

# TOWER TOPICS

The News Magazine of

## First Baptist Church

Niagara Falls, New York



VOLUME 68

NUMBER 3

2016

## First Baptist Church

554 Main Street



Corner of Main and Fourth

Niagara Falls, New York 14301-1584

### ***IN THE MARCH ISSUE:***

- ➔ p. 4 — Moderator's Notes
- ➔ p. 5 — A Little Godly Humor
- ➔ p. 6 & 7 — Seven Ways to Fight Distraction in Prayer
  - ➔ p. 8 — Bible Crossword: I Samuel
  - ➔ p. 9 — "Why Me?"
- ➔ p. 10 — Colors of the Church Year
- ➔ p. 11 — Awenam Anifrani and Rev. Holale C. Azondjagni
  - ➔ p. 12 — Missionary Rev. Deliris Carrión-Joseph

# March 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 Make special note of the St. Patrick's Day Corned Beef and Cabbage Supper and stay for the Vesper Service. Speaking of the Vesper Services, plan to attend as many of them as you can. Kath will be talking about Biblical stories we don't often get to hear.		1	2 OFFICE CLOSED 12:15 Inasmuch Lunch 7:00 Lenten Vespers	3	4 10:00 Men's Coffee 	5
<b>6 LENT IV</b> 10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship with Holy Communion 5:00 L.I.F.E.	7	8	9 OFFICE CLOSED 6:00 Diaconate/ Trustees Meeting 7:00 Lenten Vespers	10	11 10:00 Men's Coffee 	12
<b>13 LENT V</b> 10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship 12:15 Second Sunday lunch Daylight Savings Begins	14	15	16 OFFICE CLOSED 4:30-6:30 St. Patrick's Corned Beef Supper 7:00 Lenten Vespers	17 	18 10:00 Men's Coffee 	19
<b>20</b>  10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Festival Service Spring Begins	21	22	23 	24 OFFICE CLOSED  <b>MAUNDY THURSDAY</b> 7:00 Communion Service	<b>25</b>  <b>12 Noon – 3 PM</b> Seven Last Words of Christ from the Cross	<b>26</b>  Holy Saturday
<b>27</b>  <b>The resurrection of Jesus Christ</b> <i>Easter Sermon</i> 10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Festival Service	28	29	30	31	 <b>The Empty Cross</b>	



## March Birthdays

19	Kristy Engel
24	Marge Bozigar
25	Ron Bowser
29	Elaine McGrath
29	Joseph Mark Hoopsick III
30	Timothy Baxter



PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY for Sara Gromniak, Margaret Payne, Mark Williams, Jr., Patricia Smeal, Janet Keebler, Celia Krasinski, Neal Jacobs, Gladys Lewis, Dawn (Schutz) Lynn, Bertha and Harold Bissell, our Church family, our missionaries, our Country and all those who serve our Country.



### March 2 — Wednesday

12:15 PM Inasmuch luncheon

### March 6 — Sunday — LENT IV

10:00 AM Pre-service Fellowship

11:00 AM Divine Worship with Holy Communion  
Rev. Brian A. Brown, FRSA, preaching

5:00 PM L. I. F. E.

### March 9 — Wednesday

6:00 PM Diaconate/Trustees Meeting

#### LENTEN VESPER SERVICE

7:00 PM Mrs. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching

### March 13 — Sunday — LENT V

10:00 AM Pre-service Fellowship

11:00 AM Divine Worship  
Rev. Brian A. Brown, FRSA, preaching

12:15 PM Second Sunday Lunch

### March 16 — Wednesday

#### LENTEN VESPER SERVICE

4:30-6:30 PM St. Patrick's Corned Beef Supper

7:00 PM Mrs. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching

### March 20 — Sunday — PALM SUNDAY

10:00 AM Pre-service Fellowship

11:00 AM Festival Service with Palms  
Rev. Brian A. Brown, FRSA, preaching

### March 24 — Thursday

#### MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE

7:00 PM Rev. Dr. James Kelsey, preaching

### March 25 — Friday

#### GOOD FRIDAY

**12 Noon – 3:00 PM**

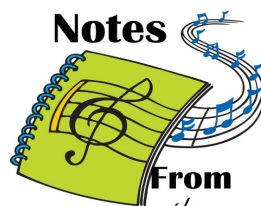
#### Seven Meditations

### March 27 — Sunday — EASTER!

10:00 AM Pre-service Fellowship

11:00 AM Festival Service with Infant Dedication  
Mrs. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching



**L. I. F. E.**Lively Interesting Fellowship for Everyone**Sunday, March 6 , 2016  
5:00 PM**Pot Luck.  
Bring a dish to pass.  
Sign up in the Friendship Room**Do we have Your Birthday?**If your birthday doesn't appear on our list, **please** call the office (716-282-4666) to let us know your special date so we can include it.**Last Month's Crossword Answers****Ruth****Notes****From  
the  
Moderator**

LENT has started. Have you checked out Sue Mink's Lenten Devotional that you received in the mail? Sue never disappoints with her thoughtful insights into our humanity for whatever season of the church year. Our prayer list has expanded this winter and we pray for those with health and life challenges. If you'd like prayer for a specific person, let us know. Our Wednesday Lenten services will be led by Kath Ordiway with an interesting variety of messages.

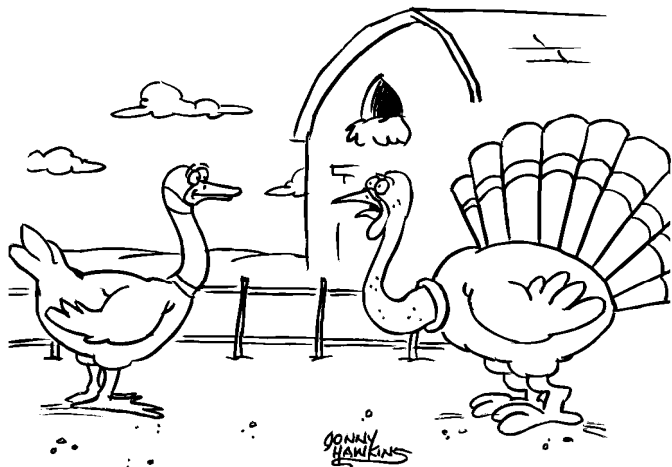
At our Diaconate/Trustee meeting we reviewed our mission giving for 2015. Our giving increased more than \$250 to over \$1250 to the One Great Hour of Sharing, World Mission, America for Christ, Blanket Sunday, International Ministries, and Retired Ministers and Missionary Fund. Plus we donated items to Heart, Love, & Soul, Community Missions (Mission/Mitten Tree) and Thanksgiving food collection, plus the Rummage Sale leftovers. That's probably another \$1250 worth of various items and for a church our size, that's HUGE! The Diaconate thanks all donors of funds and items throughout the year.

Continuing mission events, First Baptist will be hosting a Mission Dinner benefit for Carmella Jones who's off for five years' worth of work in Hungary in the schools run by the Baptist Church. An interesting fact we learned from her is that the churches run the schools, the government only provides minimal funding and the Baptists are in charge of 49 schools. The dinner is scheduled for Tuesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. The time and format is TBA at this writing and is open to the community. Tickets will go on sale at the end of March.

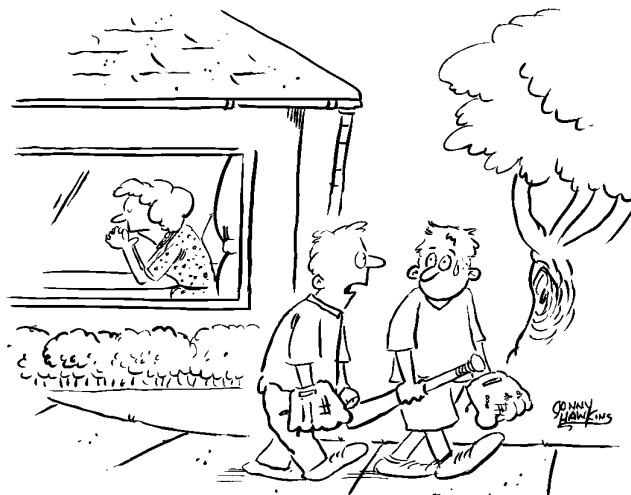
In March we celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a dinner on Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, and we'll be serving from 4:30-6:30 the traditional corned beef and cabbage dinner with Irish Soda Bread and dessert. If you'd like to assist, contact Donna or Sally Denny. Tickets will be on sale shortly.

A little bunny told me there's something in the air for little people and maybe Easter eggs? I'll have to check with the chickens to make sure I heard correctly.

*Donna Flood*



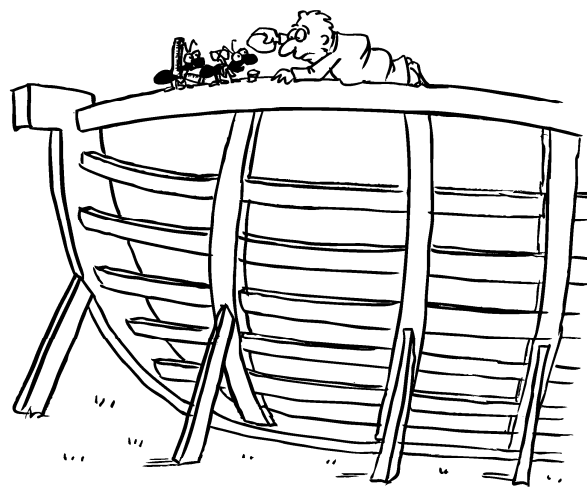
"I'm praying they opt for fast food...  
or that they pray and fast."



"Mom talks to God about us so  
we'll be prayer conditioned."



"He's today's greeter."



"We can help. We're carpenter ants."



"What program does God use to  
upload the sun every morning?"

## Seven Ways to Fight Distraction in Prayer

I remember hearing somewhere that Scripture teaches us how to pray as a mother teaches a child how to talk. God speaks to us through his Word, and then we speak back to him in response, much as a child listens to his parents and then responds. As the father of soon-to-be-3-year-old who's talking more and more, and saying some truly hilarious things, this is an illustration that resonates with me! And I find it true in my prayer life.

The point of the metaphor is that just as none of us is born knowing how to talk, none of us knows how to pray on our own. We *learn* how to pray, and more often by observation and imitation than by direct instruction. As I look to Scripture to develop and mature my praying instincts, I find it not only informs the content of my requests but also helps cultivate the impulses and appetites undergirding them.

There are so many things in Scripture my flesh would never think to ask for. I usually don't ask for boldness when I'm persecuted ([Acts 4:29](#)), or interpret my grief in light of God's honor and redemptive plan ([Neh. 1:5–11](#)), or say things like "teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" ([Ps. 90:12](#)). But again and again Scripture rebukes my shallow, self-oriented prayers and summons them upward into the larger context of God's glory, the church, eternity, and the advance of the gospel.

Here are some biblical prayers that may be especially worth meditating on to focus our minds and hearts:

- [Nehemiah 1:5–11](#): Nehemiah's prayer when he hears Jerusalem's walls are still in shambles.
- [Daniel 9:1–19](#): Daniel's prayer for God's people during exile.
- [2 Chronicles 20:1–12](#): Jehoshaphat's prayer for deliverance from attack.
- [Ephesians 3:14–21](#): Paul's prayer for spiritual strength to grasp Christ's love.
- [Matthew 6:9–13](#): The Lord's Prayer (often a great one to start with).

### 2. Pray with a Pen

I find it helpful on occasion to write out a prayer. Written prayer shouldn't replace vocal/mental prayer—but I find it works effectively as a supplement. When you're writing there's a kind of mental discipline and intentionality that's often absent in vocal communication. It's harder to get distracted, and it enables you to channel and structure your prayer a bit more.

An added benefit is being able to go back, even years later, to see how God has answered your prayers—or, more commonly in my experience, changed what you pray for.

### 3. Pray with Fasting

Prayer and fasting are healthy practices in themselves, but work especially well together. An empty stomach reminds us to pray, "Lord, fill my soul!" When we're earnest in prayer, it helps us deal with the hunger pains.

One thing I must fast from is social media. Social media changes the way our brains function. It speeds up information flow, clutters our consciousness, and reduces our ability for things like meditation, reflection, quiet. It's not an easy transition from surfing Facebook and Twitter for hours to lingering before the Lord in prayer.

When Jesus prayed, for instance, he often went out to "a desolate place" ([Mark 1:35](#)). Like him, we need to cultivate the discipline of solitude, the discipline of stillness before God. We shouldn't be surprised if we're



scattered and distracted in prayer if we're scattered and distracted all the time.

#### 4. Pray with People

Corporate prayer and private prayer fuel one another (kind of like prayer and fasting). Corporate prayer is all the more powerful if we've already been praying on our own; and private prayer is instructed and encouraged by how we've seen God at work in the prayers of others.

Not only is it harder to get distracted when you're not out there on your own, but Christ promises his provision ([Matt. 18:19](#)) and presence ([Matt. 18:20](#)) when "two or three" are gathered in his name.

#### 5. Pray with Purpose

Distraction flourishes with the amorphous, the ambiguous, the under defined. I find it helps me maintain focus if I structure my prayer time in specific ways. For instance, I might structure a prayer around one particular aspect of God's character. "Lord, today I have seen your faithfulness through. . . ." Or I might focus on a particular area of need: "Father, lately my heart has been cold because. . . ."

It's hard to drift off when there's a theme or some kind of orienting structure to the prayer.

Also, if you're consistently getting distracted by the same things, you might consider praying about those very things, whatever they are, that are distracting you. Convert the distraction into an opportunity; leverage its grip on your mind and heart to intensify your prayers. "Lord, I am distracted today by \_\_\_\_\_. I give this to you. . . ."

#### 6. Pray with Emotion

There's a kind of unhealthy manipulation that can occur in trying—through an act of the will—to stir up emotions we think we should be feeling. It's also unhealthy to let our emotions have untouched sovereignty over our will. There's a way to actively engage our emotions (rather than passively experience them) that's entirely appropriate, and can help us fight distractions.

David, for instance, will interrogate his emotions: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?" ([Ps. 42:5](#)); he'll call upon his emotions: "All that is within me, bless his holy name" ([Ps. 103:1](#)); and he'll reason with his emotions: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" ([Ps. 27:1](#)).

If there are particular emotions leading to distraction (boredom? anxiety? self-concern?), talk back at them, as David does. Engage them with the counter-emotions called for by truth.

#### 7. Pray with the Gospel

Spurgeon once advised preachers, if they ever lose their place in their sermon or don't know what to say next, to go straight to the gospel. That's a good instinct, and I believe it can help us in our prayer life as well. If all else fails, if distraction keeps seeping in, keep circling back to the gospel. I often find it helpful to pray with this kind of framework:

1. Lord Jesus, this is where I would be without you: \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Lord Jesus, this is where I am now with you in my life: \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Lord Jesus, this is what you went through to do this: \_\_\_\_\_.

The gospel never runs out of gripping, awful, wondrous power. Jesus has rescued us from sin, death, and eternal ruin. He's adopted us into his heavenly family, clothed us in his righteousness, and invited us to share in his glory. And he's done so at infinite cost—as the blood drained slowly from his veins, as he sunk down into death and defeat, as friends fled and enemies mocked, as the love between Father and Son was now, for the first time in eternity, ruptured.

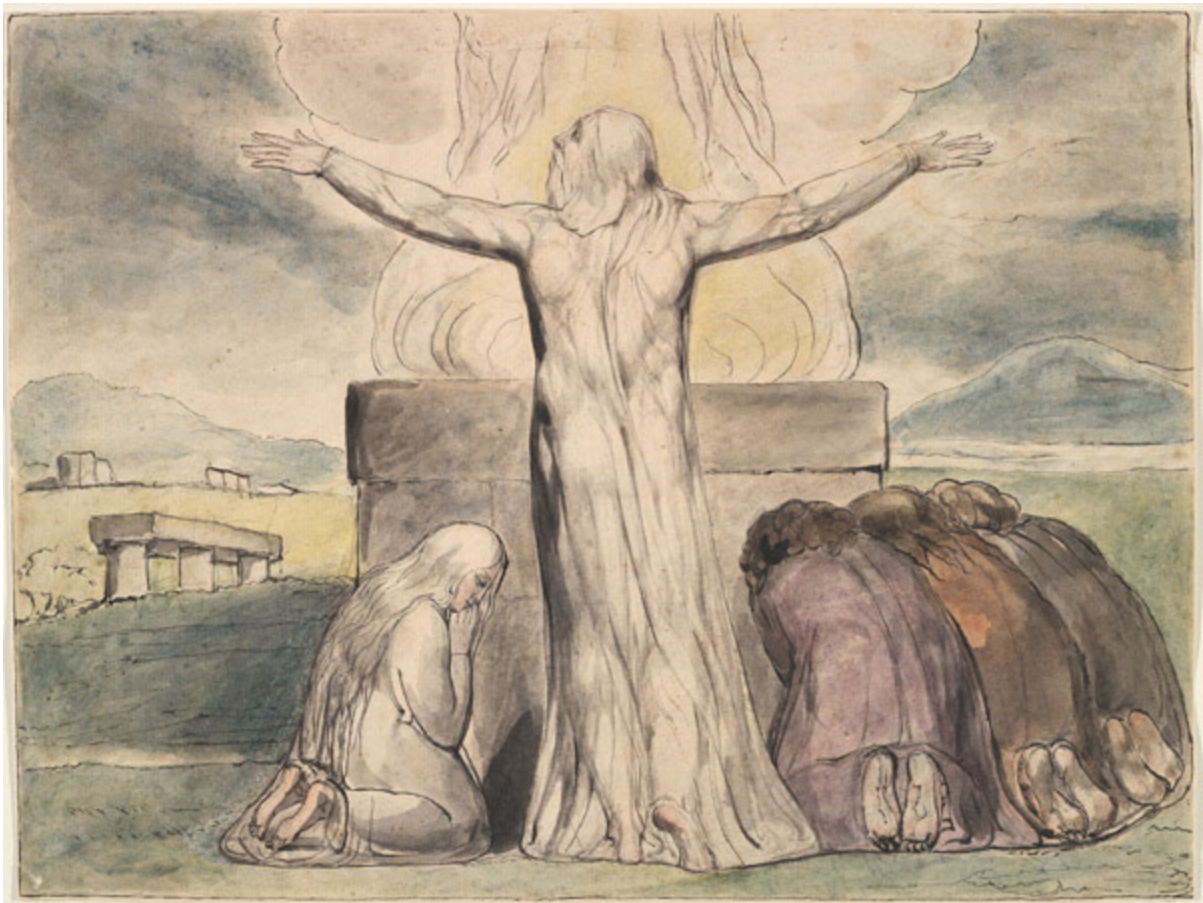
It's hard to daydream when our hearts and minds are focused on the great truths of hell, heaven, and Calvary. Make them the North Star of your prayer life, and it will help you fight distraction.

- ## Down



**WHY ME?***A Lenten Devotional Study of the Book of Job*

Everyone is invited to the historic and progressive First Baptist Church, Corner of Main and Fourth Street, for a series of profound reflections on the biblical *Book of Job*. Traditionally regarded as the oldest book in the Bible, from a source neither Jewish nor Christian, the Book of Job has puzzled philosophers and theologians through the centuries as well as psychologists and psychiatrists in the twenty first century. Lent is a season in which we contemplate the meaning of suffering, particularly undeserved distress or affliction, the agony of Jesus and our own anguish. At the heart of the matter is the cry, "Why me?" Presented by Dr. Brian Arthur Brown, FRSA, the Scholar-in-Residence at First Baptist Church, the series runs from February 14 for six weeks until March 20, every Sunday at 11:00 AM.

**JOB'S SACRIFICE**

William Blake

## Kathleen Ordiway writes:

The following are my sermon titles for the upcoming Lenten Series, Wednesdays at 7:00 PM:

### Series Title: "The Temptations of Christ"

Wednesday, February 17,  
"The Temptation by  
Food: Esau's Birthright"

Wednesday, February 24,  
"Tempted by a False  
Security: Ananias' and  
Sapphira's Downfall"

Wednesday, March 2,  
"The Temptation of  
Power: Nebuchadnezzar's  
Fate"

Wednesday, March 9,  
"Overcoming  
Temptation: Joseph's  
Triumph"

Wednesday, March 16,  
"The Devil Left Him Until An  
Opportune Time: Remaining  
Alert"

I'm looking forward to  
presenting some Bible  
stories that we don't often  
hear.

**Kath**

## The Colors of the Church Year

Back in the Middle Ages when most people were illiterate the different colors used for altar cloths, antependia and vestments in the church made people aware of the church season they were in. It was much like the pictures of Biblical scenes in the stained glass windows which taught Biblical stories.

Today, the different colors of the Church seasons remind us, too, of the movement and symbolism of the liturgical year. There are now six colors used:

**Blue** — signifying Heaven, truth, faithfulness, wisdom, charity and honoring Mary — **Advent**

**Black** — mourning, also death — **Ash Wednesday and Good Friday**

**Red** — love, fever, holy zeal, Symbol of Holy Ghost, Pentecost and the Church — **Pentecost, Reformation Sunday, Palm Sunday, Ordination**

**Purple** — penitence, preparation, mourning, humiliation, royalty — **Passion, Lent**

**Green** — growth, life, hope, fidelity, immortality — **Trinity season, Ordinal (numbered) Sundays**

**White** — light, purity, innocence, joy — **Christmas, The Epiphany, Transfiguration, Easter, Annunciation, Weddings, Funerals**

We happen to have two sets of white antependia: one with signs of Christmas and the other with more general symbols.

Our most recent addition is the color black, which completes our collection. We have custom made antependia, altar coverings, clergy stoles and choir stoles in all six colors. Kathleen Buckley oversees the appropriate color placement for Sunday and other services as well as the Communion linens.

As you might expect, these custom made items are very costly, and are kept in their own protective cabinets. The "crown" cloth was made exclusively for the maker. View the newest black cloths on display in the Library during March along with our new stained glass window.



## IM Missionary Couple - First to Serve in Togo



**Awenam Anifrani and Rev. Holale C. Azondjagni**

The Rev. Holale C. Azondjagni and his wife, Awenam Anifrani, of Evanston, Illinois, have been assigned as the first International Ministries (IM) missionaries to Togo, a former French colony in West Africa. The couple was endorsed in the spring of 2014 to serve in France. But when the needs of the Evangelical Baptist Churches of France changed, opportunities were considered in other parts of Europe as well as in Haiti and in Africa.

Born in Togo, Azondjagni and Anifrani are naturalized American citizens who have felt called to use their pastoral and training skills in mission service. Though they had approached IM with the belief that they would serve in Togo, they were surprised by God when it seemed that the most promising ministry prospect for them was in France. However, they responded in faith and embraced this opportunity-and a year later were surprised yet again when this road brought them back around to where they had started: preparing for service to Togo.



Azondjagni and Anifrani will be working with the Baptist Convention of Togo and local congregations to develop social ministries and programs serving persons with HIV/AIDS, street children and orphans vulnerable to human trafficking, girls exploited in prostitution, patients in hospitals and those incarcerated in prisons. Through the Togo Baptist Biblical Institute and the convention's 15 associations, they will also strengthen the training of pastors and church leaders for vital and vibrant ministry.

In celebration of this development, the Rev. Dr. Eleazar Ziherambere, area director for Africa and director for African American Mission, says: "This assignment is for me yet another demonstration of God's timing and faithfulness. He responded to the needs of the Baptists in Togo, who have been praying for missionaries to help them. And he has given this gifted couple, who were willing to minister anywhere, a perfect place to serve-they know the culture and the language, and above that they have the passion for this ministry to which they clearly have been called.



## Deliris Carrión-Joseph Begins New Ministry at Deborah's House in Mexico



**Deliris Carrión-Joseph**

The Rev. Deliris Carrión-Joseph, an International Ministries (IM) missionary since 1998, began a new ministry serving at Deborah's House in Tijuana, Mexico in January 2016.

In describing this new work, the Rev. Adalia Gutiérrez Lee, area director for Iberoamerica and the Caribbean, says: "Occupational therapy and pastoral counseling are two of the many areas where Deliris is able to bring support to women and children at Deborah's House. I am confident that God will



use her gifts to transform those former victims of domestic violence into thriving instruments of God's peace in this world."

Carrión-Joseph's IM ministry began in El Salvador where she served for 10 years as the chaplain and Christian education coordinator of The Baptist School of San Salvador. She was also a professor of Christian education and pastoral counseling at the Latin American Seminary. After the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Deliris was invited by the Haitian Baptist Convention to minister in Port au Prince as an occupational therapist and to coordinate visiting groups that helped with the reconstruction of schools and homes.

Carrión-Joseph is an ordained American Baptist pastor, and before becoming a missionary she worked as a pediatric occupational therapist in Puerto Rico. This dual pastoral-therapy focus will continue in her new work in Mexico, as a visit to Deborah's House from July 30 through August 6 of last year revealed. She writes: "I was able to minister pastorally to the women and children there who are in need of love, encouragement, care and someone who listens without judging them. I also had opportunities to teach a mother how to work therapeutically with her special-needs son and to show a young some exercises so that he could better perform daily activities after having broken his wrist."

God will be using Carrión-Joseph's personal faith journey as well in this new ministry. She reflects: "I have seen God's grace and mercy in mighty ways, giving me faith, wisdom, strength and endurance. I know the truth of Psalm 18:30-'As for God, his way is perfect: The Lord's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.'"