

Long Beach Presbyterian

BEACON

LONG BEACH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

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PASTOR'S CORNER

Reflections on faith, work, and worship for today's world

The Birth of Christmas

Has it ever struck your attention that there was a time when the Church did not celebrate Christmas and wasn't even concerned about the date that Jesus was born?



It's true. In fact, it was the fourth century before the Church got around to celebrating Christmas at all. Before Christmas there was a church season that ran from November 11th (the feast day of St. Martin) to January 6th (Epiphany, which is a feast day celebrating Christ's manifestation to us Gentiles). This season was a "Winter Lent." It was forty days (from November 11 to January 6) of prayer, fasting, penitence and self-denial in preparation for baptisms that would take place on Epiphany.

Then in 336 the Roman Emperor Constantine (the first Christian Roman Emperor) declared that Jesus' birth would be celebrated on December 25th. There are a few theories about why that date was selected. It seems to me the most logical is to have a big event to counter-balance the pagan observance of the winter solstice. Then in 350 Pope Julius declared that the birth of Christ would be observed on December 25th. And that is how we got Christmas. By the sixth century the Church had begun to reorganize its calendar for the celebration of Christmas; the season of Winter Lent was shortened to four weeks and the season was called Advent which means "the coming."

During the Advent season we are to "prepare the way of the Lord" and "make straight his path." A major part of this preparation, according to John the Baptist, is repentance. The clearest picture of repentance that I know is to picture a person walking on the wrong side of the road. They may be walking on the side of anger, resentment, greed, dishonesty, etc. Suddenly (or not so suddenly) they turn around and begin walking on the correct side of the road. Now they are walking in the path of forgiveness, generosity, letting resentments go and a new way of life.

Maybe this is not as exciting as "decking the halls" or singing our favorite Christmas songs but it is essential if we are to participate in the real meaning of Christmas. So while you are enjoying all the festivities of the holiday season at least daily slow down and notice what God is doing in your life. In so doing you and I receive with open and ready hearts the real meaning of Christmas – the Christ Child.

Faithfully,

Jim



Bert (Chuck) Braud – 1st
Jennifer Nides – 9th
Leo Littell – 13th
Mary Ann Pagano
Scarborough – 15th
Steve Favre – 19th
David Braud Sr. – 20th
Mary Braud – 20th

Patti Steagall – 20th
Michael Roberson – 22nd
Blayne McPherson – 24th
Jesus of Nazareth – 25th
Maria Christina Lawton – 25th
Lee Strahan – 26th
Helen Roberson – 31st
Kenneth Woodard III – 31st



CONFIRMATION CLASS OF 2018

Dr. Hightower will be conducting a confirmation class beginning February 4, 2018 from 11:45am - 12:45pm each Sunday (immediately following worship). The classes will also include Homework assignments.

The classes will be held on Feb. 4th, Feb. 18th, Feb. 25th, March 4th, March 11th, March 18th and March 25th.

The Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated on Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018 during the worship service.

If you, your child or other relatives are ready to be confirmed please let Dr. Hightower know or place the name of the attendee in the offering plate and it will be given to Dr. Hightower so enough materials can be prepared.



SPIRIT of CHRISTMAS FOOD DRIVE

make a difference
this holiday season



The hungry in our community are grateful to all who continue to bring food donations in support of the Long Beach Community Food Pantry. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord, please remember them. We need to not just act like Christians; we need to think and act like Jesus Christ.

Needed items include but are not limited to peanut butter, jam, rice, dried beans, stews, canned tomatoes, baby foods, snacks, fruit juice, raisins, soda crackers, cereal, tea, coffee, baking items, flour, honey, salt, pepper, spices, sugars, ketchup, mustard, relishes, spaghetti sauce, dry pastas, canned meat, canned fish, canned fruit, canned vegetables, soups, puddings, cake and cookie mixes, cheese whiz/Velveeta, macaroni and cheese, diapers and formula.



The Advent Season is here! The Session and I hope you will be able to join us as we prepare for the birth of the Christ Child and then celebrate the Christmas season.



Below is a schedule for our worship services during Advent 2017.

Dec. 3: **Hanging of the Greens** – A traditional service that symbolically prepares our worship space for the coming of the Christ Child.

- Isaiah 64:1-9 and Mark 13:24-37
- Homily: *Boy Does It Get Dark Fast!*
As we prepare for Christmas it is too easy to fall asleep to all of the gifts in our lives over the Christmas season.
- The Lighting of the Candle of Hope – Braud/See Family

Dec. 10: **Second Sunday of Advent** – The Sacrament of Baptism will be celebrated this day, as well as the Ordination and Installation of Elders and will conclude with our required annual corporate meeting.

- Isaiah 40:1-11 and Mark 1:1-8
- Sermon: *John the Baptizer*
- Advent is a paradoxical Truth.
No darkness, no light
No denunciation, no annunciation
No confession, no beginning again
- The Lighting of the Candle of Love – Hill Family

Dec. 17: **Lessons and Carols** – If you love Christmas music do not miss this service! Through Scripture and song we will remember the journey from the Creation to the birth of Jesus

- Isaiah 61:1-11 and John 1:1-18
- Homily: *When God Becomes Tangible?*
- The Lighting of the Candle of Joy – Littell Family

Dec.24 10:30 am: **Fourth Sunday of Advent**

- 2nd Samuel 7:1-11 and Luke 1:26-28
- Sermon: *What Do We Know About Mary?*
- The Lighting of the Candle of Peace – Ruth Lewis & Keith Cox

Dec. 24 5:30 pm: **Candlelight Christmas Eve Service**

- Isaiah 9:2-7 and Luke 2:1-20
- Sermon: *Born In Us!*
- The Lighting of the Christ Candle – Terry & Judy Dill

The theme for this Advent season is preparation as we prepare room in our hearts for the Christ Child.

Come and worship as we sing together:
"Glory to the New Born King!"



- In November we collected a total of \$463 for our Outreach offering which was forwarded to Long Beach Outreach. On November 14, LBO approved an individual request for \$1,500 of dental work that the recipient would have otherwise been unable to afford. Our generosity helped to make that dream a reality.
- At the Community Ecumenical Thanksgiving Worship Service, \$782 was collected and forwarded to the selected charity – Rebekah's House.
- On January 20, 2018 the members of the Session will be attending COLT 2018, (Church Officer and Leader

Training), a half-day program being held at Spanish Fort Presbyterian Church in Spanish Fort, AL. The event is being presented by the Presbytery of South Alabama which falls under the guidance of our shared Regional Presbyter, Dr. Rachael Knoll.

- A big THANK YOU to Mitch Blakeney for his recent work weeding the flower beds around McInnis-Wharton Hall and the church building.
- We are currently looking into needed work on the Bell Tower including repairing the eaves, replacing the ladder, inspecting the bell and repainting the cross on the front of the tower.
- A motion was approved regarding our monthly outreach offering. Going forward we will alternate the recipient of our monthly outreach collection (first Sunday of the month) between Long Beach Outreach one month and then Rebekah's House the next.

Treasurer's Report

	Income	Expenses	Difference
October 2017	\$ 3,382.83	\$ 5,246.73	(\$ 1,863.90)
YTD 2017	\$ 52,241.52	\$ 44,920.25	\$ 7,321.27



Our tentative readers for the month of December are:



- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 3 rd – Keith Cox | 24 th – Steve Dees (am) |
| 10 th – Terry Dill | 24 th – TBD (pm) |
| 17 th – Bobby Thomas | 31 st – Tal Flurry |



Please remember the following in your prayers:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Barnett Family | Tom, Regina |
| Boswell Family | & Isaac McCarty |
| Cono Caranna & Family | Jamie |
| Corcoran Family | Ken Pell |
| Billie Holzweissig | Peterman Family |
| Marta Halliburton & Family | Ramsay Family |
| Alan Harlan | Mikey Sawyer |
| Cheri Jung | Becky Schruff |
| Matthew | Stacey Stone |
| | Mary Westmoreland |

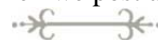


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<http://LBPCUSA.org>



And our Facebook page at
<http://Facebook.com/LBPCUSA>.

You can view our Facebook page even if you don't have a Facebook account but, if you do have one, click the button to be notified when we post updates.



PLEASE send us information to include in the Beacon

- By email: Lbpcusa@outlook.com
- By hand: Place in the collection plate at Sunday Worship.
- By phone: Leave a message on the church answering machine at 228-863-7633.
(Phone messages are checked on Saturdays)



To receive the Beacon by email, please send a request including your name and email address to Lbpcusa@outlook.com. Please note that this will be maintained as a private email list and only used for Long Beach Presbyterian Church communications.