and 6th centuries and had to wait for 700 years for the beginning of the fulfillment of the promise. In all that time they were slaves to foreign rulers and pawns in a game of ruthless international politics.

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We might say, that Christmas is about hope deferred instead of hope fulfilled. Why the joy? I think there are at least four reasons for the joy. First, this showed that God had not forgotten their plight. That their faith and hope was not a comforting self-delusion. What he said 700 years before he has done! He exists, he cares he rules! Second, this showed that their suffering had a purpose. They were where they were to receive the Messiah and bear witness to his coming! Their place in life was all a part of God's purpose of love and grace. Third, he had come to suffer with them. The name given by the prophet Isaiah was Immanuel, God is with us! This of course is always true, but the extent, the humility and the wonder of the love of God was shown in that he came and suffered with us, as one of us! There he was in the stable, homeless, a victim of Roman oppression and the hard heartedness of his compatriots. He knows the way I go! Fourth, his birth according to ancient promise was a guarantee and down payment of the final victory of God. Just as D-Day was something to celebrate for those suffering under Nazi rule in Europe, so in our days of uncertainty and difficulty we have the evidence of our final victory in what we celebrate at Christmas. In the meantime, God is with us and we serve his kingdom and advance his rule that will one day fill the earth. What we suffer now is part of the price of victory.

Your Partner in the Great Work,  
Rick Pinilla

#### **ADVENT IS HERE**

Advent begins Sunday, December 3. Advent is the season in the church year leading up to Christmas and our celebration of the birth of Christ.

#### **LOOKING AHEAD:**

December 24 – Christmas Sunday Service  
(10:00am)

December 24 – Christmas Eve Service  
(6:00pm)

#### **OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD**

Thank you to everyone who filled a shoebox and to everyone who made a donation to Operation Christmas Child! We filled 12 boxes, which means 12 children will receive Christmas gifts along with the Good News that our Savior, Jesus Christ, was born! Please remember to pray for the child who will receive your gift. How heartwarming it is to know that our Church family considers helping children in need while we are going through a massive building project. We are truly living out Matthew 5:16 ... Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

#### **CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY**

On Sunday, December 24 there will be a Christmas party for all children during the worship service. There will be crafts and games and loads of fun for the Children's Church and Nursery children. Please come and bring a friend!

#### **ANNUAL REPORTS DUE JANUARY 9!**

Attention all church board chairs and/or secretaries – please get your Annual Reports in to the church office by Tuesday, January 9 for inclusion in this year's Annual Report.

#### **ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING**

The Annual Business Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 28 this year. We are looking forward to seeing you all there.

#### **MEN'S BREAKFAST**

The next Men's Breakfast will be on Saturday, December 9 at 7:30am. Please see Jim Newcomb or Chris Scholtz for more information.

### **WOMEN 2 WOMEN**

Our next W2W meeting will be on Saturday, December 2 at 2:00PM. Please see Ruth Newcomb or Karen Scholtz for more information.

### **NEW CHURCH DIRECTORY**

Rachel is going to try to have a new Church Directory in January. Please let her know if your information has changed, and if you would like to remain in the Directory.

### **YOUTH GROUP BREAK**

There will be no Youth Group on Sunday, December 10. Then the Holiday Break will be Sunday, December 24 and Sunday, December 31. We hope you have a great holiday with your families.

### **CE BOARD UPDATE**



The Christian Education Board has continued to supply Church time and Nursery activities for children during the service. Dedicated volunteers provide loving care and Bible learning to help children find faith in Christ. The Adult Discipleship Committee presented excellent opportunities for growth this Fall. The Sunday School class shared a DVD series by Chip Ingrahm called Culture Shock. It was a vivid study of how far our society has turned away from the Word of God, and how truly necessary and difficult it is to stand on our Faith in Jesus. To tie in with that was a study on

Evangelism presented by a Christianity Explored missionary, Chris McMillan. He taught Intentional Love Evangelism which promotes developing relationships with people who do not know Jesus, rather than handing out tracts or knocking on doors. A group of eight met at the Rataj home for seven weeks. It was an encouraging study as we learned to share Jesus with others like Jesus did - meeting needs with love. Lastly, on Wednesday mornings a group of Ladies met for a wonderful Bible study, Praying For Your Adult Children, by Stormie Omartian. It has been a true blessing to learn that we are not alone in our concerns for our grown children in the world today. The theme of each chapter led the conversation and helped us better understand the issues our adult children are dealing with, and that our role as parents never ends. Especially, the prayer at the end of each chapter gave a sense of relief as we put these grown children in the Lord's hands and asked Him to fill them with His Spirit. There is no greater love than that. Stormie's teaching was solidly based on Scripture, and we all rejoiced at the answers to prayers that were shared. The study will resume in the Spring, ladies please consider joining the group. December 24 Christmas Eve party for all children during the service! Come for the fun, food, games, and crafts as we celebrate the Birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ! Serving Him, Carol Rataj "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11

### **CHURCH CHRISTMAS PARTY**

Everyone Invited! Saturday, December 9 5:30 PM at the Parsonage. Each person should bring a used gift for a Yankee Swap. There will be Christmas Singing! Pastor Rick and Anne are hosting and providing all food.