



Rev. Ronald L. Bowens
Pastor

FRIENDSHIP'S VOICE

JANUARY 2025

VOL. 12, ISSUE 1

“Exhalt the Savior, Equip the Saint, Evangelize the Sinner.”

Happy New Year

Commitment

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JANUARY CALENDAR

- 1 - New Years Day
- 4 - Outreach Boutique re-opening
- 10 - Market re-opening
- 11 - Creative Learning Ministry Workshop
- 20 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Inauguration Day
- 23 - Pastor Bowens' Birthday

THEME OF THE MONTH

Commitment

WRITTEN BY SIS. HYACINTH CHUNG



Commitment is an action we take in response to someone or something. Some dictionary definitions of commitment include faithfulness, dedication, devotion, allegiance, loyalty, promise, oath, covenant, contract, pact, responsibility, obligation, liability, and much more.

The biblical meaning of commitment is to give of yourself. It is a personal commitment to give of yourself to a person or a thing. Jesus is the perfect example of commitment to God and to man because He gave his life for us. When we commit to someone or something, we must see it through to the end.

We can commit to a spouse/partner, a job, a contract, or even a faith but if we do not see it through to the end then it is not commitment. It cannot be partial or halfway. Just like "Faith without works is dead," commitment without faith and loyalty is null and void. In Revelation 3:15-16, God said, *"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."*

We, as Christians are crippled in our walk with God because of our half-hearted commitment to the things of God. This is evidenced in our tithing, church attendance, prayer time, and our service in the various ministries we signed up for. We have no joy in serving because we do not have a personal committed relationship with God.

Scripture references: Deuteronomy 6:5-7 tells us, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

Deuteronomy 11:13-14 says, "And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹⁴That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil."

These scriptures are also affirmed in the New Testament in Matthew 22:37, "Jesus replied: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." When you are acting on the things you have committed to and things seem to be falling apart, continue on your course. In 1 Peter 2:23 we are reminded, "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."



Scripture of the Month

¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

ROMANS 12:1-2 (NASB)

HYMN OF THE MONTH

I Am Thine, O Lord

WRITTEN BY W. HOWARD DOANE

387

I Am Thine

1. I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice, And it
 2. Con - se - crate me now to Thy serv - ice, Lord, By the
 3. O, the pure de - light of a sin - gle hour That be -
 4. There are depths of love that I can - not know Till I

3
 told Thy love to me; But I long to rise in the
 pow'r of grace di - vine; Let my soul look up with a
 fore Thy throne I spend, When I kneel in prayer, and with
 cross the nar - row sea; There are heights of joy that I

6
 arms of faith, And be clos - er drawn to Thee.
 stead-fast hope, And my will be lost in Thine.
 Thee, my God, I com - mune as friend with friend!
 may not reach Till I rest in peace with Thee.

near - er,
 near - er, near - er,
 Draw me near - er, bless - ed Lord, To the
 near - er, near - er,

11
 near - er,
 cross where Thou hast died; Draw me
 near - er, near - er,

14
 near - er bless - ed Lord, To Thy pre - cious, bleed - ing side.



Happy New Year!

"Hello, welcome to Flight #2025. We are prepared to take off into the New Year. Please make sure your Attitude and Blessings are secured and locked in an upright position. All self-destructive devices should be turned off at this time. All negativity, hurt, and discouragement should be put away. Should we lose Altitude under pressure, during the flight, reach up and pull down a Prayer? Prayers will automatically be activated by Faith. Once your Faith is activated you can assist other passengers. There will be NO BAGGAGE allowed on this flight. The Captain (GOD) has cleared us for takeoff.

Destination,
GREATNESS with PURPOSE."





Martin Luther King Jr. Day

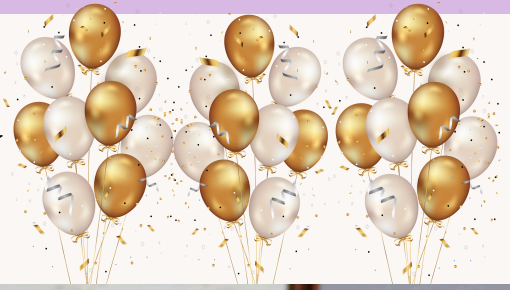
Martin Luther King Jr. Day honors the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a Baptist minister and civil rights leader who dedicated his life to the fight for racial equality, justice, and love. Rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, Dr. King championed nonviolence and used his powerful voice to call America to live up to its promise of liberty and justice for all.

After his assassination in 1968, calls to establish a federal holiday in his honor began immediately, led by civil rights leaders and members of the Black community. The movement gained momentum in the 1970s, with activists like Coretta Scott King, his devoted wife, spearheading efforts to enshrine his legacy. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed the holiday into law, designating the third Monday in January as a day to honor Dr. King's contributions. The first official celebration was in 1986, but it wasn't until 2000 that all 50 states recognized the day.

Today, Martin Luther King Jr. Day is more than a day off. It's a day of reflection, service, and a call to action for justice and unity. As we honor Dr. King, we remember his dream and recommit ourselves to building the "beloved community."



Pastor Bowens' 71st Birthday



Dear Friendship Baptist Church Family,

As we begin this new year, let us come together in love and appreciation to celebrate a very special occasion- **Pastor Bowens' 71st birthday on January 23rd!**

For over 40 years, Pastor Bowens has faithfully lead Friendship Baptist Church with wisdom, love, and unwavering dedication. Through his guidance, countless lives have been impacted, hearts have been strengthened, and faith has grown. His compassion, powerful teachings, and steadfast commitment to God's Word are gifts that we cherish as a church family.

This January 23rd, we have an opportunity to show our appreciation for the incredible man of God who pours so much into our lives. As he celebrates 71 years of life, let us remind him how much he means to us-not just as our pastor, but as a spiritual father, mentor, and friend.

We also want to recognize Sister Debbie, who stands faithfully by Pastor Bowens' side. Her love, support, and encouragement make her a vital part of his ministry and our church family.

Mark your calendars for January 23rd and join us as we honor Pastor Bowens for his remarkable life and ministry. Let us, as a church family, continue to be a blessing to the one who has been such a blessing to us.

With love and gratitude,

Tori L. Edwards
Shepherd's Care Ministry



Pray for those on our "Sick and Shut-in" List

AS WELL AS THOSE GRIEVING THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE



Send them a card, give them a call, visit them. You never know how much it could mean to them.

Mr. William Annan

Sis. Charre Armstrong

Bro. Charles Bailey

Bro. Willie Benton

Min. Karen Blacknell

Sis. Sheila Blackwell

Dea. Willie Blake

Bro. Don Bowens

Sis. Liz Bowens

Barbara Williams Brown

Sis. Alice Burnes

Bro. Dwayne Bynum

Sherita Caldwell

Breann Caldwell

Nick Caldwell

Sis. Chastity Collier

Sis. Sarah Collins

Sis. Andrea Green

Sis. Ruth Griggs

Sis. Barbara Hall

Bro. Emanuel Hazell

Sis. Dorothy Hines

Bro. Willie Irvin

Bro. Patrick Jones

Sis. Valerie McClendon

Sis. Virginia McLemore

Sis. Josephine May

Bro. Will May

Sis. Diane Meeks

Miss. Kaitlyn Miles

Sis. Alice Murphy

Sis. Terry Nagbe

Tressa Norwood

Ms. Patricia Ochogu

Bro. Charles Phinizy

The Poe Family

Sis. Carrie Rawls

Sis. Letitia Robinson

Sis. Linda Rogers

Sis. Cindy Rollins

Sis. Carrie Royals

Bro. Rennie Samuels

Sis. Jacqueline Scott

Sis. Tonya Sellers

Mr. Cyril Shields

Mr. Claudius Stafford

Bro. Xavier Stephens

Sis. Johnnie Stewart

Sis. Mabel Thomas

Mr. Cecil Upshaw

The Wells Family

Rev. Dwight Wilkerson

Sis. Shelby Wilkerson

Sis. Valerie Williams

Sis. Joan Wilson

Sis. Sadie Wilson

Bro. Victor Winston Jr.

Sis. Priscilla Wise

Sis. Dorothy Woods

Sis. Lola Wright

Prayer changes things.

HIGHLIGHTING BLACK HISTORY

The History of Watch Night Service

WRITTEN BY SIS. DIANE RUSSELL

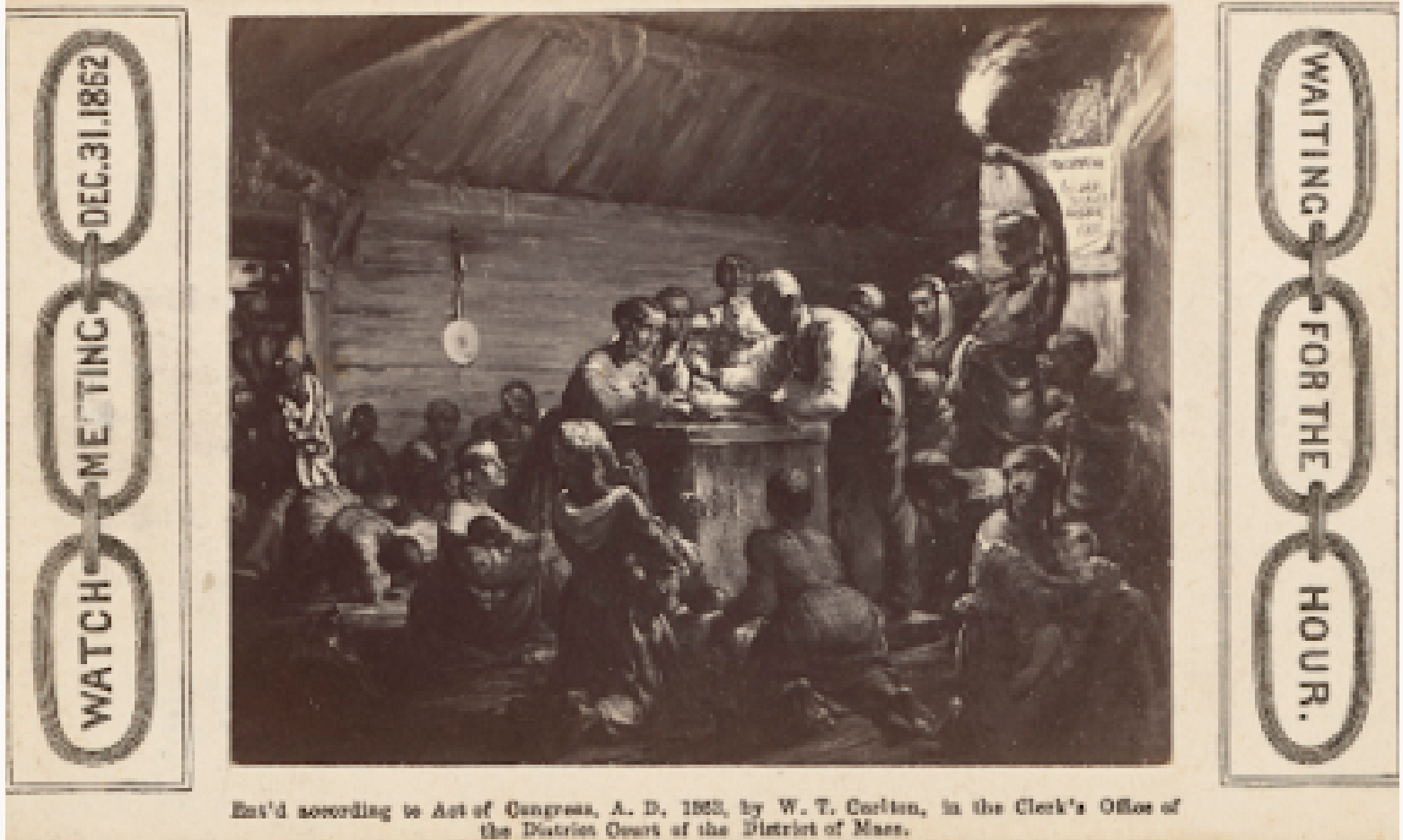


"It is a day for poetry and song, a new song. These cloudless skies, this balmy air, this brilliant sunshine . . . are in harmony with the glorious morning of liberty about to dawn upon us."

Frederick Douglass - December 31, 1862

On the night of December 31, 1862, enslaved and free African Americans gathered, many in secret, to ring in the new year and await news that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect. Just a few months earlier, on September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued the executive

order that declared enslaved people in the rebelling Confederate States legally free. However, the decree would not take effect until the clock struck midnight at the start of the new year. The occasion, known as Watch Night or "Freedom's Eve," marks when African Americans across the country watched and waited for the news of freedom. Today, Watch Night is an annual New Year's Eve tradition that includes the memory of slavery and freedom, reflections on faith, and a celebration of community and strength.



En'd according to Act of Congress, A. D. 1865, by W. T. Carlton, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Mass.

HIGHLIGHTING BLACK HISTORY

Watch Night service is rooted in African American religious traditions. During the first Watch Night, many enslaved African Americans gathered to pray, worship, sing, and dance. At the time, enslaved black people could find little respite from ever-present surveillance, even in practicing their faith. White enslavers feared that religion, which was often used to quell slave resistance, could incite the exact opposite if practiced without observance. They wrote laws that restricted worship and large gatherings, such as that in the 1848 Georgia Slave Code:

No person of color . . . shall be allowed to preach, to exhort, or join in any religious exercise with any persons of color, either free or slave, there being more than seven persons of color present.

1848 Georgia Slave Code

Despite these laws, enslaved people sought to exercise their own religious customs, including Christianity, Islam, and indigenous faith practices reflective of the homes from which they were stolen. They convened at praise houses on plantations or secretly gathered in the woods, where they practiced their faith under the protective cover of the trees and brush in what became known as “hush harbors.” As Charlotte Martin, a formerly enslaved woman from Florida, recounted, “[The plantation owner] would not permit them to hold religious meetings or any other kinds of meetings, but they frequently met in secret to conduct religious services.” Charlotte’s own brother was beaten to death for participating in such secret worship meetings, but enslaved people persisted in their faith practices as forms of resistance and freedom.

This spirit is still prevalent in Watch Night services today. The Watch Night service typically begins around 7 pm on December 31 and lasts through midnight, as faith leaders guide congregants in praise and worship.

The occasion is customarily marked by celebrations of fellowship and a worship service, followed by a fortuitous meal on New Year’s Day. Celebratory foods include a diverse collection of culinary traditions that can be traced back to Southern superstition, influenced by beliefs across West Africa. Chief among these foodways is the practice of eating collard greens, representing the promise of prosperity, and eating black-eyed peas with rice, also known as Hoppin’ John. Traditionally, Hoppin’ John consists of black-eyed peas, rice, red peppers, and salt pork, and it is believed to bring good fortune to those who eat it. Before finding its way into American traditions, the black-eyed pea (also known as cowpea) traveled from Central Africa to the West Indies and finally to the Carolinas in the early 1700s. Many West African cultures regard the pea as lucky, and memories of its luck remained with enslaved black people in the American South and still endure today. Though Hoppin’ John is a common dish prepared for Watch Night, the foods prepared in observance of the tradition are incredibly diverse and reflective of regional, temporal, and cultural differences within the African American community. Some other common dishes include candied yams, cornbread, potato salad, and macaroni and cheese.

Initially meant to welcome emancipation, today the Watch Night service is a Christian tradition that is rooted in the Bible and has theological significance. It is a time to reflect, recommit to God, and celebrate the birth of Christ, His resurrection, and His promises.

”Embracing the Spirit of Advent: Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy”

WRITTEN BY SIS. LATRELL CARR



In December, Reverend Artis Johnson’s Bible study focused on the significance of Advent. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning “coming” or “arrival.” It marks a season of anticipation and preparation for both the celebration of Christ’s birth and His second coming.

Advent is more than just commemorating a historical event; it is about preparing our hearts to receive the transformative love of Christ. This season is centered around four key themes: Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy.

Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas, reminding us that the true meaning of Christmas is not only in celebrating the birth of Jesus but also in living with a spirit of Hope and anticipation for His return. The theme of Peace calls us to remember God’s promise to reconcile us to Himself and to bring calm to our hearts.

Advent also highlights the ultimate act of Love—God sending His Son to restore our relationship with Him. On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we focus on Joy, a theme that celebrates the gladness that comes from knowing Christ has come, He is with us now, and He will come again. Joy is not just a passing emotion but a deep-rooted sense of gladness grounded in God’s presence and promises.

Throughout Advent, we are invited to embrace these themes and prepare our hearts for the transformative love of Christ, deepening our understanding of the true meaning of Christmas.



FBC's Honorable Tuwanda Rush Williams, Sworn in as Gwinnett County Superior Court Judge

WRITTEN BY SIS. CHRISTINE SMITH



On December 19, 2024, the Honorable Tuwanda Rush Williams was officially sworn in as a Gwinnett County Superior Court Judge during a heartfelt ceremony attended by family, friends, and colleagues. It was a day of celebration and reflection for Judge Williams as the event began with a prayer led by Pastor Ronald L. Bowens - Friendship Baptist Church in Duluth.

Judge Williams shared her inspiring journey to this esteemed position, emphasizing her faith in God and the pivotal moment she felt called to pursue her dream. She acknowledged the sacrifices made by her husband, Dr. Anthony Williams, who stepped out of retirement to support her ambitions as it was a requirement to leave her full-time law position at the time.

Judge Williams recounted her journey to this highly esteemed office and reflected on her humble beginnings. She highlighted the values instilled in her by her parents, particularly the importance of education combined with common sense. Her father's advice to avoid being an "educated fool" resonated deeply with her.

The ceremony featured uplifting performances including a liturgical dance and musical praise from the FBC praise team and musicians. Following the swearing-in, a catered reception allowed guests to fellowship and celebrate this significant milestone together.

Congratulations to our sister in Christ, Superior Court Judge Tuwanda Rush Williams! We wish you and your family God's continued blessings!



FBC Annual Christmas Program 2024

The 2024 Annual Christmas Program at Friendship Baptist Church took place on December 22nd in the Family Life Center. The program brought the congregation together to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, and the evening featured recitals by our youth, moving performances, and heartfelt messages that reflected the true meaning of Christmas.

The Drama Ministry presented a touching reenactment of the Christmas story, portraying key moments from Mary and Joseph's journey to the arrival of the shepherds and wise men. The Christmas program ended with an electrifying performance by the FBC Dance Ministry which incited everyone to sing and lift up praises to Him.

Rev. Bowens closed the evening with a brief but powerful reflection on the importance of embracing the light of Christ and carrying it into daily life.

The program was a beautiful celebration of faith, community, and the timeless story of Jesus' birth, leaving attendees spiritually uplifted and inspired. Victoria Jones, Drama Ministry Leader, did a great job choreographing and directing the Christmas program.



FBC ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM 2024



FBC ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM 2024



"Something Old and Something New"

Written by Sis. Whitney Brown



In the 43rd chapter of the book of Isaiah, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah to share a message of refreshment and redemption for His people. He starts off by letting us know it is Him speaking- He who created us, formed us, and called us His (Isaiah 43:1 NKJV). The Lord continues on to declare His Lordship and to paint a picture of how He will show mercy to His people in the coming days. However, my favorite declaration of the Lord comes a bit later- in verses 18 and 19. He says, "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:18-19 NKJV)

What a revivifying instruction! God is directing us to not consider the pain, struggles, or trials of the past- in fact, He says don't even remember it. He's letting us know that He will do a new thing

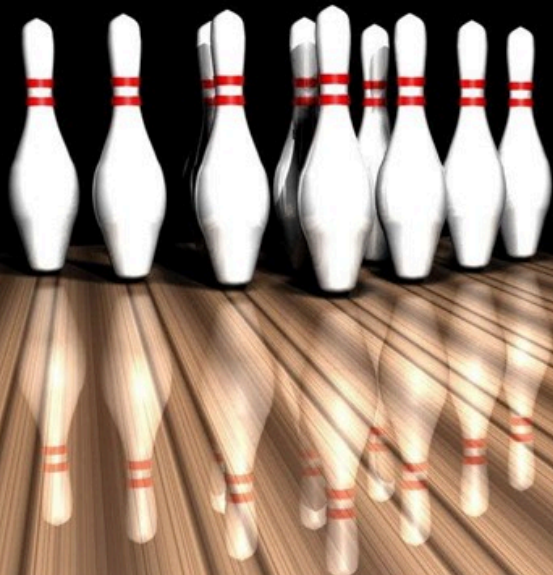
in our lives! Even better, His merciful, redemptive actions will be those of both grandeur and compassion- like an emerging road in the wilderness, or a flowing river in a dry desert. I'm not sure about you, but I'm excited for God to perform wondrous miracles like that in my life in 2025!

For many, these last few years have been a time of political uncertainty, economic crisis, health pandemic, or grief. However, we serve a God that continues to carry us through it all, even as He prepares for us a place with streets paved of gold (Revelation 21:21 NKJV). Our Father is a redeemer, and He has let us know that regardless of what the past holds, He holds our future. He is doing a new thing.

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so;"
(Psalm 107:2a NKJV)



Pete Bowens Bowling League



Stars & Strikes

1601 Horizon Pkwy
Buford, GA 30518



January 5, 2025 @ 5:00 pm
Individuals and/or 2-member teams



FBC CREATIVE LEARNING WORKSHOP

Loom Knitting

SATURDAY JAN 11

10AM - 2PM

Skill Level: Beginner

Class Location: FBC Fellowship Hall



Contact Erichka Shadburn-Rogers to register for class and for material requirements | 404-819-6901 |



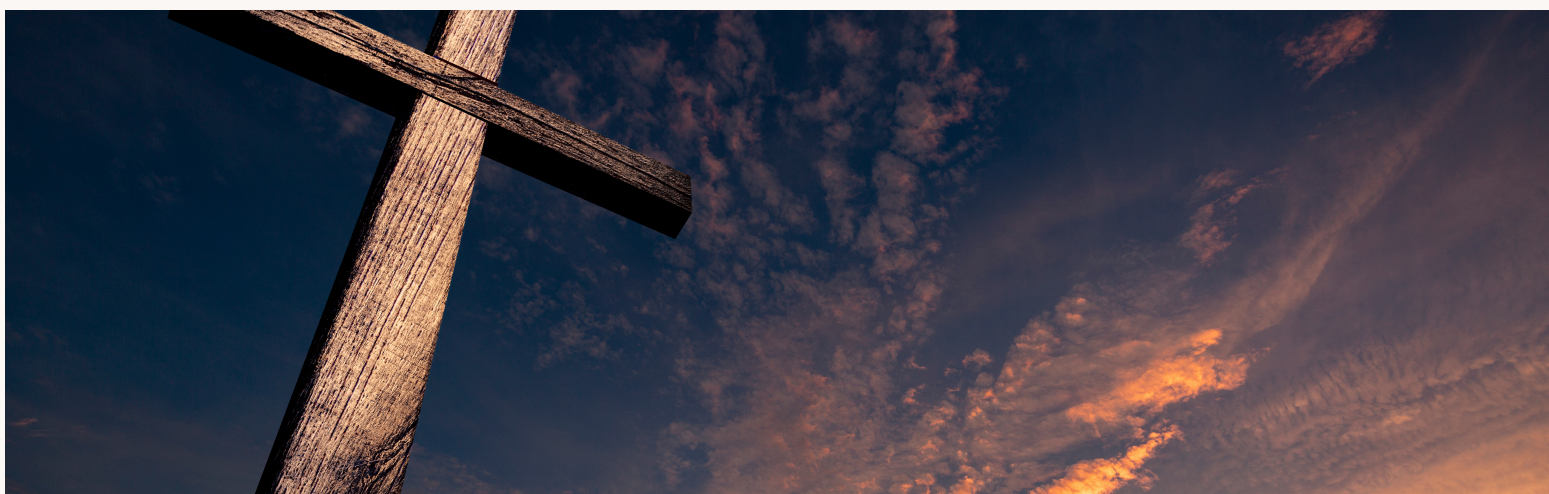
*"When we commit to someone or something,
we must see it through to the end."*

Thanks for reading

Friendship's Voice

Stay tuned for next month's Newsletter!

The deadline for February Newsletter articles is Friday, January 17th



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Improvements to FBC's website are ongoing. Feedback can be provided to the

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A Purpose-Driven Church

Friendly through Fellowship
 Developed through Discipleship
 Enlarged through Evangelism
 Sharing and Caring through Servanthood
 Stronger through God's Word and True Worship

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