

Dec. 1, 2023 **Faith Builders** Issue
#12

A Faith Chapel Newsletter – Special Christmas Edition

Sunday Mornings at Faith Chapel
Connect Classes 8:30am **Service 10:00am**

Scripture of the Month

⁷ 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. ⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:7-11

This Month

December 3rd – Communion
December 3rd – Prayer Night
December 9, 16, 23 – Community Christmas
December 15th – Legacy Builders Potluck and Caroling
December 24th – Christmas Eve Service 10:00am
December 25th – Offices Closed
December 31st – Family Service

Pastor's Perspective

Christmas is easily my favorite time of the year! I love celebrating the birth of our Savior and seeing all the wonderful festivities that surround the season brought to life LITERALLY everywhere I go. This year, my family and I decorated for Christmas a little earlier than we usually do. We did this even before Thanksgiving had arrived! To some this is a “no - no”, but for us, it makes it feel like the Christmas season is simply lasting a little bit longer than normal. One of the main reasons I love this time of year is embracing the ambitious mindset I carry. I see this time as the close of the current year and the ushering

in of the new year which gets me very excited. My mind starts fast forwarding into all the wonderful things God has planned for us in the new year. This is especially true for Faith Chapel as we've been coming through the end of this transition season and into a new season the Lord has been preparing us for. To say that I'm "excited" would be an understatement! Still, I choose not to forget the past. That's the trick, remember and honor the past while looking forward to the future. This December we'll be integrating the fresh mission and vision of the church to the entire body of believers that call Faith Chapel their home. This will be a thread woven into the grand tapestry of what the Lord is doing in our midst. It'll be preached in December and reiterated consistently as it'll become a vital part of our culture. I want to encourage you to take this December to reflect on all the Lord has done in this previous season and let it create a seed of honor within you for what He's done, is doing now, and will do in 2024 and

beyond. Begin preparing your heart today for what your role may be in what the Lord has for this great church in its future. Ministry leader and friend Chris Sonksen once shared, "No church has a future if it's dreams aren't bigger than it's memories." Rest assured, the future is bright for Faith Chapel and for San Diego. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and your families!

The True Meaning of Christmas

The true meaning of Christmas is love. John 3:16-17 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of this incredible act of love. The real Christmas story is the story of God's becoming a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ. Why did God do such a thing? Because He loves us! Why was Christmas necessary? Because we needed a Savior! Why does God love us so much? Because He is love itself (1 John 4:8). Why do we celebrate Christmas each year? Out of gratitude for what God did for us, we remember His birth by giving each other gifts, worshiping Him, and being especially conscious of the poor and less fortunate. The true meaning of Christmas is love. God loved His own and provided a way—the only Way—for us to spend eternity with Him. He gave His only Son to take our punishment for our sins. He paid the price in full, and we are free from condemnation when we accept that free gift of love. "But God demonstrated His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

What is the Origin of Christmas?

Christmas is a popular December holiday celebrated by large numbers of people all around the world. Christmas (or "the Mass of Christ") has long been known as the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, and the celebration first began to be observed in the early fourth century. However, some traditions associated with Christmas actually began as a part of pagan culture; these were "Christianized" and given new meaning by the church. The exact date of Jesus' birth is unknown, as the Bible does not give specifics as to the dates of either His birth or conception. For various reasons, the date of December 25 gained wide acceptance. At the time of Christ, Roman culture already celebrated a holiday in December: Saturnalia honored the god Saturn and was celebrated from December 17 to about December 24. Later, the Romans began celebrating Sol Invictus or the "Unconquered Sun," associated with the winter solstice and observed on December 25. When Rome eventually instituted Christianity as the state religion in the fourth century, the Roman church converted Saturnalia and Sol Invictus to a Christian holiday, the Feast of the Nativity, to commemorate Jesus' birth, thus providing a spiritually positive alternative to a pagan celebration. The sinful customs and debauchery associated with Saturnalia were "cleaned up," and some of the customs were absorbed into the celebration of

Christmas. Christians have “redeemed” December 25 and have celebrated it as the birth of Christ ever since the fourth century. Given the association Christmas had with the ancient pagan calendar, the question then becomes, “Since Christmas shares a date with a pagan holiday, is it acceptable for Christians to celebrate it?” It is important to note that Christmas, Saturnalia, and Sol Invictus were all distinct holidays; they were never identical to each other. Also, although some elements of Christmas celebrations (e.g., bells, candles, holly, and yule decorations) are mentioned in the history of pagan worship, the use of such items in one’s home in no way indicates a return to paganism. Christians simply celebrate Christmas to remember the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Celebrating Christmas is a matter of conscience. Consider Romans 14:5 – “One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord.”

Barn, Stable, or Cave?

The question “Where was Jesus born?” is surprisingly tricky. The easy answer is, “In Bethlehem.” Yes, but *where*? The typical nativity scene features the holy family in a stable that looks like a barn, separate from the Inn, where there was no room. But is this accurate? Most historians and scholars say, “Not so much.” We know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there was no room “in the inn,” and that he was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. As a descendant of King David, Joseph journeyed to his ancestral home in Bethlehem, with his espoused wife, Mary, to participate in a mandatory Roman census (Luke 2:3). In the ancient Near East, a family’s historic ties to their hometown were of upmost importance. Being a member of the royal family of David, it is not unlikely that space within the family’s ancestral home would have been made available for Joseph and Mary upon their arrival in Bethlehem. Even in Roman times, the Davidic connection to Bethlehem was so strong that it was still known as the “city of David” (Luke 2:4, 11). Although no barn is mentioned in the text, the “manger” (phatna) is prominent (Luke 2:7, 12, 16). Obviously, wood-constructed mangers like we know from our Nativity would not survive for modern archaeologists to find, but stone-carved and plaster-lined mangers are known from excavations to be on the ground floor of domestic structures in Israel throughout biblical times (see I Samuel 28:24; Judges 11:31; Luke 13:15). Historians and anthropologists have also noted the practice of keeping animals in the house among a variety of cultures down through history. While flocks were kept in sheepfolds out in the fields (see Luke 2:8), valuable or vulnerable animals – ox, donkey, sick or pregnant sheep and goats – would be brought into the house’s ground floor domestic stable. In such a location baby Jesus would have been laid in a manger.

Luke records, “there was not room for them in the inn” (kataluma Luke 2:7). The only other New Testament reference to kataluma was the upper chamber “guest room” of a Jerusalem house where the Last Supper was held (Luke 22:11 – along with its parallel in Mark 14:14; ESV, NIV, NASB, NKJV). There is no reason why Luke’s use of kataluma in 22:11 (“guest room”) on the last night of Jesus’ life should be different from his use of the same term in 2:7 (“inn”) on the first night of His life. In fact, there may even be some symbolism with these “guest rooms” serving as bookends to His life and ministry. There was no room for Him in a kataluma on the first night of His life and He presided over a meal (probably a Passover meal) in a kataluma on the last night of His life. Luke’s statement “no room for them in the inn,” suggests the “guest room” of the house where Mary and Joseph were now staying was already full. The NIV’s 2011 revision acknowledged this fact, changing “inn” to “guest room” (2:7). It may well be that older relatives were already settled there and/or Mary preferred not climbing to an upper floor or appreciated a bit more privacy in the domestic stable below. Additionally, Luke knew what a public inn was, using that term in the account of the Good Samaritan at an “inn” (pandocheion; 10:34) with an “innkeeper” (pandocheus; 10:35). His use of kataluma in the nativity account indicates a different space than a public inn – the “guest room” of a domestic home (likely within an upper story) and, suggested within the same house where the phatna (“manger”) was in the ground floor domestic

stable. Thus, Luke's nativity account references neither a barn nor any statement made by an innkeeper, nor even the mention of an innkeeper. I will suggest that the story did not have a public "inn" either! Instead, we should think of that first Christmas with baby Jesus placed in a manger on the ground floor of David's ancestral home in Bethlehem because the upstairs "guest room" was already full. While His Heavenly Father could orchestrate events any way He chose, I propose that baby Jesus did not spend that first Christmas with Mary and Joseph alone in the barn of a public building there in Bethlehem but in a domestic stable surrounded by family. Family has always been important to God (I John 1:3; 3:10) and He wants us all to be connected to our biological family – or, if that's not possible or reasonable, to our spiritual family (see Matthew 12:46-50).

Why does it matter?

This is the thousand-dollar question. It must be affirmed that the Bible is sufficient. We know what we need to know. The Gospel account is enough. Jesus was born in Bethlehem in a humble and lowly state. The God of creation was born in a back-woods town and in the overflow section. The details above help fill in the context in some ways that can be helpful to consider the trials that Mary and Joseph faced and to rejoice in God's providence. It is even possible to combine elements of the above theories without disregarding what Scripture makes clear – but this should be avoided (if we will rearrange possibilities to suit our desires on this, what else will we rearrange to fit our desired conclusions?). In the midst of the uncertain details and whichever theory you believe is most likely, don't lose sight of the wonder: that a simple manger became God's throne. This is the point of the story, let's not overlook it because we're stuck in the details God didn't believe were important enough to preserve. **(Content taken from a variety of internet articles.)**

The Christmas Tree

The first Christmas tree was decorated by Protestant Christians in 16th-century Germany. Our modern Christmas tree evolved from these early German traditions, and the custom most likely came to the United States with Hessian troops during the American Revolution, or with German immigrants to Pennsylvania and Ohio.

There is nothing in the Bible that either commands or prohibits Christmas trees.

There is no spiritual significance to having or not having a Christmas tree. Whatever choice we make, the motive behind a believer's decision about this, as in all matters of conscience, must be to please the Lord. "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Christmas Gifts

Many people take the idea of gift giving at Christmas back to the scripture in Matthew 2:10-11 which talks about the Magi (wise men) giving gifts to Jesus at His home: "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh."

The Bible gives a wonderful story about the gift God gave us—Jesus Christ—and we can use it as an opportunity to present the gospel and to show love. Giving and receiving gifts can be part of fulfilling what Paul says about giving in 2 Corinthians 8:7-8, "Just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others." Paul encouraged the churches to give financial gifts to the believers in need in Jerusalem and stressed that their gifts were to be voluntary and motivated by earnest love. We can apply

this same lesson to our own lives by giving to others, not just at Christmas, but year-round! Can gift giving wrongly become the focus of Christmas instead of thanking the Lord for the gift of His Son (John 3:16)? Yes. Does giving gifts have to take away from the true meaning of Christmas? No, it does not. If we focus on the wonderful gift of salvation the Lord has given us (Isaiah 9:6), giving to others is a natural expression of that gratitude. The key is our focus. Is your focus on the gift or on the ultimate gift-giver, our gracious Heavenly Father? "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights..." (James 1:17).

Community Christmas

Faith Chapel will be hosting what may become an annual event at Christmas. "Community Christmas" will be available to the public on three consecutive Saturdays, the 9th, 16th and 23rd from 5pm to 8pm. Guests will be greeted with the Nativity, carolers, a petting zoo, gingerbread house making, a variety of crafts to enjoy, a scavenger hunt, Christmas s'mores and more. There will also be character visits from Buddy the Elf, Peppermint Polly, Elf on a shelf, and Santa Claus. Bring your family, friends, fellow workers, and anyone you can think of for this very special event.

Flash Back

"His Love...Reaching"
A Christmas Musical Celebrating God's Gift

Faith Chapel's choir, orchestra, and Bells of Faith join in presenting "His Love...Reaching" for three performances: Sunday, December 15th at 7:30pm and Sunday December 16th at 5:00 and 7:30pm. Directed by Roy Anthony, the musical by Ronn Huff and Bill and Gloria Gaither, will also feature Phil Bateman as narrator with solos by Peggy Bateman, John Woodward, and Phil Bateman. "His Love...Reaching" is a service of celebration, a joyous and festive celebration of God reaching into our world through the gift of His Son. "His Love...Reaching" is an experience of commitment, a quiet and deeply moving occasion for a body of believers to share together the reality that God through His Son wants to become a meaningful part of our daily lives, and a chance to stay together... "There is room in my heart for You." "His Love...Reaching" is an opportunity for praise and thanksgiving, to consider again his love for us, and to join our hearts and voices in saying, "Jesus we want to thank you...thank you for bringing us love!" Reach out with love this Christmas and bring your neighbors and friends to hear and experience "His Love...Reaching."

(Faith Builder – December 1979)

Invitation to Prayer Night

December's prayer night will be held on Sunday the 3rd at 6:00pm. If we want to see God's blessing in our church, if we want to see Jesus' transforming power, the dynamic ministry of the Holy Spirit in our midst, then we need to pray together. As you pray together as a congregation, God will begin to "show up" more and more.

Therefore, please accept this article as a personal invitation to attend Sunday night prayer and watch the Lord work in Faith Chapel.

Pass It On

Here's an idea. After you have read the monthly newsletter, why not pass it on to someone you know, work with, shut-ins, or even someone you meet for the first time? Let them see what is happening at Faith Chapel and what they could be a part of. It is even okay to take a few extra to hand out. Let people know who we are, where we are, what we do, what we believe and what we want to do for our community. You never know, they might just find a home at Faith Chapel and salvation in Jesus.

Midweek Encounter

I'm very excited that we're bringing back our Wednesday night programming called, "Midweek Encounter". Faith Chapel had Midweek programming for many years leading up to Covid but after the pandemic, it just never came back. Bringing back this Midweek time of ministry to all ages was something the Lord had impressed on my heart for many months now. One key ingredient I knew we needed was to have a strong discipleship curriculum for our kids. Under Pastor Michel's leadership along with his remarkable team, this is underway! We'll be able to provide a plan of growth for people of all ages, elementary school students, through our eldest members.

In the sanctuary, we'll have a time of worship together each week beginning at 6:30pm. Everybody is welcome! Keep in mind that worshipping the Lord is central to what we do. We don't worship because we must, we worship because we're in love! It's an honor to come before the King we adore and bring a sacrifice of praise and the honor due His name as often as we gather. After our time of worship, we'll have a time in the Word and opportunity for Body ministry. We're so blessed to have many gifted ministers here at Faith Chapel and my desire is that we would hear from them often as well as from myself regularly. There's a reason I've chosen the name, "Midweek Encounter" for our Wednesday night programming. I've preached multiple times recently on the value of an encounter with the Lord. I want us to have a culture of encounters with God where we seek after Him knowing that if we seek Him with all our hearts, we'll indeed find Him. I believe He'll heal the sick in our midst, fill people with His Spirit, teach us to operate in the Gifts of the Spirit, deliver those who need deliverance, instruct us in the ways of the Kingdom and save those who are lost! Furthermore, I'm believing for this to happen across our campus in all areas of ministry.

If you're hungry to go deeper in the things of God, these Midweek Encounter gatherings will be for you. I encourage you to come prepared to be challenged to expand your horizons and understanding concerning the things of God as we as a church family create a culture honoring the presence of the Lord and all He desires to do in our midst.

Here we go:

Faith Chapel Signs

No longer will people drive by and wonder "Just what is that place on the hill." On Saturday, November 11th, the "Faith Chapel" signs were installed. Our very own elder, Richard Dinnen, put his skills into the fabrication of the signs. The signs not only tell passersby that we are a church, but that we are a Christian church, denoted by the cross that adorns the center of the sign. Thank you, Richard, for all the hard work, time, and effort you put into the making and installation of the signs.

Legacy Builders - December 15th

Legacy builders will host a potluck dinner on Friday December 15th at 6pm and then a group of carolers will embark to share a variety of Christmas songs to those who aren't able to get out at Christmas time.

All Church Work Party

The second quarterly work party was a huge success. Thirty-five volunteers, aged 7 to 85, came together for a morning of church maintenance, cleaning, and restoration. Curbs were painted, stripes were re-stripped, handrails received a fresh coat of paint, handicap parking spots were repainted, steps were highlighted for safety, tables and chairs were cleaned along with windowsills, plants were planted around the base of the monument sign, and more. And of course, the new "Faith Chapel" sign was installed on top of the monument sign. Thank you to all who gave of your time and willingness to help keep God's house fresh and welcoming.

Church Membership

If you would like to become a member, please fill out the membership request form on the FC Ap or contact one of the church elders or inquire at the church administrative office.

Connect Classes

Classes begin each Sunday at 8:30am and end at 9:30am. Below are the scheduled classes currently meeting in 2023.

- **"Heroes of the Bible"** - Both men and women heroes like Joseph, Deborah, Paul, Abigail, David, Ester, and others will have their stories told. The class will delve into how their lives can inspire us, their character qualities and how we can appropriate them into our lives. Presented by Clay and Shari Ford in the Hospitality Suite.
- **"The Gospel of John"** - Growing and maturing in Christ as a community of believers. Presented by Eric Madril in LL4.
- **"Connect to Worship"** - This is a time for everyone who loves worship to get together and grow in the gifts given to our church. Presented by LaMar and Yvette Key in the choir room.
- **"The Book of Exodus."** Presented by Rose Necochea in room C210.
- In Christ's Image Training

Training to be Christlike. Led by Dave Kiplinger in room C214.

- **"The Book of Matthew"** presented by Marsha Streiker each Sunday from 12:00pm to 1:30pm in room C214.

Small Groups

Small Groups are small gatherings of people who meet in different places around our community to hang out, eat, talk about life, and above all grow their relationships with God. Listed below are the small groups that are currently meeting.

Linda Wise – Women's Bible Study
Studying the Book of Hebrews
Tuesdays at 9:30am in the Ruby Room

Walt Harrison – Sermon Based Discussion
Legacy Builders

Tuesdays at 10:00am in the Choir Suite

George Elias – Bible Study

Studying Various Spirit-led Topics

Thursdays at 7:00pm Call 858-231-7706 for more information.

If you would like to join a small group, you can do so on the Faith Chapel AP.

A small group turns a crowd into a community.

Volunteer Opportunities

There are many ways to serve and use your Spiritual Gifts here at Faith Chapel. Sunday nursery and children's ministry, ushering, greeting, worship, production and media, special projects and hospitality are some of the ways you can get plugged in and use your talents and gifts.

to serve the body of Christ. If you would like to volunteer for any of these areas, contact the church office for more information.

Christmas Fun & Trivia

Answers on the next page.

1. In the classic Christmas movie, How The Grinch Stole Christmas, the Grinch was described with three words. What are they?
2. Which Hollywood actor played six different roles in The Polar Express?
3. Which Christmas song contains the lyric "Everyone dancing merrily in the new old-fashioned way?"
4. In the movie Elf, what was the first rule of The Code of Elves?
5. What was the highest-grossing Christmas movie of all time? No, it's not DIEHARD.
6. In the song "Winter Wonderland," what do we call the snowman?
7. In the movie A Christmas Story, what was the name of the neighbors whose dog ate the Christmas turkey?
8. What are Santa's Reindeer's names and their character traits and skill?

How Many Total Gifts did My True Love Give to Me in the Twelve Days of Christmas?

Christmas Fun & Trivia Answers

1. Answer: Stink, stank, stunk.
2. Answer: Tom Hanks
- 43 Answer: "Rocking Around the Christmas Tree"
4. Answer: Treat every day like Christmas.
5. Answer: *Home Alone*
6. Answer: Parson Brown
7. Answer: The Bumpuses

8. Answer:

<u>Reindeer</u>	<u>Personality Trait</u>	<u>Skill</u>
Dasher	He loves to go fast!	Sewing
Dancer	Completely extroverted.	All kinds of dance
Prancer	A bit vain, though affectionate.	Prancing
Vixen	Slightly tricky.	Magic
Comet	Handsome and easy-going.	Good with kids
Cupid	Affectionate.	Bringing people together
Donner	Loud.	Singing
Blitzen	Fast as a bolt!	Can electrify others
Rudolph	A little down on himself.	Nose glows

Total Gifts in Twelve Days of Christmas:

364, one for every day of the year except one.

Faith Chapel

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