

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel.
Isaiah 7:14

Faith NEWS

December 2016

Merry Christmas

HOPE PEACE JOY LOVE

A PUBLICATION OF FAITH FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

Mark your Calendar

- 12-3 **Breakfast with Santa**
- 12-4 **SOUL Sisters Outing**
- 12-9 **Caroling @ West Park 6:45 pm**
- 12-10 **Gingerbread Family Activity**
- Youth Christmas Party 6:30 pm**
- 12-12 **Ladies Christmas Party**
- 12-14 **Seniors Christmas Luncheon**
- 12-28 **Youth Ice Skating 6-9 pm**

Reminder

- December Dinners & Awana**
Dates: 12/7 & 12/14
- December 14 is AWANA STORE!**
- Wednesday morning Bible Study will continue thru 12/14 @ 10 am.

Contact Us

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Keeping "Christ" in Christmas

Each year around this time, the slogan "Keep Christ in Christmas" begins making its rounds in churches, Christian circles and social media. Keeping Christ in Christmas is fighting the trend of abbreviating Christmas with Xmas. The morphological foundations of this change can be long winded, so many Christians mistakenly see Xmas as an attack on Christianity. It is not my goal to defend it here, however, except to say that the controversy is representative of what is happening in the church overall. We seem to be content with allowing Christ to be taken out of our lives, our homes and our churches.

Any pastor could write a book of excuses. I missed church because, _____, I can't make Bible study because, _____, I don't give, don't help etc. etc. etc. While they sound like excuses, they are in fact, symptoms. Christian is not what we do, it is who we are. Every part of our lives. People should know us because of the lives we lead, not by whether or not we hang a wreath on our door in the winter. When we fail to live Christ in our lives, we lose him in our homes. Worse still, if we don't keep Him in our lives, we lose him the community of believers of which we are a part.

While we are busy fighting to keep Christ in Christmas, the Church sits idly by as Christ is taken out of the Church. With increasing and alarming frequency, the Church has

become a bastion for those that are searching for religion without relationships, without ordinances, without accountability, responsibility, and often without Christ himself. Our society is looking for answers without understanding the person or purpose of Jesus Christ.

Today, the trend is to stay away from "churchy" while doing church. While I understand and agree with the idea that the American Church has inserted too much tradition and too much of America into itself, many of the "church" things that we do are legitimate acts of worship and should be preserved. Our fight should be more focused on maintaining the integrity of the Church that Christ himself instituted and heads, instead of keeping His name associated with a holiday that he didn't institute and was founded, in large part, in pagan tradition.

Now, don't get me wrong, I love Christmas. The idea of families getting together and showing love with kind words, the giving of gifts and eating fine meals can never be overrated. My goal is not to attack Christmas, but to raise an alarm of the loss of the authenticity of the Church in America. We have become distracted and forgotten our identity. Many of the battles that we wage are not ours to wage. Our charge is clear; we are to take care of our relationship with the Lord, encourage and support our

brothers and sisters in Christ, share the good

news and disciple new believers. The Church has taken on more battles than we were ever assigned. While many of these are important, they easily distract us from what Jesus himself called us to do.

Keeping Christ in Christmas begins with us keeping him in our lives, our homes and in our churches.

~Pastor John

For
Unto us a
CHILD
is born
Unto us a Son
is given, and the
Government shall be
Upon His shoulders,
and His Name shall be called,
Wonderful, Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace!
Isaiah 9:6

Women's Ministry



DATE CHANGE!

G.E.A.R.S.
& Kingdom Kids
Christmas
Caroling at

West Park Nursing Home on Ferguson Road,
in the piano lounge

Friday, December 9, 6:45 p.m.

ALL ARE WELCOME - MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN
Invite them all!

Let's start the Christmas season by brightening the lives of the residents!

VISITATION & CARDS MINISTRY

"REACHING OUT WITH LOVE"

Pls. help yourself to a free card which is available at the Ministry Info Center
Visitation & Cards Ministry for the month of December:
TOM BRANSON
5458 LARIAT DRIVE, CINCINNATI, OHIO 45238
(513) 504-9761

Senior Basket Ministry

During the month of December we will be delivering Christmas bags with goodies to each person on our list

See Nancy Houser, Co-coordinator, for suggested donations.
There is a basket located at the Ministry Info Center in the foyer.
Deadline for donations: Sunday morning, December 11.

SOUL Sisters

Next meeting: Nick & Tom's, Sunday, December 4 after church
See the bulletin for all the details and contact Sharon Engleman to RSVP.

Want to get involved in SOUL Sisters? See Sharon.

Sharing Our Unconditional Love—a ladies group for social, outreach & service

CHRISTMAS CARDS & PARTIES



You've Got Mail! Remember each of you has a communication file. We use our files for cards of encouragement, news from the office, and YES! even Christmas Cards. These files are located in the commons in the cabinet by alphabetical order.

Ladies Sunday School Annual Christmas Party

The Ladies SS Class Annual Christmas party will be on Monday
December 12th at 7:00 at the home of Rosalie Wilkey.

Mark your calendars now. Bring a dish to share & a \$5 gift

All Seniors are invited to the **Senior Ambassadors Christmas Luncheon** On Wednesday, **December 14th** @ 11:30 in the classroom just off the auditorium, near the kitchen.

Enjoy a great meal, great fellowship, and a "sweet spirit"

Any questions, please call Betty Hall, (513)598-1911.

Diva's Digging Deeper Christmas Party will be Tuesday, December 13th at Monica Heidkamp's home. 6:30-9:00 pm

What to bring: Sweet or salty finger foods. Drinks provided. Bring along a \$10-15 gift for our gift exchange game. We will also do a small craft together. Sign-up in class!

ALL YOUTH CHRISTMAS PARTY

Saturday, December 10.

See Youth Newsletter for all the details!

Recommended Christmas Family Movie: "Saving Christmas"



Kirk is enjoying the annual Christmas party extravaganza thrown by his sister until he realizes he needs to help out Christian, his brother-in-law who has a bad case of the bah-humbugs. Kirk's fresh look at Christmas provides Christians the chance to see Christ is where He has always been: at the center of our Christmas celebrations and tradition.

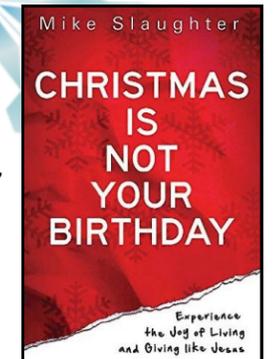
Book List Recommendation: "Christmas Is Not Your Birthday"

Every year, we say we're going to cut back, simplify, and have a family Christmas that focuses on the real reason for the season—Jesus. But every year, advertisements beckon, the children plead, and it seems easier just to indulge our wants and whims. Overspending, overeating, materialism, and busyness rob us of our peace and joy and rob Jesus of his rightful role as the center of our celebration.

This Christmas, cut through the hype that leaves you exhausted and broke at the end of the year. Instead, experience the peace of knowing that God is truly with us, the joy of giving sacrificially, and the love of a Savior who gave everything he had for us. In five short, engaging chapters, Pastor Mike Slaughter inspires readers to approach Christmas differently, and be transformed in the process.

Experience the Joy of Living & Giving like Jesus this season!

These two selections are available for check-out from our library. Stop by today!



Kingdom Kids December Theme:

Joy is a response to the character of God.

When God created the world, He made it to be a place of peace and contentment. In the Magnificent Paradise, God provided fruit trees that were pleasing to the eye and good to eat. And He personally walked with His creation! But when sin entered the world, so did greed and jealousy. As circumstances changed and life presented more challenges, people found it harder and harder to be happy. However, even now in this broken world, God wants us to have joy.

Even though we try to find joy through our stuff, or our vacations, or our relationships, joy isn't dependent upon any of those things. Joy is about being content beyond our circumstances. We can have joy when we recognize that God's plan is greater than our own. Joy is a response to our trust in God.

Jesus is the reason we find joy.

God sent His only son as a baby, born in humble circumstances. Jesus wasn't what anyone expected, but this was how God wanted to rescue the world. God made good on the promise He made hundreds of years before. This December, we pray that through the story of Jesus, kids realize that God loved them so much that He sent His Son to be here on this earth. The story of Christmas



can remind us through every season, regardless of our situation, there's a reason to celebrate what it means to have a relationship with God.

That's why it's important for us to help our kids and families discover more about **joy—finding a way to be happy even when things don't go your way.**

Our Memory Verse for December comes from Philippians 4:4. When Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi, he wasn't saying to have joy only when it's easy. Paul was writing from prison and learned the secret of having joy no matter what his circumstances looked like. Paul's faith in God made him strong and gave him the ability to find joy, even in the difficult times.

In Philippians 4:4, we read, **Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful! (NirV)** As kids memorize this verse, we hope they remember that their joy is not tied to their circumstances. Instead, we find joy when we realize that we belong to God. When we trust God no matter what, we can find joy knowing that whatever happens He is in control.

~Linda Widener

Operation Christmas Child 2017- We are setting a goal for FFC of 100 boxes to be donated in 2017. Are you up for the challenge?

How can we make this happen? By purchasing a few inexpensive items throughout the year! We will have a collection box in the Commons area, year round, for your contributions. We will store the items and have a 'packing party' in early November, 2017. We will list the recommended item for each month in the FFC newsletter. Of course, if you find an incredible deal on something for the boxes, feel free to donate any item at any time!



We have included a list of Year-Round Gift Ideas provided by Samaritan's Purse in this newsletter. Please post this list on your refrigerator and consider giving all year long. If we only spend a few dollars each month, we can bless so many children!

Can't shop? Hate to shop? Contribute to purchase the plastic shoe boxes or to cover postage. We are asking everyone to pray for this ministry and consider helping us reach our goal. Questions? See coordinators Linda Widener & Gaylynn Ramsaur

Family Gingerbread House Activity



Looking for some good ole Christmas fun with your kids or grand kids?! Well, we have the solution for you.

On December 10th from 10am-Noon

we will have a time where families can come to design and build Ginger Bread Houses!

Cost will be \$5 per gingerbread house, \$20 max per family

Be prepared to build that delicious looking gingerbread house with all the sugary pieces that go with it! It's such a great time for families to spend together!

There will also be story time with Pastor Josh!

Who would want to miss all that fun?!



Sign up today at the sign-up board in the commons or in the bulletin's connection card. Sign up will run through Dec. 7th.

***Parents or Grandparents will be required to stay and help with the building of the gingerbread house.*

If you have questions, please contact Linda Widener—lindash916@hotmail.com

BAD WEATHER CLOSING PROCEDURE:

As in years past, FFC will be delayed/closed of ALL activities including the office & counseling) if Oak Hills Local School District is closed or on a delay. Please stay tuned to all your local TV stations for updates as well as our website. Thanks! (there may be exceptions made depending on when snow falls)



FFC will continue to collect canned goods each month for BLOC pantry (see red recycling bin outside of kitchen)

BLOC Pantry is located in Cleves

Pantry is open on Monday's, Wednesday's & Thursday's from 3-5 PM
FREE Community meal every Thursday @ 5:30 pm

Join us for a special Christmas Day Candlelight Worship Service. Sunday School @ 9:30—Worship @ 10:45 am



COME CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH US!

Christ is More Important than Presents!

The Christmas season is upon us and with that brings thoughts of presents, family get-togethers, FOOD, shopping, sales. The list could go on and on. The one thing we can't allow to lose our sight is why we as Christians celebrate during this time of year. God sent His only Son, so that we would not perish, but live forever. That is certainly something to celebrate, not presents, not family gatherings and definitely not presents.

In a time where many churches are deciding to cancel their morning services due to Christmas falling on Sunday this year, FFC is not. The reason why... God is more important. Our time to gather to worship Him is more important than sleeping in, more important than our kids opening presents, more important than family traditions. He is deserving of our praise regardless of any earthly things going on.

Some may argue that they will worship Him at home or they will go to a Saturday night service. That's is a fine thought, but regardless of that intention, when we change the routine of when we gather to worship our King because it conflicts with that things we want or desire, we have made it all about us and let me make this very clear, it is not about us, nor will it ever be about us. It's about the One who came to save us. It's about the One who eventually went on to die a cruel death on a cross, it's about the One who took on the full wrath of God in our places, so we wouldn't have to. It's about our KING.

And since at Christmas it's always fun to watch our kids open presents, let me ask you, "What message

do you want to send to them?" Kids need us to help them set priorities. They are still developing in so many areas. So, it's extremely important that we let them know that Christ comes before Christmas presents, Christ comes before traditions, Christ comes before our own desires. And maybe we need that reminder too.

I get it. Having small kids or kids in general is tough and it's tough to get them ready for church. Trust me, I have three. Show them how important Jesus is. Get up earlier. If presents aren't all open before it's time to go, let them know they will be there when you get home. It's ok. Really!

That's why at FFC, Sunday December 25th will be "business" as usual. Not because we want to be better than others, not because it's about us, but rather because it's all about Him. Christ is our King and He deserves better than our rainchecks, cancellations or excuses.

We celebrate Christmas because of Him, not because of all the other stuff. And that's what it is..stuff. He is our Savior.

And in case you forget...Sunday School at 9:30 am, Worship Service at 10:45 am! See ya then!
~Pastor Josh

We have several things going on with FlipSide this month!

December 9th- Christmas Caroling- Church-wide caroling at West Park Nursing Home!
December 10th- FlipSide Christmas Party- 6:30 pm- Bring a white elephant gift!
December 25th- Christmas Day- No Youth Group
December 28th - Ice Skating at Fountain Square- 6:00 pm- Meet at the church. Bring \$10 for skating.



Sunday Schedule

9:30 am - Sunday School
10:45 am - Worship
6:00 pm - FLIPSIDE Youth Meeting

Coffee Shop open Sunday's
9:00 am - 10:45 am

Library open Sunday's 9 am—12:00 pm & during weekly business hours upon request.

Wednesday Weekly Schedule

5:00 pm Dinner, 6:00 pm Awana,
6:15 pm Bible Study

Office Hours

Monday - Thursday 9 am - 4 pm

Submit prayer requests to ffcconcerns@goffc.org

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COME WORSHIP WITH US

SUNDAYS at 9:30 for Sunday School · 10:45 Worship · Wednesday activities start at 5:00 pm



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