



CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

March 2024

Volume LXXVI, No. 03

Preparing for Easter

Sunday, March 17

After worship - Covered-dish lunch
(Please see inside for details -
Stations of the Cross)

Sunday-Friday, March 17-29

Stations of the Cross available
1:00 -5:00 pm

Sunday, March 24

Palm/Passion Sunday

Service of the Palms

Homily: "It's Parade Time"

Service of the Passion

Homily: "Listen to the Music"

Homilies by Layne Smith, Special
Music by Chancel Choir, Men's and
Women's Ensembles, Handbells,

Strings, Organ, and Readers

Stripping of the Sanctuary

Thursday, March 28

Maundy Thursday Service 6:30 pm
(Childcare available)

Friday, March 29

Good Friday

"Illuminare" by Elaine Hagenberg
First Presbyterian Church, 7:00 pm
Combined Community Choirs

Sunday, March 31

Easter Sunday



GOD'S GROAN

The Apostle Paul was being accused of caring for and loving people not like us. Those people not like us includes the vast majority of the population, doesn't it? Think about it. It's far easier to ignore, not like, and think less of others who are different from us. In this case, though, it was the Gentiles—you and me. We were the ones whom Paul was accused of caring for and loving. We were the outsiders.

As I once heard Fred Craddock say when speaking of the book of Romans, Paul had heard the groan of God over Rome. Paul understood the care of God for ALL, not just those like you and me! Paul was attempting to allay the fears of the Jewish Christians regarding the Gentile Christians. His goal was to bring these two wings of the church together. A portion of the Jewish Christian church looked down on the Gentiles. They couldn't be real Christians, could they? After all they were not true descendants of Abraham.

As we move through the Lenten season and begin to hope for and experience warmer weather and anticipate spring, let me ask you: Have you heard God's groan over Greenwood? If so, what have you heard? What have you heard in God's groan that calls you to invest yourself in caring for and loving those who are different from you and me? It's certainly not easy or natural for me. Sometimes I succeed, other times I fail spectacularly. I'm speaking here of genuine care, not a paternalistic, oppressive, inauthentic care that really is an expression of ones' belief that: I'm better than you, but I'll lower myself to "care" for you.

George Eliot, in one of her books wrote: McCarthy died today. He would have given his life for people who wouldn't give him the time of day. Jesus heard God's groan over creation and gave his life, and yes, for some who wouldn't give him the time of day. Have you heard God's groan over Greenwood? If so, how will you respond? If you haven't heard God's groan over Greenwood, what are you willing to do to begin identifying, listening to and for it, and responding redemptively to it? I firmly believe that if you really listen and respond to God's groan over Greenwood that this church will reach heights that she has never experienced or seen.

I'm honored to share life and ministry with you

- Layne

Praying the



March 17-29

Except:
Sat., Mar. 23

1:00 - 5:00 pm

Praying the Stations of the Cross

Taking time to reflect and pray while following the path Jesus took can enhance our Lenten and Easter worship. The Stations of the Cross provide an opportunity to follow the path Jesus took without the need for travel. The Stations of the Cross highlight fourteen key events in Jesus' journey. Various artists and poets from First Baptist Church and the community have submitted pieces for the fourteen Stations of the Cross that are positioned throughout the church and grounds. (A brochure with directions will be provided.) The stations will be available March 17–March 29 from 1:00 pm–5:00 pm, with the exception of Saturday, March 23. Everyone is invited to a covered dish lunch after worship on March 17. The church will provide meat and beverages. Please bring side items and join us for this special event. During lunch the artists and poets will be introduced, and the journey through the stations will be explained.



Worship in March

Sunday—March 3 Third Sunday In Lent

Scripture:

Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 22:15-22

Sermon: "Avoiding the Idol Factory"
Layne Smith

Special Music
"Take Now My Voice"—Chancel Choir,
David Corbitt, guest director

Sunday—March 10 Fourth Sunday in Lent

Scripture: **1 Kings 22:1-23, 28a**

Sermon: "Discerning God's Word"
Todd Wilson

Special Music
"Lord, for Thy Tender Mercies Sake"
Chancel Choir

Sunday—March 17 Fifth Sunday in Lent

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalms 119:9-16

Sermon:
"Equipping for the Now and the Not Yet"
Elizabeth Nance-Coker

Special Music
"Depth of Mercy"—Chancel Choir
"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"
"Near the Cross"
Jean O. Wood Handbells

Sunday—March 24 Palm/Passion Sunday

Service of the Palms
Scripture: **Luke 19:29-40**

Homily: "It's Parade Time"
Layne Smith

Service of the Passion
Scripture: **Philippians 2:5-11**

Homily: "Listen to the Music"
Layne Smith

Special Music
"Lenten Meditations and Music"—"God So
Loved the World"; "Out of the Deep" from
Requiem by John Rutter; "Psalm 121";
"They Crucified My Lord"; "Arise, My Soul,
Arise"; "O Love"—Chancel Choir, Men's
and Women's Ensembles, Handbells,
Strings, Organ, and Readers

Thursday—March 28 Maundy Thursday

Special Music
"Kneel at the Cross"
Bell Tower Trio with Betty Walker, piano
"Betrayed"
Cody Beard, trumpet; Betty Walker, piano

Friday—March 29 Good Friday

Special Music
"Illuminare" by Elaine Hagenberg
First Presbyterian Church, 7:00 pm
Combined Community Choirs

Sunday—March 31 Easter Sunday

Scripture: **Mark 16:1-8, Acts 10:34-43**

Sermon: "What's the Good News?"
Layne Smith

Special Music
"Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"
Handbells, Brass, and Organ
"Christus Resurrexit"
"Christ is Arisen"—Karle Erickson
Chancel Choir



Sanctuary Flowers During Lent

During Lent, the permanent greenery arrangement on the Communion table will be the only sanctuary flowers. May the simplicity of this arrangement remind us that Lent is a time of self-reflection, prayer, and focus on following Jesus' example of sacrifice and self-giving.



Community Lenten Pilgrimage

First Lunch Seating 12:00 pm

Service 12:30 pm

Second Lunch Seating 1:00 pm

Cost of Lunch \$2.00

March 6 ARP Todd McCoy

March 13 First Baptist

Mary Balfour Dunlap

March 20 Main Street UMC Steve Keck

March 27 First Presbyterian Kyle Hite

(Offering will be given to
Greater Greenwood United Ministry)



Music Notes

"Return to the Lord" and "Go with Us, Lord"

During this Lenten season, the Chancel Choir will be singing a new Call to Worship each week titled "Return to the Lord" by Karle Erickson. The tenors and basses offer an undulating motif of "return" over and over while the altos and sopranos sing the melody "Return to the Lord, for He is your God, He is gracious and merciful unto you. Return." It's a beautiful way to begin each Sunday of Lent, as we enter into worship each week, with a focused desire to return our hearts and minds to the Lord and to be still, listening for God's word and message.

Also, each week we will end our Lenten services with the 'Tallis Canon' "Go with Us, Lord," with music by the English composer Thomas Tallis. We will sing the hymn tune all together, and then begin a round (like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat") with the congregation on the pulpit side and in the balcony starting first, followed by the congregation on the lectern side, followed by the Chancel Choir. You can imagine the melody even continuing after we finish singing, to propel us into the world, spreading the good news of Christ's salvation for all. It calls on the Lord to guide us every day, and for the Holy Spirit to make us "Strong and true" that our lives "May be our gift to you (God)." May this year's Lenten journey be a time of returning our hearts and minds to God, and taking the message of Christ's love and forgiveness out into the world, each day. Keith



"Flowering" the Cross

The church family is asked to bring flowers from home to "flower" the cross on Easter. A cross with greenery will be placed in the narthex prior to service.



Opportunities to Honor or Remember for Easter



On Easter Sunday, First Baptist will publish a list of donors and those honored or remembered through a special offering during Lent. Honor donations and memorial donations may be designated for the Beverly Greer Offering for State Missions or for the Ministry Plan. Unfortunately, the florist moved the date for lily orders, so the deadline to order lilies has passed. Donation in honor or in memory of someone must be given through Sunday, March 24, to have the name listed in the March 31 bulletin. Checks should be made payable to First Baptist Church. A form is in the church office for donors to indicate where the donation is to go and who is being honored or remembered. Since cards will be available in the church office for donors to send to recipients, no acknowledgements of these gifts will be sent by the church office.



March/April Building Blocks: "All about Missions"

In addition to our regular Building Blocks of Growing on Grace and Chancel Choir, the Missions Committee will be leading an overview in the Fellowship Hall of our local missions partners. Each Wednesday a representative from a local missions partner will be on hand to give a brief presentation followed by a time for discussion, questions and answers, and, during some sessions, a hands-on activity such as writing letters to veterans and overseas military; preparing Easter cards for Meals on Wheels; making bowls for the Greenwood Soup Kitchen *Empty Bowls* and more. This will be a wonderful time to get involved with our missions partners and learn how First Baptist can continue to grow in our mission to serve Christ.

Finishing the Year (2023) on a Positive Note...Financially!

Although First Baptist ended the year with a negative balance (\$78,684.61) as it relates to the annual Ministry Plan, the church ended the year with a **surplus** (\$28,411.00) related to revenue verses expenses.

This would not be possible without the generous contributions given by the First Baptist Church family in December. Thank you for your generosity to the annual Ministry Plan and to the ministries of First Baptist Church!

In fact, more than \$211,000.00 was given in December alone! To say this in another way, twenty-one percent of the annual Ministry Plan was given in the month of December. (Thirty-four percent of the Annual Ministry Plan was given in the Fourth Quarter.)



In a recent article in *Outreach Magazine*, Thom Rainer listed several Truths in Church Statistics. Before you look at the answers below, see how many you get correctly.

- 1) The greatest decline in churches comes from the decreasing attendance frequency of church members.
- 2) The median average worship attendance is 65.
- 3) Approximately 22% of church participants are under the age of 18.
- 4) Sixty-eight percent of church members live within 15 minutes of their congregation's location.
- 5) Females account for a majority of active participants (56%) in churches.

How did you do? All of the answers to the questions above are TRUE.

Church Family News

Christian Sympathy is extended to the families of

- Carl Bridges, Bonnie Corbitt's uncle
- Bernice Boyd Gantt, sister-in-law of Judy Gantt
- Vivian Anders

Birth

Ellison Ruth Cox, daughter of Maura and Joshua Cox

Home: Jeanne Hughston, Alison Moore, James Thomas, Andy Clawson, Linton Mann, Jackie Dewberry, Harry Stephens



February Diaconate Update

The February Diaconate meeting was held at 6:00 pm on Sunday, February 18. In addition to receiving reports from the staff and the Senior Pastor Search Committee, the Diaconate approved a proposal by the First Baptist Church Foundation to appoint Ray Wilson to the First Baptist Church Foundation Board.



Daylight Saving Time Begins Sunday, March 10

Don't forget to set clocks ahead one hour before going to bed on Saturday night, March 9. Daylight Saving Time begins at 2:00 am Sunday, March 10. Check the batteries in your smoke detectors, too.

January 28 to February 25, 2024

Monthly Need	\$ 95,039.35
Monthly Gifts	93,585.00
Ministry Plan Req'd YTD	152,062.96
Ministry Plan Rcv'd YTD	124,045.71
Ministry Plan YTD Deficit (Under)	(28,017.25)
Sunday School Att. (Avg)	164
Worship Attendance (Avg)	197



Spring Semester Dates

- March 24:** Children's Egg Hunt at the Weaver's, 3:30 pm-5:00 pm
- March 24:** Palm Sunday, children wave palms in worship
- March 27:** No Wednesday Activities
- March 28:** Maundy Thursday Service
- March 31:** Easter, children shake Alleluia Bells in worship
- April 3:** Children's Family Picnic and Playground Night, 6:00 pm-7:30 pm
No children's choirs
- April 11** Deadline for Family Night reservation
- April 14** Family Night Activity
- April 25:** RSVP due for Children's Playground Night
- April 26:** Children's Playground Night, 5:30 pm-8:00 pm
- May 15:** Music & Missions Night
- May 22:** CIA Fun Night
No children's choirs
- May 23:** RSVP due for Family Bowling Night
- May 29:** Family Bowling Night, 6:30 pm-7:30 pm
No children's choirs

Family Night Activity Rescheduled

Due to a large majority of families being unavailable, we'll postpone Sunday's Family Activity Night to Sunday, April 14. It will still be 5:00 pm-7:00 pm with pizza supper, cookie decorating, bracelets and necklaces, and a Homebound craft. RSVPs will be due Thursday, April 11.



Egg "Stuffings" Needed



Candy—gummies preferred—and small surprises are needed to help "fill the plastic eggs" for the children's March 24 **Easter Egg Hunt**. There are bins in the church office, narthex, or Anna's office. Monetary donations are also welcome. **Please make donations by Sunday, March 10.** Thank you for helping make this event special for the children.



Easter Egg Hunt

The Easter Egg Hunt is Sunday, March 24, 3:30 pm-5:30 pm at the Weaver's home (450 Pembroke Rd). Bring your Easter baskets! Please use Google Docs to sign up for food.



Calling All Children



On **Palm Sunday (March 24)**, all children are invited to carry palm fronds to the altar during the processional. On **Easter Sunday (March 31)**, children will receive "Alleluia Bells" to ring on the chorus of the great Easter Hymn, "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today." (Every time the word "Alleluia" is sung the children will ring their bells.) On both of these Sundays, someone will be in the Narthex at 10:45 am to distribute palms or bells.



Family Activities on Wednesday Nights during District 50 Break

During District 50's intercession week and Spring Break, March 27 and April 3, Wednesday Nights will look different.

On March 27, there will be no Wednesday Night activities. Instead, the church will have a Maundy Thursday service at 6:30 pm in the sanctuary on April 3. Childcare is available.

The second intercession week, April 3, will be a playground and picnic night from 6:00 pm-7:30 pm. Families are welcome to eat upstairs or get a meal to go and eat it as a picnic or bring your own. There will be no childcare for this night.

Volunteer Help



A volunteer is needed for Children's Church (3K-5K) on the first Sunday in April, June, August, October, and December. Help is also needed in the Nursery on the second Sunday in April, June, August, October, and December. Please contact Anna Burch (aeburchfbc@gmail.com) to volunteer.

Youth News

Festival by the Sea



Please pray for the *Voices of Grace* choir and their chaperones (Keith Jameson, Beverly Psomas, and Dianna Cox) as they prepare for and travel to the Festival by Sea, March 1-3.



Voices of Grace Youth Choir

Due to Festival by the Sea and Sunday Night Live, *Voices of Grace* will not rehearse on March 3 and March 10. The choir will rehearse on March 17 and March 24 at 4:50 pm. There will be no rehearsal on Easter Sunday (March 31).



Sunday Night Live

March 10, 2024

6:00 pm-8:00 pm

At the home of Lauren Coker
(151 Devore Rd.)



Thanks for Your Help

The Youth Souper Bowl fundraiser on February 11 took in \$4,394.00 from the sale of soup, pimento cheese, and the baked goods auction. Expenses total \$1,019.98, meaning the youth raised \$3,374.02 for Passport expenses this summer. The youth would like to thank everyone who contributed to this event. YOU are who made it a success.

Walk the Labyrinth during Lent

The Spiritual Formation Committee invites everyone to prayerfully walk the labyrinth located behind the church. The labyrinth is an opportunity to reflect on any of the journeys Jesus took during his life.



Emerald Handbells to Perform

At the next NGO Fellowship on March 5, the Emerald Handbells will present a program of sacred and secular music. This group is comprised of twelve members of the community, three of whom are members of our church choirs. Each year this community group share their talents at the Festival of Trees, the Burton Center, and nursing homes. The catered meal from Lee's Barbeque will be turkey, dressing, broccoli casserole, cranberry sauce, and banana pudding. The cost of the meal is \$10.00. **Non-NGO members are asked to call the church by Thursday, February 29, to make meal reservations.** The meeting will begin at 11:45 am, followed by the program and then lunch. Dues of \$5.00 for the year are now payable.



Library Corner

The following new titles have been added to the church library.

Adults

Allen, Carlton, *Stories of Falling from Grace* (4th copy)

Bowler, Kate, *Have a Beautiful, Terrible Day*

Brooks, Geraldine, *Horse*

Harpur, Tom, *Finding the Still Point*

Nouwen, Henri, *Bread for the Journey*

Children

Daywalt, Drew, *The Day the Crayons Came Home*

Turnbull, Stephanie, *Ancient Greeks*

-Enjoy reading, Libby



Gift of Rug

During the *Footsteps of Paul* trip last spring, the group visited OBA Rugs and Kilims in Selçuk, Turkey. Following a presentation of rugs woven by the company, OBA Rugs extended the gift of a rug to "pastors" for their congregations. Therefore, First Baptist was gifted a 4' by 2.5' handmade wool on cotton area rug. The Property Committee voted to place the rug in the chapel to be used with the kneeling bench.



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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED