

# First Light

First Baptist Church - Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Vol. XLIX No. 25

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December 16, 2025



**Chancel Choir Christmas Cantata & Communion**  
**Sunday, December 21, at 10:45 a.m.**

**Churchwide Christmas Caroling**  
**Sunday, December 21, at 5:00 p.m.**  
*(meet in the fellowship hall)*

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service**  
**Wednesday, December 24, at 5:00 p.m.**



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# REFLECTIONS

*"Calling them like I see them"*

A weird story found its way to me this past week. Apparently, McDonald's made a Christmas commercial from AI slop and then had to pull it down because the backlash was so universal. Everyone hated this thing. Not just because it was AI, but because the message of the commercial was stone-cold tone deaf. It was essentially how the Christmas season is stressful, so they generated all of this video of like crazed shoppers and scary family members all over a rendition of "It's the Most Wonderful Terrible Time of the Year." That's right. They really replaced the word "Wonderful" with "Terrible" in a classic Christmas standard song. Their obvious solution was find respite at McDonald's, which is a fittingly baffling conclusion to this nightmare of a commercial.

Why? Why make that commercial, for one thing? But why am I relating this abomination to you? Simple, because there's some truth in it. Obviously the conclusion is wrong, the tone is wrong, the method and the execution and the sentiment are all wrong.

But this season is tough. This week, my family has two different recitals (we had another last week). We finally got to put up our tree this past weekend because it's the first chance we've had. Shopping, planning, parties, trips, appointments. It's all happening. And that's for all of us, right? How many Christmas movies START with that exact premise? Poor Kevin McAlister gets left home alone because everyone is so busy at Christmas.

The Christmas story in Luke 2 is the same way. People traveling, visiting family, a census, no room at the inn. Not to mention being pregnant! It's busy. But there's a moment or two in there when all the busy clears and we're left with something wonderful.

I know Christmas gets tough. I know it's all busy and stressful. But Christmas is built to create opportunities for a moment. Maybe it's in the still of the night when all the presents you've wrapped are under the tree and the lights are glowing and you just sit admiring the beauty. Maybe it's a lingering moment after a good meal with people that you love and care about, no one saying anything really. Maybe it's a moment of sweet, soft singing in the candlelight at church (that's usually mine). Christmas makes opportunities for moments of peace. That's why we put up the lights, or go to the trouble of shopping for gifts, or endure the stress of holiday travel. Because we're making those moments possible.

So when it comes this year, note it. Enjoy it. Savor it as long as it lasts. Peace on earth, goodwill toward humanity. Merry Christmas.

*Peace, Rory*

## *Before His Presence with Singing*

As the choir finished their cantata and the last note lingered in the air, Lila felt an overwhelming sense of peace. It was as though the music had unlocked something inside her that she had buried deep. For the first time in a long time, she didn't feel alone.

When the service ended, people slowly filed out into the cold night, but Lila stood in the back, reluctant to leave, as if savoring the last traces of magic in the air. A voice from behind her said,

"Beautiful, wasn't it?"

Lila turned to see an older woman smiling at her. She nodded. "It really was."

She really didn't want to come tonight. The warmth of home and the familiarity of just staying in was compelling. After all, choir cantatas are all the same. Heard one, heard 'em all. But, she'd promised her best friend, Julie that she'd go, and so she shrugged on her coat and scarf and, headed out.

When she stepped inside the church, the first thing that hit her was the scent of pine and candle wax. Next was the candles lit near the altar—the Advent wreath. The choir in their robes were somehow more than human. The organ prelude was the familiar hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." Somehow, the word, "Emmanuel." Became her focus. It seemed that, for the moment, God really WAS with us.

The choir's voices were rich and full, soaring effortlessly through the first notes of the cantata. This piece was unfamiliar, but the beauty of it seeped into her soul in a way spoken words never could. "Ah! That's familiar" she thought as the music made a segue into, "Away in a Manger." "Manger". Lila grew up around cows and horses. But in her mind, the animals ate from a feeding trough. The word "manger" was the thing that Jesus was born in. So, she took a moment, as the carol echoed against the church ceiling, and made herself remember that Jesus was born in a cow's feeding trough. No luxury. Not even a bed or cradle. The simplicity and humbleness made a profound impression on her.

Then came the tune, "Once in Royal David's City." "... stood a lowly cattle stall" continued the words. Again, she found herself involuntarily focused on the makeshift surroundings of Jesus' birth. God really came to us in the humblest of circumstances. And yet, as several of the cantata pieces mentioned, his coming was anticipated.

It occurred to Lila that her attitude about coming tonight had been a little like the circumstances of Jesus' birth. She'd known about the cantata for weeks, but hadn't really warmed to the idea of coming. The people of that time knew Jesus was coming, but no real preparations were made. He barely had a barn to sleep in! Not only was there no room for him in the inn, but he was crowded out, displaced to the barn.

The cantata's final piece was an arrangement of "Joy to the World." Lila found herself inwardly somehow urging the world to get out of the house and share in the joy of Christmas, the joy of Christ himself, God with us!

In Christ, *Tim*

## Thank You!

Dear First Baptist Church,  
It is with grateful hearts that we express our thanks to the members of FBC who so joyfully cleared the leaves from our yard!  
Your care is an inspiration to us and our neighbors!

Kindest Regards!  
David & Trish Jones

### STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Since the church fiscal year began July 1, First Baptist has spent more in operating expenses than we received in undesignated offerings. Our operating expenses include salaries, utilities, insurance, maintenance and Missions; essentially everything required to continue operations as a church. Many of the designated accounts, such as AGAPE have a healthy balance, and we maintain a Memorial Reserve, which can only be used by the vote of the church in a business meeting. This is an encouragement to prayerfully support the operations of First Baptist Church with your undesignated offerings and your service in our ministries. For those of us that must take Minimum Required Distributions (MRDs) annually from our retirement accounts, you can get your financial institution to send part (or all) of your MRD directly to the church as a charitable contribution.

### ECUMENICAL STOREHOUSE

Beginning on Dec. 17, the Ecumenical Storehouse will be closed for four weeks for the customary winter break. We will not supply volunteers during the break.

**Our schedule for service will resume in January as follows:** Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026, through the end of Jan. 2026. Volunteers are also needed from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Dec. 13 for pickup of donated items. Signup sheets will be available in the foyer and the church office. If you have questions, please contact Linda Williamson at (865) 805-5949 or Jim Williamson at (865) 719-6409.

### ECUMENICAL NEEDS

Ecumenical Storehouse is in need of gently used or new twin blankets and bedspreads as well as twin, full, and queen mattress covers.

## JANUARY FBCFBC

On Monday, January 5, our book club will meet in the library as Lela Moore leads a discussion of the novel *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom. In the story, the main character, Eddie, dies on his 83rd birthday in a tragic amusement park ride accident in an attempt to save a little girl's life. He awakens in the afterlife, where he learns that heaven is not a lush Garden of Eden, but a place where your earthly life is explained to you by both loved ones and distant strangers. One reader said, "It makes you think about how you treat others and the things you've done in your past that have ultimately shaped you into the person you are today." Please join us at noon—and you are welcome to bring your lunch.

### January Fellowship Table

The next Fellowship Table is Friday, January 9, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. in the fellowship hall. Tickets are \$5 each. The main entrée will be Lasagna. Come as early as 11:30 a.m. and enjoy fellowship around hors d'oeuvres, although serving of the meal will not begin until 12 Noon. If you have any questions, please contact Jan Stoutland.

### CHILDREN'S VOLUNTEERS

**SUNDAY, December 21 — CHANCEL CHOIR CANTATA**

**SUNDAY, December 28**

Nursery 11:00 a.m.... Jackie Laney & Amber Slessinger  
Children's Church.....Lela Moore & Debbie Johnson

### CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

**Dec. 24 & Dec. 25, & Jan. 1, 2026**

**No Prayer Meeting or Chancel Choir**  
**Dec. 24th & Dec. 31st**



# JANUARY 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																											
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