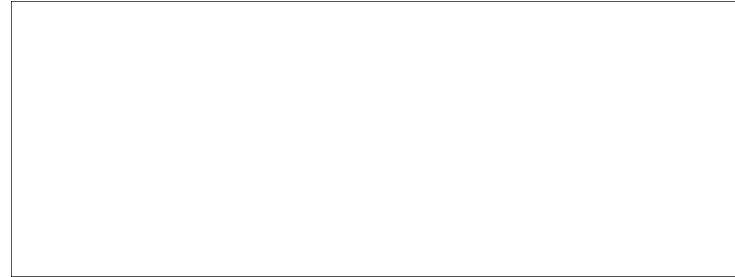


THE BRIDGE

Published monthly by
First Baptist Church
201 St. Clair St.
Frankfort, KY 40601

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
FRANKFORT, KY
PERMIT NO 58



Christmas Eve Service

Carols, Candlelight, and Communion

6:00 pm, December 24
Facebook Live Premier

Please join us as we celebrate the arrival of GOD INCARNATE. We will sing carols safely from our home. Prepare the communion elements and have a candle ready to participate in the candle-lighting portion.



The Bridge

First Baptist Church of Frankfort
December 2020 Newsletter



Like many of you, I have always been drawn to the birth narrative of Jesus, especially in the Gospel of Luke. The characters and places seem larger than life: Emperor Augustus, Joseph, Mary, Galilee, Bethlehem, the baby, the manger, the inn. The story has a somewhat magical aura and for me, at least, it never seems to lose its mystique. As the years went by and I became more of a serious student of the biblical text, I've come to realize the importance of the shepherds.



The shepherds are not neglected in the retelling of the story or left out of nativity sets. They've always had their place of prominence in the children's Christmas plays and it would seem odd to not have them gazing upon the baby in swaddling clothes. I just wonder how much we have really thought about their significance regarding the bigger picture of the Gospel.

They are literally 'living in fields' in that region. We may have a picturesque countryside in mind with freshly pressed robes on the shepherds and little lambs by their sides. Luke doesn't paint that attractive scene. The shepherds are the slaves of this time and space. They are not the affluent land or animal owners who would have been in their nice homes this time of night. These guys lived in the fields. They worked in the fields. They labored day and night to make sure the rich stayed rich.

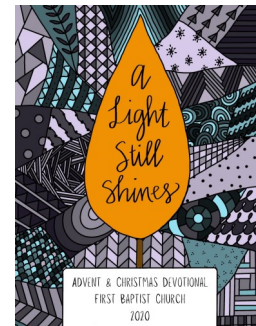
What we find in the larger scope of Luke's gospel is that he more than the other gospel narratives portray Jesus as a liberator of the poor – not in spiritual terms, but in actual socio-economic measures. Wesley Allen Jr wrote in his commentary, "*It is not just in Jesus' ministry that God redeems the marginalized and oppressed; it happens already in his birth, and thus is core to his very being. For Luke, Jesus' very existence and identity is one of turning tables on the inequality of the world.*" From the time Jesus is welcomed into our world, we learn that he is upsetting the status quo. He is here to free the slave, rescue the oppressed and save those pushed to the margins.

In the Magnificat, Mary articulates it better than anyone. "He lifts up the lowly. He fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty." Is it any wonder that those who did not give food to the hungry or drink to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, or visit the sick or imprisoned are cast out of the Kingdom of Heaven? Jesus showed us the Way from his very first cries as Infant Holy. Could this change the way in which we see and treat the impoverished and disinherited of our day?

In Christ,
Keith

CHRISTMAS CONNECTIONS

During December, make connecting with your First Baptist Church family a priority. Participate in everything you can as we grow spiritually and show love for one another.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL - Our devotional, *A Light Still Shines*, is available on our website. A printed version is available in the front lobby closet of the church. Coloring pages can also be downloaded from the web.

CHRISTMAS CD - The FBC Sanctuary Choir's Christmas CD, *The Work of Christmas*, is available in the closet of the church lobby. Please take one for yourself and take additional copies for friends and family.



CHRISTMAS POST OFFICE - Let's share our Christmas greetings with each other! Send a Christmas photo of your family, a short video of your family sharing their greeting, or a Christmas picture colored by

your child to Marcus by December 8. We will assemble all submissions into a slide show and share at the end of worship on December 13 and 20.

ADVENTURE BAGS - Amanda has assembled ADVENTure bags for children with activities for the entire family during Advent. If you have not made arrangements to get yours, please contact Amanda.

VIRTUAL NATIVITY DISPLAY - Don't forget to send Kara a photo of your nativity. We'll share the photos during December.



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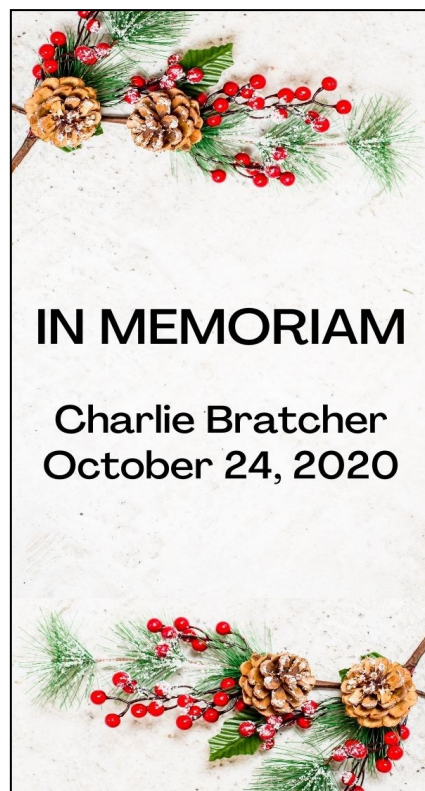
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IN MEMORIAM

Charlie Bratcher
October 24, 2020





A confession: As we near the end of 2020, after a week and a half of quarantining apart from my husband amidst a COVID scare, I, a person who nearly always insists upon waiting until Advent to put up Christmas decorations, hauled the tree up from the basement on November 15.

I'm a firm believer there can never be too many twinkle lights on a Christmas tree. (My tree may have to plug into two different outlets to keep from blowing a fuse.) As a result, I spend a fair amount of time just looking at my tree. And as I've been sitting here preparing to write about hope, my eyes keep landing on an ornament on our tree that's actually the word "hope," made to look as if it's cut from gingerbread.

The ornament was a gift from Ms. Timmy in 2012. In fact, a number of our Christmas decorations are gifts from a wedding shower the FBC children gave me that year. It's felt extra special to pull those things out this year as I've had the opportunity to renew relationships with many of the people behind these gifts and to look forward to what's ahead.

I am excited to be part of the FBC family again and to walk alongside you and to hope alongside you, even in this strange time. In just the few months I've been with you, I can name so many things that invite me to hopefulness about our future together: Meaningful, thoughtful worship, despite having to be apart. A neighborhood full of people who cheerfully dressed up and handed out clues and candy to our kids in October. A children's Godly Play group that delightedly soaks up each new story. A church that has been creative and flexible in keeping ministries to our community alive during a pandemic. Book and Bible studies that are thriving even on Zoom. A staff that continues to dream and to look forward to what lies ahead for FBC. I wonder what in your life catches your eye and stirs you to hope in this season?

-Amanda



When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."

Probably not the text you expected for this December article on Peace, but I cannot think of a better one to illustrate the power of

peace. Horatio Spafford was a lawyer who penned these incredible words while sailing near the spot where his daughters had recently drowned in a ship wreck. As a parent, and grandparent, I am in awe of such faith to write such words at such a time. Yet this is the peace of Christ that you and I proclaim, a peace that passes all understanding.

This year has been unlike any other in my lifetime. Covid has robbed me of doing some of the things I love most in the world, namely being present with my faith family and making music with that family. Yet Covid cannot take away our Hope, Peace, Joy, or Love unless we allow it to do so. These things are not dependent upon external circumstances, they are all internal and rest in our relationship with God. Though I confess I've been burdened by the effects of Covid I also have known Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love in these days. Even in the hardest days I've been able to say "it is well with my soul." We celebrate anew the coming of the Prince of Peace. He taught it and lived it and now, through the Holy Spirit, offers it freely to all of us. My prayer is that you too can say "it is well with my soul", but if not please know it is available to you through Jesus. Be still and know that He is God, and be at peace!

-Richard



If I were to ask you, "What brings you joy?" what would your response be? Perhaps it's the anticipation of receiving that gift you're so excited to open in your bunny rabbit pajamas, which could potentially shoot your eye out (Anyone catch my reference?). Perhaps it's knowing that you'll be saving money with the Black Friday and Cyber Monday deals you're after. Or, perhaps it's grandma's homemade stuffing that you salivate over every holiday season at the dinner table.

All of these things are incredibly nice, especially grandma's stuffing. Yet, I wonder if we could go a little deeper with this question of what brings us joy. For me, I've come to find joy in a variety of ways. I've found joy in small gestures like handwritten notes and random phone calls and text messages from others checking in with me. I've found joy in taking this current period of time to love and affirm myself, which I would encourage any and everyone to do. I've found joy in remembering and reminiscing on past experiences, pictures, and journal entries from time spent with others. I've found joy in looking back in my journey of where I've come from, and I find joy in wondering where I'm heading. I've also found joy in dreaming and looking forward to the day when we can finally meet again. Maybe you can find joy in these things, too.

During this season of waiting and anticipation for the arrival of Jesus, perhaps you can fill your moments in listing how you find joy. Then, I encourage you to share that joy with those around you.

I love and miss each of you with all my heart! Peace be with you!

-Marcus



Love. In the year 2020, love seems so much more difficult than it has before. But love has always been something we are waxed philosophically about. The sheer numbers of poets, artists, books, films, letters, and public declarations throughout millenia speak to how integral love is to the human existence. When we go to the Scriptures it's what Jesus boils the whole Gospel down to. LOVE. Familial, romantic, friendly, unconditional. It is what drives us in all our relationships, whether present or not. 2020 brings me back, not to the way we find love in our many relationships, but the way we act out that love. If faith without works is dead, so too is love dead without the actions behind it as a manifestation of its existence. Love is not just a sentiment, it is action. It is words and deeds. Love is so fierce that it means reshaping the world for the people who hold your affection. Too often, our culture celebrates a fleeting romantic love, when instead I wish we would find the loves that literally changed society around them because of it. In a world where people are dying—because of the color of their skin or a deadly virus, it's love that is willing to act that we so desperately need. Love like Bonhoeffer, knowing returning to a Nazi Germany to die. Love like King, spending his life in and out of jails. Love like Alice Paul, not stopping her advocacy at just the women's vote. Love like Dolly, trailblazing for women and then giving back all she earns over and over. Love like Jesus, eating, preaching, living, and dying for the least of us, for you, and for me.

-Michelle