



From the Pastor

Colton, what do you want for your sixteenth birthday? *Tickets to Metallica.*

Mom will take you, she's from California...I, on the other hand, enjoy the use of my eardrums. You all have fun. (Fast Forward six months.)

Caren is visiting her father in California, as cancer spreads and the prognosis is poor. And her visit coincides with the *Metallica* concert.

Friday, November 3rd, Colton and I, along with 55,000 heavy metal fans, travel downtown to the America's Center Dome.

The concert begins at 6 p.m., the opening acts are Wolfgang Van Halen and Pantera.

Walking with thousands into the Dome, I felt out of place, but it was a joyful community, bonding from their love of the heavy metal genre.

My primary anxiety? I have no idea who is sitting to my right and front. I was entering alien territory.

We made it. Second level. Second Row.

I placed torn pieces of tissue paper (couldn't find ear plugs) and inserted into ear. It worked! I will not go deaf! Texas ingenuity!

A young man and girlfriend sat to my right. Two couples, admiring various purchases of Metallica shirts, sat in front.

Wolfgang played 30 minutes and Pantera began a one hour set.

Pantera played song, "In tribute to our fallen brother". The crowd responded with applause and affirmation.

I texted Drew, who among his many talents, is a music aficionado.

Drew, Pantera is playing a song in memory of a band mate. What happened?

(Immediate reply) Yeah, he was stabbed to death by a fan, on stage during a concert several years ago, the guitar player's name was Dimebag Darrell...

Ok...good to know...thanks! I was relieved we didn't have floor seats.

The set ended with *Walk...I actually know this song!*

Metallica took stage around 9 p.m., entering with recording of Ennio Morricone's *Ecstasy of Gold*.

And I enjoyed their musical craftsmanship and spectacle.

The focus was on music, and short on speeches...except one instance...

The lead singer (James Hetfield), reflected on suicide, after playing a song entitled *Suicide*.

Saint Louis, we all have our dark side. You can't hold that stuff in, talk to somebody, you have to let it go. We are losing way too many, you don't lose hope.

Seek and Destroy was the final song. Hetfield said, "Metallica loves you" and the house lights turned on. It was off to the parking lot, arriving home at 12:30 A.M. (whew!).

12:45am. *Ping!* A text. *Here's your link to Night 2 Tickets for Metallica.*

I inadvertently purchased Night 1 (Friday) and Night 2 (Sunday) several months ago. The promo said, Two Different Nights! Two Different Sets! Two Different Opening Bands!

I attempted to sell Sunday tickets online and enjoyed numerous "technical issues."

Saturday night I told Colton we were seeing Metallica again. He was ecstatic.

We arrived a bit late, sorry to miss something called *Nine Ice Kills*, but in time to experience a mellow band of five nice young men called *Five Finger Death Punch*.

The lead singer of *Five Finger Death Punch* (that would look interesting on a resume) quieted the crowd halfway through the one-hour set.

We have an election coming up one year from now! (The crowd was not in the mood for political speeches and boos reigned down.) After acknowledging the crowd's displeasure, he went on:

And both sides will do all they can to divide us. We are not going to let that happen. Here's what I want you to do. Find a person seated next to you, someone you do not know, and extend a hand of welcome.

No matter their politics... Let that person know: I'm glad you're here, welcome to the concert, we are united not divided, all brothers and sisters.

The same person from Friday night was seated to my right. I looked over and he had a warm smile with hand extended: *Welcome to the show, are you enjoying it, I saw you came before, I'm glad you're here, welcome brother!*

I shook his hand and exchanged pleasantries. And for a brief moment I felt a wave of emotion, moved by this short interaction.

Five Finger departed 30 minutes late and Metallica played a new set of 16 songs on this no-repeat weekend. I can now scratch off 11 hours of metal concerts in two days from my bucket list.

Why was I touched by the hospitality of a stranger attending a metal concert? After taking a few steps back: the young man shattered preconceived notions and prejudice. I knew I would feel out of place and unfamiliar with the culture and songs. And I felt an odd sense of welcome into their world. And I thought of Third.

Would this person, or any from this "heavy metal culture" feel anxiety walking into our space.

And during the Passing of the Peace, though not understanding our songs, traditions, and message, would he experience a sense of belonging?

Friends, as Third enters the Christmas Season, keep your spiritual antenna up for the *other* entering our space.

The universal language of *unconditional welcome* removes barriers and clears paths for one to *enter, respond, and experience* the Gospel (Good News!).

Beloved, never underestimate "little acts of grace", your acknowledgement of another's presence and extending, in our tradition "the right hand of fellowship".

Inspiration for this 2023 Christmas article was sparked by *Metallica* and *Five Finger Death Punch*. I did not see that coming. God winks at us from time to time...

Merry Christmas,
Tommy

Family Ministries

Drew Phillips, Minister to Families

Youth shopping for the Christian Activity Center (CAC) Christmas gifts:



From the AYB "Gathering" retreat at Second Baptist Peoria



For families:

The First Sunday of Advent, December 3, I will have Jesse Trees Advent devotionals to give families to follow along with at home. Jesse Trees are trees of symbols that tell the story of Jesus beginning with the stories from Genesis. It gets its name from Isaiah's prophecy about Jesus:

"A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah, 11:1-3)



Jesse Tree Advent
Devotional
2023

There are 25 days of devotionals that have 25 symbols and 25 stories. I hope these will enhance your Advent as you work through and discuss at home. Our youth will be following the Advent calendar on Wednesdays and in Sunday School and the first and the second and fourth Sundays we will have Godly Play following the Advent calendar during worship.

December's missions offering will be split between Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionaries ministering in Ukraine and the association of Baptist churches in Israel, an American Baptist church mission partner doing ministry in Gaza.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) field personnel Gennady and Mina Podgaisky serve in Kyiv, Ukraine (since December 2002), where they facilitate the ministries of the Village of Hope, a ministry center that assists foster families. They also lead Bible studies, provide counseling, organize and lead family seminars; Outback couples retreats, and provide training on the Life-Skills Manual for Youth.

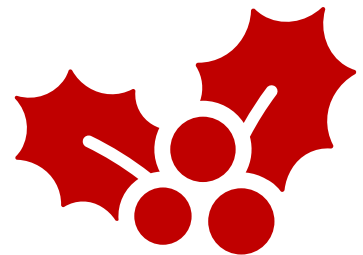


Dr. Philip Barnes, Music Director

Our festive music over the Advent and Christmas periods includes several arrangements by the British composer, Benjamin Britten, whose music we heard most recently in October with his cantata, “Rejoice in The Lamb.” There, he set the allegorical words of the mystic Christian poet, Christopher Smart, and here too his choice of words ranges from the allusive to the direct. He was drawn to Christian allegories which include the miracle of the cockerel in King Herod’s court, and – in words of W. H. Auden – a modern trio of shepherds, wondering whether they should leave their flocks to attend the Christ Child. These unusual texts force us to go beyond the trite and well-worn cliches of the Christmas Story. But never fear, familiar and beloved carols will be enjoyed by congregation and choir alike, culminating on New Year’s Eve with Lowell Mason’s “Joy to the world, The Lord is come!”

Our Carol Service on December 10th provides another chance to hear “On Christmas Day,” the elegant rhapsody for strings and piano that Sasha Johnson Manning wrote for Third last year, as well as original music and verse by Natalie Sleeth and Christina Rossetti. As ever, Third witnesses the creativity of both men and women artists in its worship.

A very special December Food Pantry event:
Third’s annual Christmas Baskets giveaway
needs your help!



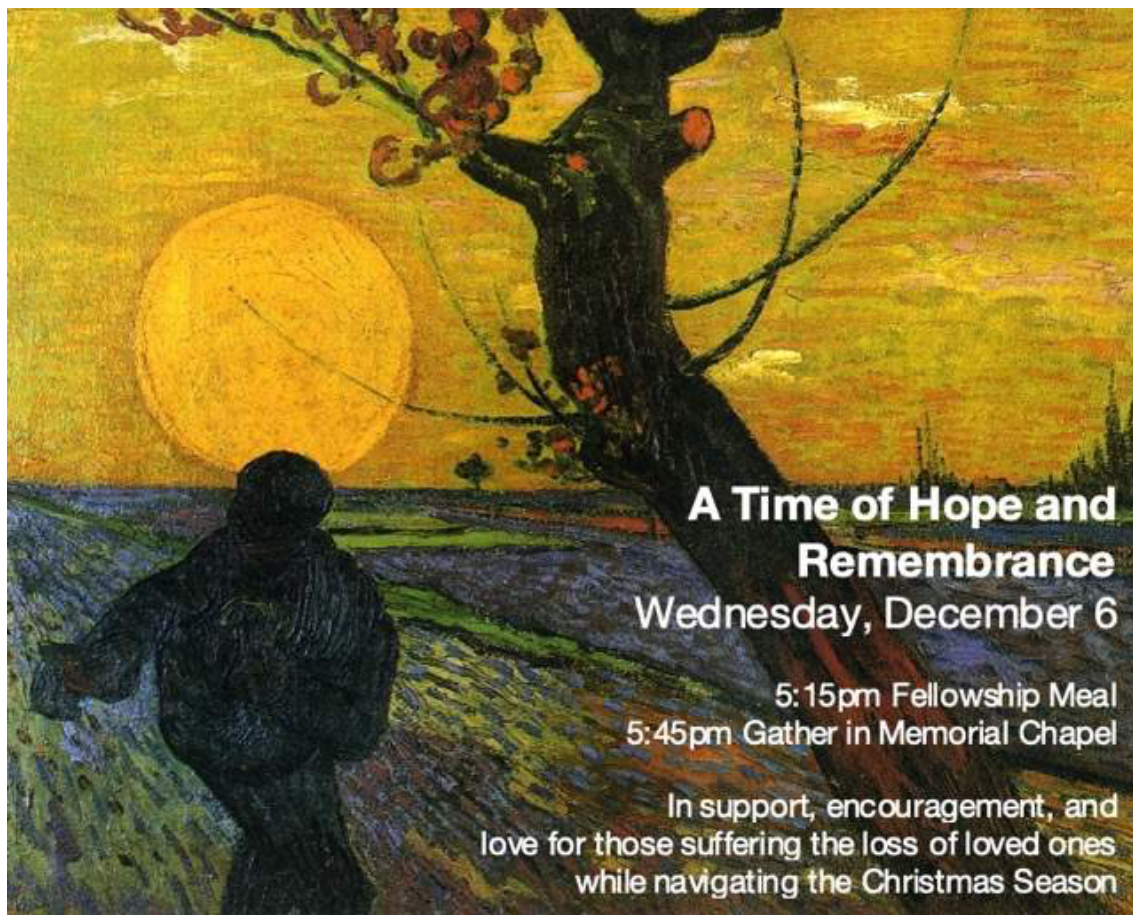
Thursday, December 14th: Help unload the food truck **about noon**. Please contact Monica McDaniel-Collins for details.

Friday, December 15th: Christmas “basket” Prep Day! **Starting at 9 a.m.**

Saturday, December 16th: Now for the giveaway – the fun part! **Volunteers arrive around 8 a.m.** Guests will get invitations to come during an appointed time between 9 – 10:30 a.m. for their pre-bagged Christmas meal supplies. Many hands make quick work, plan to stay after for a quick clean-up.

There will be snacks, music, and a festive atmosphere as we share this advent season with our community.

Adult Discipleship



Wednesday, December 13th

Dr. Tisha Brooks leading Discipleship, 5:45 p.m.
Dinner at 5:15 p.m.

Dr. Tisha M. Brooks is an Assistant Professor of English at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, where she teaches courses in African American Literature and composition. She received a B.A. degree in English from Ursinus College in 2001, an M.T.S. degree from the Harvard Divinity School in 2003, and a Ph.D. in English from Tufts University in 2013.



There will be no Wednesday evening dinner and discipleship on December 20th, returning January 10th, 2024.



Christmas Eve Service
5 p.m.

**Christmas Eve &
New Year's Eve Services:**
No change in Sunday morning schedule
Donut Fellowship
10 a.m. Bible Study
11 a.m. Worship



Next Quarterly Business Meeting

Sunday, December 3rd

12 p.m. after morning worship



**Welcome
new member!**

David Sanjay
is pursuing his
master's degree
at Saint Louis
University,
majoring in
Business Analytics

Happy Birthday to...

- 03 🎁 Ezra Estes
- 10 🎁 Candace Thomas
- 11 🎁 Karen King
- 14 🎁 Kelly King
- 17 🎁 Tisha Brooks
- 20 🎁 Carson Wright
- 21 🎁 James Robbins
- 23 🎁 Timothy Harrison
- 24 🎁 Lois Hunsaker
- 28 🎁 Gregory Robinson
- 29 🎁 Bill Pearson
- 30 🎁 Connie Vohsen



In the city for good!

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PARISH NURSE

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BUSINESS MANAGER

Christine McCarthy

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Timothy Harrison

CUSTODIAN