



## Keeping Christ in Christmas

By Alexander S. Brown, Minister

**T**HE Christmas season is a season of extremes. It is one that most people look forward to with joy and excitement, and for many people the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas is one of busy activity, decorating, cooking and baking, and celebrating with friends. Although many grumble about all that has to be done in those few short weeks before Christmas, I think for most of us we would not have it any other way.

As soon as the Thanksgiving turkey is cleared off the table, our minds turn to preparations for Christmas. The busyness and excitement that takes hold of our families and communities is infectious as it envelops us – everywhere we look, whether it is in switching on the television and watching Holiday Specials, or walking into stores decked out with Christmas trees and tinsel, or simply driving through our neighborhoods and seeing the twinkle of Christmas trees in homes. The Christmas season is a holiday that changes our communities, and our frame of mind – it is a holiday that we can see, hear, taste and touch in a way unlike any other.

However, for many around us Christmas is not a time of celebration, but rather a time of sadness. There are many around us who simply just try to get through the holiday season, looking forward to the dropping of the ball on New Year's Eve, not because they are eager to welcome a new year, but because they are eager to see all this celebration fade away. We all have friends, family members, neighbors, and acquaintances, whose joy in the holiday season is marred by those loved ones that they have lost, or by wondering why they are not as happy as everyone else seems to be. The holiday season is one that can generate tremendous happiness, but it can also generate tremendous sadness.

**F**OR those of us who are Christians, we know that it is important during the holiday season to not get distracted by all the trappings of a modern Christmas. We know that we must not get distracted by all the parties, food, decorations, and celebrations. However, it is equally important that we do not get distracted by the hurt and loneliness that can come in reaction. Both can be a distraction from the Gospel.

For the believer Christmas is so much more than presents, cookies, trees, and decorations; it is so much more than time with family and friends; it is even much more than simply adoring a baby in a manger. Christmas is a time of year when our minds should be filled with the wonder of the Gospel. The Christmas story takes our mind back to the very roots of our redemption as we stand in awe of a God who took on human flesh, that He might redeem a people for Himself. The Christmas story is a story of a Covenant King who has brought a perfect fulfillment of the redemption which He promised.

*(Continued on the next page)*

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 a time of celebration,  
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### December Calendar

- Tuesdays** **Men's Breakfast Bible Study**  
Sandcastle Café, 7:30 a.m.
- Wed 12/1** **Midweek Prayer Meeting—*Praying with the Psalms***  
GIPC, 7:00 p.m.
- Thu 12/2** **Mission Committee Meeting**  
Huddleston home, 6:30 p.m.
- Fri 12/3** **Paul Anderson Youth Home Christmas Dinner Theatre**
- Sat 12/4** **“Hanging of the Greens”**  
GIPC, 4:00-7:00 p.m.  
*(see next page)* 
- Sun 12/5** **Sacrament of the Lord's Supper**
- Tue 12/7** **“Beyond the Pages” Book Discussion Group for Women;**  
Taylor home, 6:00 p.m.
- Tue 12/7** **Finance Committee Meeting**  
Currier home, 7:30 p.m.
- Wed 12/8** **Poinsettia Orders due**
- Wed 12/8** **Midweek Prayer Meeting**  
GIPC, 7:00 p.m.
- Mon 12/13** **Stated Session Meeting**  
*New Member Interviews*  
GIPC, 6:00 p.m.
- Tue 12/14** **Ladies Bible Study—*Psalms: Songs Along the Way (Lesson 10)***  
Brown home, 6:00 p.m.
- Wed 12/15** **Midweek Prayer Meeting**  
GIPC, 7:00 p.m.
- Thu 12/16** **WIC Leadership Team Meeting**  
Dr. D. Bowen's office, 5:00 p.m.
- Sat 12/18** **Women of GIPC—Christmas Drop In & Cookie Exchange**  
Brown home, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
- Fri 12/24** **Christmas Eve Service**  
***Lessons and Carols***  
GIPC, 5:00-6:00 p.m. 
- Sat 12/25** **Christmas Day**  
*“When the fullness of time had come,  
 God sent forth His Son,  
 born of woman, born under the law,  
 to redeem those who were under the law,  
 so that we might receive adoption as sons.”*  
—Galatians 4:4

*(December 27-31—Church Office Closed)*

#### Worship Schedule

9:30 a.m. Sunday School  
 10:30 a.m. Morning Worship  
 6:00 p.m. Evening Worship  
 Children's Church, Nursery available

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As we think of the Child in the manger we do not coo over this baby, but we fall down and worship Him as we see not just an infant, but the promised Seed of the woman who comes to crush the head of the serpent. As we think of the birth of Christ we do not get all warm and fuzzy as we think of how cute He must have been, but we stand in humbled awe as we behold the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world!

*Beloved, let us be on our guard this Christmas season against distraction. Distraction from the celebration, or distraction from the sadness. Let our joy this December be a true joy that comes not from presents, food, and family, but rather that comes from meditating on the Gospel. This Christmas season let us be amazed at the wonder of the goodness of God, and let that be the message on our lips. ♦*



## Remembering

by Sue Taylor

*"Plans are established by counsel.  
By wise counsel wage war."  
Proverbs 20:18*

Most of you have been asked, "Where were you on September 11, 2001?"

Some of you have been asked, "Where were you when President John F. Kennedy was shot?"

A few of you have been asked, "Where were you on December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese, and war came to the United States?"

Or, "Where were you in the summer of 1945, when the Germans surrendered in May and the Japanese in August, to end World War II?"

To answer the last question, I was at Camp Skylake in North Georgia. I remember the excitement when we heard the news, especially among the adults. There were cheers and tears of happiness, and relief that our servicemen were coming home. I had been very caught up in the war effort. Our school collected scrap metal to be used in the war, and women's nylon hose were unavailable due to nylon being needed for parachutes. Sugar was rationed, along with other items, and we used coupons for these items. Most movies were about war, and newsreels were always shown with war being prominent. The newsreels ended with everyone singing "Anchors Away My Boys", "The Caissons Go Rolling Along", and "Off We Go into the Wild Blue Yonder". The newspapers had cartoons about war, "Up Front" by Bill Maulden, creator of Willie and Joe. Today we still have "Beetle Bailey", who is always in trouble with the Sergeant.

My father was too old to enlist, but I had uncles in every branch of the service. Dean was an Army pilot, Harry, a sailor, and Ray was in the Marines. They wrote wonderful letters to my aunts, and my sister and I loved to have those letters read to us. They all came home, married my aunts and led productive lives. As a nine year old, I never realized the horrors of war. A high school friend shared with me recently how war affected her father. She said, "He was not the same man, irrevocably changed, actually a casualty of war". Other than letters, there was no way to know how loved ones were, and often, where they were. Today's families have much better communication with their loved ones overseas, due to computer technology.

In World War II we knew who our enemies were: Hirohito, emperor of Japan, and Adolph Hitler, German chancellor and self-proclaimed Fuehrer. We fought to keep our country free and not run by dictators. Do we know who our enemies are today? Saddam Hussein is dead, and Osama Bin Laden is still trying to destroy us.

Perhaps World War II really was the last good war, not that war is ever good. As Christmas approaches I always think of our servicemen, their families and their loved ones. May God bring them safely home, and may we one day have Peace on Earth. ♦



## Focus on Missions

2010 Faith Promise  
Commitments: \$39,010  
Balance through 11/30:  
\$26,420 or 68%

Commitment Cards for fiscal year 2011 total \$30,890. The Mission Team will use this figure to develop the Faith Promise support budget.

## Significant Sessional Actions

- Vacation was approved for Alexander Brown, for 29th December—3rd January.
- Updates to the Policy Notebook were approved.
- Membership interviews were moved from Monday 6th December to Monday 13th December.

## Women In the Church (WIC)

### "Beyond the Pages"

#### Book Discussion Group

—Meeting the first Tuesday of each month at Sue Taylor's home, 6:00 p.m. The next book to be discussed (12/7) is "Ruth, A Portrait: The Story of Ruth Bell Graham," by Patricia Cornwell.

#### Weekly Bible Study:

##### **Psalms: Songs Along the Way**

(by Kathleen Buswell Nielson);  
led by Sara Brown; meeting on  
Tuesday evenings at the Brown home.  
There will be one meeting in December:  
12/14, 6:00 p.m.; the study will cover  
Lesson 10, Psalm 103.

#### Christmas Drop In and Cookie Exchange—

Saturday, December 18th from  
2:00-4:00 p.m. (Brown home)



## "Hanging of the Greens"

Saturday, December 4th

4:00-7:00 p.m. at GIPC

*All are invited to meet at the church on Saturday afternoon, December 4th to help hang Christmas wreaths, change out the sanctuary tapestries and decorate for the Advent Season.*

*Enjoy a pizza supper, homemade Christmas desserts and hot cider. Afterward, everyone will gather around the piano to sing favorite Christmas carols.*