

JANUARY 2010

GOD-365

A DEVOTIONAL & PRAYER JOURNAL



“BEGINNINGS”

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31 Psalm 71:5 “I trust you Lord”	<h3 style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">January Historical Highlights</h3> <p style="margin: 0;">January 1, 1916: First issue of “Journal of Negro History” Published</p> <p style="margin: 0;">January 11, 1980: Rev. Charles J. Southall, III licensed to preach by Lowerlight B.C., New Orleans, La</p> <p style="margin: 0;">January 15, 1929: Birth date of Martin Luther King, Jr.</p> <p style="margin: 0;">January 17, 1964: Birth date of Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama</p> <p style="margin: 0;">January 20, 2009: First African American, Barack Hussein Obama, sworn in as 44th President of USA</p> <p style="margin: 0;">January 24, 2010: First Emanuel Baptist Church celebrates 124 years in existence</p>					

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THE BIRTH OF GOD-365

First Emanuel Baptist Church has a powerful preaching ministry, an anointed teaching ministry, and gifted Christian education writers. We began writing curriculum for our Church several years ago with our youth bible study curriculum. Shortly thereafter, our adult Sunday School (now Church School) and Vacation Bible School curriculum emerged. In addition to our Christian education curriculum publications, we also have a quarterly newsletter – “Emanuel Echo.”

GOD-365 was inspired at the end of our church’s 40 day fast.¹ In July 2009, Dr. Linda Fortenberry² blessed us as our Women’s Day Speaker. In her message, she shared with us the blessing her church experienced as a result a 40 day corporate fast. After reviewing the material³ recommended to us by Dr. Fortenberry, Pastor Southall, along with members of the Ministerial Staff, published a prayer and fasting journal specifically for a season of prayer and fasting God instructed First Emanuel to endure. We prayed for our personal growth and sought God for a more intimate and personal relationship with God. In our last Season of prayer and fasting,⁴ we found ourselves thanking God for the experience and committing to continue this new found intimacy through our daily devotional and prayer period. We observed the great move of God in the First Emanuel Family and extended family of believers. Prayer journaling brought us to higher heights in our communication with God. **GOD-365** continues that journey.

It is our prayer that **GOD-365** evokes a greater intimacy and personal relationship with God our Father, Jesus our Savior, and the Holy Spirit our comforter.

Minister Marilyn M. Smith
Minister Sandra Cabrina Jenkins

GREETINGS

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD AND THE WORD WAS GOD. JOHN 1:1

Happy New Year to each of you. It is my prayer that you, your family, friends, and loved ones experience a love for God like never before in 2010. I do not know any better way than to give the gift of God’s word to those that I love. **GOD-365** is our gift to you. God’s word is our foundation. The Word gifts us with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding about all truth.

Enter 2010 prayerfully and with great anticipation for an awesome move of God in your life. It is my prayer that we submit ourselves 100% to God’s perfect will in 2010. Allow God to possess you in 2010. Honor, worship, and praise God-365 in 2010.

Let us begin, with the Beginning.

Your Pastor, His Servant,
Dr. Charles J. Southall, III
First Emanuel Baptist Church

¹ October 21, 2009 – November 29, 2009

² Dr. Fortenberry serves as the Director of Christian Education at Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, Tallahassee, Florida.

³ Freeda Bowers, “Give Me 40 Days of Prayer, An Invitation for an Encounter with God,” Copyright © by Freeda Bowers, Second Edition 2007

⁴ The 40 day fast was broken into 4 seasons of 10 day increments: Season One – Preparation; Season Two – Positioning; Season Three Perspective; and Season Four – Victory.

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Why We Write

God instructed John 16 times in the Prophecy of Revelation to write. The audience to which John is writing is the Church. God said: write what you see... write what you hear...write the things which are...and write the things which shall be thereafter. (Revelation 1:19). God also said: "...blessed is he that reads and...keep those things which are written..." (Revelation 1:3).

The Apostle Paul wrote over a dozen letters to the early Church. Paul's letters are messages of encouragement; reinforcement of the promises of God; and a display of passionate love for Jesus the Christ.

It is evident, God ministers to his people through writing. In obedience in our call to write...not a prophecy...not instructional doctrine for the church...but a prayer devotional for the edification of God's people...**We Write!**

Now you must write! Write what you feel...write from your heart... write when God speaks...just write to **GOD-365!**

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Source of Scripture

The following Bible translations are used in this devotional and prayer Journal:

King James (KJV)

New Revised Standard (NRSV) "The scriptures contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved."

Amplified Bible (Amp) "Scripture quotations taken from the Amplified® Bible, Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987, by the Lockman foundation used by permission." (www.Lockman.org.)

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Friday, January 1, 2010

I confess...I acknowledge...I covenant

Our devotional focus for this month is “**Beginnings**”. In the beginning of the year we contemplate how we can make the new year better than the one we left behind. January’s daily scriptures, prayers, and words of encouragement, exhortation, and wisdom will prayerfully awaken in you a new appreciation for your beginning. This is not the traditional beginning that we consider at this time of the year. Our focus is “*the very beginning*” -- Creation...God’s purpose for our creation...God’s pleasure in his creation...the orderly fashion of God’s creation ... the celebration of beginnings....and finally the power of our new birth as believers in Jesus Christ.

Let us begin by confession and acknowledgement. Let us conclude with a covenant with God. Do not be disappointed if you cannot complete the exercise below in one day. Continue to revisit as you daily confess and acknowledge your God and God’s place in your life. Continually reflect on the many covenants God has made with us as you prayerfully formulate the covenant you desire to make with God.

“No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsake them will obtain mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13) NRSV **Lord I confess:**

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:6) KJV

Father I acknowledge:

“For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of peace be removed saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” Isaiah 54:10 KJV **Lord I covenant with you:**

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Saturday, January 2, 2010

The Beginning

Isaiah 64:4 “*For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.*”

Let Us Pray

Father, I know there are great things in store for me and my family this year. I commit to diligently seek you for answers and direction. I invite divine intervention in all areas of my life in 2010 – family, work, school, friends, my community, affairs of the heart, finances, ministry – everything! I want to rid myself of fears of the unexpected. I want my faith to grow so that I will not fear. Lord I am waiting! I am ready to receive. I am willing to serve you. Amen.

Sunday, January 3, 2010

Body Image

Genesis 1:26: “*And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness...*”KJV

The new year typically brings thoughts of how we can change “me into a better me” – weight loss?—hair growth? –what will do the trick? I would venture to say “improvement of body image” is probably in the top ten on most lists? Magazine covers and run-ways present unrealistic body images for young girls and women to aspire to achieve. We are a nation obsessed with beauty and maintaining our youthfulness. In 2007, Botox treatment was the leading cosmetic procedure and grossed a half billion dollars for its maker Allergan.⁵ It is not my place to judge those who inject body parts with this toxin. FYI -- Botox contains the toxin botulism which is the same organism that causes

⁵ Lombardi, Lisa, “Cosmetic Surgery boom revamp doctors’ offices,” December 2, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/12/02/plastic.surgery.cosmetic.risks/index.html>

food poisoning!⁶ If we would substitute this quest to retard the aging process and enhancement of our beauty and put it its place the zeal and commitment to embrace the image in which God created us, then, and only then will we understand the power of God creating us in his image and after his likeness.

On this 3rd day of the new year, and the first Sunday of 2010, open your mind and heart to receive knowledge and wisdom on how to maintain and improve your Christ-like image. Question God. Seek God for revelation on the benefits of being created in his image and in his likeness. Meditate on the fact that: (1) God created us for his Glory; (2) God formed us to worship; and (3) God molded and shaped us to declare his praise.

Let us Pray: Father in heaven, I come to you with a heart of thanksgiving, a passion for knowledge, and a hungry spirit to receive understanding of the power in your words: “let us make man in our image, ...” Amen.

Monday, January 4, 2010

There is nothing ordinary about me

Exodus 3:11, 4:10-12: “*And Moses said unto God, who am I, that I should go...?” “... O my Lord, I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech...And the Lord said...who hath made man’s mouth:...hath not I the Lord...Now therefore go...”KJV*

Moses is speaking negatively of himself like so many of us do when we do not understand how or why God elects to use us in a situation. Just think about some of the common negatives we speak at this time of year. How many times have we had the following conversations with ourselves after the holidays? *The holidays are over -- I’ve gained 20 pounds...I hate Monday mornings...time to get back into the routine of*

⁶ Parker, Mike, “What is Botox made with?” http://www.ehow.com/facts_4913614_what-botox-made.html?ref=fuel&utm_source=yahoo&utm_medium=ssp&utm_campaign=yssp_art

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work—maybe I'll call in sick or just go to work and do nothing...Lord have mercy, as usual, I have already broken most of my resolutions—I just cant' get it together!

God does not accept us downplaying our abilities. In all the instances that Moses pointed out his weaknesses, God provided a strength – Aaron as Moses' press secretary (Exodus 4:16); 70 elders as Moses' ministerial staff (Number 11:16-17). It is actually an insult to our Creator to consider yourself incapable of a task God ordains for your life. Appointed tasks are always accompanied by God's perfect plan. Let us remedy negative thoughts about our "perceived inabilities" with the following daily affirmations:

1. ***There is nothing routine about my creation; therefore there is nothing routine about my life.***
2. ***My beginning was ordained by God.***
3. ***Because my beginning was ordained by God, I have an expected end ordained by God.***
4. ***I am strong even in my weakness because God is my strength.***

Let Us Pray: Father, I praise your Holy and righteous name. I desire to down-size self. Release the insecurities I have about myself. Shower down the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon me as I move through this day. I thank you Lord for being my strength. Amen.

Tuesday, January 5, 2010

Worship God!

Revelation 19:10: *"And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thou fellow servant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." KJV*

So many times we have misdirected praise and worship – towards others or of ourselves. One of my breakthrough moments during our season

of prayer and fasting in 2009 was acknowledgment that my praise and worship has at times has been misdirected. The tragedy is that it is misdirected towards me -- I sought acceptance, appreciation, and approval of others. In my prayer of repentance I told God: *"I do not want to be found in that scripture where it says your reward is on earth. I pray that I release that need for acceptance. I pray that I stop reaching out for glory...for approval..."(SCJ 10/23/2009).* I was humbled even more when God led me to scripture to show me how Jesus viewed being glorified and honored by man: *"I do not accept glory from human beings...I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?" John 5:41-44 (NRSV).* Even our devotional scripture today show us that the angels of God do not consider themselves worthy of praise and worship. Lord God I thank you for deliverance through your word!

Let Us Pray: Father, who are we to seek acceptance of others? What have we done that would merit worship and or praise? May our encouragement and exhortations of each other be out of sincere love and void of praise for and worship of man. May we not be stifled by our human need for acceptance and love by others. Forgive us Lord. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Wednesday, January 6, 2010

Time to throw down!

Revelation 4:11: *"Thou art worthy O Lord to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." KJV*

In this chapter, God allows us to witness "throne worship." The twenty-four elders have thrown down their crowns and fall down before the one that sits on the throne and worships by singing verse 11 to the Creator.

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God said I am created for his pleasure...what's this pleasure principle? Remember, after each creation, it is written -- "and it was good." Good things bring pleasure. In the beginning, God saw you -- it pleased God. During creation God desired a relationship with someone like the Creator -- you. Now that we know we bring pleasure to God simply because we are his creation, consider what you need to throw down in order to be in position for true praise and worship of your Creator.

Let Us Pray: Lord, I thank you for the revelation in your Word today that my worship pleases you! It is my prayer that my worship is Holy, acceptable and pleasing in your sight. Amen.

Thursday, January 7, 2010

I belong to God

Isaiah 43:7: "*Even everyone that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory...*"
KJV

God is the proud and possessive Father of his creation. Our creation was purposeful and not an afterthought. God wants us to acknowledge that we are his. We wear symbols to witness to the world that we belong to someone -- wedding rings -- engagement rings -- letterman's jackets. We honor our spouses, fiancés, and boyfriend/girlfriend when we wear outward symbols that represent the commitment to our one and only true love.

We are God's true love. In God there are no break-ups, no community property settlements -- God adores and proudly claims us to the end. Ask God today: "how can I please you?" Ask God: "how can I honor my God, my Creator, my reason for being?"

Let us Pray: God I belong to you. As I continue in my quest for knowledge of the power of my beginning, teach me how to honor you. Father, I acknowledge that I am created for your glory and I confess that I sometimes mix up the fact that I was not created for my glory or man's glory. Have mercy on me dear Lord. In the name of Jesus the Christ I pray, Amen.

Friday, January 8, 2010

My Creation was Orderly

Isaiah 45:19: "*I have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth. I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.*"
NRSV

In the beginning, the beginning was void and without form. The Spirit of the living God spoke -- order, life, and structure was born. Where there was darkness it ceased to exist. In the beginning we were smaller than tadpoles -- earless, speechless, sexless, sightless, and without form. Now that we are formed and have gained sight and speech we have abandoned the role designated for our creation. On occasion, we allow chaos to rule our households -- unmade beds, delinquent bills, disorderly conduct, foul speech, and no honor and respect amongst us.

It is not a secret what God created us to be. God esteems us highly. God made us a little lower than the angels and gave us rule and dominion over all things on the earth and under the earth. (*Psalms 8:4-8*) So why do we allow ourselves to sometimes live in a black hole? The very breath of life that God breathed into us is being sucked out of us as a result of our walking contrary to our intended role in creation.

Before another day passes in 2010, **STOP** -- examine yourself. Are you in a chaotic state? Has a tradition of drama evolved in your life? If all is well in your household, give God thanks and lift those that are struggling to regain the order God intended for our lives. If all is not well within your household, repent -- turn away from what is hindering your intended purpose in creation. Recapture your beginning -- Pray for order in your life!

Let Us Pray: In the name of Jesus, I humbly present myself before you begging your forgiveness. Lord, I don't know where to begin to bring my household under subjection to your Word and to your will. Please Lord deliver my

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household. Remove the chaos. Destroy the spirit of confusion. I thank you for your tender mercies and your grace. Guide me Holy Spirit in the right direction. Amen.

Saturday, January 9, 2010

Even in the beginning I was me

Ephesians 2:4-5, 10: *“But God,...made us alive together with Christ... For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” NRSV*

One day I was studying my birth certificate. I looked at mommy’s name and for some odd reason I peeped over at the father section of the certificate to make sure it was daddy’s name -- it was. Then I noted my address – 801 Swan Avenue, Scotlandville, Louisiana. Then I thought to myself: “Scotlandville was an incorporated city back then... I thought I was born in Baton Rouge!” Anyway, the most peculiar reaction I had was when I read “Certificate of Live Birth”. I thought to myself: “good I was born alive”. I studied my birth certificate as if I was searching for new information about me. I found nothing-- except the place of birth issue. My joy at being born alive was comical to me because if I was not a live birth I would not be reading my birth certificate.

Too often we get so entangled with the battles of life we forget to take pride and joy in being born alive. Our creation is what God intended. Take the time to pull out your birth certificate – study and meditate on the fact that you are who God made you. Rejoice in being born alive!

Let Us Pray: Father, I thank you for my life. I will strive to be what you intended me to be. I want to always be joyous in being born alive and then being born again. Amen.

Sunday, January 10, 2010

God Chose Me First

2 Thessalonians 2:13: *“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief to the truth.” KJV*

When I was growing up it did not take me long to realize that I was not very good at sports. To say that my athletic skills were poor would be exaggerating the truth of the matter, consequently PE was not my favorite course in school. Would you believe if I told you that I made an “F” in badminton? Well, I did. I hated always being the last person chosen for kickball or any other team sport. What was worse was being assigned to a team by the teacher because no one wanted you on their side. There is no feeling worse than knowing that you aren’t wanted. Although the rejection of my classmates hurt, I understood their reasons for not wanting me; they wanted to win. They saw me as worthless because I could not aid them in their short term goal, winning. Things have not changed very much since my school days; we are quick to reject people and see them as worthless if they can’t help us reach whatever our objective is for the moment.

I’m so very grateful that God is not like man for he chose us from the beginning. The Creator chose me to mold in his likeness and his image. He chose to breathe the breath of life into me. And while I was yet in sin, God chose to send his only begotten son to die for a sinner like me!

Let Us Pray: Father, I ask you to forgive my selfishness. Help me Lord not to devalue my fellow man because of my shortsightedness. Teach me to reach out to others so that I may assist them, not because of what they can do for me. Thank you Lord for choosing a sinner like me.

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Monday, January 11, 2010

Covered from the very beginning

Exodus 12: 7-13: “...And they shall take the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door posts of the houses...and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you,...” KJV

In the early to mid 1970s there was a high level of racial tension in Baton Rouge. I recall once being very frightened about an alleged planned “Black Muslims” attack on white people. I recall hearing my parents discuss what was circulating in the community on how to avoid the violence of the alleged Muslims’ attack. It was said that a black cloth should be hung outside of your door to show your support for the Muslims. If the Muslims saw the cloth they would not bother you. I was hoping my parents would put something black outside the door. I was so afraid we were going to be killed. Well, no black cloth was hung outside the door. I went to bed scared and woke up the next morning – alive!

God commanded Moses and Aaron that there shall be a perpetual celebration to commemorate God’s sparing those whose door post adorned the blood of the unblemished lamb when God Passed over Egypt. God even told Moses and Aaron, the time period in which the celebration is to take place -- “*the beginnings of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you.*” Exodus 12:2. God is a reliable source on how to protect one’s family from harm. God promised Israel deliverance and release from the stronghold of Pharaoh if the family just followed his instruction and got under the covering of the blood of the lamb. God wants Israel to begin its year by remembering. Why not begin your year by remembering? Remember when God delivered...remember when God healed...remember when God answered...REMEMBER!

Let Us Pray: God Almighty, I humble myself before you. I thank you for being the protector

of my family. I thank you for bringing my family through good times as well as challenging times. Lord it is my hope that my family is obedient to your will. Amen.

Tuesday, January 12, 2010

In the dirt

Isaiah 44:2-4: “Thus saith the Lord that made thee and formed thee from the womb...I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up...” KJV

I loved to play in dirt as a child. I played marbles with my brothers and their friends in the dirt. My friends and I drew hop-scotch in the dirt. We made mud pies in the dirt. We dug up earth worms in the dirt. I was even told that as a baby, I ate dirt – I refuse to believe that! As you can see dirt is multi-purpose. For gardeners and farmers, dirt has to be cultivated in order to yield the fruit of the seed which is planted. Without the proper fertilization, water, and sunlight, the seeds will fail to grow. Many plants flower and produce more seed for the next season. The reproduction of the seed is eternal if the proper nurturing occurs.

God promised that he would nurture our seed for growth. God said “and they (our children-- our children’s descendant) shall spring forth.” You can only “spring” if you have something powering the projection to ignite the “springing.” The power which fuels “springing forth” is the anointing of the Holy Spirit in our children’s lives. Our children’s children and their children’s descendants have the promise of perpetual blessing as a result of the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon them. What a wonderful God we serve!

Let Us Pray: Lord, I thank you for the gift of life through children. I thank you for the power of the Holy Spirit in my child’s life. I thank you Lord that from the beginning you saw me, my children, and my children’s children. I thank

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you for the comfort in knowing that my
bloodline is blessed eternally. Amen.

Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Finish what you start

John 4:34: “*Jesus saith unto them, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*” KJV

How many projects have you started this year? How many of the projects that you started have been completed? Just imagine if Jesus had become frustrated with the constant threats of death, the ridiculous accusations of blasphemy, and the rejection of God the Father and just said -- I quit. God expects us to complete the tasks he wills for our lives. When the Lord plants a seed to act, do not allow fear to enter your heart or mind. Recall the words of David to his son Solomon: “...*be strong and be of good courage, and do it, fear not, nor be dismayed: For the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work of the service of the house of the Lord.*” I **Chronicle 28:20** **Has God given you specific instruction to act? Did you start?**

Let Us Pray: Dear God, grant me the courage to do your will. It is my desire to be obedient to your call for me to act. I make myself totally available to you. Use me Lord. Amen.

Thursday, January 14, 2010

He Is, Therefore I Am

Acts 17:28: “*For in Him we live, and move, and have our being: as even some of your [own] poets have said, For we are also His offspring*” { Amp }

Take a moment and slowly reread the scripture for today, meditate on it and let it simmer for a while. Note, in Him – not in ourselves – we

live, and move and have our being. Without the presence of the living God on the inside of us there would be no us, not a living, breathing and moving us. We are the offspring of God our Creator and as such we have privileges. The privilege of knowing that when we go to God, He hears us, the privilege of knowing that He will never leave us, the privilege of knowing that His thoughts and plans for us, His offspring, are good and not evil so that we will have an expected end, hope in our final outcome. Jer. 29:11 (Amp)

Let Us pray: Thank you Lord for breathing the breath of life in me at my birth. Now Lord this life You have given me, I fully surrender to You. Lead me and guide me in my everyday walk. Amen

Friday, January 15, 2010

The Lord has anointed me to...

Isaiah 61:1 “*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.*” KJV

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was born 81 years ago today. 46 years ago he earned the distinction of being the youngest man to win the Nobel peace prize. Last year there was uproar about President Obama being awarded a Nobel Peace Prize on “promises & hope.” But there was no noticeable uproar three years ago, when Nobel Peace Prize winner, Dr. James Watson, “the godfather of DNA,” concluded: “people of African descents’ level of intelligence is not equal to that of whites.”⁷ For one to espouse such a disrespectful and dangerous view of God’s creation helps us understand why God

⁷ ; “The elementary DNA of Dr. Watson,” October 14, 2007, http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/article2630748

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raised up an orator, warrior, and peace maker as Dr. King. Dr. King spoke with passion and a sense of urgency about the state of Black America, the poor, and the oppressed in his sermons and speeches. He wrote so eloquently and with such authority and conviction that one would never believe he endured constant threats of death on his life. Even the humiliation of arrest did not discourage this Morehouse alumni, Crozer Seminarian, and Boston University scholar from his commitment to speak and fight against injustice. God desires to use all of us in Kingdom building. God is still raising up peace makers, warriors for justice, and obedient servants. We may never win a Nobel Peace Prize or have our names memorialized in history, but we can fulfill the will of God by serving him through serving others. Pray today that God reveal to you who, when, and how you can serve others.

Let Us Pray: Father I thank you for the people in my life who have served as examples of obedient service to you. Lord I need help in discerning what you have called me to do. I have dreams and goals for my future; however, I am not sure my dreams and goals are consistent with your will for my life. Give me discernment on when it is my season to move and act on the vision you have given me. Amen.

Saturday, January 16, 2010

I hear you Lord

Isaiah 30: 21: *And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." NRSV*

Last week we were reminded that in the beginning we were smaller than tadpoles – earless, speechless, sexless and without sight. At the moment of conception our parents did not know if we were a boy or girl, but God knew. Our parents did not even know at the moment of conception that we existed, but God knew. God also knew that once we exited the womb competing voices would consume our space. In the beginning, God knew to equip you with a special hearing device to detect his voice. In

God's divine wisdom, knowledge, and love for you he fully equipped you to hear his voice. In your beginning, God deposited something in you. The "us" is in you. ("let *us* make man... in our image...our likeness") The Holy Spirit is a part of the "us" in you. The Holy Spirit is your teacher, your guide, and speaks as he hears from God. -- "...when, he the Sprit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak..."(John 16:12). Follow God's voice!

Let Us Pray: Lord, please tune my ears to your voice. I no longer want to wonder aimlessly trying to figure out which way to turn in my life. Have mercy on me for ignoring your voice and doing my own thing. I thank you Father for your love and your grace. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Sunday, January 17, 2010

God's Hands

Psalm 119:73: *"Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments." NRSV*

God's hands are like that of a sculptor's hands for in the beginning it is reported that God created man from the dust of the earth. (Genesis 2:7) God's hands must be very agile and delicate like that of a surgeon's hands for in the beginning God opened the rib cage of man extracted a rib and sewed him back up before forming woman. (Genesis 2:21-23). God's hands are like that of a plastic surgeon for in the beginning God sculpted woman to such perfection that it pleased man to the point of denouncing all others and man's declaration that the woman is a part of him and they are one.

God's hands are not like that of a parent holding a toddler's hands who is trying to slip away into mischief. The parent holds tight, but sometimes the child slips away because the parent is tired of the battle to keep the child in one spot and just gives in for the moment. God, however never let's go of us. Our antics and tantrums in an

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attempt to escape from God cradling us in his hands do not faze God. You see God does not get tired of holding on to us. Jesus said no man is able to pluck us out of his hands and no man is able to pluck us out of God's hands. (John 10:28-29) God desires that we have eternal life and not perish. So the question of the day is "whose hand are you holding?"

Let us pray: Father, I thank you that your hands will never suffer and be weakened from arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, or fractures. I want to always grab hold of your hand to guide, teach, and direct me in the path of righteousness. I thank you for not letting go of my hand when I was twisting, turning, and pulling away. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Monday, January 18, 2010

Living the Abundant life

John 10:10: *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly".*

I know that during this time of economic crises you may ask, how can I live an abundant life when my bills aren't met, there is a threat of a layoff on my job or I can't even find a job, and I can barely keep food on the table? There is a very strong possibility that someone reading this devotion today is experiencing one or possibly more of these "crises", however, even in the midst these uncertain times, we, as born-again believers, can still experience an abundant life. Jesus said He came that we might have not just life but a more abundant (in the full, until it overflows) life. This life promised is not just a life of getting, but a life of giving and in our giving, we'll get.

Let Us Pray: Father, help me during these times of uncertainty and let me not forget Your promises to me and the fact that whatever You have promised, You are well-able to perform. Let me not waiver in my faith during these times of testing. Amen.

Tuesday, January 19, 2010

There's A Yes and An Amen Waiting for Me

2 Corinthians 1:20: *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

How many times have you been told "no" to something you've really wanted? How many times have you been told "yes" to something you've really wanted. Which ones readily comes to mind, the Yeses or the No's? We can probably easily recall the No's especially if they were associated with a deep desire we've had. I remember when I told my daughter "no" to one of her numerous requests and she looked at me like I used profanity. She was utterly shocked because she got a no from her Mother. At times, this is our reaction to God's no. Not realizing that His no will allow us to appreciate the yes and the Amen which are on the way. God knows what's best for us and whenever He tells us yes and Amen, it is perfect timing. Everything associated with that "yes" is entering our lives exactly as ordained.

Let Us Pray: Father God I thank you for the times You've told me no and I praise You for the times of my yeses. Lord help me to remain faithful during my periods of waiting for my yeses to manifest. Amen

Wednesday, January 20, 2010

Caution: Slippery When Wet

Romans 15:1: *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

I was about 17 or 18 years old and I had just applied for a job at TCA⁸ on Jackson Avenue. It had been raining and the weather was a little gloomy. I had a huge umbrella with me. As I left TCA and while crossing Jackson Avenue, I tripped over that huge umbrella and I fell right in the middle of Jackson Avenue. As if that weren't bad enough, there were RTA busses coming from both directions and there I

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was sprawled out in the middle of Jackson Avenue. How embarrassing. I started to just stay there, too embarrassed to get up. I remember this man saying, as he was running to safety, you better get up there are two busses coming but he didn't bother to help me up.

God knew from the very beginning of our existence that we would slip and fall during this life. He knew that we would sprawl out in sin and be tempted to just lie there. So in Romans 15:1, He tells us what to do when we see someone who has slipped. However, note the condition, "**we then that are strong**". The Amplified says we who are strong (in our convictions and of robust faith). Who can you help today?

Let Us Pray: Father I thank you for the help extended to me when I've fallen and now Lord allow me to extend that same help to someone else when they have fallen. *Amen*

Thursday, January 21, 2010

First Encounter

Luke 1:39-41: "... *Mary... entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth, when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.*" NRSV

I will never forget the excitement of the first day of 1st grade. Mommy dressed all three of her girls in identical blue dresses. I was so happy. I was jumping, skipping, & hopping...then it happened. All of that skipping, hopping, & jumping did not agree with my nervous tummy. I threw up my breakfast. I had to change my dress. I was disappointed that I lost my identity with my sisters, but, I maintained the excitement of what I had anticipated for so long – my first encounter with big school!

John the Baptist did a little jumping himself in response to a first encounter. The Word says John leaped— sounds like worship to me. How awesome -- in the womb, John worshipped God! Jesus' presence even evoked the power of the Holy Spirit and everybody in the household

praised and worshipped God. It is a natural response to worship our God the most high. We are born to worship. The Spirit of God lives within us. We cannot help but respond with joy, excitement and worship when we encounter the presence of our Creator.

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, I acknowledge that I am born to worship. Grant me the discipline to set aside time for meditation, and seasons of fasting and prayer. Lord, I desire connection with you at all times. I thank you for blessing me with the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. *Amen.*

Friday, January 22, 2010

In Spite of Me

II Samuel 23:5: "*Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.*" KJV

This passage of scripture demonstrates perfectly God's commitment to his promises *in spite of us*. David is speaking. It is near the end of his life. It appears David is reflecting on his tenure as King. The everlasting covenant David speaks of is the promise God made when he told David **NO**. That's right, in the midst of **NO**, God made a promise. God said **NO** to David building his house. Certainly this pained David; however, any disappointment David may have felt by not being the one chosen to erect the house for God is overcome by God's covenant with David: "*Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.*" (II Samuel 7:16-NRSV).

What a great revelation -- *In spite of me, promise -- blessings...* Take this with you all day and for the rest of your days:

1. *In spite of my shortcomings I maintain my salvation*
2. *In spite of my transgressions and disobedience, God keeps his promises to me*

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3. God will never renege on a promise to me. I may, however, be out of position to receive the promise as a result of disobedience
4. God will never reject me, but God will chastise me out of love and his desire to maintain unity with me.
- 5.

Let Us Pray: Heavenly Father, I, like David, mess up. I even fear that you will turn away from me. I thank you for the revelation in your word reminding me that, “in spite of me”, you will not forsake me. I thank you Father that I can depend on your word. I am so grateful that my salvation is sure! In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Saturday, January 23, 2010

I am Complete

Genesis 2:2(a): “*And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made...*” KJV

Has anyone ever told you “You are a piece of work?” Or have you called someone “a piece of work?” I am not so sure God takes too kindly to calling his creation a “piece of work.” You see when God was done with his creation it was a complete package. The work of our creation is not a fragmented work, an incomplete work, nor an imperfect work. Unfortunately we tamper with the original work of God. Even from the very beginning there was tampering in the Garden of Eden. Temptation entered paradise, man fell for it, and God responded. Temptation even entered the Garden at Gethsemane --Jesus prayed...the disciples slept...God’s promise was fulfilled. From the very beginning, God knew our weaknesses. God knew our flesh would war with the spiritual part of us. Do not assist the enemy with tearing down the flesh with harsh words, but, instead follow the example of Epaphras. Paul is ending his letter to the Church at Colossae when he speaks of Epaphras: “*Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills. Colossians 5:12 NRSV*

Let Us Pray: Father, control my tongue today. May I be an instrument of peace. Place in my heart love and not strife so that I may pray for those that frustrate, aggravate, and sometimes humiliate me. Amen.

Sunday, January 24, 2010

We are born free

Galatians 5:1: “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*” KJV

As we move closer to the celebration of the great attributes of African Americans to this country, one cannot help but reflect on the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. When I see the words Liberty, Free, and Bondage, I think about the passion exhibited by many of the leaders during the Civil Rights era – especially the more radical leaders and movements. A couple of weeks after Malcolm X made a public “Declaration of Independence” from the Nation of Islam, he made this statement in his speech “The Ballot or the Bullet”⁹ – “*How can you thank a man for giving you what’s already yours? How then can you thank him for giving you only part of what’s already yours? You haven’t even made progress?*” Freedom and Liberty is already ours because of our Salvation. There is nothing in addition to **confessing** with our mouths the Lord Jesus **and believing** in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead that brings salvation. (*Romans 10:9*) Man can not take your salvation or give you salvation – it is not man’s to give. In this passage of scripture, the Apostle Paul exhibits his passion and radical love for Christ and the converts. Paul is trying to get the Galatians to understand that there is no additional act to their salvation. The law of circumcision is the issue Paul is addressing: “*You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*” (*Galatians 5:4 NRSV*) Take time today to witness to someone about your salvation. Before you witness, however, make

Malcolm X Speaks, 1965, Merit Publishers and Betty Shabazz

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sure you reflect on the benefits of your salvation and give God thanks for freedom from bondage and your victory over sin because of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let Us Pray: Father in Heaven, I confess Christ Jesus as my Savior. I thank you Father, for a love so great for me that you sacrificed your son on the cross in order that I might live and not die. Holy Spirit please teach me to live in the freedom and liberty of my salvation. Amen

Monday, January 25, 2010

Forced Heirship

Romans 8:17: *“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heir with Christ...” KJV*

In Louisiana we have “forced heirship.” Generally, parents are obligated by law to leave their children, who have not attained the age of 23, a certain percentage of their property at death. A parent can also disinherit a child. Legitimate reasons under the law for disinheritance include a child raising his hand to a parent, attempt murder of a parent, or the child’s failure to communicate with the parent for two years. Good news, there is mercy in the law for the disinherited child – reconciliation. If the parent and child reconcile and it is documented in writing and it clearly and unequivocally demonstrates reconciliation – the child is an heir again. We are heirs of God regardless of age. We never lose our status as joint heirs with Christ. God will not disinherit us. Just as the child can be reconciled with his parent and restored to heirship in Louisiana, we as joint heirs of Christ are reconciled to God through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Our heirship with God is not forced. It is freely given with love. Our confession of faith that Jesus Christ is the son of God, that walked on this earth preaching, teaching, healing, and eventually suffering death on the cross, -- yet still lives-- is clear and unequivocal proof of our reconciliation with God. Never forget that!

Let Us Pray: Our Father who rules the heaven and the earth, whose kingdom is everlasting, we thank you. We thank you that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We thank you that the consequence of our sin is not disinheritance. We thank you for offering us the opportunity of salvation through your darling son Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday, January 26, 2010

The Lord’s Work is known from Long Ago

Acts 15:18: *“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” KJV*

When a match is struck a flame occurs and grows as it is fueled by the wood of the match and air. Soon the wood is consumed by reddish orange tongues of fire that spreads. Over 2000 years ago a match was struck and the fire spread out to the world. Beginning with a small group of disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit, the message of God traveled through their teaching, preaching, healing, and demonstrations of love. Many believed and received the Good News with joy. New churches were started, and new believers began to grow in the Christian life. Yet, some, the same as today, had a tendency to want to measure by their own yardstick.

God’s Word provides an eye witness account of the flame and the fire. God’s word is an accurate record of lessons and living examples of the work of the Holy Spirit, church relationships and organization, the implications of Grace, and the law of love. The Holy Spirit is available today to empower us to embark upon this mission to witness for Christ. We can rely on the Holy Spirit to give us strength, courage, and insight to accomplish our work for God.

The more we know God’s Word, the more we read it, study it, and meditate on it the better we will be able to discern what is right and best in times of controversy or doctrinal deviation. God’s Word is validity of Christ’s claims and promises. The Lord has made things clear from the earliest times through His word.

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Let Us Pray: Lord, Grant us the desire and the diligence to be the student of scripture you have commanded us to be, Amen.

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Heart to Heart

Psalm 22: 9-10: “But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breast. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly.” KJV

Have there been times in your life that you couldn’t feel God’s presence? You’ve been studying His word, reading your bible, attending bible study and yet you still feel as if he’s not there.

Before my son was born I had been warned by several mother’s that one of the worst things I could do was let the baby sleep with me. So, here I was, the first night home and where was the baby, sleeping on my chest of course. At times I would lay for what seemed like hours watching him sleep, watching his body rise and fall on my chest as I inhaled and exhaled. At times we seemed to breathe as one. It was amazing! He was comforted and I was at peace because he was safe and I knew where he was. One night several months later I found myself in that same position flat on my back with my child lying snugly on my chest, then it happened, the unthinkable. At some point in the darkness of the night I heard crying. Instinctively I sat straight up in the bed as I tried to come to my senses. I reached for the light and as it came on the cry got louder, that’s when I realized what happened. I had fallen asleep and the baby had rolled off my chest. In a panic I jumped up and proceeded to run around the room looking for him. I am sure the whole scene looked very comical, but at the time it was anything but funny. I was panicked but at the same time I never lost sight of my mission, to find my baby. He had left the sanctity and safety of my protection! My only thought was to find him and I did!

Whenever I am feeling far from God, I am reminded that no matter what I experience in this life, God is always near because I carry him in my heart. When life becomes complex and burdensome, I can lay my head on Him, and there I’ll find comfort and be at peace. What better place to take refuge than the bosom of Jesus! After all it is he who made us and took us from our mother’s womb; “*but thou art he that took me out of the womb*” He’s known us since the beginning of time; “*I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly.*”

And the rest of the story..... Sometimes when we don’t feel God, it may be that we’ve temporarily left His protection; we have left the peace and comfort of His bosom. Like a baby when we are lying in His bosom, we can feel His heart beating, the rises and falls of life are not as difficult to handle because we are in a safe place. However when we roll away and get lost all we have to do is cry out to Him and even if we’re in a dark place, He’ll shine a light on our dark pathways. One thing’s for certain, He makes it His personal mission to find us when we cry out to Him!

Let Us Pray: Father God, thank you for letting me feel you in my heart. With each beat of my heart, each breath that I take, I am reminded that you are always with me. Thank you for never leaving me.

Thursday, January 28, 2010

You can’t go back...and you can’t give it back

Jeremiah 20: 14-18: “*Cursed be the day wherein I was born...Wherefore I came out of the womb to see labor and sorrow...? KJV*”

Are there mornings when you just want to bury your face under the pillows, turn off the sun, and go back to bed because the thought of the responsibilities awaiting you are just too much to bear? It looks like the prophet is having one of those days. He has cursed the day he was born as well as rejected the plan and purpose God has for his life. Jeremiah is tired. He does

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not want to remember when God told him: “*I formed thee...I knew thee...I sanctified thee...I ordained thee...a prophet.*” (Jeremiah 1:5) Jeremiah is experiencing such heaviness and pain that death for him is better than life. Thankfully, Jeremiah was strengthened and obediently followed God’s plan for his life.

Today, there is someone on this earth that wants to end his/her life. Suicide, however, is not the answer. The pain, challenges, and disappointments of life can never outweigh God’s plan and purpose for our lives. Yes, it really hurts sometimes and it can get pretty dark at other times, but life is bearable through Christ Jesus. In Christ is life. Jesus is the light of the world; therefore when we call on Jesus, the darkness has to flee. God formed us, God knows us, God sanctified us, and God ordained our lives for a specific purpose. So who are we to say “I give up?” We do not have the right to reject the breath of life God has given us. When we give up, we are aborting God’s divine plan for our lives. When things get to the point of “I can’t go on” just whisper the prayer – “Lord help me....” Trust me, God will be right there to scoop you up, cradle you in his arms, and ease your pain.

There is someone out there that needs your prayers. Pray for those that are contemplating suicide. Pray for those that want to take life. Please Pray.

Let us Pray: Lord, as you know, there is someone out there right now that does not want to take another breath. I thank you for posting your angels around this precious soul. May your beautiful creation recognize the love you have for all mankind. May the ones that are so lost in pain, emptiness, and grief that they want to inflict pain on others by taking life be stopped in their tracks and repent. May there be a turning away from the desire to kill. Please have mercy upon their souls. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

Friday, January 29, 2010

Pre-existing Conditions – COVERED!

Isaiah 38:19 “*The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth.*” KJV

At the close of 2009, Congress was in heated discussions on health care reform. One point of contention between the parties was whether the government should fund coverage for the 25 plus million Americans who have no insurance. Included in legislation was a mandate that the insurance companies cover pre-existing conditions.¹⁰ Thank God we are not at the mercy of man as to whether our pre-Jesus condition precludes or limits our benefits post-Christ.

In the 38th Chapter of Isaiah, we learn that King Hezekiah is terminally ill. God instructed Hezekiah to get his house in order in preparation for death. Hezekiah refused to accept that his life was not covered by God. Hezekiah immediately pulled out his policy and made an appeal to God as to why he is eligible to live. In Hezekiah’s praying and weeping he reminded God that he was his faithful servant. God granted Hezekiah’s request to live.

Our pre-existing condition before Christ was sin which equates to death. Because of Christ, we have the full benefits of abundant life here on earth and eternal life after death. In Hezekiah’s praise and thanksgiving to God for sparing his life, he honors God for casting his sins behind his back. (*Isaiah 38:17*). Hezekiah practically brings God back to why he created us. He does this by reminding God that: “*...the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down in the pit cannot hope for thy*

¹⁰ At the time of publication, only the house bill, “Affordable Health Care for America Act – H.R. 3962” had been introduced and passed by the House. Unfortunately the Senate health care bill does not allow for a provision to bar exclusion for pre-existing conditions. The Senate vote was scheduled for late December 2009.

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truth.” (Isaiah 38:18) But only *“the living ... he shall praise thee.”*(Isaiah 39:19)

Let Us Pray: Father, I thank you that I live. I praise you Lord that I can celebrate you for I know I will not be silenced by the grave. I look forward to the day and night and night and day worship and praise of you in heaven. In the meantime, Father, I give glory, honor, and praise unto you. I will bless your name always. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Saturday, January 30, 2010

God has already blessed us in Christ Jesus

Ephesians 1:3-4: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” KJV*

The blessings of Salvation originated in the timeless mind of God long before we existed. God has unlimited knowledge and wisdom. He knew us as His own before the world was formed (Romans 8:29). We do not receive salvation because we deserve it but because God is gracious and freely gives salvation. He has distinctly confirmed His love for us. He provides all we could ever need, and more (Matthew 5:45). In Christ we have countless spiritual blessings. When we have an intimate relationship with Christ, we can enjoy blessings that are eternal, not just temporal. Only being in Christ do we have access to every spiritual blessing.

Let Us Pray: God we express our thanks for your wonderful love. Thank you for choosing us and blessing us to belong to you through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Sunday, January 31, 2010

I trust you Lord

Psalm 71:5: *“For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou are my trust from my youth.” KJV*

Let us Pray: Father, I thank you for reminding me that from the very beginning you control my life. Lord, forgive me for attempting to control my life. I am honored that you created me. I love you Lord. I commit to keep my trust in you. I pray that in times of fear, doubt, or confusion that I not put my trust in man, but call upon you to strengthen me. I thank you Father for all things. Amen.

Month in Review

Accomplishments & Victories:

Revelations:

Lord I thank you for revealing to me:

Challenges and Disappointments:

In spite of a few heart-aches and pain I:

My Prayer:

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**FIRST EMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
“THE CHURCH WITH VISION AND THE FAITH TO ACT”
PROVERBS 29:18 JAMES 2: 18**

About First Emanuel Baptist Church

We are celebrating our 124th year in 2010 and our 21st year under the leadership of Dr. Charles Joseph Southall, III. Pastor Southall is the 7th Pastor of First Emanuel Baptist Church. We are located in New Orleans, Louisiana and our State’s Capitol, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. For more information about us, please visit our website. You may also contact us as follows:

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