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***Celebrating the Unity and Diversity of the Body of Christ!***

First Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)  
1327 Leighton Ave.  
Anniston, AL 36207

Visit us at [www.fccanniston.org](http://www.fccanniston.org)

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.  
Sunday Worship 11:00 a.m.

# The Good News

First Christian Church  
Anniston, AL

[www.fccanniston.org](http://www.fccanniston.org)

256-236-1316

December 2008

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## **Advent ~ A Season of Anticipation!**

The season of Advent – the four Sundays before Christmas – is a time of preparation. We are getting ready to welcome the Christ Child into our lives, and more, we are renewing our hearts to be changed by the presence of Christ in our lives and our world. This year at FCC, we will be focusing on the experience of ANTICIPATION as our Advent theme. As we look forward to Christmas, our hearts tingle with excitement about arrival of the Christ Child. Advent is about holding onto hope and passionately preparing for that hope to be fulfilled. As we worship each Sunday, we will spend time in prayer and reflection about what our hopes are and how God makes those hopes real in our lives. Moving through this season of Anticipation – experiencing something that's coming, but not here yet – helps us appreciate even more deeply the arrival of Christmas Day, when Jesus becomes the Word made flesh, Emmanuel – God With Us. ☉

**These activities help us prepare our hearts for the arrival of the Christ Child and build up the body of Christ here at FCC.**

**Sun., Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> ~ Congregational Meeting ~ 12:15 ☉ ♥ !!**

**Sat., Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> ~ Young Adult Christmas Party ~ 5-8 pm ♥ !!**

**Sun., Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> ~ Cookie Exchange & Special Music ☉ ♥ !!**

**Wed., Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> ~ PFP PLUS Christmas Bible Study ~ 6:15 ☉ ♥ !!**

**Wed., Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> ~ Christmas Eve Service ~ 6:00 pm ☉ ♥ !!**

**Sun., Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> ~ Contemplative Service ~ 11:00 am ☉ ♥ !!**

## Advent & Christmas

### Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> ~ Cookies & Music ☉ ♥

You are invited to bring in homemade Christmas cookies to trade with fellow church members again this year. Bring a few dozen cookies of your favorite variety to church on Sunday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>. During Fellowship Time, everyone will be invited to build a plate or two from all the offerings. If you can't bring cookies, you can still take some home, but we encourage you to give a donation to the Christmas Clearing House project. ☉ ♥

That Sunday, we will also welcome Allison Woolridge, a voice masters student at Georgia State University, to sing for our worship service. Allison grew up in Pastor Rebecca's home church. You won't want to miss it! ☉

### Candlelight Christmas Eve ☉

Our traditional Christmas Eve service with communion and candles will be held at 6:00 pm on Wed., Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>. A reception will follow. Bring your family, friends and neighbors. ☉ ♥ !!

### Contemplative Service ~ Dec. 28 ☉

The Sunday after Christmas, our worship service will provide a chance for us to take a deep breath and relax in God's presence. With the big events over, it is a great time to reflect more deeply on the meaning of Christmas. The contemplative service will be a little like "Pause for Prayer." Be sure to invite any friends you know who have been over-stressed this season. ☉ ♥ !!

## Adult Study in Advent ☉

During Advent, our Sunday morning Adult Study will have a special Bible study on the passages from Isaiah that are traditionally used during this season. We will look at what they tell us about Jesus' Jewish heritage, what people throughout history have longed for and who we should be sharing the good news the angels brought with. All people, junior high and up are welcome to join us, in the Fellowship Hall each Sunday at 9:30 am. Adult study will not meet Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> or Jan. 4<sup>th</sup>. ☉ !!

## Young Adult Christmas Party

All Young Adults are invited to a Christmas party at Pastor Rebecca & Todd's house (1504 Christine) on Sat., Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> from 5:00-8:00 pm. Please bring your favorite party foods or beverages to share. Children are welcome to attend. ☉ ♥ !!

### **New Direction for Informal Service:**

## **Come try out PFP PLUS!**

Join us on Wednesday, Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:15 for PFP PLUS. (Note new time!) After Pause for Prayer (PFP), we will have a short break with snacks, and then join in singing, Bible study and communion. If you're not already attending Adult study or the Young Adult group, consider this your chance to dive deeper into scripture. (It's People Learning & Understanding Scripture = PFP PLUS.) Everyone welcome! ☉ ♥ !!

## Church in Covenant Opportunities and News

### Christmas Offering supports Regional Church Ministries

Each year, we invite you to give over-and-above gifts on certain special days. Each of these special offerings goes to a different important ministry of our wider church. The Christmas Offering supports the ministries of our Region, the Christian Church in Alabama and Northwest Florida. One hundred percent of your gifts to this offering will stay here in our Region, supporting a wide variety of ministries such as:

- **Leadership Development** – Staff persons for Youth Ministry, Young Adult Ministry, Women's Ministry, and PEPP (our Regional church leadership training program for licensed ministers and active lay people), as well as support for annual retreats for the various constituencies within our regional churches.
- **Ministry Support** – The annual Ministers and Mates Retreat; the Committee on Ministry, which provides oversight and accountability for ministers; educational workshops and financial support for continuing education and counseling for our ministers; administrative support for collegial relationships that sustain ministry.
- **Congregational Support** -- Support during ministerial transition; training workshops for congregations in transformation; strategic planning assistance; hands-on support during congregational conflict.
- **Shared Ministries** – Miracle Days; Anti-Racism training and advocacy, in partnership with the South East Regional Fellowship; New Church starts, including Iglésia Cristiana here in Anniston; support for Alabama Arise as part of our ministry of speaking up on behalf of the "least of these."

**We will receive the Christmas offering on Sundays, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>. Special envelopes are in this newsletter and will be in the worship bulletin those days. Please give as generously as you can!**

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## **Regional Prayer Calendar**

*In 2008, we will continue to send cards with our prayer blessings to our partner churches in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region. Living into our calling to be a covenantal church, we collect prayer concerns from these partner churches as we hold them in prayer each week. The Prayer Calendar for December is:*

Dec. 7: First Christian Church, Tuscaloosa, AL – Scott Thayer

Dec. 14: River View Christian Church, Valley, AL – Donald Bledsoe, board chair

Dec. 21: Westwood Christian Church, Pensacola, AL – Connie Bradow

Dec. 28: Discovery Christian Church, Warrior, AL – Theron Gunn

## From the Pastor's Pen...

Beloved Church,

As we move into our eighth Christmas season together, I am struck by how much has happened in the last seven years. The church, our community, our country and the world have been through so many ups and downs. Our situation at the moment can seem a little perilous, with global financial markets sputtering, climate change threatening our way of life, and wars raging across the globe.

And yet, in the church, we begin anew, starting a new year with a season of anticipation – Advent. We are waiting for something, Someone, life-changing. Times are dark, and yet, we are waiting for the Light that cannot be overcome by shadow.

The mystery of Christmas is the mystery of the Incarnation – the crazy idea that God could come be with us in a completely ordinary way – as a fellow human being. What does that mean for our understanding of who we are and what our role is in the universe? What does it mean about how we ought to treat each other? I think you'll agree, that the final point is Love. Let's share it!

*Peace and grace,*

*Pastor Rebecca*

*p.s. See you in church!*

## **Service Schedules ♥**

### **December Meetings ♥**

Stewardship CT – Wed., Dec. 3, 6:00

Mission CT – Wed., Dec. 3, 6:00

*Elders – Sun., Dec. 7, 12:30*

Fellowship CT – Wed., Dec. 10, 6:00

Sp. Form. CT – Thu., Dec. 11, 4:00

*Evang. Team – Tue., Dec. 16, 5:30*

### **Elders ♥:**

Dec. 7: Mary Elizabeth Johnson

Dec. 14: Marie Bittle

Dec. 21: Anne Phillips

Dec. 28: Judy Bell

### **Communion Set-Up/Service ♥:**

Colin & Nancy Green

### **Fellowship Hosts ♥:**

Dec. 7: Julie Nix

Dec. 14: ***Cookie Exchange***

Dec. 21: Deane Albright & Janie Morrow

Dec. 28: Karen and John Russell Reaves

### **Liturgists / Kids Message ♥:**

Dec. 7: Karen R. / Rebecca

Dec. 14: Suzy Spiceland /

Dec. 21: Mary Lib Johnson / Rebecca

Dec. 28: Joanne Wells /

### **Floater / Pre-School / CC ♥:**

Dec. 7: Joanne W. / Trace S. / Marie B.

Dec. 14: Deane A. / Suzy S. / Lori H.

Dec. 21: Karen R. / Janie M. / Laura P.

Dec. 28: Mary Lib J. / Anne P. / Dick B.

### **One + One + One Key**

⊕ = You ♥ = Church Ω = World

!! = Bring a friend!

## **Disciples Women ⊕**

CWF/DW will meet at 1:00 pm on Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup> in the Fellowship Hall. Pastor Rebecca is arranging a special guest to provide a program. All women are invited to come and bring a friend. ⊕ !!

### CHRISTMAS CLEARING HOUSE

The Disciples Women (CWF/DW) invites you to join them in supporting Interfaith Ministries' Christmas Clearing House, which provides Christmas for low-income families in our area. Donations will be received through Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>. Envelopes are hanging on the small tree in the Friendship Room. Donations should be dropped in the gift box under the tree. Checks should be written to First Christian Church. See the back of the calendar for more information about CCH. Ω

### **Lifeline Screening hosted 12-12**

Lifeline Screening will be conducting health screenings for the public in our Fellowship Hall on Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, all day. If you're interested in getting screened, call 1-800-324-1851. More information is available on the flyers on the table in the Fellowship Hall. Ω

## Christmas Card Tree

We invite you to bring in one Christmas card to greet the whole church family and hang it on our Card Tree in the Friendship Room. Any savings from postage and cards can be donated to Christmas Clearing House. Be sure to take some time to read the greetings from your church family as they appear on the Card Tree. Happy Holidays! ♥ Ω

### Get the GOOD NEWS online!

In an effort to save resources, we are inviting you to choose to receive this newsletter online. Please contact the office ([fccanniston@bellsouth.net](mailto:fccanniston@bellsouth.net)) and let us know if you would like to be on an email list that will notify you when the newsletter is posted on our website ([www.fccanniston.org](http://www.fccanniston.org)). The only part not available online is the prayer concerns page (for privacy reasons). The calendar is on a different page of the website. ♥

### **Pastor Rebecca on vacation ⊕**

Pastor Rebecca will be on vacation Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> – Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>. She and Todd will be visiting with his family in Pennsylvania. Our service on Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> will be our traditional post-Christmas quiet, contemplative service. There will be no Adult Study on Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> or Jan. 4<sup>th</sup>.

## Congregational Meeting ~ Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> ♥

The congregation is called into meeting on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, to make decisions about the coming year. The Slate of Lay Leaders for 2009 and the Proposed Budget for 2009 will be voted on. Those materials will be passed out to members in worship on Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup> and mailed to those not present. ♥

Additionally, members will vote on amendments to the Constitution that have been made to bring it into harmony with the new ministry structure that was approved by the congregation last year. The old and new versions of the Constitution can be reviewed on our website ([www.fccanniston.org](http://www.fccanniston.org)) on the Newsletters page. If you would like a hard copy, please call the office or pick one up from the Church Family Table (new version only). ♥

### Evangelism Team Updates ♥

The efforts we have been making through our Neighborhood Outreach Program have definitely been raising our profile and giving those participating good practice at talking about our faith and our church. But this part of our plan is most likely to bear fruit long-term, rather than immediately. ♥

However, our call from God is grow our church now, and in the future. How can you help that happen? The answer is the same every time – Invite people to come to church! Your friends, your family, your neighbors, your co-workers, people you meet for whatever reason. Every month, a tip to help you is printed in the bulletin. The Evangelism Team plans to hold some training workshops in the new year to help you become more comfortable in reaching out to people with the joy of the life in Christ we share here at FCC. ♥

***FCC T-Shirts still available! Only \$15! Order yours today!***

### Sharing about Stewardship ~ End-of-Year Update

As the end of the year approaches, the church has need of any additional gifts you can provide for us to catch up on expenses before we close out our financial year. If you are not sure if you are caught up with your estimate of giving, please feel free to contact Treasurer Suzy Spiceland. We are aware that things are tight for everyone. We do not want to pressure anyone to put themselves at risk financially, but we hope that, in these times of high anxiety, we will all be able to put our trust in God's providence. God's faithfulness does not fail. Abundant thanks to all of you for your faithful and generous giving throughout the year, and your commitments to the next year of our ministry! ♥