

First Baptist Church of Salt Lake



The Beacon

The Newsletter of First Baptist Church of Salt Lake City—

December 2017 Vol 11 Issue 11

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A Christmas Carol

One of my favorite authors is Charles Dickens. My favorite Dickens story is *A Christmas Carol*. I am not alone in this: from the moment this story hit the shelves it was well received. Published on 19 December 1843, the first edition sold out by Christmas Eve; by the end of 1844 thirteen reprint editions had been released.

Dickens was writing at a time when the western world was falling in love with Christmas all over again. In England Christmas Hymns had become popular thanks to several published works. In America, Washington Irving was also writing stories about Christmas. For Dickens, Christmas became a vehicle for stitching back together the social fabric that had become frayed by the industrial era. His story of the miser turned saint in the character of Ebenezer Scrooge had the kind of hope for the future he wanted for the whole of English Society. England in the years following the industrial revolution had lost its conscience, its compassion and its sense of unity. It was the children for whom Dickens had a particular concern and who were the most heart wrenching of victims of these societal shifts. Dickens wanted to show the evils of self-interest as demonstrated by Scrooge and the possible repercussions of ignoring the poor, especially children in poverty—personified by the allegorical figures of Want and Ignorance. Tiny Tim came to represent the possible outcome of society's lack of compassion as well as the opportunity to turn our fate around. Dickens, in this story and many others, drew attention to the sad repercussions of the industrial era for the exploited poor. It was these stories that became a catalyst for reform in England and the whole of the western world with such innovations as child labor laws and anti-exploitation legislation.

The heart of Christmas, captured by Dickens and others, has always been about those very yearnings for hope and transformation. The Gospel message is contained in a nutshell in the birth story we celebrate each Christmas: that in the midst of troubling times, God acts and we can respond. We can be transformed from being both a victim and perpetrator of selfishness by recognizing our common humanity and, like Jacob Marley, declaring each day, "Mankind [is] my business". The Gospel also declares, like *The Christmas Carol*, that we are in control of our fate. We are put on a path, but which direction we choose at any given point takes us to a place of communion or alienation. Christ calls us to communion. And perhaps most important in the Christmas story, both Dickens' and the Gospel's, is that we can choose a different path at any

time. As the repentant Ebenezer declares upon realizing that it was Christmas Day, "I haven't missed it!"

In the craziness of the season and in a time such as this, it is my prayer that we don't miss it. The heart of Christmas, the hope it brings, the call to transformation, the promise of Emmanuel, God with us: it is all here to be both remembered and experienced anew. In first century Palestine, in 17th century England and in 21st century America, the story renews and inspires.

Have a very Merry Christmas and, of course . . .
as Tiny Tim observed, "God Bless Us Every One"

Pastor Curtis

December at FBC:

- Dec 3: Community Prayer in the Chapel at 10:30
- Dec 5: Beers and bros at Fiddlers Elbow at 6 pm
- Dec 6: Lux Singers Christmas Concert at 7:30
- Dec 8: Salt Lake Men's Choir Concert at 7:30
- Dec 9: Santa Breakfast 9-11:30
Salt Lake Men's Choir Concert at 7:30 pm
- Dec 10: Salt Lake Men's Choir Concert at 4 pm
- Dec 12: Ruth's Circle at 5 pm at Marie Calendars
- Dec 14: ABWomen's meeting at noon
- Dec 15: Child Development Center Christmas program and party at 4 pm
- Dec 17: German Choir Concert at 7 pm
- Dec 19: Beers and Bros at Fiddler's' Elbow at 6 pm
- Dec 20: Crossroads Chorale Christmas Concert at 7 pm
- Dec 22: Salt Lake Symphonic Choir Concert at 7:30 pm
- Dec 24: Children's Pageant during worship at 11 am
Christmas Eve Service at 7:30 pm
- Dec 25: Merry Christmas
- Dec 26: Church and Child Care closed for the day.

Happy Birthday to: Dec 3: Angela Bond, Pat Johnston. Dec 5: Wendy Winzenried. Dec 7: Karen Carter. Dec 9: Lilian Brown. Dec 10: Jennifer Schimmlfenning. Dec 11: Andrew Thompson. Dec 12: Ricardo dosSantos. Dec 14: Jessica Hall. Dec 15: Mark Rausher. Dec 16: Aaron Barnes. Dec 20: Ron Hall. Dec 21: Alyssa Wilson, Matthew Keysaw. Dec 22: Chuck Payne. Dec 24: Scott Smith. Dec 26: Amy David. Dec 27: Georgine Parmeter. Dec 28: Abigail Nelson.

Community Prayer in the Chapel will meet on December 3th at 10:30 a.m. in Skaggs Chapel

Our traditional Christmas Eve service will begin at 7:30 pm. Join us as we celebrate the birth of Jesus with word, music, candles and love. This is the service to invite your friends and neighbors to join you at worship.

Christmas Eve Service at 11 am. Dec 24 is the fourth Sunday of Advent. Our children will be presenting a Christmas Pageant during the 11 am service.

End of Year giving for 2017: Just a reminder that all donations to the church for 2017 must be in the Church office no later than Thursday, Dec 28th in order to receive credit on your 2017 taxes.

Alpha Lambda's Annual Santa Breakfast: Dec 9th, 9 to 11:30. There will be a pancake breakfast, holiday boutique and baked goods, raffles, door prizes and Santa. Donation is \$4 for children under 7 and \$7 for everyone over 7. Talk to Phyllis Hollen for more information

Sign Up Sheets for Hospitality and Flowers for 2017 are on the bulletin board outside the office. Sign up now and get the weekend you want.

Thanks to AB Youth and their leaders, and all those who helped, for their hard work in decorating the Sanctuary for Christmas.

Thanks to all who helped make our Thanksgiving Dinner so great! Ken Burnett and all who worked in the kitchen, Julia Watson, Pat Ditton and helpers for the set up and those who helped with the clean up. The time of fellowship in the kitchen is a wonderful experience. Thanks too to all those who cooked turkeys and brought all the delicious side dishes and pies. Special thanks to Scott Smith and Leland Flinders for donating the turkeys.

Ruth Circle Christmas Party—Dec 12 at 5 pm at Marie Calendar's.

AB Women Christmas Luncheon—Dec 14 at noon in the Library. Bring a small white elephant type gift.

The Children of Al and Marion Deware invite you to help them celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary December 24th following worship at a special coffee hour to be held in their honor. Cards are welcome, no gifts please

Order Form for Poinsettias for the Church: Buy a poinsettia for the Sanctuary. These may be purchased in honor of someone, or in memory of someone. The list of dedications will appear in the Christmas Eve Bulletin. Plants are \$11.00 each this year and may be taken home following the Christmas Eve service.

Orders need to be in the office no later than December 20th.

Name of giver _____

In memory of _____

In honor of

_____ Number of
plants _____ X \$11.00= total paid _____

Annual Junior-Senior High Winter Retreat at Camp Utaba

At this year's retreat, we will explore the role of God and how we so often deny God that role by turning elsewhere for our help. In addition, we will enjoy playing in the snow, reconnecting with old friends, making new friends and just having a good time.

Camp Utaba—January 5, 6 and 7. Applications are available in the church office or from Pastor Curtis or Tommy Burnett.