

December 1, 2020



# PROVIDENCE

BAPTIST CHURCH

*Start Here*



*O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord!*

## A Light in the Darkness



Lee Canipe

*“When the time came to completion, God sent His Son . . .” Galatians 4:4*

According to the way Christians in the church mark time, the season of Advent began on November 29. In a very real and profound sense, though, it feels like we have been *observing* Advent since mid-March.

Advent, you see, is about waiting, which is something we’ve done a lot of these last nine months. Advent is about waiting for God to act. It’s about scanning the horizon, looking for a sign—*any* sign—that God is on the way to visit the troubled places where we live with the good news that better days, *blessed* days, are finally upon us. Advent is about knowing that God is coming, without knowing *when* God is coming—which means that Advent is also about learning how to be patient in the face of excruciating, baffling, inexplicable delay.

In a normal year, the way we observe Advent can feel like an artificial exercise in delayed gratification. Why can’t we sing Christmas carols in worship? Why can’t we open our presents yet? Why can’t we fast forward to the good stuff? The stores have been decorated for Christmas since before Thanksgiving. The radio has been playing Christmas music for a few weeks now. Why does the church insist on dragging its feet with all this dreary “Advent” talk?

That’s how it usually is. *This year?* Advent feels different this year—at least, for me it does.

This year, there’s nothing artificial about the exercise of waiting on what we long for, yearning for what we know will come in the yet-to-be-disclosed future. But it can’t possibly arrive soon enough to satisfy us. By this point in 2020, we know all about waiting. We know all about having to be patient. We know all about aching for what we can’t have right now and wondering how many more precious days will pass before the world is right again.

If you’re like me, you’ve spent a lot of time since March poring over the news, searching for positive trends and hopeful indicators that this scourge of a virus is starting to recede. You’ve been looking for a sign—*any* sign—that back-to-normal is getting closer,

all the while marking time in terms of the birthday parties, graduation events, vacation travels, holiday gatherings, and so many of the other, more mundane, activities that you’ve missed because they didn’t happen. While some of us have lost more than others in 2020, all of us have lost something this year.

And we’re ready for things to change. We know, one day, they will. We hope it’s soon. But, most of all, we’re just so tired of waiting for the time to come to completion. This year, the spirit of Advent is all around us. We’ve been living it for nine months now.

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,” writes the prophet Isaiah. It’s a familiar Advent verse. We hear echoes of it in the gospel of John: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” Advent doesn’t deny the reality of darkness. It does, however, insist—defiantly so, sometimes in the face of great evidence to the contrary—that the light of God’s love is stronger and more tenacious than all the darkness this world can ever possibly muster. There’s a reason, I believe, that we associate candles with Advent. When it gets dark, people of faith light candles to remind ourselves—and proclaim to the world—that it won’t stay dark forever.

And so this Advent, that’s exactly what we plan to do. We’ve already spent most of this year waiting. Now, we intend to light candles in the darkness as signs of the enduring hope we have in Jesus Christ. On the next page you’ll find information about our outdoor Advent Vespers services on December 6, 13, and 20. These events will be family-friendly, interactive, engaging, and worshipful. Each week, as part of our time together, we will light candles together. Because of the virus, we’re holding these vespers events outside—which gives us an unusual opportunity to bear a very public witness to our faith in Jesus, the light of the world.

We want to share this light with our neighbors—and this Advent, at the end of this very hard year, everyone who drives down Randolph Road on Sunday evening will be able to see our lights shining in the darkness. I hope you will join us and add *your* light to our hopeful witness.

May the peace of Christ be with you!



## Advent Vespers

**Sunday Evenings in December** 5:30pm on the Rotunda Green

Advent is the time for Christians to share the good news that, in Jesus Christ, all of God's promises to us are fulfilled, even if right now the world feels like a dark, foreboding place. The year 2020 has been hard for everyone, a year that has tested both our patience and our hope—and yet, as people of faith, we still look ahead with great anticipation to what God will do next in our lives, in our church, in our city, and in our world. In order to share our Advent faith with one another and our neighbors, we will gather Sundays in December (6, 13, 20) for a time of interactive, family-friendly, intergenerational worship and socially-distanced fellowship in the Rotunda parking lot. We will sing familiar songs, share stories of joy and gratitude, engage with one another, and light candles of hope as a way of testifying to our faith that the Savior we're waiting for is the true light of the world. Please bring a lawn chair, wear a mask, and invite a guest to join us on these special Advent Sunday evenings!



*“In the same way, let your light shine before others.”*

*Matthew 5:16*

## “Behold the Lamb of God”

**Sunday, December 6**  
10:30am

Virtual Worship

Prepare your heart with Andrew Peterson's unique musical led by our worship band. The music will make listeners think about Christmas

as more than just the birth of Christ, but also as the fulfillment of years of promises.



## Lessons and Carols

**Sunday, December 20**  
10:30am

It's the story you know by heart, but still long to hear every year. The Lessons and Carols service will allow us to hear the story of the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus. Tune in to our virtual worship and be filled with gladness.



## Christmas Eve Worship

**Walk Through Bethlehem** at 10:00am for children and their families. (See next page for details.)

**Candlelight, Carols, and Communion Under the Stars\*** at 5:00pm

This is our traditional Christmas Eve service, moved out of the Sanctuary and into the parking lot, where we will hear the good news of Jesus' birth as the shepherds in Bethlehem did so many years ago, outside and under the stars. Please bring a lawn chair and wear a mask for this service. \* *weather permitting*

**Christmas Eve from Providence** at 5:00pm

An online broadcast of our traditional service, recorded in the Sanctuary and available for those in our church family and beyond who prefer to stay home to celebrate the good news of Jesus' birth. Join in and let us worship together as one church family.

**Christmas Vigil at Providence** at 11:30pm

Our Christmas Vigil will be an online broadcast of our recorded late service. Candles will gleam and music will rise as the clock strikes midnight. Be one of the first to welcome Christmas Day in a relaxed and reflective spirit. (The Virtual services can be found on our Virtual Worship page of the website.)



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

## Baby's 1st Christmas

Sunday, December 13

4:00pm @ the Activity Center

Let's bless our newest with a drive-through celebration for baby and parents during their first Christmas together!



Parents, just drive through the Activity Center Circle and we will celebrate the blessings of this first year.

## Walk through Bethlehem

Christmas Eve, December 24

10:00am - 11:00am

Rotunda Side

We hope you will join us as we travel to Bethlehem to meet Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus.

We will stagger our start time to accommodate the crowd and to ensure social distancing.

Please arrive at these times, based on your last name:



A – H 10:00 am

I – P 10:20 am

Q – Z 10:40 am

For more information about the Children's Ministry, visit the website at [www.providencebc.org/cherish-the-gift](http://www.providencebc.org/cherish-the-gift).

# WEEKDAY EDUCATION MINISTRY

## Create a Keepsake

Wednesday, December 9

and Thursday, December 10

11:00am

Spend time with your child and make memories that will last a lifetime. Join us for this Christmas Keepsake Decoration Event and help us "Deck the Halls!"

Find us in our Winter Wonderland on the Weekday Grounds. Bundle up!

## Christmas Holiday Schedule



Preschool Winter Break

December 16 - January 1

Full Care Winter Break

December 24 - January 1

We will return to the Center on Monday, January 4.

## Holiday Program

It WAS on the calendar. Now it isn't.

The annual Fours/TK Christmas program has been cancelled this year due to COVID.



## Thank You

We thank you for all of your support during 2020! We did it together!

We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Blessings to you and your family!

*Lucinda S. Taylor*



For more information about the Weekday Education Ministry, visit the website at [www.providencebaptistweekday.org](http://www.providencebaptistweekday.org).

## The Most Wonderful Story Ever Told

What is something extraordinary that you take for granted? How about your phone? We rarely think about how incredible the technology is we have in our hands. Just a few years before I was born, the kind of technology we walk around with every day would have been unthinkable.

What about the human body? You don't think about it, but consider how incredibly complicated a simple act, such as reaching for the remote control, is. You somehow decide to reach for it, and your brain fires all these signals to your nerves, which move your muscles to reach out and grasp something a few feet away from you. It's stunning how miraculous this simple action is.

Why don't we think about how cool these seemingly random things are? Because they are so routine. We do them so often we don't think about them. We lose the wonder because of how seemingly normal it is. The same is true when it comes to how we think about Christmas. And we **HAVE** to change this.



*Dane Jackson*

### Advent Devos



Following the Star – Daily Advent devotions available online or mobile. Visit [d365.org](http://d365.org) today!

Christmas can be a time when we get so wrapped up in the commercial (and chaotic) aspects of the season that we lose sight of the spiritual aspect. We are so familiar with the story that we can forget how amazing it is. God, the eternal, unchanging God who spoke the universe into being, came to earth in the form of a fragile, human baby. And God did this to save us from the penalty of our sins so that we could be in relationship with Him. **THAT** is the most amazing story ever told. And we need to do whatever we can to keep from losing our awe of this story.

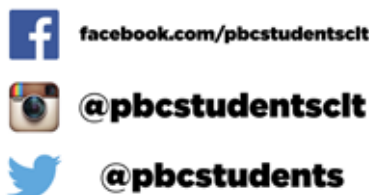
I hope that in this season of Advent leading up to Christmas that you can try to do just that. Spend a few moments each day reading the various accounts of the Christmas story. Find a daily devotional that you can follow (I LOVE “Following the Star” at [d365.org](http://d365.org)). Start right now—by preparing your heart and mind to celebrate the most wonderful story ever told.

*Dane Jackson*

## Let's Connect



Want a daily devotion geared toward students? Start your mornings right. Visit [d365.org](http://d365.org) and sign up.



See all our Student Group happenings. You'll love the daily scripture images and photos of our students!



Parents and students: Sign up on “Remind” and always be in the know. It's simple. Get the latest updates via text.

For more information about the Student Ministry, visit the student website at [www.providencebc.org/students](http://www.providencebc.org/students).

## Coming January 2021



Blake Kendrick

2020 has been a year of necessary isolation and social distancing. And the lack of public gatherings and personal interaction has taken a toll on our spiritual lives. As we balance our moral and public responsibility to stay safe and prevent Covid's spread, we also seek ways to grow our faith, nourish our souls, and lean into God's goodness and provision.

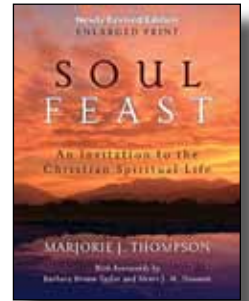
So, in January 2021, the Adult Discipleship Ministry at Providence will begin a journey into a new year, and you are invited to join us. Together, we will read Marjorie Thompson's *magnum opus* "Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life."

This book will speak to the deep hungers we all share for spiritual nourishment. In essence, it will teach you how to become a faithful and centered disciple of Jesus.

This 10-week study will feature weekly ten-minute videos—produced by Blake Kendrick and uploaded to our church website—to help you dive deeper into Thompson's work.

Book study participants will gather via Zoom periodically to discuss the book and build community. We will conclude the 10-week study with an outdoor, socially-distanced prayer retreat in the spring of 2021.

Please consider adding this to your plans for 2021. Purchase your book over the holiday season (the 2014 "newly revised" edition, which comes in normal text size and enlarged text sizes). Then, invite your friends, family, and neighbors to join us! We begin on January 6.



Sign up by January 3.  
[bkendrick@providencebc.org](mailto:bkendrick@providencebc.org)

## Advent Psalms Series



### Reading the Advent Psalms Together

Lee Canipe will lead this four-week online adult discipleship series via ZOOM.

We'll ZOOM at 6:30pm on Thursdays, December 3, 10, 17, with the final study on Wednesday, December 23.

Haven't registered?  
Simply email Lee Canipe.

[lcandipe@providencebc.org](mailto:lcandipe@providencebc.org)

## 2021 Thursday Bible Study

Beginning January 14, we will begin an 11-week journey through the Gospel of Matthew. We will retrace Matthew's account of Jesus' life and public ministry, culminating with the saga of Holy Week and Easter. Together, we'll also explore the life of Matthew – AKA "Levi", the son of Alphaeus. He was an apostle, a tax-collector, and an evangelist.

We'll take two weeks off in April for Holy Week and Spring Break, and then we'll return on Thursday, April 15, for a five-week series featuring content from The Bible Project.

Mark your calendars and join us as we—together—deepen our knowledge, commitment, and faith through studying God's Word.



Make Disciples

For more information about the Adult Discipleship Ministry, email Blake Kendrick at [bkendrick@providencebc.org](mailto:bkendrick@providencebc.org).



## A “Blessing” of a Partnership

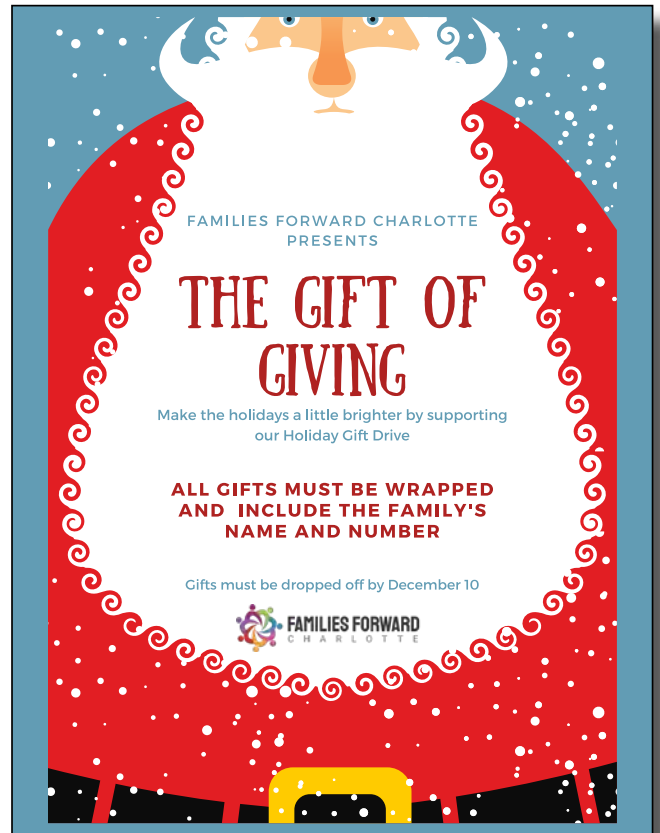
During 2020, Providence developed a generative, vibrant relationship with our featured local missions partner Families Forward Charlotte. As a part of our drive-through blessing events, our church family collected food, toiletries, socks and underwear, and household items for Families Forward. Together, we’ve made a difference in the lives of our neighbors!

Last Christmas, Providence teamed up with Families Forward for their annual gift distribution to their partnered families. During Christmas 2019, families and individuals from Providence provided gifts to 51 adults and over \$2000 worth of gift cards that Families Forward used throughout 2020 as incentives to partner-families for reaching their goals and completing their educational programs. In 2020, we hope to build upon last year’s success. See below for ways you can be a blessing this Christmas.

## Drive Through Blessing Event

**Sunday, December 6**

3:00pm - 5:00pm @ the Rotunda entrance



We are collecting clothes and toys for children. We are also collecting clothes and necessities for adults. Or you can choose to donate gift cards for gas, groceries or fast food. Check out the weekly Diaspora email for specific items and ideas. Thank you for stepping up and helping make this an amazing Christmas! Drop off your gifts in the Nalley Missions Center during the week of 11/30 - 12/7. Specific drop off times will be listed in the Diaspora.

## Volunteer This Season

Think about how you can help partner with FFC during Christmas.

1. We need volunteers to provide gifts and gift cards to partner-families.
2. We need volunteers to serve at gift drop-off stations during the week of 11/30 - 12/7.
3. We need volunteers to distribute the collected gifts during the weekend of 12/12 - 12/14.

Watch the weekly Diaspora email for the Signup Genius link, or contact Blake Kendrick: 704.366.4030x126 or bkendrick@providencebc.org



## Thanksgiving Mission

The ladies of the WMU joined together in November to package 50 Thanksgiving food boxes for Charlotte Rescue Mission. They met in the Nalley Missions Center, masked and socially distanced, and assembled the boxes along with other missional items. They also supported the NCWMU Red Box Ministry by donating bottles of lotion for women in prisons.



Thank you, ladies!

## A More Profound Alleluia



Timothy Hill

I cannot begin to adequately express the loss I continue to feel regarding our ensembles and music making. Our separation during the pandemic, while necessary, has been very difficult on us all. Oh, how I long for the sound of a choir ... voices raised in song ... music made together.

For many of us, music helps us transcend the troubles of the world, and it brings us closer to God. As hymn writer Fred Pratt Green puts it:

*How often, making music, we have found a new dimension in the world of sound,  
as worship moved us to a more profound Alleluia!*

Our “Alleluias” might not be as full right now ... especially since we can’t sing them together ... but, they have not disappeared. Soon, I pray, we will be able to gather and sing once again, and when we do, I believe it will be a glorious occasion! That hope is captured beautifully in these words (also by Fred Pratt Green):

*Let every instrument be tuned for praise! Let all rejoice who have a voice to raise!  
And may God give us faith to sing always Alleluia!*

As we approach the season of Advent, a time normally filled with rehearsals and preparation for the Music Ministry, I encourage you to continue to plug in with the virtual worship offerings, as well as other small group calls and gatherings. And as we continue to improve our ability to record and live-stream, look for opportunities to add your voice ... be that in person or behind a screen. These are tough times, but I pray God will grant us peace, and that we will gain new perspectives on music and worship.

May the peace of Christ be with you.

## “Behold the Lamb of God”

**Sunday, December 6**  
10:30am

Virtual Worship

Gather ‘round as we sing out with joy for the brave little boy who was God, but he made himself nothing. Hear the true tall tale of the coming of Christ, as our Providence musicians lead this unique virtual worship experience.



## Lessons and Carols

**Sunday, December 20**  
10:30am

From a 19th century wooden shed to our present digital streams, the timeless stories found in nine short Bible readings, interspersed with familiar carols and music, continues to open our hearts to the loving purposes of God. Join us as we “go in heart and mind,” and consent to follow where the story leads.



## Communion Sunday

**Sunday, December 6**  
9:00am

Rotunda Green



Bring your mask and your chair and join us for a short worship service that concludes with a socially distanced offering of communion.

## Sermon Scripture

December 6: Behold the Lamb of God  
December 13: John 1:6-8, 19-28  
December 20: Lessons and Carols  
December 27: Luke 2:22-40





## Holiday Closures

### Christmas

Friday, December 25  
&  
Monday, December 28



## Minister on Call

Although we are not allowed to visit members in the hospital, and our personal contact must remain at a minimum, we are still ministering, praying and supporting our church family. Please call if you need anything.



### Minister on call: 704.366.4030x147

December 1 - 7: Dane Jackson

December 8 - 14: Julia Wright

December 15 - 21: Timothy Hill

December 22 - 28 : Lee Canipe

December 29 - January 4 : Blake Kendrick



### New Year's

Thursday, December 31  
&  
Friday, January 1

## What Is A Stephen Minister?



**STEPHEN  
MINISTRY**

Stephen Ministers are lay congregation members trained to provide one-to-one care to those experiencing difficulties, such as divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or relocation. Stephen Ministers come from all walks of life, but they all

share a passion for bringing Christ's love and care to people during a time of need.

Since 1975, more than 600,000 people from more than 13,000 congregations have been trained as Stephen Ministers. At Providence, we are extremely blessed to have several individuals who have stepped up to accept this call. Currently, our Stephen Ministers are sending cards, making calls and caring for their Care Receivers in other creative ways to carefully and safely minister to those they serve. Once we get through the Corona Virus pandemic, we will offer training for new Stephen Ministers.

Do you have a need? Contact Martha Haigler.  
mhaigler@providencebc.org or 704.608.7947

## COVID-19 Update

This fall, as the COVID cases continue to rise, Providence focuses on developing creative ways to worship and minister, with special attention paid to the health of our members. We are eager to return to campus, but we must weigh that desire with the responsibility of caring for one another.

The Covid Task Force continues to look forward to the day when the governor raises the number of people who can safely gather indoors to 150. Although we long to be together, we will continue life "separated" until we can safely return to our Randolph Road campus.



## Senior Adult News

As we welcome December, it's time to say good-bye to Martha Swain, David Pyatt, and Donna Eason, who will be rotating off the Senior Adult Committee this month. We offer a special "THANKS" to Donna for her leadership throughout this year. We look forward to welcoming our new committee members, Pauline Bethea, Sylvia Case, and Darren Griffin, who begin their service in 2021.

With this year coming to a close, let us stop and take a moment to reflect on the good things in our lives, such as the birth of a child, grandchild, or great grandchild; and for weddings, birthdays, and anniversaries. Take care and stay in touch with family and friends during the Advent Season.

*Submitted by Wilna Eury*

## PrimeTimer's Special

**Thursday,  
December 10**

11:00am in the Sanctuary

Mark your calendar for our last PrimeTimers' event of the year, "Advent Art and Carols." Tim Hill will sing Christmas music that complements Blake's personal advent art photo collection. Due to COVID restrictions, masks and social distancing are required while in the Sanctuary. Rows and seating will be marked to meet social distancing requirements. Don't forget your last-minute donation to the Families Forward Christmas Drive!

Reservations required by  
Tuesday, December 8.

704.366.4030x211



## Activity Center Update



Providence has long been a part of the Playbook for Life Youth Basketball League, enabling us to compete against other congregations from around the city. Due to health concerns amid rising cases of

COVID-19, Playbook for Life leadership decided that a 20-21 basketball season was not possible. Though we cannot play league basketball this year, there are still ways for you to stay active at Providence.

The outdoor basketball goal, walking track, and green space on our campus are available for you to enjoy. The Activity Center is also open on a limited basis. The walking track and fitness room are open for scheduled work out times via a sign-up genius or by calling the Activity Center. Remember: we have new health and safety requirements: masks, social distancing, and temperature checks are required.

If you are interested in spending time in the gym, watch for the SignUp Genius link in the weekly Diaspora emails or contact Katelyn DeVane to schedule your workout.



*Katelyn DeVane*

704.366.4030x103

## New Member



*Debbie Faison*

Welcome to Providence, Debbie Faison! She's been a member of our kitchen staff for four years, but we are now delighted to welcome her as a new member! She comes to us from the Holiness Tradition, and has claimed that Jesus is her Lord and Savior. We are grateful!

## Church Staff News

**Tresor Masunda** celebrates his second anniversary with Providence. Tresor is Custodial Supervisor, and is responsible for overseeing the maintenance and custodial staff. He can fix anything, and he does so with a faithful and giving spirit. We are thankful to have him at the helm!



*Tresor Masunda*

## Financial Covenant 2021

When is a good time to do what's right? According to the Bible, all the time! Galatians 6:9 reminds us: "Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up."



You can keep doing what is right by joining your fellow Providence members in supporting our 2021 financial plan for missions and

ministry under the theme, "Keep Doing What Is Right!" If you have not returned your financial covenant, you may do so by mailing it to our church office, or by going online (see info below). We rejoice already for God's financial blessings this year, and we are encouraged as you join us in doing what is right for 2021!

*Submitted by Allen Schuyler*

## Being Faithful

Please continue to give faithfully . . . our ministries are still very active. Consider scheduling your giving directly through your bank, saving us processing fees.

See all your giving options when you visit our website:

[providencebc.org/why-give](http://providencebc.org/why-give)

Or mail your gift to:  
Providence Baptist Church  
4921 Randolph Road  
Charlotte, NC 28211



*Cultivate Generosity*

## You May Still Return Your 2021 Financial Covenant

### US Mail

Use the above address

### Commit Online

Log in to your Realm account and go to "Giving" or visit [www.providencebc2.org/2021-commitment](http://www.providencebc2.org/2021-commitment).

## Called Budget Conference

**Wednesday, December 9**

7:00pm on ZOOM

The Finance Committee will present its 2021 financial plan for Missions and Ministry at Providence via ZOOM. Church-wide participation is encouraged. Watch the Diaspora email for budget materials and for the Zoom conference link.

If you would like the conference materials mailed, contact Summer Sneed.  
[ssneed@providencebc.org](mailto:ssneed@providencebc.org)

## End of Year Giving

This year, take advantage of the new charitable giving guidelines. Thanks to the **CARES ACT**, all of your 2020 contributions will be 100% tax-deductible. (Please consult your tax advisor).

In compliance with the IRS, the following contributions made will count toward your 2020 taxes:



- All contributions hand-delivered to the church office by 4:00pm on Wednesday, December 30.
- All contributions received with a December 31 USPS post mark.
- All contributions received into our brokerage account by December 31.
- All contributions received electronically to our church bank account by December 31.

Any contribution received after December 31 will be treated as a 2021 gift.

The church office closes at 4:00pm on Wednesday, December 30.

**The church office will be closed on Thursday, December 31st and Friday, January 1st.**

As we enter the last month of 2020, remember that you can give to Providence from your 401k distribution **TAX FREE.**

Call the Church Finance Office at 704.366.4030x141 to see how!





Postmaster, Send  
Address Corrections to:  
CONNECTIONS  
4921 Randolph Road  
Charlotte, NC 28211-4002

•  
CONNECTIONS  
USPS 979-940  
Published monthly  
plus two special editions  
in April and October.

•  
Providence  
Baptist Church  
4921 Randolph Road  
Charlotte, NC 28211-4002  
www.providencebc.org  
704.366.2784

Periodicals  
Postage  
PAID  
Charlotte, NC  
USPS 979-940



**Communion Sunday**  
*Sunday, December 6 at 9:00am*  
*Rotunda Green*



**Budget Conference**  
*Wednesday, December 9 at 7:00pm*  
*Location: ZOOM*




**Lessons and Carols**  
*Sunday, December 20 at 10:30am*  
*Virtual Worship*




**Christmas Eve Worship**  
*Thursday, December 24*  
*See page 3 for details.*

**Next Connections  
is January 1, 2021.**

Deadline for submitting articles,  
photos, or announcements is  
**Noon, Monday, December 14th.**  
Articles should be 350 words or less.  
Email your submissions to:  
ssneed@providencebc.org.  
*Thank you!*

 **"LIKE US" on FACEBOOK!**  
Providence Baptist Church -  
Charlotte, NC

 **"FOLLOW US" ON TWITTER**  
@pbccommunity

 **Check Out Our Website!**  
www.providencebc.org