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December 2016

Tower Tidings
The First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland
3630 Fairmount Blvd.
Shaker Heights, OH 44118

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Please submit articles or news via e-mail to Star Knuckles:
sknuckles@firstbaptistcleveland.org

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Thank You! to the many volunteers who help assemble the Tower Tidings mailing each month!

This Issue at a Glance ~

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6 Youth Page
7 Announcements; Events; December Birthdays
Our rush to Christmas often seems to be a mad dash to the finish line where upon there is a sense of collapse from exhaustion. Yet for a child, the expectation and anticipation of Christmas seems to move along at a snail’s pace. The chore of decorating for Christmas combines both a sense of obligation (keeping up with our traditions) and a bit of nostalgia as we find comfort in our cherished memories of past celebrations. The pulse of Christmas beats with a rising rhythm as December 25th arrives with hopes for a wonderful Christmas.

Yet, many find the Christmas season to be a difficult time of the year. Loss, pain and grief may cast dark shadows on the once joyful celebration. Amidst the pulsing flood of Christmas activities and state of being, the simple and powerful message of Christmas gets buried beneath the incessant messages promoted by Amazon, Walmart and Macy’s.

In a newly released book, Hidden Christmas: The Surprising Truth behind the Birth of Christ, Timothy Keller wrestles with the simple message of Christ’s birth in the face of blaring commercialism. He notes that Christmas has become two celebrations sharing the same space. The outside appears bright, colorfully adorned with ribbons and bows, while the actual gift of great worth lies inside. The gift within the paper, bows and box is the object of joy as is found within heart of the one who has provided the gift. Our culture has become excited about the wrapping paper and bows, and has come to ignore the beauty of God’s gift which lies within. A gift of the highest value, not a product of creation, but lying in cradle, the Savior who is Christ the Lord. Therefore, Christmas is as much about light amidst darkness, innocence in contrast to cruelty, and acceptance in a world of abandonment. It is a promise that looks to what is yet to be, while recalling the world that was, or was.

Our chaotic world needs a regular reminder of what’s truly important and value of our Christmas gift—Jesus, our Savior. The cherished Christmas Carol, “Away in a Manger” clearly states the message which God has for each of us and our world.

I love Thee, Lord Jesus look down from the sky, and stay by my side, till morning is nigh. Be near me, Lord Jesus I ask Thee to stay, close by me forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care, and take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

Merry Christmas,
Pastor Kregg Burris

“Christmas! The very word brings joy to our hearts. No matter how we may dread the rush, the long Christmas lists for gifts and cards to be bought and given—when Christmas Day comes there is still the same warm feeling we had as children, the same warmth that enfolds our hearts and our homes.” —Joan Winmill Brown, American author
The Youth Department participated in serving the homeless at Calvary Presbyterian Church on November 25.

Still looking for a tree?...look no further. Our lot is the best in quality and price! Come by and check us out...

**Fresh Fraser Fir Christmas Trees**
From the hills of Boone North Carolina
Premium Grade Trees 6 ft. to 10 ft.

$60-$100 Mention this ad and receive $5 off any tree

We Also Deliver!

First Baptist Church
OF GREATER CLEVELAND
3330 Fairmount Blvd. in Shaker Heights, OH
Phone 216.932.7480

The Children’s Center Connection ~ Nature Classroom Gets Green Light

Interactions with nature, especially plants and animals, can influence children’s development of prosocial behavior. Children’s play in natural settings is more diverse and includes more imaginative and creative play than in non-natural settings. That’s why we are excited to announce that our outdoor classroom is now becoming a reality. Recently, we identified space adjacent to Wheaton Center and the church has given us their blessing.

The idea came about at a staff retreat in the fall of 2015. This retreat led to birth of our Strategic Direction. One of the goals that emerged was creating an outdoor nature classroom. To date, we’ve completed the first phase of selecting a location, creating a diagram of where activity centers will be stationed and securing approval from the church.

The next phase is the purchase and/or construction of portable activity centers. We would love help with this! When we determine that the play patterns and space meet our goals for children’s play and exploration we will permanently install some stations. The last phase of the project involves moving the current fence north toward Fairmount, to be even with the existing playground fence. This will enable us to expand to include a larger digging area, butterfly garden, storage and gathering area. The project will evolve over the course of 2017.

Thank you for your generous donations to our annual Thanksgiving Food Drive. Your contributions made it possible for us to provide a turkey and food to thirty-nine area needy families. Our donations came from our congregation, families represented at our Children’s Center and students at nearby Canterbury Elementary School.

A special thanks to the twelve ladies that sorted and packed the boxes for the families and the three who did work in advance to purchase the turkeys and fresh produce.

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A Festival of Lessons and Carols, December 18, 4pm

Christmas Nativity Pageant. (with live animals) December 24, 7pm

Candlelight Service, December 24, 11pm

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Please stop by the Mitten Tree in the Fairmount Hall. We invite you to take an ornament from the tree home with you. This ornament can go on your own tree and be a reminder of suggested donations. All gifts will be appreciated; a small bottle of lotion for a lady coming to the hot meal we serve at Calvary, a pair of gloves for a man at the men’s shelter, a new toy for a child living at Family Promise and a check for the offering to benefit Retired Ministers and Missionaries. Check out the display for more details.
Retired Ministers and Missionaries 2016

by Judy Donley

Please remember these faithful servants who have worked for very low pay and truly appreciate this gift. For those who receive it, it is a humbling experience. It is about unknown people who care enough to say thank you for past service. It is often used to buy prescription medicines, necessary home repair, help with winter fuel costs, rent, automobile expenses and medical expenses.

American Baptist congregations contribute to this special offering to provide financial support to retired ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses. It can provide emergency assistance in times of crisis or to send a Thank You check. In our church, we will dedicate the entire offering collected on Christmas Eve. Thank you for remembering.


by Anita Bartel

From a box to a Bible, thanks to all who participated in Operation Christmas Child. So many people of our congregation filled boxes or donated money for shipping.

Angela Fielding’s Girl Scout Troop# 37361, packed 19 boxes! Our East Side Ministry class packed a box and many children in our congregation got involved in assembling and sorting the boxes. Thanks also to Pastor Jeff who delivered our 65 boxes to our drop-off location on Monday, Nov. 14.

Imagine the faces of children squealing that they received a stuffed animal or a pair of socks.

The Happy Ending Lyric Players

Proudly Present

Beauty and the Beast

FBC’s resident theatre troupe will be raising the curtain on their 41st Season with the Disney smash hit, Beauty and the Beast.

The classic story tells of Belle, a young woman in a provincial town, and the Beast, who is really a young prince trapped under the spell of an enchantress. If the Beast can learn to love and be loved, the curse will end and he will be transformed into his former self. But time is running out. If the Beast does not learn his lesson soon, he and his household will be doomed for all eternity.

This show is fun for the whole family whether they are on stage or enjoying the production from the audience!

Auditions
January 7th and 8th 2-5PM
January 9th 7-9PM

Please prepare 32 bars of a fun song (It is Disney after all). There will also be light choreography and potential cold reading. But don’t worry! It’s great fun!

Performances
March 24th-April 2nd

Contact Kelley Pernicone for more information!
kpernicone@gmail.com