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The December 5, 2008
Newsletter of the
Smoke Rise Baptist Church

Christmas Events at Smoke Rise Baptist

Family Christmas Caroling — December 10 — 6:00 p. m.



“Birthday Party for Jesus” — December 14 — 9:45 - 10:45 a. m.

Presented by 3 Year-Old Choir for all preschoolers and families



Peter Mayer Concert — December 17 — 7:00 p. m.

Sanctuary



Holiday Breakfast — December 21 — 9:00 - 9:45 a.m.



“The Many Moods of Christmas” — December 21 — 7:00 p. m.

Presented by the Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra



Christmas Eve Services

December 24

Children’s Candlelight Service

5:30 p. m.

Candlelight Service

7:00 p. m.

(No 11:00 p.m. Service)

Advent Devotionals

Followingthestar.org is an online Advent devotional experience created by Passport (youth and children’s camping options) in partnership with CBF, PC USA, and the Episcopal Church. Although created for students, it is a good resource for adults, providing a thoughtful way to go through this special season in only a few minutes each day. Type followingthestar.org in your browser bar and that should take you to the website. If you would like to sign up to receive a daily reminder to visit the site, click on guestbook and fill out the form. If you don’t have a computer and would like a printed copy of an Advent guide, you may pick one up in the Sanctuary Breezeway.

Sadies Ladies Circle will meet for a Christmas celebration Monday, December 8, at 6:30 at the home of Suzanne Cowan. Please bring an appetizer and a toy donation for the Stone Mountain Co-op.

Ladies, please come to our **MultiFocus WMU** on Tuesday, December 9, in Room 218 at 10:00 a.m. Our mission project is to donate to the Lilburn and Stone Mountain Co-ops.

Life Connections: Classes for Adults Winter 2009

Klesis: God's Call and the Journey of Faith

Klesis is a process designed to assist in the examination of your "calling." It assumes a concept of ministry that is inclusive of all who follow Christ and one that is as unique as each follower. It provides help in finding out who you are and learning how to give yourself away. 3 sessions - \$25.00 for materials.

Mondays at 9:45 a. m., January 12, 19 & 26

Sundays at 4:30 p. m., February 1, 8 & 15

Esther: It's Tough Being a Woman

This new study by Beth Moore explores God's providence and the hope and encouragement he offers women facing challenges in our society.

10 weeks - \$15.00 for workbook

Sundays at 5 pm beginning January 11

Mondays at 9:45 am beginning February 2

Sign up for classes in the Sanctuary Breezeway or email Kathy Dobbins at kdobbins@smokerisebaptist.org.

We welcome these New Members!

Mr. and Mrs. M. H. (Wynelle) Belcher, 4213 Autumn Hill Drive, Stone Mountain, GA 30083; tel. 404-296-8378. Deacon: John Mench.

Elaine Bryan, 3707 Rainbow Circle, Snellville, GA 30039; tel. 770-278-1390. Deacon: Gerri Hankla.

Mr. and Mrs. Greg (Shara) Johnson and their children, Emily, Daniel, and Meghan, 4404 Dunriver Drive, Lilburn, GA 30047-4221. Deacon: Jim Still.

Connie Wilbanks and Wendell Brigance, 3655 Rosetree Ct., Lilburn, GA 30047; tel. 770-978-6654. Deacon: Bob Burkett.

Birth

Congratulations to Jim and Michelle Wilson on the birth of a daughter, "Makena." Grandparents are Bobby and Beverly Goodwin.

Deaths

We extend our Christian sympathy to Julie King whose aunt died; Jimmy Stewart whose mother died; Kim Ward whose sister-in-law died; Lou Tankersley whose aunt died; and Dee Dee Poss whose mother and sister died.

Faith, Family & Future Campaign Contributions

In April, 2003, the church embarked on a campaign to raise money to renovate our facilities, construct the canopy attached to the sanctuary and addition to the gym, reduce our debt and support several mission causes. \$2,779,552.45 was spent on these projects and the work was completed. We are grateful for the improvements to our campus and appreciate those that so generously supported this campaign. All bills have been paid and it is time to terminate this campaign and close the books on it.

Any contributions that are given beyond this point to this campaign will be directed to the 40th Anniversary Offering. Again, thank you for your generosity!

Page & Deb Need You On Their Team!

The Mission Trip to Honduras will be March 21 – 28

It will be a great adventure in "Life Style Evangelism," working to improve the living conditions in a village home. You'll have a great team experience.

Please pray about your chance to be a part of the team.

Email Page Fulgham at rpfulgham@bellsouth.net or Deb Leamon at dalor53@comcast.net to reserve your spot.

Remember our Co-ops During the Holidays

Co-op Christmas cards will be on sale on Wednesdays during dinner outside the Fellowship Hall and on Sunday mornings in the upper breezeway before and after the worship services through December 14. Please contact Becky Seay at 770-381-6865 if you would like to volunteer selling the cards during these times.

Smoke Rise has been asked to work at the Stone Mountain Co-op on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from December 8 through December 22. The hours on Mondays and Wednesdays are 10:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Please call Becky if you would like to volunteer on any of these days.

You may also help our co-ops this holiday season by donating food, money, Kroger gift cards and (teenage gifts for Lilburn Co-op), or by sponsoring a family for Christmas. You can be a blessing to the many families we will help during these difficult financial times.

Thank You

Our Family Advent Activity on Sunday morning, November 30th, was a great start to the Advent season with wonderful fellowship. The morning's Advent calendar activity would not have been possible without the assistance of: Melissa Adams, Carol Bell, Martha Braswell, Ann Carrolton, Kim Catoggio, Elbia Coe, Sybil Embry, Sandra Ethridge, Julie King, Susan Lane, MaryLynn Manley, Cindy Raines, Erin Roberts, Nancy Rose, Julie Sapp, Ginger Zachman, and the Circle of Grace. We appreciate the generous help of our Smoke Rise Family in making this morning so meaningful. Thank you, Kellie, Amanda, and Kara

From the Pastor's Heart

“Where in the World is God?”

Isaiah 64:1-9

Today, we begin our journey through Advent, a season of anticipation and preparation for Christmas. For the next four weeks, we'll look forward to and prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth on Christmas Day. All our services and programs will be designed with this in mind. I look forward to making this journey with you and appreciate all who will lead us.

About a year ago, I attended a conference led by Old Testament scholar, Dr. Walter Brueggemann, where he talked briefly about Advent. I was struck by his simple yet profound description of the season we embark on today. **“Advent is about God coming out of hiding,”** he said.

He quoted from Matthew 1:23. “The maiden will be with child and give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel, which means, God with us.”

He went on to say that the ancient Israelites did not always consider God to be this accessible and engaged in the affairs of men. Isaiah 64 is a good example of this.

This text reveals a time when people felt God to be aloof and disconnected from their lives. So distant was He that the people had quit praying and seeking His presence.

“No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you, for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins” Isaiah 64:7.

This led Isaiah to become their advocate and plead their case before God. “Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay and you are the potter. We are the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord. Do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people” (Isaiah 64:8-9).

In Brueggemann's words, Isaiah boldly approached God and said, “You call yourself, Father. Well, act like it! Like a loving and responsible parent, enter our world and help us along our journey. Don't be an absentee Father.”

Those were strong words meant to stir the heart of God. They were charged with emotion and delivered with a sense of great urgency. **Why?** Isaiah's countrymen were hurting and needed help.

What did they need God to help them do? They needed His help rebuilding their lives as they returned to Jerusalem after living in exile in Babylon for fifty years. Solomon's temple, along with their personal property, lay in ruins. Life as they had known it was gone.

They also needed God's help to overcome temptation. They were not treating one another very well. God's absence brought the worst out in them. As Brueggemann said, “When God was hidden, they were destructive.” They could not be gracious neighbors without His help just as they could not rebuild their lives.

With this in mind, Isaiah appeals to God and demands that He be a caring Father. He pleads with God to listen to their cries for help, forgive them of their sins and walk closely with them

along their journey.

How did God respond? Our text doesn't tell us. Only Isaiah speaks in this chapter. We do know that the temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem under the direction of Zerubbabel around 515 B.C. In addition, under Nehemiah's leadership seventy years later, Jerusalem was reconstructed and repopulated.

This indicates to me that God entered into their struggle and helped them along their journey. This task of rebuilding the temple, their beloved city and their lives could never have been accomplished without divine help.

There are people all around us that are trying to rebuild their lives, too, after the death of a mate, failure of a marriage, loss of a job, devastating effects of an illness or a humiliating moral lapse. **This is why Advent is about more than God coming out of hiding. I think it is also about believers coming out of hiding.**

It is about followers of Jesus being engaged in the lives of those that are struggling. It is about hearing others' pleas for help, walking alongside them on their journey, sharing resources with them, forgiving them for the mistakes they make and helping them rebuild their lives. It is about believers rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty. It is about God's people becoming the presence of Christ in a hurting world by opening their hearts, lives,

pocketbooks and homes to those that others turn away.

Who needs your help? Who among you is trying to survive in these tough times or attempting to rebuild his or her life? How will you respond to their cries for help? What do you

have to offer? Companionship. Encouragement. Advice. Hope. Money. Prayers. Are you offering these?

What would Isaiah say to you today? Perhaps he would say something similar to what he said to God. “You call yourself a believer, well, act like it! Be a loving and responsible neighbor. Enter the world of the hurting and walk beside them on their journey.”

Who did this for you? Who entered your world during one of the most difficult times in your life and saved you? Who heard your cries for help and responded? Where would you be today without them?

Come out of hiding during Advent this year. Open your eyes and heart to those around you that are struggling to rebuild their lives and help them. I can think of nothing you can do that would prepare you better for the celebration to come on Christmas Day!

Until Sunday,

Bob

Letter of Appreciation

Dear Smoke Rise Family,

Thank you so much for your prayers, calls, concerns, cards and support in the loss of our beloved sister, Betty.

What a blessing to be a part of such a loving, caring church.

Love & appreciation.

Baxter and Jean Dollar and family

There is a great need for warm clothes (coats, sweaters, and jackets) for recently arrived immigrant families. All sizes can be used. Household items (towels, sheets, and blankets) are also welcome.
 Contact Elbia Coe at 770-491-6281

Smoke Rise Families In Need Fund

Earlier this year, a grant was made to our Missions budget, with the general request that the grant be used to meet mission needs in our local community. The Mission Support Committee (MSC) has now approved the creation of a Families in Need Fund, using this grant as the initial funding. The purpose of this Fund is to address the financial emergencies of our Smoke Rise members during these difficult economic times.

The MSC has approved the formation of a three member Task Force to oversee the Families in Need Fund. The Task Force has developed a process to handle family emergencies of our members as quickly as possible, while being sensitive to the confidentiality needed for the family. The process will include the already existing partnership that Smoke Rise has with Kay Whithear, Executive Director of Lilburn Cooperative Ministry. The Task Force has been appointed to serve through the year of 2009. To keep within the spirit of the grant to apply to local endeavors, any unused funds at the end of 2009 will be disbursed fully to the Stone Mountain and Lilburn Cooperatives.

To initiate a confidential request for the funding of a family financial emergency, the Task Force recommends that a call be made first to our ministers, Bob Browning, Ernie Forrester or Tim Adcox.

Please keep this mission effort in your prayers.

John Edgar, Chair
 Mission Support Committee

Be IN THE KNOW!

Visit www.smokerisebaptist.org for the latest news about the many summer opportunities at Smoke Rise.

FINANCIAL STATISTICS As of November 26, 2008

Four hundred fourteen families have pledged \$1,966,177.60 to date for the 2008 Budget.

	YEAR TO DATE (THIS YEAR)	BUDGET TO DATE
INCOME		
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	\$1,939,034.15	\$2,346,663.00
TOTAL OTHER INCOME	18,967.14	0.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,958,001.29	\$2,346,663.00
EXPENSES		
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$1,589,368.02	\$1,809,506.00
TOTAL MINISTRIES – WORSHIP	40,691.88	52,540.00
TOTAL MINISTRIES – EDUCATION	103,728.61	153,016.00
TOTAL MISSIONS	177,667.09	205,153.00
TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	104,821.74	109,913.00
TOTAL EQUIPMENT	12,504.71	16,326.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,028,782.05	\$2,346,454.00
MORTGAGE BALANCE:	\$ 0.00	

40TH ANNIVERSARY OFFERING:

Two hundred sixty-one families have pledged \$445,130.00 towards our goal of \$570,000.00. Forty-eight families that did not sign a pledge card have given \$60,146.13.

GOAL	\$ 570,000.00
AMOUNT GIVEN OR PLEDGED	\$ 505,276.13
NEED	\$ 64,723.87



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OUR STAFF

Church Office: 770-469-5856

Robert F. Browning, D. Min.	Pastor
E. Ernest Forrester, Jr.	Associate Pastor
Kathy Dobbins	Minister of Spiritual Formation
Tim W. Adcox	Minister of Missions/Recreation
Danny Vancil	Minister of Worship & Music
Kellie Denton	Minister to Families with Children
Carra Hughes Greer	Minister of Families with Youth
David MacFarland	Director of Administration and Communications
Linda Cummings	Coordinator of Congregational Life/ Senior Adults
Amanda Burton	Nursery Director
Truett Gannon, D. Min.	Pastor Emeritus

Smoke Rise Counseling Center
 Affiliate of Care and Counseling Center of Georgia
 770-469-6547

Gloria White, M. Div., LCSW	Counselor
Rene Ely, M. Div., LMFT	Counselor
Gina Campbell, M. Div., LCSW	Counselor