



first baptist carrollton

worship & arts
MINISTRY

CHRISTMAS 2010

Sunday, December 5, 6:00 PM

"Celebrate Christmas"

- Worship Choir & Orchestra present music from new recording –
"Carols & Classics"
- Children's & Student Choirs featured also

Sunday, December 12, 6:00 PM

Christmas Lord's Supper Service

MAJOR OUTREACH PRODUCTION:

Friday-Sunday, December 17-19, Performance Times

TBA

Charles Dickens'

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

A New Musical by Keith Ferguson & Bruce Greer

Friday, December 24, 5:00 PM

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Why did we choose A CHRISTMAS CAROL?

As the most popular novel in the English language, this story and title has immediate name recognition with the secular audience we are seeking to reach. It is our belief that a musical version of this much beloved Christmas classic will draw people from a broad section of our community. Charles Dickens was a Christian and intended A CHRISTMAS CAROL as a parable to teach the heart of Christ, and as a story of Scrooge's recognition of personal sin and his ultimate redemption and salvation. Over the years, many stage and film adaptations have minimized these facets of the novel, while the version we are writing will celebrate them. Our version will be very faithful to the novel, with a focus on Christ as the heart of Christmas.

What about the ghosts and spirits? How do we reconcile that aspect with the Scriptures?

Dickens was clear throughout the novel that this was a fantastic dream Scrooge was having. He never intended for anyone to think that the ghosts and spirits were "real," rather they were sent to Scrooge in a dream as a way to get his attention as to the state of his eternal soul. One of the early lines in the novel is that "Scrooge was a wicked, old sinner." It's rarely stated that plainly in 2010!

How will the Choir & Orchestra be involved in A CHRISTMAS CAROL?

All choir members are encouraged to participate. The production will consist of a large, singing chorus in full Victorian costumes, with many acting and singing roles and choreography. There will be many opportunities to be very involved both onstage and off. In addition to adults, there are children and teenage roles as well that must be cast. There will be an audition process, with detailed information and instructions announced at a later date.

The instrumentation for the musical has yet to be determined, however, there is a good chance that it will require smaller forces than we use most of the time. However, there will still be many parts to be covered and players needed to play. We will keep the orchestra updated on this as the writing process moves forward.

How will the project be funded?

We will utilize the Patron program that we used for the SCT.

Why are the dates later in the month than the usual SCT dates?

First: in order to reach our target audience. While early December dates are more convenient for us, most of the people we are seeking to reach are looking for events to attend with their families after office parties have ended and school has been released. Second, we need a full two weeks of preparation following our December 5 concert to be ready.

How can we learn and memorize the recording music, as well as a new musical?

Typically, there are 15-20 songs on the Singing Christmas Tree, depending on the year. We will record 11 songs for the CD, and the musical will contain approximately 6 full chorus numbers. So, it will be challenging, but we are basically in the same ballpark.

Reclaiming 'A Christmas Carol'
By Stephen Skelton
The Entertainment Ministry

Stephen Skelton, author of the new book *A Christmas Carol: Special Church Edition*, thinks that among the red-nosed reindeer and talking snowmen of the season, Charles Dickens' beloved Christmastime classic has been misplaced.

The new book features the entire novel along with copious study notes on the margins of each page that show where Charles Dickens reveals his Christian faith within the story. Skelton recently spoke with CBN.com about *A Christmas Carol: Special Church Edition*.

"Today, too many of us view *A Christmas Carol* as a secular seasonal story, in the same category as the stories of Rudolph or Frosty," said Skelton in a recent interview. "But that's not where it belongs at all."

"In the first place, with Charles Dickens, you're dealing with a self-proclaimed Christian author. And in the second place, he has infused his story with Christian meaning. After all, this is the writer who said, 'I have always striven in my writings to express the veneration for the life and lessons of our Savior...'"

"This book really started last year when I wrote a video-based Bible study on *A Christmas Carol*. While I was doing the research for the Bible study, I learned for myself that Charles Dickens was a Christian—and that he wove this Gospel parallel into *A Christmas Carol* on purpose."

"So this year, we created this little church hand-out book that features the complete text of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*—along with running notes in the margins of each page which show how fully the story of Ebenezer Scrooge was influenced by the teachings of Jesus Christ."

Skelton said that, throughout the novel, Dickens embedded scriptural references and biblical allusions that many readers today, both Christian and non-Christian, don't catch.

"For example, look at the title of the book. Today we may think of a carol as a secular seasonal song such as 'Jingle Bells.' But Dickens didn't know that meaning. Dickens is using the original meaning of 'a Christmas carol,' which is a song celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Then, to reinforce that his novel is a song celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, Dickens does not call the sections of his book chapters, he calls them staves, which means the stanzas of a song."

"Another example is when the ghost of Jacob Marley shows up, he's transparent," Skelton continued. "And Dickens writes, 'Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now.' Which makes no sense unless you understand that Dickens is actually referring to the book of I John where John mentions our "bowels of compassion." And so if you don't understand it's compassion

that Dickens is actually talking about, you miss his meaning—and the reason for Marley’s eternal damnation.”

Asked for another example, Skelton revealed the hidden meaning behind a very well-known name. “One of the main characters is Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim’s dad and Scrooge’s clerk. In using the name ‘Cratchit,’ Dickens has used the root word ‘cratch.’ That is the old English word for crèche, or the manger of baby Jesus.”

Referencing the earlier video-based Bible study he wrote, Skelton laid out the four biblical principles upon which Dickens built his Christmas redemption tale. “Dickens established the first part of the story to deal with the principle of sinfulness, specifically selfishness. This would take us from the start of the story all the way up till the ghost of Jacob Marley appears.”

“Next he moves into the principle of regret, which Scrooge experiences with the Spirit of Christmas Past. Then, Scrooge experiences repentance with the Spirit of Christmas Present. And finally, Scrooge experiences salvation when he prays for forgiveness as the Spirit of Christmas Future leaves him. So the story takes you from sinfulness to regret to repentance to salvation—which is not only Ebenezer Scrooge’s journey, but it’s our journey as well.”

Skelton added that when Dickens wrote this story, the people of his day readily understood the biblical meaning. “But, tragically, the Bible no longer provides the foundation for the common language of people in our society.”

“However, significantly, the stories that use that biblical language, such as *A Christmas Carol*, continue to be celebrated and embraced—which allows an excellent opportunity for Christians to reveal what biblical meaning actually calls people to that story.”

“There seems to be a modern perception that all of our great literary giants must have been atheists, or must not have been Christians. In truth, Christians need to promote classic Christian literary figures. Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* should find its rightful place alongside the likes of C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* or J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*—alongside other acknowledged works of celebrated Christian fiction.”

To solidify his point, Skelton offered a surprising fact from Dickens’ family life. “He was such a dedicated Christian, and so concerned that his children would know Christ, that he wrote a book called *The Life of our Lord* that was his retelling of the Gospel and was intended only for his children.”

In closing, Skelton remarked, “Perhaps the best thing I discovered through the research on this book is that our greatest Christmas classic really was based on the Greatest Story Ever Told—and that has brought me great joy.”

A WORD FROM THE PASTOR . . .

Keith,

I have read the material you are putting out tonight and think it is great. I am not only completely supportive of this idea but am enthusiastically excited about the possibilities of reaching a lost segment of our society through a familiar story.

All good things must come to an end and while the Tree has been great, I think many are open to exploring new possibilities. I cannot wait to see the production but more than that, believe many lives have the potential of being eternally changed. The issue is not about the Tree or "A Christmas Carol," but is about looking for creative ways to introduce people who are not believers to the salvation found in Jesus Christ.

I believe the choir and orchestra have this same vision and will be fully supportive of the new direction. The Bible says, "See the Lord is doing a new thing" and I believe that is happening this Christmas season through our worship ministry. More power to you and may this be a great community outreach.

I don't know about everyone else but the Pastor is 110% behind this plan and I will do all I can to make sure it is a success for the Kingdom.

Rock on.

Brent