



M Grace Messenger

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

122 Walnut Street
Madison, AL 35758
256-837-8821

GBC HOMEPAGE

<http://www.gracemadison-al.com>

"Preaching the free grace of God which brings a change of lifestyles, masters, and destinies."

DEAN OLIVE, Pastor

— December 2006 Issue —

"Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling."

Psalms 2:11



NURSERY SCHEDULE

DECEMBER

- 03 – NELLIE & HANNAH McFADDEN
- 10 – TROY & JESSICA MOSELEY
- 17 – BOB & FAYE WILLIAMS
- 24 – VICKI JOHNSON & SHARON BAGLEY
- 31 – RALPH & AMBER SOLAN

JANUARY

- 07 – LINDA OLIVE & SONJA WILLIAMS
- 14 – KRISTY HINES & JENNY LOVASSY
- 21 – DAVID & MARY ALICE OLIVE
- 28 – JON & TANYA AMIS

FINANCIAL SUMMARY AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2006

Budgeted expenditures (ytd)	\$ 80,800.04
Actual on-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$ 89,056.03
Actual off-budget expenditures (ytd)	\$ 53,174.04
General Fund offerings (ytd)	\$ 117,571.17
Building Fund offerings (ytd)	\$ 0.00
Love offerings (ytd)	\$ 3,663.99
Total offerings (ytd)	\$ 121,235.16
November General Fund offerings	\$ 12,319.75
November Building Fund offerings	\$ 0.00
Total Building Fund expenditures	\$ 96,257.43
Total Building Fund balance	\$ 16,267.61
Missions Fund balance	\$ 12,236.01
Hurricane Relief Fund expenditures	\$ 13,820.00
Hurricane Relief Fund balance	\$ 0.00

Merry Christmas

CHRISTMAS AT GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH 2006

DECEMBER 17 – We will be joining Providence Presbyterian Church for a Christmas meal at 5 p.m. Following the meal we will have a joint worship service consisting of Christmas hymns and a message from Rev. Dana Crowell, pastor of Prosperity Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Yukon, Tennessee.

The ladies of Providence Presbyterian Church will prepare the meal. The ladies from our church will provide the desserts.

DECEMBER 24 – The morning service will be as usual, at 9:30 a.m. There will be no Sunday School. The evening worship hour will be at 5:00 p.m. and will involve singing Christmas carols, special Bible readings, and a message from God's Word.

DECEMBER 31 – The morning service will be at 9:30 a.m. but there will be no Sunday School. Sunday School classes resume on January 7. The evening service will be at the normal time, 6:00 P.M.



SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

NORMAL SUNDAY SERVICES

Morning Worship	9:30 AM
Sunday School	11:00 AM
Evening Worship	6:00 PM

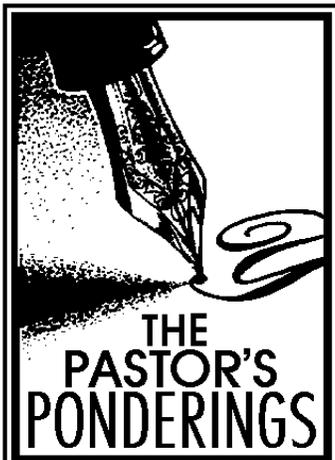
WEDNESDAY EVENING

Bible Study and Prayer Meeting	7:00 PM
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FIRST SUNDAY SERVICES

Morning Worship	9:30 AM
Sunday School	11:00 AM
Dinner at the Church	12:00 Noon
Afternoon Service	1:30 PM
(No Evening Service)	

THE REAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS



Christmas is when we remember most especially that Christ, who was fully God, became a man. Christ possessed the very nature of God and took the very nature of man when he was born of Mary. What a grand doctrine this is.

The very essence of God was joined with the very essence of man.

The two natures seem incompatible. How can God become man and how can a man be God? How it happened is recorded in the birth narratives in Matthew 1 and Luke 2. One thing the Gospel writers made abundantly clear is that while Jesus was fully man in his physical being, because He was Virgin born He was not in Adam. The union of the divine and human natures in Jesus was done in such a way as to keep Him free from sin. But He was a real man.

The Christmas story then begins prior to Bethlehem. The One who came to earth in the form of a man was God of God. That is why we worship Him. "If Jesus is not the divine, eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father, then all Christian worship of him is idolatrous. But if he is the true and living Lord, then all worship must be in Christ Jesus, for no one comes to the Father except by the Son" (Ross).

Condescension is the word we use to explain the staggering idea that God became a Man. Jesus humbled Himself when He put on flesh. How astonishing that One in the form of God would lower Himself so as to become a man.

But much more astonishing is it that Christ, rather than entering the world in the upper echelons of royal society, instead stooped to the lowest level of servanthood. Paul says that Christ "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant" (Phil. 2:7). What condescension! What a humble station for One so high. He was born, not in a palace, but in a stable. He was not wrapped in fine silk fabric, but in plain strips of cloth. He didn't sleep in a golden crib but in a feed trough.

Mark Twain wrote a book that provides a good illustration of this. It is called, *The Prince and the Pauper*. Twain wrote about two boys in England who were born on the same day, who looked alike, and who later temporarily changed positions. One was the son of the king of England and the other a poor boy in London. The king's son, Edward Tudor,

exchanged places with the poor boy, Tom Canty. The prince became the pauper and the pauper became the prince.

Christ Jesus, the Prince of heaven, became a pauper among men. "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). What grace, what generosity! He gave up glory for a brief while for us. He became what we were so we could become what He is.

We must be clear. When He clothed himself in humility He didn't cease being God, rather He subjected Himself to all the indignities of poverty and servitude. Jesus retained equality with God but temporarily laid aside the glory that pertains to Godhood in becoming a man, and subjected Himself to doing the Father's will. He was and always shall be divine, but He set aside the privileges of deity when He became a man.

What did He give up? William Hendricksen says that Christ gave up his favorable relation to the divine law, His heavenly glory, His independent exercise of authority, and He gave up his riches. In becoming a Man, Jesus divested himself of the prerogatives of deity. The Incarnation required this of Him. And He did it for our sakes.

Why was it necessary for Jesus to become a Man? He became a Man so He could lay down His life in sacrifice for us. He became a man in order to endure the shame of the cross on our behalf (Heb. 12:2). Paul made reference to the shame of being nailed to a tree in his letter to the Galatians. He said, quoting Deut. 21:23, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree'" (3:13). Salvation has come to us by Christ becoming a curse for us. He delivered us from the curse of the law by bearing its dreadful curse in death.

The Lord Jesus obeyed the Law fully and completely and then endured the penalty for sin in his vicarious death. "He perfectly met both the penal and the perceptive requirements of God's law" (John Murray). He rendered perfect obedience to the precepts of the Law which we have all broken, and then he freely and willingly died to pay the penalty of the Law on our behalf. It is through His death on the cross that we have the forgiveness of sins. Jesus Christ made peace by the blood of His cross (Col. 1:20).

We therefore exclaim with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 1:14).

WEB SITES

THE REFORMED EVANGELIST - <http://reformedevangelist.com/>

CRBC VIEWS - <http://crbcviews.blogspot.com/>

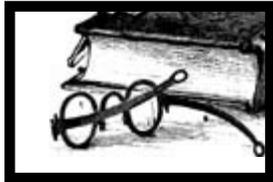
CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION BLOG - <http://www.persecutionblog.com/>

PULPIT MAGAZINE - <http://www.sfpulpit.com/>

REFORMATION 21 - <http://www.reformation21.org/>



READ THROUGH THE BIBLE IN 2007



Now is the time to make your plans about reading through the Bible in 2007. There are a number of good guides for reading through the Scriptures in a year. If you don't already have a guide to follow, *Back to the Bible* offers five unique ways to do it: chronological, historical, Old and New Testament together, beginning to the end, and blended. You can access either of these guides at www.backtothebible.org/devotions/bible_guides.htm. Everyone needs a workable plan. Pick one out and read through God's Word in 2007.



Puritan Gems

A POWERFUL WRATH

STEPHEN CHARNOCK

"There are two attributes God will make to shine in hell to the full: his wrath and his power (Rom. 9:22). If it were mere wrath, and no power to second it, it were not so terrible; but it is wrath and power; both are joined together... God will [punish] in such a manner as to make men sensible of his almightiness in every stroke. How great must that vengeance be that is backed by all the strength of God! When there will be a powerful wrath, without a powerful compassion; when all his power shall be exercised in punishing, and not the least mite of it exercised in pitying... O that every obstinate sinner would think of this..." (*Discourse on the Power of God*).

QUESTION #82 – "Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?"

ANSWER – "No mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed."

SCRIPTURE – 1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8, 10; Galatians 5:17; Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Romans 3:9; James 3:2, 8

COMMENTARY – "As a natural man has no power to keep the moral law, so he has no will. He is not only dead, but worse than dead. A dead man does no hurt, but there is a life of resistance against God that accompanies the death of sin. A natural man not only cannot keep the law through weakness, but he breaks it through willfulness" (Thomas Watson, *Body of Divinity*).

ILLUSTRATION – Dr John Gill was once preaching on human inability. A gentleman present was much offended, and took him to task for degrading human nature. "Pray, sir," said the doctor, "what do you think that man can contribute to his conversion?" He enumerated a variety of particulars. "And have you done all this?" said the doctor. "Why, no, I cannot say I have yet; but I hope I shall begin soon." "If you have these things in your power, and have not done them, you deserve to be doubly damned, and are but ill qualified to be an advocate for free-will, which has done you so little good."

THEOLOGY



CORNER

A REFORMED AND BAPTIST CATECHISM

THEOLOGY CLASS NEWS

On January 22, 2007, a new theology class begins (d.v.). Presently, eight men are meeting on Monday evenings and studying the Doctrine of God. The next class will be the Doctrine of the Church. The teacher is Dr. Samuel E. Waldron, professor of theology at the Midwest Center for Biblical Studies, Owensboro, Kentucky (via DVD). The cost for the class is \$50.00, unless you wish to receive credit, then it is \$200. For further information, see pastor Olive.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

Beginning in January of 2007, you will have the opportunity of serving the Lord by helping keep the church clean. A list will be posted so you can sign up, preferably in groups of two. If you will find a helper and sign up to clean the church for a month, it will be greatly appreciated. Instructions about what needs to be done and all cleaning material will be provided. For additional information see Jonathan Amis.

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY?

BY JIM ELLIFF

"'Tis the Season to be jolly?" Well, maybe.

The business of Christmas, that is, the hard and cold commercial trade of the Thanksgiving to Christmas sales window, is a measure of how well America is doing. It's the thermometer in our corporate mouths.

Needs are created through the media in order to entice the buyer into purchasing more this year than last. No one is to be disappointed at Christmas, after all. The manipulation is as blatant toward children as adults. And who can bring themselves to crush the psyche of anyone by not giving them all they want?

The end result of all of this is "happiness." The receivers of the presents are happy and the merchandisers are happy. The media people are happy and the credit card people are happy. Everything is happy during Christmas.

Happy is what it is supposed to be, that is. But sometimes things go south. The economy may well not cooperate.

Sickness may invade the home, jobs may be lost, anger and sulkiness may pervade the atmosphere, death may stalk a family member, drugs and alcohol may taint family togetherness, divorce clouds may darken the skies, disappointment may rule a child's spirit, and depression may turn you pensive and silent. And so it goes behind the closed doors or in the inner space of so many. The Bible says that even in their laughter there is sorrow.

Can tinsel and presents, carols and candy really bring happiness? Not often, and not much. And if our happiness is based on circumstance, is it a true happiness? Isn't it just a

playful escape, a temporary delusion? Does a little thin paint on the outside eradicate the rust beneath? Do cosmetics on a corpse make the death go away?

I think the diversion is worth something, mind you, But when the reality is so strong, do we have the right to call even Christmas a source of true happiness?

This "reality" is much more troubling than the list mentioned above—the depression, sickness, sulkiness, and aggravations. The reality for a person without Christ is a permanent state of non-forgiveness, alienation from God, separation from the true people of God forever, and hell. Those are the matters that make happiness hard to come by and what makes laughter so fugitive for the thinking person.



Even joy based on family can elude you. Everything is moving, changing, shifting. You cannot rest on anything to bring solid, stand-against-all-odds joy but that which is permanent. And that which is permanent is God.

When the angels sang about Christ's birth, they said that they were bringing tidings of "great joy." Great joy?—yes, joy for every person who will come to Him by faith. It is in the relationship with God through Christ where joy is found.

If a person is related to God through His Son Jesus Christ, then joy, that deeper happiness that is more than a facial characteristic, is a birthright blessing.

The true Christian should be joyful because his sins are forgiven, his place in heaven is secure, his life is in-dwelt by God's Spirit, and he has an open door to God's throne room. No matter what happens, he always has reason to rejoice because the big things are taken care of, and the Spirit in him promises to help him through all the rest. In a word, his joy is not based on circumstance, but on huge unchanging facts and an even bigger God behind the facts.

For sure, some true Christians forget what they have and need a refresher course on what is provided for them, but on the main you will notice that true Christians have joy that is bigger than circumstances. I'm not saying this about pseudo-Christians, of course, the church-goers who really don't know Christ.

Christmas then is not the season to be jolly, as if the other seasons are the opposite. But it is the reason to be joyful. Christ's coming to the earth, His perfect life and sacrificial death as a substitute for sinful people like us, is certainly a reason for joy to all who will come to Him by faith.

Is that you?

If you are one of those who have not come to Christ, then the best you can do this season is to hope for good circumstances and a kind of naïveté about your actual situation before God. But things could be different and the coming of Christ that you are singing about this holiday time could become the best news you have ever heard—good tidings of great joy!

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