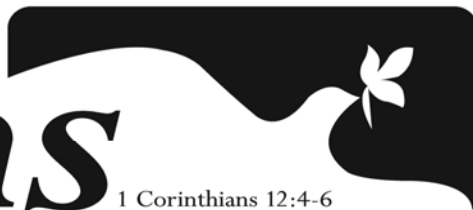


Variations

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

A weekly message from Vestavia Hills Baptist Church



The Shepherd's Pen



Jesus began his ministry in earnest with a sermon at Nazareth in Luke. Last week I talked about the new possibilities that we face in this new year—indeed in every year. He stood and read from Isaiah 62 and 58, saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

After closing the book, looking at his hearers, Jesus then stunned the crowd: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” He was saying, “The age of Messiah has begun.” Many commentators also think the sermon was a reference to the “Jubilee Year.”

The year of Jubilee was an extraordinary concept in Jewish faith in the Old Testament. It was ordered by Moses to occur every fiftieth year—the year after “seven sevens” (forty nine years, if you haven't been in math class for a while). In that year, there was a *be a “sabbath's Sabbath,”* if you will, the greatest time of Sabbath EVER.

Most of all, Jubilee was a year of restoration and reclaiming. It was a “back to basics” time. Yet it was more. If it only meant a return to “what used to be” it would have merely been a temporary change. It was a radical time of the reclaiming of the Jews' identity in God. They were to cancel debts, free slaves, return property to their original owners—in short, to liberate all the possibilities of the earth and God's people.

It was reclaiming their identity as God's chosen to bring light to the world. That is exactly what the coming of Jesus brought. In this reclamation came the possibility of freedom for a new way of life unimagined. That is why it was fitting that it would come at the end of seven groups of seven years—the perfect culmination of seven “sabbaticals.” In that time, God's rule would move into the

2007-What a Year!!! Members Gave Faithfully and God Blesses

On Sunday, January 13, the Deacons received a summary of the year-end financial report. The church will receive the detailed report at their quarterly business meeting on Wednesday, January 30. God has blessed the faithful and generous gifts of members to the cause of Christ through Vestavia Hills Baptist Church. Below are a few highlights.

- ◆ Gifts to the 2007 budget were \$1,526,884—the largest receipts in the history of the church! While these receipts were 3% less than budget, they were \$32,380, or 2.2%, more than last year's receipts and \$90,202, or 6.3% more than 2007 pledges!
- ◆ Gave over \$163,000 to budgeted missions activities (11% of budget expenditures).
- ◆ Gave over \$172,447 to special missions causes over and above the church budget.
- ◆ Gave over \$63,000 through the Unified Missions Offering to relief efforts on the coast, to the Kenya Missions Project, to Watering Malawi, and to special denomination missions offerings.
- ◆ 17%, or \$335,700, of total funds received by the church went to budgeted or non-budgeted missions causes.
- ◆ Ended the year with over \$11,000 in the Maintenance Fund for capital improvements and repairs to the property and facilities.
- ◆ Ended the year with over \$20,000 in the General Reserve Fund.
- ◆ Received \$120,185 to the Building Fund.
- ◆ Received \$60,100 toward the Capital Campaign Fund.
- ◆ Gave support to over 200 people who had experienced temporary financial set-backs, through rent, utility, and transportation assistance.

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow!

weariness of human life in a fresh and powerful way.

What is interesting is that scholars often ponder whether Israel ever, in fact, practiced the Jubilee. But what if they had? What if people turned loose of all the controlling and dominating that goes on in economic corruption? What if somehow God's vision of a just and whole community took place? Jesus was saying, in essence, "this is what I have come to commence."

This past year we celebrated our fiftieth anniversary. Since then, we have entered into a really energetic period of time. We have committed to attack our debt and had a spirited process of conversation and decision. We entered into a commitment with the Generis company and Dr. Allen Walworth who is leading us in a "jubilee time" of spiritual re-commitment and churchwide renewal to new possibilities. What if? That is the question I want to dream about together this year. What if, just as we did in 1999 when we stepped out and built the facilities we needed, we now stepped up to the next place possible for us as a church—new ministries, new and exciting mission directions, reinvigorated commitments to develop and minister to growing children in the faith? What if we attempted some great new things unhindered by debt? That is our great challenge and focus this year.

Dr. Allen Walworth will be coming to lead us in a Winter Bible Study on Sunday, January 27. It will not be about "giving money to the church" but a time of spiritual preparation and Bible study to help us believe in the new things God is going to do among us this year.

We ended last year with incredible positives. Our congregation had only pledged 91% of the budget but gave 97%. We saw many new members come in December. I counted up and we have had over 400 members join us since our last Capital Campaign. We are in a position to do some very strong things this year together. But if paying debt is all it does, we will have done little. We are praying for God to open our minds, hearts, spiritual gifts, commitments, and devotion to experience "the year of the Lord's favor" together.



Welcome New Members

Andrew Farrell
SU Box 290550
Birmingham, AL 35229

Lori McAuley
2083-F Vestavia Park Ct.
Birmingham, AL 35216

Expect the Unexpected.

All church leadership is invited to join us for an experience of worship, inspiration and expectation to prepare our hearts for the new year.

Sunday, January 27th

4:00-5:30 p.m.

Fellowship Hall

Childcare for preschoolers.

Learning activities for 1st through 6th grade.

Women's Bible Study for Spring

6 weeks

beginning Monday, Jan. 28 at 9:30 a.m. or

Tuesday, Jan. 29 at 6:30 p.m.

Beth Moore's newest study is *Stepping Up: A Journey Through the Psalms of Ascent*. Through an in-depth look at 15 Psalms, participants in this study can pray, reflect, and write a personal rendition of these ancient choruses. Themes such as unity, joy and gratitude, redemption, repentance, the power of blessings, facing ridicule, and more are explored in detail. Join us! Child-care available upon reservation.

Contact: Merryl Cooper, 822-4600

"Living by Abundance or by Scarcity?"

Winter Bible Study

Led By

Allen Walworth

Sunday, January 27

Schedule:

10:00 a.m.-Morning Worship Service

5:45 p.m.-Chili Supper

6:15 p.m.-Bible Study

New Baptist Covenant Georgia World Congress Center—Atlanta January 30-February 1

More than 20,000 Baptists from across North America will gather at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta January 30-February 1, 2008, in an unprecedented demonstration of Baptist unity. The history-making event will culminate months of planning by leaders of more than 30 Baptist organizations who laid the groundwork for a new era of cooperation during a series of meetings at The Carter Center in 2006 and early 2007.

The New Baptist Covenant is an effort to seek unity among Baptists to work cooperatively in North America. Some of our members are planning to attend the meetings. If you are interested, call the church office to find out more information. To read more about the meeting, go to the website at <http://www.newbaptistcelebration.org/>

Remember in Prayer...

Members in the Hospital

- ♦ Edith Wood—Lakeshore Rm. 211

Members at Home

Grace Barnes	Doris McWaters
Lou Bell	Marge Olive
Virginia Deaton	Nora Ousley
Earl Donegan	C.O. Paugh
Kathryn Eidson	Jo Powell
Jim Galyean	Elizabeth Quinby
Elaine Goodwyn	Martha Ray
Wyatt Guy	Joan Sanders
Bob Harrelson	Judy Schlegel
Leta Holliman	Velma Smyth
Mary Lou Hughes	Arthur Weeks
Faye Knowles	Bob Wilson
Dorothy Lindsay	Jody Wilson
Elizabeth Lindsey	Richard Wilson
Sarah Little	Nettie Worrell
Nancy Lochamy	

Christian Sympathy

Christian Sympathy is expressed to:

- ♦ *The family of Leon Sanders in his death on January 4.*
- ♦ *The family of Theda Cowen in her death on January 6. A Memorial service will be held Thursday, January 17 at 11:00 at the church.*

Congratulations

Congratulations to Brendt and Andy Blanks on the birth of a daughter, Caroline Faith Blanks, on January 9. Proud grandparents are Curt and Sara Newell, Great-grandparents are Kitty Newell and Ed & Sara Arendall.

QUARTERLY BUSINESS MEETING

Wednesday, January 30

6:15 p.m.

Fellowship Hall

Ministry Budget Offering

Budget Needs This Week	\$30,664
Budget Given This Week	\$13,983
Budget Needs This Month	\$61,328
Budget Given This Month	\$54,130

Children's Ministry Day

For Grades 1-6, Saturday Feb 16, 10:30-1:30 pm

A day for children to learn about the issues surrounding hunger and to minister to others.

Registration is due by Sunday, Feb 10.

Forms are available at the reception desk in the children's foyer.



H is for hungry.
O is for obey.
P is for pray.
E is for everybody.

You **CAN** help!

Please bring cans of chicken noodle soup and vegetable soup to the church by Wednesday night, Feb 13.

Place your cans in the Children's Building Foyer.

16th Annual Mom's Retreat - February 22/23, 2008
Brochures are available at the Children's foyer reception desk. Contact Nancy for more information.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR TO WORK IN VACATION
BIBLE SCHOOL - June 9-12

Offering Envelopes

In an effort to save money we have decided to put the 2008 offering envelopes out for people to pick up when you are at the church. We do not use the numbers on the envelopes, so just pick up any box. They will be put out on tables in the front foyer and the Fellowship Hall foyer. If you are unable to come and pick one up please call the church office at 979-5920 or email lynn@vhbc.com and we will gladly send them to you.

Changes in the Variations for 2008

Variations to be printed Bi-Weekly

Beginning in 2008, the *Variations* will be printed bi-weekly. Each issue will contain information for the upcoming weeks. For weekly updates, please check out the church website, www.vhbc.com or the Mid-Week Promoter and Sunday worship guide.

Variations Available Electronically

Beginning in February, you can receive the *Variations* electronically instead of through the mail. You can view it on the church website www.vhbc.com, or you can have it sent to you via your email as an attachment. If you would like to receive it via your email instead of via the Postal Service, please contact Martha Neill at martha@vhbc.com or call the church office at 979-5920.

Week of January 17-23

Saturday, January 19
 7:00 Girls Basketball game
Sunday, January 20
 8:45 Bible Study
 10:00 Worship Service
 6:00 New Member Training
Monday, January 21
 4:00 4 to 8
 5:30 Boys Basketball game
Tuesday, January 22
 9:30 International Friends
Wednesday, January 23
 6:30 Prayer Breakfast
 10:30 Pastor's Bible Study
 4:30 Fellowship Supper
 4:30 Library Open
 5:00 Handbells
 5:30 Music for PS 3's-6th grade
 5:45 Women's Bible Study
 Planning Meeting
 6:00 Prayer Service, Youth Group
 6:00 FPU
 6:15 Mission Friends, GA's, RA's
 7:00 Sanctuary Choir

Week of January 24-30

Saturday, January 26
 9:30 Youth Winter Bible Study
 6:00 Girls Basketball game
Sunday, January 27
 8:45 Bible Study
 10:00 Worship Service
 4:00 Youth Choir, Leadership Mtg
 5:00 Youth Winter Bible Study
 5:45 Chili Supper
 6:15 Winter Bible Study
Tuesday, January 29
 9:30 International Friends
Wednesday, January 30
 6:30 Prayer Breakfast
 10:30 Pastor's Bible Study
 4:30 Fellowship Supper
 4:30 Library Open
 5:00 Handbells
 5:30 Music for PS 3's-6th grade
 6:00 Quarterly Business Meeting
 6:00 FPU, Youth Group
 6:15 Mission Friends, GA's, RA's
 7:00 Sanctuary Choir

Volunteers in Service for the week of January 20

Deacons of the Week: *Norfleete Day, Stuart Collier
Counting Team: Clay Hopcroft, Mike Craddock
Sound Technology: Pete LeBerte, Mike Wells
Shuttle Service Team: Jeff Baker, Charlie Scott, Emory Gaskins
Flower Committee: Lea & Carolyn Dutton, Becky Hasty
Library Committee: Betty Hauser (20) Rosemary Bamberg (23)

Worship Care

Babies Becky Hasty, Robin Cameron
 Creepers Lisa & Cris Speegle
 Ones Rebecca McKinney, Cappy Blackwelder
 Twos
 Threes Steve & Michelle Thackerson
 Fours/Fives Ann Marie Harvey
 Desk Ed Whatley

Volunteers in Service for the Week of January 27

Deacons of the Week: *David Fleming, Paul Edfeldt
Counting Team: Steve White, Jeanne Harrelson, Allen Fulks
Sound Technology: Mike Wells, Dan McMurray
Shuttle Service Team: Tim Franklin, Chuck Gillespie, Ed Whatley
Flower Committee: Jeanie Patterson, Virginia Wood
Library Committee: Marilyn Tinnermon (27) Lynn Taylor (30)

Worship Care

Babies Hazel Turner
 Creepers Michael Wilson, Gilda Coker
 Ones Merryl & Jason Cooper
 Twos Kathy Dent, Marilyn Tinnermon
 Threes Jason Dearing, Scott McGinnis
 Fours/Fives Pete LeBerte, Ron Smith
 Desk Janice Fulks

FELLOWSHIP SUPPER

Jan. 23 Pepper Steak, Rice, Green Beans, Strawberry Cake
 Volunteers —Martha Eskew, Hazel Turner, Bob Eskew,
 Mike Oatts
Jan. 30 Meat Loaf, Macaroni & cheese, Steamed cabbage, Apple pie
 Volunteers — Sue Edfeldt, Johnny McCracken, Bob Eskew,
 Lou McCracken

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OUR MINISTRY STAFF

Gary A. Furr, Pastor
 K. Dennis Anderson,
 Minister of Education/Administration
 Nancy E. Akins,
 Minister to Preschool/Children
 Mike McBrayer, Minister to Students
 Terre Johnson, Minister of Music
 Beth McGinnis, Organist
 C. Otis Brooks, Pastor Emeritus

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 at 10:00 a.m. on WVSU, 91.1 FM