

FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

DECEMBER 2020



KEEP CHRISTMAS WELL Advent 2020

In the classic Christmas story, "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens, we meet the grumpy, stingy, cold man that is Ebenezer Scrooge. So widely known is his tale that his very name has become the adjective for one who has no Christmas spirit or kindness in their heart. Of course, if you read the story or watch any of the many adaptations put to film, then you know that Ebenezer became much more than simply a Scrooge. He encounters the ghost of an old business associate who warns of three other phantoms coming to haunt Scrooge on this Christmas Eve. They come because Scrooge has chosen only greed and cruelty with his life; they come to show his fate. With each visit Ebenezer journeys from his past to his future, learning along the way that kindness and blessing carry far more value than coin and purse.

Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" will serve as our inspirational and thematic lens for the season of Advent. Each week we'll explore the story of Christ's arrival while also playfully looking at the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future. The Biblical story doesn't use ghosts per se, but there are plenty of angels, miracles, visions and dreams. Together we'll journey with Ebenezer Scrooge as we all remember to honor Christmas in our hearts and keep it all the year.

Now I know that the church returning to online-only services isn't on anyone's Christmas list. It certainly wasn't on mine either. But even more than the sadness I feel for being apart, I feel a grand amount of thankfulness, pride and hope in our congregation and its leaders. Our Executive Board has led during this impossible season with diligence and duty. They have strived to keep our congregation safe, a task that no previous Executive Board has ever had to take so seriously. Our congregation has mitigated the anxiety of this season by caring for and loving one another so very well. So while I feel sadness, I also give thanks for wise leaders. I give thanks for kind church members. I give thanks for humble and brave Christians.

Ebenezer had no plans on being whisked through time and space to face his own mistakes, yet he journeyed into the darkness and found the light. Mary and Joseph had no plans to become the parents of the Messiah, yet they answered the call, became refugees from a violent king, and lovingly raised the Son of God. Like the pioneers of faith that have come before, we march into the unknown, bolstered by love for one another and the kind of hope that only lives in Christmas tidings.

"And it was always said of Ebenezer, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge." - "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens

Serving Together,
Rev. Dr. Rob Collins
Senior Pastor

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RACIAL JUSTICE AND THE PEORIA POLICE

The two of us joined members of other churches and the Jewish Federation in a November meeting with Peoria Police Chief Loren Marion to learn how the department approaches racial justice issues. In response to the killing of George Floyd, Chief Marion said the department added de-escalation procedures to its training and banned the use of carotid artery restraints. Illinois forbids police from using chokeholds, the procedure that killed Floyd. A new Peoria requirement is "duty to intervene;" if an officer witnesses something improper being done, he or she must report it. "Implicit bias training" was added this year; the department already trained officers on cultural diversity, racial profiling and procedural justice, as for traffic stops. Chief Marion spoke and wrote to oppose the officers' actions in Floyd's death. The police chief said Peoria's officers were recognized as among the best trained in the state four out of the last five years. Peoria is among just five percent of departments across Illinois to require bias training.

One of the police chief's goals is to increase diversity on the force. In September 73 percent of officers were white males; 19 percent were minorities of either gender. Of the nine officers hired in October, five were minorities. He would like a police department that more closely reflects the racial makeup of Peoria, which is 32 percent minority. Asked about fears of "driving while black," he acknowledged that more black drivers than whites are stopped, but he didn't have the numbers. He said he believed this is because more police patrol downtown neighborhoods.

Chief Marion stressed the importance of community cooperation in solving crimes, and the police department has numerous efforts aimed at reaching out to residents. The city has five resident officers who live in valley and bluff neighborhoods. They mentor youths, work with schools, partner with the Peoria Community Against Violence organization, conduct canned food drives and do many other things as part of a deterrent strategy. The department has a resource staff to help high-risk individuals get support services, such as GEDs and job training. In normal years police hold four or five neighborhood forums, which he believes provide important feedback to help target ways to improve. The department is looking at offering these on Zoom next year if in-person forums are not possible. And he strongly urged Peorians to take part in the Citizens Police Academy next year if the corona virus abates and the department can offer it again.

The meeting with the police chief was part of an effort of local churches to work toward a more racially just community.

Barb Drake and Wayne Nowlan

FROM THE MODERATOR

Dear Church,

As everyone is aware, the Executive Committee has been closely monitoring the reports and guidance pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic. It goes without question that the latest information surrounding the number of cases and hospitalizations in Illinois has not been good. Given the seriousness of the situation and the concerns that are being voiced, the Executive Committee has determined the best course of action is to suspend all in-church activities, including in-person services, effective immediately. It is our sincere hope that we will be able to resume in-person church services by January 17, 2021. Additionally, we respectfully ask that if you have a need to visit the church during this time, please contact Sandy in advance to make an appointment. Please remember to wear your mask if you do enter the building. While we have a small staff number wise, we want to keep them as safe as possible.

Pastor Rob, Mark and the rest of the team are aware of this decision and are already planning to reengage with our on-line services. They did a wonderful job before, and we are fully confident they will continue to do so going forward. The church services will be available every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. on the church website, FBCPeoria.org, and the church's Facebook page.

If you have any questions, please reach out to staff or the executive board. Your continued prayers for them are greatly appreciated.

God Bless,
Joe Sexton
Moderator



ADVENT AT FIRST BAPTIST

KEEP CHRISTMAS WELL

Journey with Ebenezer Scrooge as we all remember to honor Christmas in our hearts and keep it all the year

Online Worship Services can be found on Facebook or at FBCPeoria.org

November 29, 2020

KEEP AWAKE FOR THE CHANCE OF HOPE

Scripture Reading: Mark 13:24-37

December 6, 2020

SHADOWS OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN

Scripture Reading: Mark 1:1-8

December 13, 2020

TELL EVERYONE ABOUT THE LIGHT

Scripture Reading: John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 20, 2020

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:26-38



First Baptist Church

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THE MISSION OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IS TO MINISTER TO OUR CONGREGATION, THE COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD, SO THAT ALL MAY EXPERIENCE THE LOVE AND GRACE OF GOD.

PRAYER CONCERNS

Tom Maulding	Char Austin	Sharon Polakow
Betty Wenger	Rose Kimpling	Jim Ashton
Mark Stanard	Sharon Stanard	Rose Kimpling
Rosemary Walk	Mary Hinch	Jerry Edwards
Alyssa Russell	Deb Houser	Jacquelyn Kellogg
Leon Vickerman	Karen Vickerman	June Fredell
Beryl Fredell	Joyce Clarke	
Bob Braden (Sandy Johansen's brother-in-law)		

CONDOLENCES

We extend sympathy to Vicky & Doug Stewart and family on the death of Vicky's father, Dick Koehl. He passed away on November 12th in Fairbury, IL.

We extend sympathy also to Lynelle & Bob Ryan and family on the November 16th death of Lynelle's brother, Dennis Flynn.

CONGRATULATIONS

We congratulate Mark and Leigh Grizzard on the birth of their daughter, Natalie Mardelaine Grizzard. Natalie was born on October 30th, weight 7 lb. 1 oz. and 17" long. The family is settled in at homem and all are well.

ABW NUTS

There are still some nuts available for purchase as part of the ABW fundraiser. If interested, please contact Carolyn Ihnken at 309-472-4509 or csimk@comcast.net.

DON'T FORGET



Please remember to send in your donation in support of the World Mission Offering and the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering.

Since we are unable to hold in-person services on the collection date of November 29th, we ask that you mail your contributions to the church office. Checks should be made payable to First Baptist Church. Unless otherwise specified, donations will be split evenly between these 2 missions.

Thank you,
FBC Mission Board