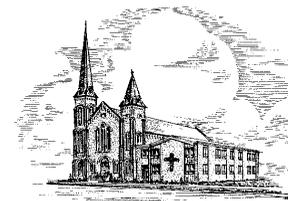


Holiday Tunes

- Away in a Manger
- Choir of the Bells
- Dominick the Donkey
- Frosty the Snowman
- Holly Jolly Christmas
- Jingle Bell Rock
- Jingle Bells
- Let it Snow
- Little Drummer Boy
- Little St Nick
- O Holy Night
- Rudolph
- Santa Baby
- Silent Nigh
- Silver Bells
- The Christmas Song
- The First Noel
- Winter Wonderland

Chicken Scratch NY

S G R D A M A F C I F Z Z X F K U H J X
 W A W A Y O B R E M M U R D E L T T I L
 C K M B H P L O D U R J T G J I H Z N O
 Z D W T Z E D S Y E L C B Y R T G C G K
 G N O S S A M T S I R H C E H T I J L L
 Q A N K O I D Y A L F D G I R L N B E D
 X L S O X Q R T B T I N W X N E T O B J
 D R T J T I R H V A A H X I P S N A E W
 F E I F W V T E C M B E U U B T E S L S
 N D T U C C H S A Y A A I N S N L C L Q
 B N E V X E G N X I L M T R I I I Y R W
 F O L N I A I O Z T K L I N X C S J O U
 B W V E S Y N W K M G F O O A K T E C N
 G R O K A C Y M V Z E U A J Y S L D K U
 M E Q W Q O L A O H K P I T Y K B N M Q
 G T A P U I O N T S L L E B E L G N I J
 L N F G C Z H N S L L E B R E V L I S E
 I I Y E K N O D E H T K C I N I M O D S
 L W B T K S L L E B E H T F O R I O H C
 U I M U Y F C J H B X B V R U M Q C Y B



Steeple Breezes
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VOLUME 216 DECEMBER 2017 NO. 12

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,

It is December. By the time you read this, there will be Christmas decorations all over the place. Hopefully, the church will be decked out for the holiday. At different events, Christmas carols will be sung. Most of those carols will speak directly to the idea of “peace,” or at least, allude to peace.

One of my favorite songs during this Christmas season is “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.” It talks of the bells of the churches ringing out the message of “peace on earth, goodwill to men.” The song goes on in the next verse to say, “And in despair I bowed my head, there is no peace on earth I said, for hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth good will to men.”

This Christmas season, I feel that despair more than I remember feeling it in the past. There are thousands of people in this country who will be grieving this season because of the murder of loved ones. In just recent weeks, there were 56 people murdered in Las Vegas, 26 people murdered in a church in Texas, and 5 people at a school in California. In 2017 (as of the writing of this article), there have been 317¹ mass killings in America. A mass killing is where “four or more people are killed in a single incident, at the same general time and location, not including the shooter.”²

In addition to the thousands who suffer because a family member or a friend has been killed, there are first responders, doctors and nurses, and other people who are directly affected by this violence. Each death has an impact way beyond the numbers indicated. To bring this closer to home, as of November 14, there have been 5 murders in Jackson, MI. If you include the whole county, there has been 6 murders. That

means five of your neighbors have been killed, and an untold number of their friends and relatives affected by their deaths in the last 11 and a half months.

The song (I heard the Bells on Christmas Day) goes on to say that the bells proclaim more loudly and deeply that God is not dead and is not sleeping. I believe that to be true. However, I believe God has given us a responsibility to take some form of action. It appears to me that the church, that is all those who claim to follow Christ, the Prince of Peace, have closed their eyes to this ongoing carnage.

There are no quick fixes. It is certainly not in keeping with Christian standards to increase the number of people on the streets who carry guns. In the United States there are from 270 million to 310 million HANDGUNS.³ That is close to one for every man, woman, and child in the country. In the one instance where Jesus supported carrying weapons, he was told there were two swords that were available (one for every six men). He said, "That is enough."

What is needed is a change of attitude among the people of this country. We have come to accept the killing of someone as a right, if we have a good enough reason. That is not Christian! What I hope for this Christmas season is that those who claim to follow the Prince of Peace will not just talk about how bad things are; instead, that we will find ways to change attitudes toward life as a whole that reflect what God does for us in Jesus. Let's talk about this issue, and then, let's do something.

Pastor Ross

¹ <http://www.abc15.com/news/data/mass-shootings-in-the-u-s-over-270-mass-shootings-have-occurred-in-2017>

² <http://www.shootingtracker.com/>

³ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/04/a-minority-of-americans-own-guns-but-just-how-many-is-unclear/>

CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKETS

Once again, Nadine Manchester has graciously headed up the project of the Christmas Baskets handed out by First Baptist Church. While Nadine does a wonderful job at the behind-the-scenes work required to show the love of Christ to 36 deserving families, she could use some helping hands during assembly and distribution. If you are available on Friday, December 22nd at 3 p.m. to assemble or at 6 p.m. to distribute, please let Nadine or the church office know. All volunteers are appreciated!

Without offering a single caution,
a bullet can sever the cord that binds one to life.
Without advanced notice, one car slams into another,
snuffing out the lives of all involved.
Without warning,
illness strikes down the strong,
the weak,
the rich and the poor.

Where can we go for comfort?

What can be used to salve our soul when that which is dear has been taken?

Where is comfort when death beckons us home to God?

We know the words -

"Our God is a comfort,

A very present help in the midst of strife."

"The Lord loves you

even if no one else cares."

"In the presence of Jesus,

the afflicted find solace."

But to give the words substance takes intention,
effort,

setting aside one's own pursuits long enough to be with someone
in the midst of anguish,

in the midst of uncertainty,

in the midst of the ambiguity of life.

Comfort comes from the hands that take time to spread love.

Comfort comes from the voice, that soothes disheveled nerves.

Comfort comes from our presence,

a presence that delivers the distressed from the depths of despair.

The wanderer over this world can be comforted.

And often it is small things that comfort,

things as simple as

a cup of hot chocolate,

a warm quilt made with love,

a brown, or black, or beige bear, made to embrace a child's heart.

—Ross T. Lucas, October 9, 2017



PRAYER QUILT MINISTRY *submitted by Shirley Sayles*



This is a prayer ministry that combines a gift of prayer with the gift of a hand tied quilt. A thread is used to take stitches through the quilt layers and the ends are left to be tied with a square knot. As knots are tied, a silent prayer is offered for someone in need. The quilt is then given to someone in need of comfort and prayer.

What makes these quilts unique is not the pattern, color or workmanship, but the prayers tied into each one.

These “comforters” are a statement of faith and a testimony to our belief in God and in the power of prayer. Faith is not about everything turning out okay. Faith is about being okay no matter how things turn out.

FROM WHENCE COMETH COMFORT?

Where does the traveler of this early plane find comfort?

What can ease the times of pain,
the suffering that all pass through?

A steaming cup of hot chocolate,
on a cold winter’s eve.

A quilt,
soft and warm,
infused with love,
on a wet rainy night.

A bald brown teddy bear,
its fur worn away by little hands that clutch it close,
and still it comforts,
catching the tears of a sobbing child.

Life hangs by a thread,
always,
no matter what the situation
life is tentative,
unpredictable,
subject to the whims of people who are uncaring,
storms without compassion,
illness that respects no man, no woman.



2018 ALTAR FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS

For the last two years, beautiful altar flower arrangements have been made by Brown Floral Company for First Baptist Church when desired. The cost continues to be \$37.00 which includes a delivery fee. If you are interested in providing altar flowers in honor or in memory of a loved one at a Sunday service this year, please call the church office to indicate your preferred date, and our secretary, Nicole, will make arrangements with Brown’s and will take note of any message you may want to have placed in the Sunday bulletin. Checks for altar flowers should be written to First Baptist Church. Of course, you may also purchase flowers from any other florist of your choice being certain that your provider is aware that deliveries must be made when the church office is open (M-F, 9AM-1PM). As always, if you prefer to design your own floral arrangement or bring in a bouquet of your garden flowers, those are also options.



**Christmas
Poinsettias**

If you would like to donate a poinsettia for use at the Christmas Eve service on Sunday, December 24, please fill in the information below and turn it into the church office no later than **Sunday, December 3.**

All plants are to be paid for at the time they are ordered. Plants not picked up after the evening service on Sunday, December 24 will be taken to our shut-ins, unless otherwise specified to the church office.

Qty. _____ Color: Red Pink White
(\$9.25 each) (Circle Selection)

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

Given by _____

Please return with check payable to: **First Baptist Church**
201 S. Jackson St., Jackson MI 49201

