

Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Permit #3
Oakboro NC

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
PO BOX 10
OAKBORO NC 28129-0010

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

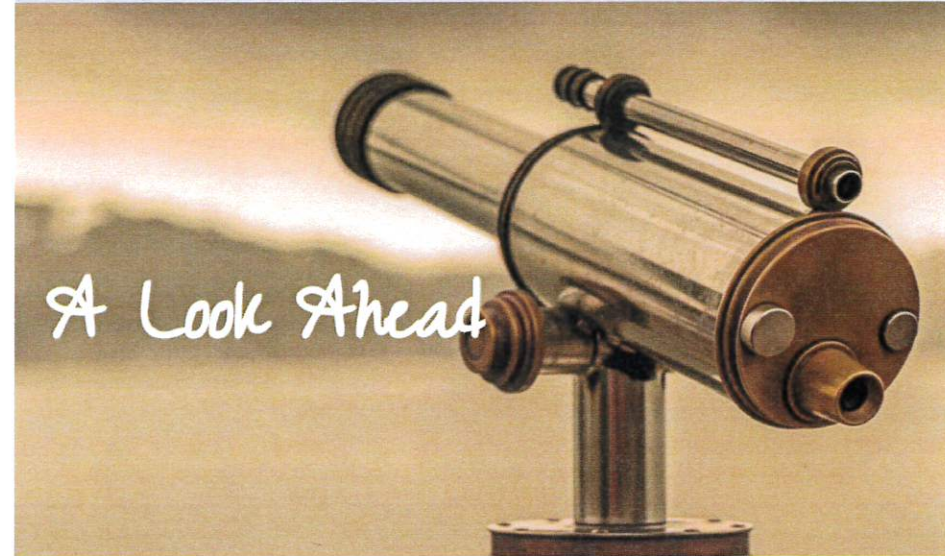


FIRST BAPTIST
OAKBORO

The Communicator

VOL. XXXIV No. 1

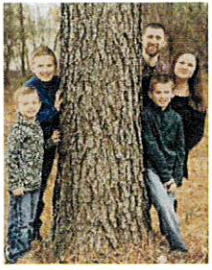
January 2024



A Look Ahead

PO Box 10
322 N Main Street
Oakboro, NC 28129
www.fbcoakboro.org

Rev. Jonathan Waits, Pastor
Office (704) 485-4313
pastorjwaits@gmail.com
(804) 896-4520



You never know when you are going to come across an idea or an argument that both affirms and completely changes your outlook on something. This happened to me recently and has proven to be a perfect segue into this new year.

I am a pretty faithful consumer of podcasts. They are probably my primary source of news and information about the world, but also about ministry and the church. I don't manage to keep up with everything, but I hear about a lot of it. Because of this, I recently listened to the first part of an interview with the authors of a new book called *The Great Dechurching*.

The book is about the incredible movement away from the church that our culture has experienced in the last 25 years. The authors characterize it as the single greatest religious movement in our nation's history. Over the last 25 years some 40 million people have stopped going to church. Just in case math isn't your thing, that's a lot of people. We have been hearing for years about how churches across the country are facing declining attendance. Denominations are shrinking. Baptisms are down. Giving is down. There's a fair bit of gloom and doom for churches going around these days.

The Great Dechurching is the result of the first major research project looking into the demographics of who has been leaving, why they have left, and what it would take to get them to come back. At the time of my writing this (a few days before Christmas), I haven't yet finished the book, but I have gotten through all of their profiles of the five major categories of the dechurched in America. What I have read so far has been incredibly profound in terms of promising applications for how we do church if we want to be able to reach these folks.

There are five major groups, four of whom attended an evangelical church (that is, a church like ours) fairly frequently at some point in their past. Of these four groups, one has had a bad church experience of some kind and doesn't ever plan to go back to an evangelical church ever again. Another group is entirely non-white in its makeup, and while we should absolutely minister to and seek to connect with folks from this group, because of our current culture-situatedness, efforts to connect with them are not likely to be fruitful. Building ourselves into a community that can would be a worthwhile goal, but that is a long-term investment and beyond the scope of what I want to say here.

The last two groups are where a great majority of the people around us who are not currently connected with a church fall, and they are also the two groups with whom our Gospel efforts have the greatest potential of experiencing success. These are folks who are culturally Christian, meaning that while they had some association with the church in the past, they never really grasped the Gospel itself, and folks who were once fully on board with the church, but due to life change or Covid or some other factor have simply stopped going.

Now, we could talk about all kinds of approaches and strategies to getting these folks to connect or reconnect with the church. Some of these are worthwhile pursuits for us, some of them are not. But before and above any of those kinds of things took great pains to make one point clear that they argued should absolutely not be missed. In nearly every single case, the reasons these folks stopped attending church were primarily relational in nature. And, accordingly, the reasons they would consider returning to church are primarily relational in nature.

In other words—and do not miss this—the way to get these folks to take the plunge of reconnecting with the church is to build relationships with them and invite them. I hope that the implications of this are obvious. If we want to grow this church, the absolute best way to do it is by our building relationships with people who do not go to church and then inviting them to come to this one. That's it. It really is that simple. Now, we have to make sure that as a community we are actively creating a relational context here that will receive them warmly and provide them with the kind of community they actually want to be a part of, but if we want them here, a relationship and an invitation are the way that is going to happen. They may not accept the first invitation, but if we are patient and consistent, they will eventually respond.

So, as we get started on this new year, here is the challenge I lay before each and every one of us: Invite people to church. Invite family to church. Invite friends to church. Invite neighbors to church. Invite coworkers to church. Invite strangers you meet in the grocery store (you extroverts anyway) and who you learn are new to town to church. Invite people to church. God is preparing to do some really great things among us. If we want to share our experience of these with others, an invitation is the way it will happen. Have a very happy new year.

Pastor Jonathan

OUR RECORD OF GIVING

Budget Goals – December (thru 12/24)	26,037.84
Budget Receipts – December (thru 12/24)	25,818.00
Budget Goals – YTD	110,660.82
Budget Receipts – YTD	103,653.00
Budget Variance	-7,007.82
<i>Special Offerings</i>	
Building Fund	10,695.00
NC Baptist Children's Homes	150.00
Gathering Place	504.00
Lottie Moon Offering	3,106.00
MOM Donations	175.00
Scholarship	2,000.00
Brotherhood	32.00



*In memory of **Sissy Stroud**, a donation was given to the Building Fund by Carolyn & Mark Hinson.*

*In honor of **Catherine Thomas, Doyle Hatley and Bea Goodman**, contributions were given to the Building Fund by the Blessed Assurance Sunday School class.*



*In honor of **Joyce Little**, donations were made to the Building Fund by Jewell Parker and Jim & Cheryl Cameron.*

*In honor of the **Two or More Prayer Group**, Tracy & Lisa Lowder made a donation to the Lottie Moon Christmas offering.*

*In honor of **Joyce Little, Bea Goodman, and Jill Turner**, a contribution was given to the Lottie Moon offering by Mae Brooks.*

*In honor of **Cameron Stroud**, Mae Brooks made a donation to the NC Baptist Children's Homes.*

HOPE Fellowship Happenings



The Senior Adult Committee will meet at 5:00 p.m. on **January 3** to finalize the plans for January's outing on the 18th. Everyone that is available is welcome to join us. When plans are made, a sign-up sheet will be placed on the bulletin board for you to sign up.



Tracy & Lisa Lowder are proud grandparents again and welcome new granddaughter

Perula Mei Lowder

to their growing family.

Born on December 17, she weighed 8 pounds, 1 ounce and was 20½ inches long.

Casey & Bonnie Lowder are her parents. God bless this new baby girl and her family!



Christmas Mailbox

Please pick up your Christmas cards from the fellowship building entrance.



Also, if you haven't done so, please pick up your poinsettia(s) this Sunday. There are some extras if you'd like one—even if you didn't reserve one yourself.



SLOW AND STEADY

It's time for the New Year! At the time that I write this, it's not quite the new year. By the time of reading, it may be past New Year's Eve, and we'll all be back to work, the holidays behind us, and some of us might even have New Year's Resolutions. Those resolutions might focus on our health, relationships, screen time, and priorities. But as time goes on, a lot of them will unfortunately slowly fade away. Why is this? Well, all resolutions are ultimately based on changing something. Change, as most know, takes time. Most also know that change is the only permanent thing besides God's faithfulness. But even the story of God's faithfulness took time. Think about it, from the creation of man's biggest problem, sin, to the resolution of the problem, Jesus' death and resurrection, it literally took thousands of years! Even today, God has said that he will be faithful in redeeming us through Christ's return. How long has humanity been waiting for God to be faithful? 2,000 years, and it could be 2,000 more years or even longer!

What's the point of all this? Good things take time. The goals of most resolutions are good. Chances are, they take time too. Losing weight? Takes time. Building relationships? Takes time. Growing spiritually? Well, you get the idea. It takes time but also intentionality. God wasn't doing nothing throughout his redemptive history. He was still acting towards the goal of our salvation. God is doing some amazing things here in our church that are leading to people's salvations and growth. The only 2 questions we must ask: are we willing to be intentional, and willing to be patient as God works. I'm excited for the work as we are both of these things together in the life of our church.

Happy New Year,

Nate



January 20 ~ Stars & Strikes -- \$20



Follow our youth ministry on Instagram @fboyouth



Offering Envelopes

The Stewardship Committee has distributed most of the numbered offering envelope sets. If you didn't receive one, please contact the church office, and one will be given to you. UNLESS you email or call the office to request one, those who give online will not be given a set. Also, contribution statements will be ready mid-January.



Join us as we recognize and honor the men of FBCO, while hearing about IMPACT Church.



American Red Cross

Blood Services

Go to redcrossblood.org, enter **fbcoakboro** for location and schedule your appointment to donate blood in the FBCO fellowship building. This will be **Tuesday, January 9, from 2:00-6:00 p.m.** All blood types are needed, first-time givers are encouraged, as well as those who give each time they're eligible. More information will be available soon in the fellowship building entranceway.



- January 2 Julie Poplin
 Ann Burgess
 4 Jean Little
 5 Jessica Colquitt
 7 Taryn Barringer
 9 Carol Kiker
 Jordan Hunt
 10 Jane Barnhardt
 11 James Hudson
 Ben Sisson
 14 Carolyn Hinson
 15 Janet Jackson
 19 Dana Jenkins
 20 Mason Chaney
 23 Ashley Morton
 24 Josiah Waits
 28 Scott Nightingale

Please email or call the church office with additions to or deletions from the calendar.

January

FIRST BAPTIST
 OAKBORO

322 N Main Street
 PO Box 10
 Oakboro, NC 28129
 www.fbcoakboro.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 8:30 a.m. Two or More Prayer HAPPY New Year	2	3 5:00 p.m. Sr. Adult Committee Mtg 5:30 The Gathering Place (please sign up) 6:30 Bible Study for ALL 7:30 Worship Choir Rehearsal	4	5	6
7	8 8:30 a.m. Two or More Prayer	9 2:00 - 6:00 p.m. American Red Cross Blood Drive 6:30 Deacons' Meeting	10 5:30 p.m. The Gathering Place (please sign up) 6:30 Bible Study for ALL 7:30 Worship Choir Rehearsal	11	12 7:30 a.m. Gideons' Prayer Breakfast (in church basement)	13
14 10:00 a.m. BAPTIST MEN'S DAY with Brandon Hembree Impact Church Fredricksburg	15 8:30 a.m. Two or More Prayer 6:30 p.m. Gideons' Monthly Meeting (in fellowship building) MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY	16 8:30 a.m. Two or More Prayer 6:30 p.m. Ladies' Care Ring in Youth Center	17 5:30 p.m. The Gathering Place (please sign up) 6:30 Bible Study for ALL 7:30 Worship Choir Rehearsal	18 HOPE Fellowship Trip to Asheboro (more details to come)	19	20 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Youth to Stars and Strikes GOLFWAY-TO-PLAY
21	22 8:30 a.m. Two or More Prayer	23	24 5:30 p.m. The Gathering Place (please sign up) 6:30 Bible Study for ALL 7:30 Worship Choir Rehearsal	25	26	27
28	29 8:30 a.m. Two or More Prayer	30	31 5:30 p.m. The Gathering Place (please sign up) 6:30 Bible Study for ALL 7:30 Worship Choir Rehearsal	Weekly Sunday Schedule 9:00 a.m. Sunday School (Live & Zoom) 10:00 a.m. Worship		