



The Spirit of Strawberry Baptist Association

Rev. David Timma- Moderator

Vernon DeLong – Secretary

Vol 55 No. 12 Dec 2024



*How silently,
How silently,
The wondrous Gift
is giv'n!
So God imparts
to human hearts,
The blessings
of His heav'n.
No ear may hear
His coming, but
in this world of sin,
Where meek souls
will receive Him still,
The dear Christ
enters in.*

*“O Little Town
of Bethlehem”
3rd verse
written by
Phillip Brooks, 1868*



Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions Week of Prayer December 1st – 8th

Charlotte Digges “Lottie” Moon was born December 12, 1840, on a 1500 acre tobacco plantation near Scottsville, Virginia, part of a family of five girls and two boys. The Moon family valued education, and at age fourteen Lottie went to school at the Baptist-affiliated Virginia Female Seminary (*later Hollins University*) and Albemarle Female Institute in Charlottesville, Virginia. In 1861 Lottie received one of the first Master of Arts degrees awarded to a woman by a southern institution. She learned Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and later Chinese. Lottie underwent a spiritual awakening after a series of revival meetings on her college campus in 1858, led by John Broadus, one of the founders of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Lottie helped her mother maintain the family estate during the Civil War, and afterward began a teaching career. She taught at female academies in Danville, KY, and in Cartersville, GA. Lottie joined the First Baptist Church and ministered to the impoverished families of Bartow County, GA. Lottie’s younger sister Edmonia, accepted a call to go to north China as the first single woman Baptist missionary in 1872. By this time, the Southern Baptist Convention had relaxed its policy against sending single women into the mission field, and Lottie soon felt called to follow her sister to China. On July 7, 1873, the Foreign Mission Board officially appointed 32-year-old Lottie as a missionary to China.

Lottie joined her sister Edmonia at the North China Mission Station in Shandong, and began her ministry by teaching in a boy’s school. While accompanying some of the missionary wives on “country visits” to outlying villages, Lottie discovered her passion: direct Evangelism. Most mission work at that time was done by married men, but Lottie discovered an important reality: only women could reach Chinese women. Lottie became frustrated, convinced her talents were being wasted and could be better put to use in evangelism and church planting. She had come to China to “go out among the millions” as an evangelist, and came to view herself as part of an oppressed class - single women missionaries. Her writings were an appeal on behalf of all those who were facing similar situations in their ministries.

In 1885, at the age of 45, Moon gave up teaching and moved into the interior to evangelize full-time. Her converts numbered in the hundreds. Continuing a prolific writing campaign, Moon’s letters and articles poignantly described the life of a missionary and pleaded the “desperate need” for more missionaries. She encouraged Southern Baptist women to organize mission societies in the local churches to help support additional missionary candidates, and to consider coming themselves. In 1887, Moon wrote to the *Foreign Mission Journal* and proposed that the week before Christmas be established as a time of giving to foreign missions. Catching her vision, Southern Baptist women organized local Women’s Missionary Societies and even Sunbeam Bands for children to promote missions and collect funds to support missions. Moon was instrumental in the founding of the *Woman’s Missionary Union*, an auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, in 1888. The first “**Christmas Offering for Missions**”, in 1888 collected over \$3,315; enough to send three new missionaries to China.

Throughout her missionary career, Moon faced plague, famine, disease, revolution and war; all profoundly affecting mission work. Unknown to her fellow missionaries, Moon shared her personal finances and food with anyone in need around her, severely affecting both her physical and mental health. In 1912, she only weighed 50 pounds. Alarmed, fellow missionaries arranged for her to be sent back home to the United States. However, Lottie Moon died en route at the age of 72, on December 24, 1912, in the harbor of Kobe, Japan. Her body was cremated and the remains returned to her family in Crewe, Virginia, for burial.

Our Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions Goal is \$205 Million for 2024.

In 2023, the IMB raised \$206.8 Million for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

In 2023, Strawberry Baptist Association gave \$33,733 to the LMCO.

100% of the LMCO pays the salaries of 3500 Foreign Missionaries

Strawberry Baptist Association

Bedford - Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Ministry was one of our main focuses during the year. We had a goal of 225. We exceeded that goal with a final total on Dedication Sunday of 254.

- *As we roll into December, we are gearing up for all the Christmas activities. On Sat, Dec 7th, we will once again host the Bedford Area YMCA's 5K Christmas Classic. Some of our members participate in the race, but our Outreach Committee will be on site, to help with parking and lending a hand, as needed.
- *On Sun, Dec 15th, our children will be joined by "The Growing Place" to present their Christmas Pageant, "A Shepherd's Story" during morning worship. Lunch will follow in the Fellowship Hall and maybe even a visit from Santa.
- *Our Christmas Cantata will be held the following Sun, Dec 22nd during morning worship and later that evening, we will have the Live Nativity Scene on the front lawn from 5 – 7 pm.
- *As we move into the "Reason for the Season", we will present our "Christmas Eve Candlelight Service" on Dec 24th at 7:00 pm. We invite our community to attend any of these events.

Pecks - packed **59 OCC Shoeboxes** for Samaritan's Purse.

- *We had our Community Thanksgiving Breakfast on Sat, Nov 23rd, with the Men of the Church doing the cooking.
- *Our Christmas Program will be Sun, Dec 15th, at 5:30 PM.

Timber Ridge - Our Youth attended Word of Life's Reverb event with hundreds of other youth across the state. They enjoyed fun games, food, prizes and most importantly, a Bible challenge that encouraged a closer walk with the Lord. Several of our youth rededicated their lives to Christ.

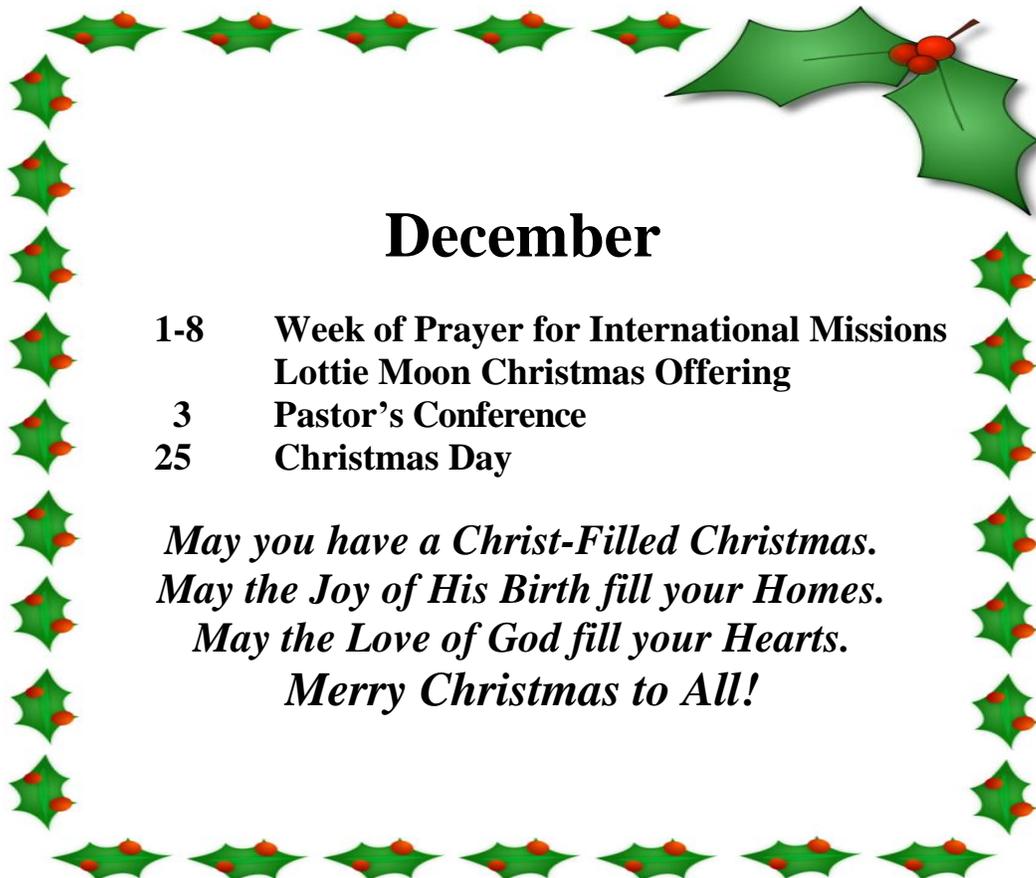
- *We are pleased to announce that our very own, Leslie Fifer, was bestowed the honor of Teacher of the Year at Big Island Elementary School. Leslie is a dedicated educator who loves the Lord and loves her students and works diligently in helping them meet their educational needs and goals.
 - *We filled **100 Shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child**, collected items for the Bedford Christmas Station & also sponsored several children through Agape Ministries Angel Tree campaign.
 - *Our AWANA Clubbers enjoyed hearing from a real-life hero during our "Salute to Heroes Night."
 - *On Sunday evening, Dec 15th, our AWANA Clubbers will be celebrating Jesus with a BIG "Happy Birthday Jesus Night." There will be cake, fun games, a craft and most importantly, the Christmas Story.
 - *Our ladies will be preparing baskets of goodies for our seniors and shut-ins on Dec 4th and will begin the evening with a "Soup Supper."
 - *Our Choir will present their Christmas cantata, "Hope is Born" during our 11:00 am Worship Service on Dec 8th. Our children will join in by presenting drama that retells the birth of Jesus. We will enjoy our annual Christmas luncheon following the morning service.
 - *On Dec 15th during our 11:00 a.m. Worship Service, we will host the Gospel Group, "Promised Land Quartet," who will bless us with their "Christmas Joy Gospel Sing." Formed in Jan 2000, this group, who calls the Shenandoah Valley home, travels across the US sharing the Gospel of Christ, compelling folks to a new life in the Lord. As is their heart's cry, "If you walked in the doors lost without Christ, you don't have to leave that way."
 - *Our Ladies Wednesday Night Bible Study group will soon begin an in-depth look at the Book of Deuteronomy in the new study entitled, "Be Equipped: Acquiring the Tools for Spiritual Success." This study will be facilitated by Lisa Arthur, our Women's Ministry Leader.
- On Jan 5th, 2025, we will host speakers from the "ICR: Institute for Creation Research." "Science is objective. At least, that's what we're told. But there are inherent issues with this statement that can cause very real confusion. How can two rational, intelligent people look at the same piece of evidence and offer different explanations for their observations—and not just different, but mutually exclusive. What causes this divide, and what can we do about it?" (*ICR Staff Writer*). Plan to join us as we see how God is truly the Master Designer of all creation.

Sedalia - We packed **750 OCC Shoeboxes** for Samaritan's Purse. **Praise the Lord!**

Shady Grove – We delivered **42 OCC Shoeboxes** filled with gifts, covered in prayer to the collection site on Nov 24th.

- *Celebrating the beginning of Advent with our Hanging of the Greens service on Dec 1st.
- *Serving supper at the Rescue Mission of Roanoke on Dec 6th.
- *Christmas Fellowship Breakfast on Dec 15th.
- *Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Dec 24th at 8:00 PM.
- *REV Home support: prayer & fasting Dec 26th; Special Offering collection Dec 26th.

Strawberry Baptist Association
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December

- 1-8 **Week of Prayer for International Missions**
 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering
- 3 Pastor's Conference**
- 25 Christmas Day**

May you have a Christ-Filled Christmas.
May the Joy of His Birth fill your Homes.
May the Love of God fill your Hearts.
Merry Christmas to All!