

## *Ministers*

**Paul Baxley**      *Senior Minister*  
**Frank Granger**      *Minister of Christian Community*  
**Randy Brittain**      *Minister of Music*  
**Janet Cleland**      *Minister of Children, Families, and Outreach*  
**Brandon Pendry**      *Minister of Youth and Mission*  
**Amanda Lewis**      *Minister of College Students*  
**Anne Brittain**      *Organist and Music Associate*  
**Alan McArthur**      *Pianist*



**First Baptist Church**

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*First Baptist Church*  
*Athens, Georgia*

December 24, 2017

11:00 a.m.

*The Fourth Sunday in Advent*

# Creative Brooding

*Christmas lends itself easily to metaphor and sentiment. We need our metaphors, and sentiment is the grease without which our human machinery would break down and wear out, but Christmas does not represent a sentiment, an idea, or even a feeling about God. Christmas belongs to those who recognize not the sense of the holidays but the real presence of God in their lives and in their world, not simply once upon a time long ago and far away but here and now, inhabiting our hearts and struggling with us against the terrible realities that surround us. The world of little Bethlehem was real, Caesar Augustus was real, death and slaughter were real, despair was real and normal, and in the midst of all this God had to be made real, and was made real not in an ideal but in the flesh, for that is what the Incarnation was and is, and that is why we bow before its presence.*

*“God with us,” for that is what Emmanuel means, is not just a translation of a Hebrew name but a translation of the living, loving purpose of God to be present in and among his creation. God does not abandon that which he makes; he becomes one with us that we might become one with him.*

-Peter Gomes

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*First Baptist Church is a thriving community in Christ  
where we all participate in worship  
and are transformed by mission.*

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## Weekly Calendar

### **Sunday, December 24**

11:00 a.m.—12:00 noon ..... Worship Service — Sanctuary  
5:30 p.m..... Christmas Eve Candlelight worship with Communion

### **Monday, December 25**

*Church office closed*

### **Tuesday, December 26**

*Church office closed*

7:00 p.m. .... Boy Scout Troop 22 — Rm. 5 (3rd floor)

### **Sunday, December 31**

11:00 a.m.—12:00 noon ..... Worship Service — Sanctuary

### *Recent Prayer Concerns*

We extend our Christian love and sympathy to Sylvia Byrd and her family in the passing of her brother-in-law, Danny Williamson, of Hinesville, GA on December 19.

Kathy Barrow — The Oaks, rm. 621  
Larry Cutshaw, husband of Evelyn Cutshaw  
Harriett Dwyer — home  
Sarah Kesler — Athens Heritage, rm. 401  
Larry Moon — recent cardiac ablation  
Juanita Reddish — Alan Reddish’s mother  
Greg Shull — Cheri Rose’s brother

*“Want to keep Christ in Christmas? Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the unwanted, care for the ill, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have done unto you.”*

— Steve Maraboli



### **Sanctuary Flowers**

The arrangement in the sanctuary this morning is given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Archie and Mary Langley by their sons, Emmett and Bob, and their families.

### **NATIVITY SCENES**

Nativity scenes in the church are donated in memory of Bernice Bryant by the Adults in Missions, Todd Houston in recognition of his birthday on Christmas Day by Lamar and Jane Houston, and in memory of Polly Irby.



## The Sunday Messenger

Please remember that all **DONATIONS TO FBC** must be received in the church office by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 29 or postmarked by December 31 in order for them to appear on your annual contributions statement. As always, you can give in worship, by bringing a contribution to the church office or by mailing it to the church. We can also receive transfers of stock. If you need instructions on how to do that, please contact Cheri Rose, and also make sure you initiate that gift in time for it to be received by the church before the end of the calendar year.

Never miss a thing! If you would like to receive our weekly e-news, **THE MIDWEEK MESSENGER**, simply contact Communications Manager Sharon Jenkins ([sharon@firstbaptistathens.org](mailto:sharon@firstbaptistathens.org)).

### Serving Together

#### Co-Deacons of the Week

December 24-30: *Marcia & Phil Caskey*  
Dec. 31– Jan. 6: *Steve Barton, Sallyanne Barrow*

#### December Fellowship Team

*Debbie Hargrave, Cindy Haygood, Daniel Haygood, Wayne Hogan*

#### Welcome Center Team

December 24: *Becky Adams, Amy Young*  
December 31: *Bettye & Wayne Jordan*

#### December Usher Team

*Brad Lastinger, Doug Dillard, Ches Smith, Kevin Price, Bill Horton, Wes Hogan*

#### Counting Committee

December 24: *Steve Barton, Ray Noblet*  
December 31: *Lane Chason, Jackie Griffin*

### Our Church on Mission

#### **Emergency Food Bank Needs:**

Pork 'n Beans, Spaghetti Sauce, Canned Salmon/Tuna

Join our **MISSION MINISTRIES at FBC** by signing up for your choice of ministries on the two month calendar on the second floor hallway. On the **FIRST** and **LAST** Sunday of every month, a mission team member will be in the main hallway to help you sign up to serve with FBC's mission partners.

As we wait for Christ's birth during this season, we don't have to wait to be involved in bringing relief in Christ's name, together with other Christians. **PIVOT PUERTO RICO** is a learning immersion experience for lay leaders of all ages that includes six studies exploring God's mission in the world ahead of 4.5 days of Caribbean cultural acquisition and reflection in Puerto Rico. Offered by our partners at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, this unique mission trip will begin with six studies followed by on-site work in Puerto Rico over the President's Day weekend (February 15-19). This is not a typical mission trip. For more information or to register, go to <http://www.cbf.net/pivotpuertorico/>. Space is limited to the first 50 people to sign up. If you have questions about going or funding, please contact Brandon Pendry, Minister of Youth & Missions ([brandon@firstbaptistathens.org](mailto:brandon@firstbaptistathens.org)).

## The Worship of God

Invitation to Worship

Paul Baxley

Prelude

*Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light*

ERMUTRE DICH

harm. J.S. Bach/ arr. Mark Hayes

Invocation

Emily Harbin

\*Hymn 125

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

GLORIA

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Anne, Bill, and Margaret McDonald

Leader: Today we light the candle of Love which burns with hope, peace, and joy, shoving darkness aside.

**People: These flames shed light upon our path giving us clarity through the sights and sounds which surround us.**

Leader: As you continue your journey to Bethlehem, make your way with this confidence: the God of love will meet you, not only when you arrive, but even now as you travel.

**People: We ask for strength to remain faithful in our journey, faithful in our waiting, and faithful in our worship.**

Carol Response

*Come Emmanuel*

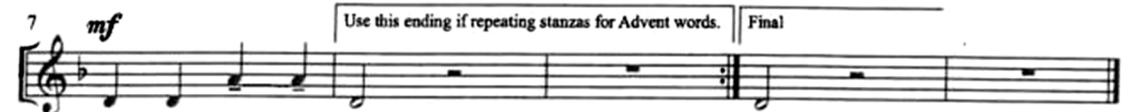
Keith Pate/arr. James Barnard



Ad - vent can - dles, see their light, drive a - way the dark of night.



Love we cel - e - brate. This gift an - tic - i - pate.



Come, Em - man - u - el.

el.

**First Lesson** Luke 1: 26-38 Brandon Pendry  
Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.  
**People: Thanks be to God.**

**Anthem** *Ding Dong! Merrily on High* arr. K. Lee Scott

**Silent Prayers**

**Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer** Frank Granger  
*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.*

**\*Hymn 132** *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* CAROL  
> Children PreK -2nd grade will remain in worship with their families.<

**Second Lesson** Luke 1: 46b-55 Janet Cleland  
Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.  
**People: Thanks be to God.**

**Testimony in Song** *What Songs Were Sung* John Jacob Niles  
Randy Brittain, Tenor

*We cannot tell, we do not know What stars shone down so long ago,  
When Mary birthed her own sweet Son And peace and love became as one.*

*The Son of God, as scriptures said, Was Virgin born in a tiny shed,  
Where simple shepherds stood hard by While heavenly sound filled up the sky.  
Now let us stand, uncovered all, Before this crèche in lowly stall,  
Where kings and angels dignify God's gift, His Son, in humility.*

*We do not know, we cannot tell, What songs were sung, what starlight fell,  
Or why the holy mystery stands For so many years in so many lands.*

**Sermon** *A Song of Discovery* Paul Baxley

**\*Hymn 122** *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice* IN DULCI JUBILO

**\*Prayer of Stewardship** Phil Caskey, Deacon

**Offertory Duet** *Silent Night* STILLE NACHT/ arr. Joel Raney

**\*Response of the People** *His Name is Called Emmanuel* LASST UNS ERFREUEN  
*His name is called Emmanuel, more wonderful than words can tell.  
God is with us! Alleluia!  
Born in our darkness, He is Light; born in our weakness, He is Might.  
God is with us! Alleluia! God is with us! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

**\*Recognition of Commitments** Paul Baxley

**\*Benediction**

**\*Postlude** *Sussex Carol* Trad. Appalachian Carol/  
arr. Dan Forrest

**\*Please stand, if able.**

**WELCOME VISITORS!** We are so glad you're here! There are wonderful programs and opportunities for all ages! If you'd like to learn more about our ministries, please fill out the guest information card in the pew rack in front of you and drop it in the offering plate. You may also speak to any of our ushers, greeters, or ministers and then be sure to visit the FBC website ([www.firstbaptistathens.org](http://www.firstbaptistathens.org)) for more information.