

Baptist Bulletin



Pastor Leah's Word

Jesus Also

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:21-22)

At about this point, after Christmas and before spring, once the glow of the new year is behind us, things start getting dreary. Especially with COVID-19 lurking. (Thanks, Omicron.) And inflation. And the climate crisis. And looming domestic conflict. And the humanitarian crises in Afghanistan and other countries. And whatever significant personal issues happen to be confronting you currently. And, and, and.

The news and social media and the TV keep chattering on, but the stuff coming out seems oddly similar, and not very helpful. Loneliness—even around other people, perhaps especially around other people, with whom maybe we aren't communicating very well—settles over us. One is not always the loneliest number.

Long story short, the post-holiday slump has us needing some affirmation, some uplift. Some divine-human company to break the solitude.

Thank goodness Jesus decided to go for a dip in the Jordan.

The story of Jesus' baptism presented a serious embarrassment to the early church. You can tell, because the author of Mark dwells as briefly on it as possible, the author of Matthew has John the Baptist arguing with Jesus about John's worthiness to baptize him, and the non-canonical Gospel of the Hebrews claims that Jesus only got baptized to make his mom happy.

Nowadays, we savvy cynics might find the baptism of Jesus hokey in its overt symbolism. A dove descending? God thundering from the heavens? Really? How...obvious.

But back in the first decades and centuries after Jesus' ascension, what folks

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
WEST ACTON BAPTIST CHURCH
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Preaching Schedule

January 9th

Epiphany 1/Baptism of Jesus
Isaiah 43:1-7, Luke 3:15-22
“Called by Name”

January 16th

MLK Day/Wedding at Cana
Isaiah 62:1-5, John 2:1-10
“Low on Sauce”

January 23rd

Epiphany 3
Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Luke 4:14-21
“Today Is the Day”

January 30th

Epiphany 4
Jeremiah 1:4-10, Luke 1:4-30
“Hometown Disadvantage”

February 6th

Epiphany 5
Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 5:1-11;
“If You Say So”

Upcoming Events

Worship Link

Time: 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
Call Church office for link

Conversation & Prayer Link

Time: 7:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
Call church office for link

Online Streaming and Prayer Privacy

Please limit personal information in the details provided during prayer time by using only the person's first name and personal relationship and describing their need or celebration.

To give more information to the pastor and congregation, please email a detailed request to the church office by 2 p.m. on Sunday; requests received later will gladly be included with the Tuesday prayer-request email. Thank you!

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found unnerving about his baptism can be found in two little words in Luke 3:21, “Jesus also.” What seemed hinky to first-century readers was the idea that the Messiah himself would condescend to wade in the water along with the rest of humanity. Why would “Jesus also” seek baptism, like mere mortals? Why would God need to repent?

And yet, just as John has explained to the people that he is merely the opening act for the headliner Messiah yet to come, the one who will “baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire,” Jesus shows up and asks to be baptized with water, just like everyone else. He stands right next to the masses seeking new life and clean hearts, doing the same thing. In the moment of Jesus baptism, we see that God was truly one of us. All the way, no holds barred.

The Irish Christians talked about “thin places,” locations where the spiritual and physical world came especially close together. Jesus himself is, as Marcus Borg put it, “our thin place,” the place where human and divine, heaven and earth, meet. By wading into the waters with “all the Judeans and people of the surrounding countryside,” Jesus took his place beside us and among us regular folks. He accepted baptism because he stands with us in our hurt, our brokenness, our lostness, our joy, our emerging toward wholeness—the whole human process. And when God called the praying, possibly dripping-wet Jesus his “beloved son,” we are being told that God counts us beloved too, no matter what. Jesus’ baptism is among the signs and seals of that promise.

So, when COVID is knocking at your door, or the news gets you down, or one too many rounds with the shovel or snow thrower has you aching, or the sorrows of the world are simply too much and you feel overwhelmed and alone, remember—Jesus also accepted help and sought healing before he began his ministry. Jesus also needed someone to break into his loneliness. You are not alone. And you are in divinely good company.

Pastor Leaf

FBC Littleton is holding a **winter book group** using the book *If God Is Love, Don't Be a Jerk* by John Pavlovitz. The group will meet weekly starting on Jan.20 at 7:15 PM.

Discipleship Team

Child Care – We are offering childcare in the lower-level nursery. Any child over the age of 2 should be masked. We will sanitize the nursery before & after each use and try to maintain a safe environment.

SUNDAY SCHOOL for ages 4 through 10 takes place during the worship service in the DEN. All children are welcome! Children will attend the start of service and be dismissed after children’s time. For COVID-19 safety, all children must wear a mask.

SCHEDULE:

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| January 2 nd | No Sunday School |
| January 9 th | Jesus is Baptized |
| January 16 th | Jesus Brings Good News |
| January 23 rd | Jesus Calls Levi |
| January 30 th | Jesus Sends the Disciples |

The Sunday School kids celebrated Jesus’ birthday with a story of his birth, and then we all took a walk over to the West Acton Fire Station to say Thank you to the firefighters for the service and drop off cookies.

Scripture Readers:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| January 2 nd | Val Nolen |
| January 9 th | Joan Richards |
| January 16 th | Bob Williams |
| January 23 rd | Linda O’Neil |
| January 30 th | Zelda Williams |

WABC Handbell Choir 2021



Missions Team

We welcome the new year and the possibilities of serving God through Jesus Christ and his amazing grace and salvation. For all who have served in his mission throughout 2021 we are extremely grateful and blessed.

- Our RMMO offering will be sent into TABCOM this month from the gifts received in December 2021.
- We thank our WABC staff for their dedication to serving the Lord and have sent a Christmas gift in their honor to the Acton Food Pantry to help those struggling to survive hunger. Please continue to pray for all who are seeking the bread of existence and have yet to open their hearts to Jesus Christ, the savior, God in human form, and the holy spirit God provides.
- To Ruth Thatcher and the team of servers who help with the Community Suppers that WABC is able to host thanks to the grant from Stillman Association, a round of applause and gratitude for your commitment sharing fellowship and a good meal to those who come to the offered suppers.
- Please remember those serving in hospitals, research staff, town emergency services, and disaster relief personnel who have been challenged by many natural disasters and a second year of pandemic viruses that keep evolving and cause terrible physical illnesses and death to so many for the second year. We thank God for those in our fellowship who have survived Covid and for the vaccines that have been developed to address the spread.
- The Mission Team asks that you include in your prayers the many who have been called to serve as global servants and continue to spread the hope and good news of the Jesus.

Val Nolen, Linda O'Neil, Joan Richards and Ruth Thatcher

Church Chatter

- ❖ **Mask Mandate** - The WABC Church Council decided that due to the Delta and Omicron variants, all who enter the church must wear a mask, even if they are vaccinated. This decision accords with public health officials' recommendations.
- ❖ **Volunteers Needed** – Are you interested in learning how to run the A/V equipment during worship? Please let the church office know if you are interested. This way we can rotate A/V operators. We grow our relationship with God and one another through service. Give it a try—you might be surprised how much you enjoy it.
- ❖ **Children's Message During Worship** – We will be welcoming our young ones up for a children's message each week during worship. Spread the word!
- ❖ **Finance Team** – The Finance Team would like to thank the anonymous donor of their \$25,000 gift to the church.
- ❖ Thank you to all who contributed to the **staff gift**, we were able to donate \$435 to the Acton Food Pantry.

WABC Women

- There are ongoing webinars through **AB Women's Ministries**, information on their website: <https://abwomensministries.org/>.
- **Human Trafficking Awareness Day** is on January 11th.
- **Meeting** – Our next meeting on Zoom is on Friday, January 7th at 11 am. We will celebrate birthdays & have our Annual Women's meeting.

TABCOM

Fresh Expressions – Sat, January 29, 2022, 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM EST at Grotonwood

The crises of the last 18 months have accelerated the need for churches to "future-fit" for our new world. You and your team need a planning retreat where you can craft a strategy to take your congregation into the future.

Re-Imagining Church brings leading thinkers and missional practitioners alongside your team to chart a course for the road ahead.

This season has left us with many uncertainties. How do we live in both a virtual and a physical congregation? How can we stay engaged with our people? What does effective mission look like in a season of unpredictability?

Yet, one thing we can be certain of - the future of our congregations doesn't look like the past.

The good news is that amidst this crisis, there is great opportunity.

Bring your team to the Re-Imagining Church Summit and plan a future-focused strategy for the coming year and beyond. Cost is \$75 per church (up to 7 members, additional members \$10 to cover lunch).

SESSION ONE- Better Days Ahead: *A Thriving Mission on the Other Side of Covid*

SESSION TWO - Church has Left the Building: *Re-Vitalizing Congregations from the Outside-In*

SESSION THREE - Adaptive Leadership: *Leading Change at a Pace that Can Be Absorbed*

SESSION FOUR - Hybrid Church: *Embracing a Multi-Modal Ministry Model*

SESSION FIVE - Led by the Spirit, Empowered for the Mission Ahead

Fundraising

Coffee –We place an order for coffee every month. Go to our fundraising page on our [website](#) & fill out the form. The cost is \$11/lb. for Regular – Whole/Ground/Medium/Dark and \$12/lb. for Decaf Whole/Ground/Medium/Dark. The coffee is Fair Trade & Organic and is roasted & shipped within 24 hours. Our church gets \$3/lb. for every pound we sell. NEXT order is going in at 9am on **Monday, January 31st**.



Amazon - Please link your purchases with AmazonSmile for us to earn a %. Here is the ink: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/04-6067819>

RADA Cutlery - We have a continuous internet Fundraiser through RADA Cutlery. Please use this link to purchase items directly from RADA. Share the link with your friends, family & Facebook!! We earn 40% of your purchase!! Rada Cutlery is 100% American Made – raw materials and construction and has made & sold over 150,000,000 knives since 1948, earning the reputation for remarkable cutlery, service, and value.



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