

## first foundations preschool 9:15 a.m. schedule

Weekly Coach	Victoria Hertenstein	Darleen Block	Kim Bell	Jackie Haight
<b>9:15 a.m.</b>	<b>Dec. 4</b>	<b>Dec. 11</b>	<b>Dec. 18</b>	<b>Dec. 25</b>
<b>Desk</b>	JoAnn Sanders	Tricia Brinson	Elayne Powers	Annette Ivory
<b>Infants (Otters)</b>	Linda Watts Beth Bentley	Tammy Hollonbeck Kent Hollonbeck	Sybil French Larry French	Linda Watts Wendy Heagey Danielle Heagey
<b>Crawler &amp; Walkers (Jellyfish)</b>	Cynthia Monroe Meagan Suarez	Cynthia Monroe Meagan Suarez	Cynthia Monroe Meagan Suarez	Cynthia Monroe Meagan Suarez
<b>Twos (Seahorses)</b>	Abby Stanford	Abby Stanford	Abby Stanford	Abby Stanford
<b>Threes &amp; Fours (Dolphins)</b>	Lenora Horton Mary Lawrence	Lenora Horton Mary Lawrence	Lenora Horton Mary Lawrence	Lenora Horton Mary Lawrence

## first foundations preschool 10:30 a.m. schedule

Weekly Coach	Victoria Hertenstein	Darleen Block	Kim Bell	Jackie Haight
<b>10:30 a.m.</b>	<b>Dec. 4</b>	<b>Dec. 11</b>	<b>Dec. 18</b>	<b>Dec. 25</b>
<b>Desk</b>	Sue Horton	Evy Vogler	Angie Heath	Cindi Clayton
<b>Infants (Otters)</b>	Kelly Pruett	Susan Beran Caitlin Beran	Erin DeLoach Trudy Dodson	Susan Beran Caitlin Beran
<b>Crawler &amp; Walkers (Jellyfish)</b>	David Adetutu DeeDee Adetutu	Sandy Jorgensen Jan Burns	Jessica Ayers Kathy Kelly	Emily Jones Debbie Lail Danielle Lail
<b>Twos (Seahorses)</b>	Linda Pittman Caroline Brinson	Jackie Snider David Snider	Diane Meyer Paul Meyer Whitney Hutchinson	Emily Roman Kevin Roman
<b>Threes &amp; Fours (Dolphins)</b>	Stephanie Teasley Joe Teasley	Jackie LaMay/Nikki Tim Grimes Emily Morgan	Jennifer Harris Brian Harris Olivia Dodson	Nate Tyler Kim Evans Justin Evans

december 2011

# connections

keeping you connected to the people & ministries of first baptist church of tampa

## Christmas Caroling

page 6



# Staff Perspective

## Pastoral Staff

**Bob Block**

Senior Pastor

bob@fbctampa.org

**Mike Horton**

Senior Associate Pastor

mike@fbctampa.org

**John Sanders**

Associate Pastor Families

john@fbctampa.org

**Don Jones**

Associate Pastor Administration

don.jones@fbctampa.org

**Brian Dembowczyk**

Associate Pastor Discipleship & Assimilation

brian@fbctampa.org

**Chris Haight**

Associate Pastor Evangelism

chris@fbctampa.org

**Chad DeLoach**

Interim Music Minister

rcd1400@yahoo.com

## Ministry Directors

**Nate Tyler**

Collegiate Ministry Director

nate@fbctampa.org

**Lynn Jones**

Children's Ministry Director

lynn@fbctampa.org

**Darleen Block**

Preschool Ministry Director (interim)

dblock@fbctampa.org

## Office Staff

**Alice Hilton**

Ministry Assistant

alice@fbctampa.org

**Donna Hencke**

Ministry Assistant

donna@fbctampa.org

*connections* is published each month by the First Baptist Church of Tampa.

The article submission deadline is the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. Articles may be submitted in the church office or by email to Mary Brigham, editor, at [mary@fbctampa.org](mailto:mary@fbctampa.org). This newsletter magazine is available online at [fbctampa.org](http://fbctampa.org) or at the church Connection Desk.

2 | connections | December 2011

## Celebrate the Season by Encouraging Servanthood by John Sanders

Community service is a requirement for all students seeking a Bright Futures Scholarship Award in the state of Florida, and many high schools are requiring substantive service hours from all graduates. Those may be reasons why volunteerism is on the rise among teenagers, but I suspect the main reason is that students are recognizing the value and joy of helping meet the needs of others.

The Bible tells us that we were created in the image of God. If God is gracious, loving, and compassionate (He is, by the way!) then it is no wonder that we, who have been made in His image, have the desire to be gracious, loving, and compassionate.

Let's tap into that God-given craving to help this Christmas season. With thanks to Laura Widstrom (a youth ministry research friend of mine), here are some reasons why we should lead our families to serve:

- Service offers kids many opportunities for taking on significant responsibilities.
- Service leverages deep and meaningful relationships with others.
- Service is a powerful catalyst for building community.
- Service-related struggles expand a teenager's capacity for overcoming hardship.
- Service offers kids a context and process for "owning" their faith.

This Christmas, as your family celebrates the birth of our Savior, help your kids follow Jesus' example by looking beyond themselves to serve other people in His name. If you'd like some specific service project ideas, send me an email ([john@fbctampa.org](mailto:john@fbctampa.org)); I'd love to connect you with some people who need your help!

# For Your Calendar

## Happy Birthday

12.1	Brenda Fuller, Mark Evans, Erica Brown, Hailey Teasley
12.2	Joe Cornett, Liz Horton, Dylan Snider
12.3	Cindy Gonzalez, Jacob Germino
12.4	Chris Cheung
12.6	Amelia Bell
12.7	Ralph Kelly, Ellie Flanigan, Alex Smith
12.8	Joe Bales, Greg Bentley
12.9	Gina Stiles
12.10	Phillip Carrillo, Charles Ennis, Craig Vogler, Hannah Dembowczyk
12.11	Bernice Dilworth, Tasio Fernandez, Sara Vanzant, Alex Dickerson

12.12	Juanita Hurley
12.13	Jodie Frizzi, Joy Cornett
12.14	Kelly Cheung, Ashlyn Horton
12.15	Richard Carlo
12.16	Cathy Jones, William Holk
12.18	Annette Ivery
12.20	Gloria Ferlita, Amanda Wolf
12.21	Barbara Elliott, John Hotchkiss, Nadia Hall
12.22	Mary Chambers, Ben Block
12.23	Caileigh Potter
12.24	Theron Clark
12.26	Jarrett Seiler
12.28	Catherine Ayers
12.30	Janet Lewis, Henry Brannan
12.31	Lori Jungers

## Happy Anniversary

12.2	Roy & Reva Bodden, 55
12.3	Chris & Kelly Cheung, 12
12.12	John & Donna Beard, 23
12.16	Oscar & Eunice Reynolds, 59
12.22	David & Adeola Adetutu, 6 John & Lisa Sanders, 21
12.26	Harry & Lois Livingston, 63
12.27	Geoffrey & Anne Weihe, 13

## Bible Reading Plan

December	
12.1	1 Corinthians 9-11
12.2	1 Corinthians 12-14
12.3	1 Corinthians 15-16
12.4	2 Corinthians 1-4
12.5	2 Corinthians 5-9
12.6	2 Corinthians 10-13
12.7	Galatians 1-3
12.8	Galatians 4-6
12.9	Ephesians 1-3
12.10	Ephesians 4-6
12.11	Philippians
12.12	Colossians
12.13	1 Thessalonians
12.14	2 Thessalonians
12.15	1 Timothy
12.16	2 Timothy
12.17	Titus & Philemon
12.18	Hebrews 1-6
12.19	Hebrews 7-10
12.20	Hebrews 11-13
12.21	James
12.22	1 Peter
12.23	2 Peter
12.24	1 John
12.25	2 John & Jude
12.26	Revelation 1-3
12.27	Revelation 4-8
12.28	Revelation 9-12
12.29	Revelation 13-16
12.30	Revelation 17-19
12.31	Revelation 20-22

## Looking Ahead

January	
1	No Evening Services
3	<i>The Truth Project</i> Begins
4	Winter CrossTraining Begins
7	Upward Basketball Evaluations
9	Advisory Council
10	WMU
10	Joy Club
12	Men's Prayer Breakfast
14	Upward Basketball Evaluations
21	Evangelism Training Course
29	2012 Ministry & Missions Fair

## February

4	Upward Practices Begin
9	Men's Prayer Breakfast
14	WMU
14	JOY Club
18	Upward Games Begin

## March

5	Advisory Council
15-17	Ligonier National Conference
24	Egg Hunt Flier Distribution
26	Business Meeting

## Dinner Menu

### December 7

**Chicken Pierre** served with brown rice, asparagus, Caesar salad, dinner roll, and fresh apple cake or homemade chocolate pie

*Light Options: Pizza; Vegetable soup*

### December 14

**Turkey & Swiss on ciabata roll or Sloppy Joe** served with potato chips, layered salad, and banana pudding or chocolate cake w/raspberry filling

*Light Options: Pizza; Tomato Bisque*

### December 21

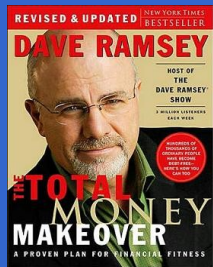
**Pork Chops w/BBQ sauce** served with homemade macaroni & cheese, baked beans, coleslaw, mixed greens, and cherry cobbler w/vanilla ice cream or chocolate cheesecake

*Light Options: Pizza; Baked potato soup*

### December 28

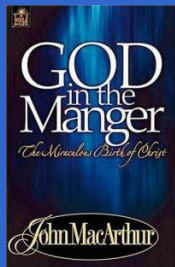
**No Meal Served**

check these books out...



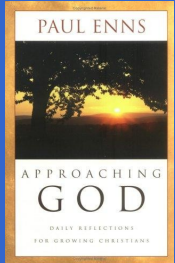
**The Total Money Makeover**  
by Dave Ramsey

Instead of promising the normal dose of quick fixes, Ramsey offers a bold, no-nonsense approach to money matters, providing not only the how-to but also a grounded and uplifting hope for getting out of debt and achieving total financial health. Ramsey debunks the many myths of money and attacks the illusions and downright deceptions of the American dream, which encourages nothing but overspending and massive amounts of debt. The Total Money Makeover isn't theory. It works every single time. It works because it is simple. It works because it gets to the heart of the money problems: you.



**God in the Manger**  
by John MacArthur

MacArthur unravels the intricacies of the event that changed the face of human history: the birth of Christ. As he examines every angle of Christ's birth - from the heavenly announcement, to the mixed reactions and the powerful ramification - the superiority and preeminence of Jesus Christ will shine through and speak volumes about creation, redemption, and divine destiny.



**Approaching God**  
by Paul Enns

Make 2012 a year in which you and your family will grow closer to God by using a year's worth of devotional readings tied to key Christian doctrines. These devotions are based on conversation Enns had with his family around the dinner table.

These books and 1,000 more are available in the church library.

**IMAGINE YOURSELF DEBT FREE**

Dave Ramsey's **Financial Peace UNIVERSITY**

Financial Peace University is a 13-week, video-based small group study that teaches families how to beat debt, build wealth, and give like never before.

[daveramsey.com](http://daveramsey.com)

**Free Preview**

**Wednesday, December 14**  
Room 300-A @ 5:45 p.m.

**Class Begins**

**Wednesday January 4**  
6:15 p.m.-7:45 p.m. Cost: \$100

Call For More Information      **Bob Bishop** 813.837.7000

**Testimonials about Financial Peace University**

"Dave Ramsey is a great communicator. His principles are scriptural and easy to follow. I really enjoyed the classes as they were filled with logic and humor. Every week Dave would give real examples of how lives were changed and debt was paid off. Dave showed us that living debt free gave us great freedom. I would highly recommend this class to anyone who desires to live debt free. It is not achieved overnight but Dave shows us how we can make great strides in reducing our debt by some very simple disciplines."

Vickie Bray

"I began to listen to Dave Ramsey on the radio about ten years ago. I was amazed by the many stories that ordinary people told of their financial struggles and that by following the biblical principles that Dave Ramsey teaches they were able to overcome huge obstacles! Anne and I have greatly improved our own situation through following God's principles of debt reduction as taught in the Dave Ramsey seminar. It works no matter what an individual's income level is. Anne and I pray that every church member will take advantage of this blessing!"

Jeff Weihe

**FEATURES**

- 4 **Joy Club & Senior Adult News**
- 4 **New Classroom Numbers**  
Don't get lost. Rooms will be being renumbered
- 6 **Christmas Caroling Outreach**  
Join this opportunity to spread Christmas cheer and sing Christmas favorites
- 10 **Imagine Yourself DEBT FREE**  
Upcoming Financial Peace University

**COLUMNS**

- 2 **Staff Perspective**  
John Sanders reflects on Jesus' example of being a servant

- 5 **1st Person**  
Pastor Brian writes on the effort of preparing for Christmas

**REGULAR CONTENT**

- 3 **This & That**
- 4 **Missions Moment**  
Update on the Flook family
- 8 **Ministry Notes**  
Be sure to check out upcoming classes, events, and needs of our church ministries
- 10 **Check These Books Out**  
Three more great books to read.
- 11 **For Your Calendar**  
December birthdays, anniversaries, Bible reading plan, and Wednesday dinner menus; December and January calendar highlights.

this and that...

Average BIBLE STUDY Attendance to Date

229

Average WORSHIP SERVICE Attendance to Date

310

GIVING to Date \$770,499<sup>90</sup>

Over/(Under) Need (\$69,984<sup>30</sup>)

Average PARAMOUNT Attendance to Date

20

Average Extended Care Attendance to Date

27

**Christmas Eve Vespers Service**

**Saturday, December 24**

**6:00 p.m.**

Steve & Marilee Flook

**1** Please pray for the thousands that are spiritually lost and dead, who lack a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and who have a very wrong belief about their and their loved ones eternal future.

**2** We also ask for prayer that as we witness to people from street guards to taxi drivers that God would bring into our path those who are “ripe for salvation.”

**3** We expect to move into our home soon. Renovations are almost complete. Our crate of belongings (furniture, toys, clothes, dishes, etc.) is en route to a port in Chile. Then it must be trucked over the mountains to arrive in customs in Santa Cruz. There it could be held up for months depending on who inspects the contents.

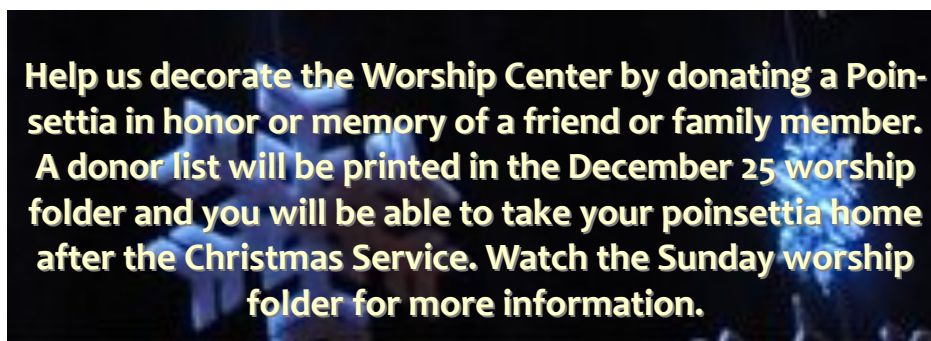
**4** We also ask prayer for our visas to be granted. We are still awaiting Interpol paperwork from the U.S. government to be delivered to the Bolivian government.

Blessings and peace to everyone.

## Joy Club & Senior Adult News

Joy Club for December should be a very special event that senior adults will not want to miss. Plan on meeting in the dining room on December 13 at 11:30 a.m. dressed for Christmas and the rest will be provided. There is a very special menu planned amidst a very festive Christmas setting. Great door prizes along with a special guest appearance by Santa Claus with presents for all in attendance. Then the event will be topped off with our special guest for the day, Tiffany Coburn. You don't want to miss this wonderful Christmas Joy Club event.

January will kick off a brand new year of great events, activities, and Bible study for our senior adults. Joy Singers will resume practices each Wednesday at 10 a.m. Our weekly Bible study will continue on Thursday mornings at 10 a.m. Also, mark your calendars and join us for a great time at Medieval Times Dinner Theater on January 26. Contact Mike Horton ([mike@fbctampa.org](mailto:mike@fbctampa.org)) for more information about any of these events.



## Room Number Changes

The move of the children from the 4th floor of the main building to the KidsZone area in the Carlton building has freed up new space for adult Bible study groups, CrossTraining, and Paramount in the main building. During this time of transition, we will be reassigning the room numbers as well.

The intention is to simplify the room numbering by making it consistent on the 1st, 3rd, and 4th floors and to make it more intuitive. In essence all the rooms to the west of the elevator will be even numbered and the rooms east of the elevator will be odd numbered. Each room will have a unique number, removing any confusion involving the use of letter suffixes. Only classroom space will be numbered; storage rooms, restrooms, HVAC rooms, and so forth will simply be labeled according to their use.

New room signs will be installed soon and floor plans will be placed on the wall on each elevator landing. During the transition period, effort will be made to refer to both the new room number and the old one to help people become better acclimated.

## Missional Ministry

### ■ Lottie Moon

We are collecting the Lottie Moon Offering during the week of December 4-11. Look for designated offering envelopes in your worship guide. This is also the Week of Prayer for International Missions.

### ■ Angel Tree

We will again support the Florida Baptist Children's Home with Christmas gifts for the 43 children residing there. The Angel Tree will be placed in the foyer on the second floor by the elevator landing. Contact Christ Haight ([chris@fbctampa.org](mailto:chris@fbctampa.org)) for details.

### ■ VENTURE: 2012 Ministry & Missions Fair

January 29, 2012 @ 10:45 a.m. Plans are presently underway for what we hope will become an annual or biannual church event: a ministry and missions fair that will help match each of our members with ministry opportunities in our church, local community, state, nation, and world. This year's theme is VENTURE, a journey that is taken even in the midst of uncertainty or risk.

While serving in ministry may be quite a venture for some of our church members, we hope it proves to be an exciting and rewarding adventure for all.

If you direct, or represent, a church ministry or community organization and would like to participate in VENTURE by setting up an informational booth, please contact a member of the Ministry Committee, Nate Tyler at [nate@fbctampa.org](mailto:nate@fbctampa.org), or Brian Dembowczyk at [brian@fbctampa.org](mailto:brian@fbctampa.org). Limited space is available but the goal is to represent as many opportunities as possible.

## Sports Ministry

### ■ Upward Basketball & Cheerleading

We are continuing to recruit leaders for Upward Basketball & Cheerleading including basketball coaches, referees, cheer coaches, scorekeepers, concession stand workers, prayer partners, emcees, greeters, and more. Visit [fbctampa.org/upward](http://fbctampa.org/upward) for information or contact Brian Dembowczyk ([brian@fbctampa.org](mailto:brian@fbctampa.org)) if you want to partner.

Registration is available for participants K5 through 6th grade. Registration brochures are available in the church office or registration is available online at [fbctampa.org/upward](http://fbctampa.org/upward). Participants must attend one of the two Evaluation days, either Saturday, January 7 or Saturday, January 14. Practices begin in February. The season runs through April.

## new members

By Letter  
Chris & Allison Moore

Hayden & Victoria Moore  
Austin, Layl, and Michael Efird

Chris Cates

By Baptism  
Sarah & Aaron Ramthun  
Amelia Bell



## Preschool Ministry

([john@fbctampa.org](mailto:john@fbctampa.org)) if you need directions.

### ■ Study Theme

Our preschoolers will continue with the LifeWay curriculum.

### ■ Extended Session

The 3's and 4's are learning that "God wants me to do my best" while our 1's and 2's are learning "Jesus is God's Gift."

On Christmas morning during worship time all preschoolers will participate in a "Happy Birthday, Jesus" party including presents, cookies, and watching the Veggie Tales "Little Drummer Boy" in the KidsZone theater.

## Children's Ministry

### ■ Sunday Morning Theme

The children will continue preparing for Christmas this month with Group's "Under the Tree." They will also enjoy the Veggie Tale movie "Little Drummer Boy" on December 11 and have a birthday party for Jesus on December 18.

### ■ Kids on Mission

This group will wrap up their study on Southeast Asia this month. They will also be learning about sharing their story and the ABCs of becoming a Christian.

## Student Ministry

### ■ Parent Meeting

December 11 @ 12:15 p.m.  
Parents of middle school and high school students meet with John Sanders on Sunday, December 11, at 12:15 p.m. in the Dining Room.

### ■ Christmas Party

December 9 @ 8 p.m.  
The middle and high school student Christmas party is on Friday, December 9 at 8 p.m. at the Holk's residence. Contact John Sanders

## Young Adult Ministry

### ■ Paramount

Paramount has moved into our new home on the first floor of the main building. Come check us out on Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m. We will begin our new worship series on "Christmas Chaos."

## Senior Adult Ministry

### ■ Joy Club

December 13 @ 11:30 a.m.  
Our December meeting will be a special Christmas celebration with Tiffany Coburn as the special guest and a visit from Santa Claus. See the article on page 10 for more details.

### ■ Joy Club Singers

We will resume practices on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. in January. Practices occur in the first floor rehearsal room. Contact Mike Horton ([mike@fbctampa.org](mailto:mike@fbctampa.org)) for more information.

### ■ Senior Adult Bible Study

Look for another exciting study to begin in January. This study is led by Mike Horton and takes place on Thursdays at 10 a.m. in room 300 (old room number 304).

## Worship Ministry

### ■ Vespers Service

December 24 @ 6 p.m.  
Invite your family and friends to a very special worship service on Saturday, December 24 at 6 p.m. The carols of Christmas and the candlelight will help set the tone as we look back on the first Christmas celebration. We will also celebrate the Lord's Supper.

## Discipleship Ministry

### ■ Winter Cross Training

January 4 @ 6:30 p.m.  
Registration is now open online for our winter classes that begin in January. Four courses will be offered:

- Introduction to Doctrine 2
- So You Want to be Like Christ?
- The Life of David
- Financial Peace University

Doctrine 2 is a CORE course. There is a \$100 fee for *Financial Peace* which may be paid online at [fbctampa.org/payment-giving](http://fbctampa.org/payment-giving). Register for all classes online at [fbctampa.org/registration](http://fbctampa.org/registration).

### ■ The Truth Project

January 3 @ 6:30 p.m.  
Jeff and Anne Weihe will be leading a study of *The Truth Project* in their home on Tuesday nights beginning on January 3. The group will meet from 6:30-8:30 p.m. This 12-13 week study is limited to the first 12 participants. You can learn more about *The Truth Project* at [thetruthproject.org](http://thetruthproject.org) or register for this at [fbctampa.org/registration](http://fbctampa.org/registration). Contact Brian Dembowczyk at [brian@fbctampa.org](mailto:brian@fbctampa.org) for info.

## Women's Ministry

### ■ Upcoming Bible Study

The Shaunti Feldman *Life Ready Woman* study groups begin on Monday, January 2, at 7 p.m. and on Tuesday, January 3, at 9:30 a.m. Registration begins soon.

### ■ Drop-In Baby Shower

December 10 @ 10 a.m.  
A baby shower for Katie Tyler and Tara Dembowczyk is planned for Saturday, December 10 from 10 a.m. to Noon in the Dining Room. Both families are registered at Target and Babies R Us.

# The Effort of Preparing for Christmas

by Brian Dembowczyk

I firmly believe that there are certain moral truths that are non-negotiable. One of these fundamental realities is that we should not begin formally celebrating Christmas until Thanksgiving Day, or preferably the day after. Now, I know some will counter that we should always celebrate Christ's birth, and I wholeheartedly agree...thus my use of the word "formally" above. What this means is that we should not begin listening to Christmas music, wear Christmas clothing, and by no means decorate for Christmas before Thanksgiving. That's just the way it is. Why else do so many of us have off the day after Thanksgiving? To decorate for Christmas of course!

So the day after Thanksgiving I put on my mountain climbing gear, tied the rope around my ankle, and hung bells on my clothes and ventured into my attic above the garage to dig out the Christmas decorations. Can I gripe for a minute? I despise going into my attic. The last time I was up there I split open my head on the drop-down hinge, so my attic and I aren't exactly on speaking terms these days. Anyway...

After putting my life in great peril and securing said Christmas decorations, I tackled the most dreaded Christmas-related assignment known to man: assembling the artificial Christmas tree. Here's a friendly warning. If you ever happen to drop by 1041 Legends Pass Drive the day I am assembling the Christmas tree, you might want to forego coming in and head down the road to have lunch at the Genghis Grill instead. Consider yourself warned. I loathe assembling the tree and it always puts me in a bad mood despite the Christmas music playing in the background. Fluffing those branches just drives me nuts. A few hours, a few pots of coffee, and a quick trip to Lowes to buy new strings of lights later, with the life sucked out of my soul, I ended Christmas preparations for the day. While I was pleased with my work on the tree, despite its apparent need of a V-8, I was not looking forward to the next day's assignment: hanging the ice cycle lights outside.

On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...the assignment to hang the exterior Christmas lights. My plan was simple: outline the front of our home's roof line with lights. Once again, I put my life in harm's way as I climbed up and down my ladder that often was in awkward positions due to the bushes and shrubs, scaled onto the roof to hang lights, and dodged perturbed yellow jackets who were definitely not in the Christmas spirit yet. Several hours and another outing to Lowes later my home was decorated. I was ready for Christmas.

OK. Why do I share all of this inane information with you? Because I want you to take a moment and think about how much work it is for us to prepare for Christmas. Beyond decorating, there is the shopping, cooking, cleaning before parties, and so forth that consumes so much of our time, energy, and effort. It costs us to prepare for Christmas! It takes effort. Great effort.

Now, join me in humble awe of our God as we ponder the great lengths to which He went to "prepare" for Christmas. The Bible tells us that God sent Christ at just the right time, the perfect time, and it was not arbitrary. God spent a few thousand years preparing mankind and setting the stage for that moment in Bethlehem. What it "costs" us to prepare for Christmas is miniscule compared to what Christ paid...ultimately His life. Now that's great effort and cost.

This Christmas as you worship the King don't forget to ponder what it took for God to put on that first Christmas for all of us. Be amazed by our great God who is infinite in love and grace.

# Christmas Caroling Outreach

“It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas, everywhere you go.” That is definitely the case here in South Tampa. Colorful bright lights, Christmas trees, and cheerful garlands are everywhere. It is indeed the most wonderful time of the year! Just as the sights of Christmas abound, so do the sounds in malls, shops, offices, and more. The sights and sounds of Christmas always seem to make everyone happier and kinder (except when a store runs out of the perfect toy or game that was on sale).

Sadly, much of the world has no idea what (or more precisely Who) the source of all this joy is. We know though. In eternity past, before the earth was even formed, our great God about to create man knew that man would fall and He devised a great plan to redeem His creation back to Himself. Then, just over two thousand years ago, God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, and what a miraculous gift He was. Born of a virgin, this little baby was at once the Son of man and the Son of God, conceived in righteousness. In our sin, we owed a debt we could not pay, and in His righteousness He paid a debt He did not owe.

That most gracious of all gifts filled the earth with joy unspeakable and song after song burst forth joyfully from the hearts of His grateful followers, worldwide, century after century. Today, we call those joyful songs noels or, more popularly, carols. Whether believers or not, everyone seems to sing them and love them.

Plan on participating in a fun evening of caroling on Sunday, December 18, at 6 p.m. On this evening, we have a wonderful opportunity to share that joy, and the source of that joy, with a targeted neighborhood in South Tampa. Here is the plan...

---

## Sunday, December 18

### 6:00-8:00 p.m.

---

First, on Sunday, December 4, you will have the opportunity to take home one of fifty baskets to fill with all manner of wrapped and sealed goodies, ornaments, etc. A list of recommended items will be enclosed in each basket to help you fill it. Then return your basket to the church by Wednesday, December 14. We will then add a special DVD and other materials designed to lead them to Christ and wrap and seal them in cellophane.

Second, on Sunday, December 18, be at the Church by 6 p.m. with a crock-pot of your favorite chili to share and ready to head out to sing carols and distribute the baskets.

Third, at 6 p.m. we will all enjoy a very special presentation by our Joy Bells (pre-school choir), after which we will meet in the parking lot of the U.S. Post Office just to the west of the intersection of Henderson, Morrison, and Dale Mabry. From here we will make our way down McKay, then back up Swann, caroling door-to-door, and leaving a basket with each home that will open to us.

Finally, we will return to the Church and enjoy a chili fellowship together. The church will provide all of the accompaniments, drinks, and paper products. This is a very easy, fun, and non-threatening (for both giver and receiver) way to share the true source of our joy for this beautiful season. It is a great way to fulfill our mission of making disciples by being disciples, while at the same time having fun, bringing joy to others, enjoying great fellowship, and, with God’s blessing, leading others to Christ. Everyone has fun...and everyone wins!