

Falls Fellowship



The Future of the Church

I took some time off over the holidays. (That really is a misstatement because ministers are never “off” the clock). I spent some time reading articles I had collected over the past year on the future of the church. A question ran through the articles: “Does the church, not just Falls but what we call the Church Universal, have a promising future or is it, like many other institutions, dying a slow death?” Let me share with you some gleanings from my reading.

1. The church will not die. The church belongs to Jesus Christ. Christ told Simon Peter in Peter’s famous confessional scene found in Matthew 16 that the gates of hell will not prevail against his church. This is reassuring and it suggests to me the church still has great potential.

2. Although the Church of Jesus Christ will survive, many individual churches will not. Thousands of churches close their doors each year. In a recent year, 3,700 churches closed.

3. Some churches survive, and even grow, by learning new ways to minister in their context. For example, the pandemic taught the importance of churches using digital technology. Many churches are streaming services rather than gathering in buildings.

4. Congregations will continue to grow older. For some churches, the days of children running up and down the aisles are over.

5. We must plan for having fewer people in attendance after the pandemic has stabilized and the number of cases diminishes.

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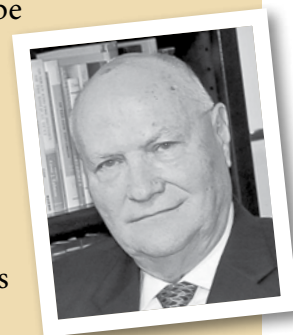
The Gift of a New Year

By the time you read these words we will be walking in the days of a new year, 2021. No one should be surprised.

The earth revolves around the sun and when it completes its journey another year has passed.

When, as children, we played the game of “Hide-and-Seek,” we would begin the search for our quarry by saying, “Ready or not, here I come.” Ready or not, the New Year is here.

You have a choice here: you can walk into the New Year as though you have a grudge against it. You did not accomplish all you intended to do in 2020 and now another year is here. The calendar does not wait on you. God is in control of the calendar. It is all part of his plan for creation. So there; you do not have anything to



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Future cont' ...

Thomas Rainer, former president of Lifeway, predicts a drop of twenty to thirty percent in Sunday morning attendance.

6. The decline in attendance will affect the offering plate. Fewer people attending church services means less money for the church budget.

7. Many churches will not have the resources to invest in long-term mission projects. Resources, including people resources, will diminish.

8. After the pandemic, healthy members of the Silent Generation, people born between 1928 and 1945, and Baby Boomers, people born between 1946 and 1974 will be the largest groups attending traditional churches, like Falls.

Here are some implications of these thoughts for Falls Baptist Church:

1. The reluctance for people to gather in groups will continue even after the pandemic recedes. This

means we need to strengthen our digital footprint. We have made a good start here.

2. Being small does not mean we are ineffective. Let us never use our size as an excuse for not fulfilling the purpose God places before us.

3. Mission projects must be short-term and clearly focused. Rather than on-going mission projects which require enormous blocks of time by volunteers, we must plan projects which can be done over a weekend or in one day.

4. We are an aging congregation with limited resources for children. This does not mean we do not want children to attend our church, bring them on! However, we must not think we are failing unless we are reaching families with children. Older people need Christ and the fellowship offered by a church family. We are good at that.

In summary, God still has a plan for Falls Baptist Church. We may be small, but we are not dying. Do not compare our effectiveness as a church with other churches; let us purpose to be the church God calls us to be and be satisfied with that.

— Tom Jenkins

Please pick up 2021 Offering Envelopes

Members should pick up their offering envelope boxes in the vestibule if you have not already done so. Please see Kevin Barham if you have any questions.

January Birthdays

3	Courtney Mayerick
8	Jessica Jackson
10	Linwood Barham
13	Sara Powell
13	Sandra Brown
15	Joey Groves
16	Bruce Williams
19	Gloria Crudup
20	Frank Powell





Worship Precautions During January

The church is taking several precautions to make attendance as safe as possible during this Covid-19 pandemic. Even though we are not aware of anyone in our congregation who has the virus, we are aware you could have the virus and be without symptoms. Therefore, we are requesting that all follow these guidelines:

1. If you are ill, please do not attend until all your symptoms have disappeared.
2. Maintain six-foot social distance except for family members living in the same household.
3. Use furnished hand sanitizer or wipes as you enter the church.
4. Pew Bibles and hymnals have been removed. Order of service and hymns will appear in your individual program bulletin.
5. Use your own face mask if you desire or disposal masks will be available for those wishing to use them.
6. Pews will be cleaned before and after each service.
7. Boxes to receive tithes and offerings are placed at the doors so we do not have to handle offering plates.

Some members fall into the category of having underlying conditions which make them uncomfortable to be in groups. We understand they may not be willing to attend now. Hopefully, this pandemic will soon pass and we can truly get back to normal worship services. During the month of January Wednesday Bible study will continue on Zoom.

— Linwood Barham

Sunday School Resumes!

Sunday School at Falls Baptist Church resumed on Sunday, December 6 at 10:15 AM. We have two classes, Senior Adults will meet in the sanctuary, and Middle and Older Adults will meet jointly downstairs in the fellowship hall.

Social distancing will be practiced with the classes lasting about 20-25 minutes.

We are still looking for volunteers to lead children's programs so we can reach out and have some attendance by children.

Helping a family

We were truly blessed in more ways than one. We were sponsored for Christmas by Falls Baptist Church. Thank you so much Angie Harris and Cynthia O'Toole. Your church has done more than ever expected we are truly blessed and I can't wait for the babies to open up their presents and send you guys some pictures. Even the new baby girl says thank you even though she doesn't have a name yet!



Deacons

Linwood Barham, Chairman	919-418-1162
Frank Powell, Vice Chairman	919-604-1285
Kevin Barham, Secretary	919-618-4214
Hubert Jenks	919-270-8765
Alan Watkins	919-793-5548
Mike Harris	919-746-5697

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New Year continued ...

do with it.

Here is another choice you can make: accept the New Year as a gift and treat it with gratitude. After all, God did not have to let you live to see another year. Remember the many who succumbed to death by COVID-19 last year? You and I could have been among the statistics. Only by the grace of God have we lived to see another year. Be grateful.

Some of our miseries and woes come from a lack of gratitude. A couple of weeks ago I said in a sermon when a heart is filled with gratitude there is no room for depression. A heart brimming with gratitude pushes out depression, miseries, and woes. Perhaps instead of making New Year's resolutions, make a list of people and events and gifts and circumstances for which you are grateful. I have been doing this and here are some of the items on my gratitude list.

I am grateful, first and foremost, for God's love for me given in Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for my family, a wife who has supported my work for 55 years and who brings unceasing joy to my life and I am grateful for my children and grandchildren. I am grateful God birthed me into a Christian family where I was nurtured through my



parents' love for Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for every day. As a friend of mine said, "It's a good day when you wake up, roll out of bed and stand on your feet without anyone having to help you."

I am grateful for Falls Baptist Church. It is not a building; it is the people and when I think about Falls Baptist Church, I see the people. I am grateful for the gifts you gave Cheryl and me at Christmas, for the moving Christmas Eve Service, for our worship services each week with Kevin's music, for the greeting you bring to me week after week. I am grateful for the people who have supported the church through the generations of their families. I miss the members who have left us during my tenure here like Pearl, Dorothy, Nina, Sally and Demp, but I am grateful I knew them and I know where they are and someday, I will be gathered with them again and sit down at the table of the King of Kings for the great supper of the Lamb of God.

Hallelujah! It's a New Year; be grateful!

— Tom Jenkins



9700 Fonville Road
Wake Forest, NC 27587
www.fallsbaptistchurch.org

Dr. Tom Jenkins, Pastor
(919) 812-6675



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