

# TOWER TOPICS

The News Magazine of

## First Baptist Church

Niagara Falls, New York



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## First Baptist Church

554 Main Street










Corner of Main and Fourth

Niagara Falls, New York 14301-1584

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# February 2021

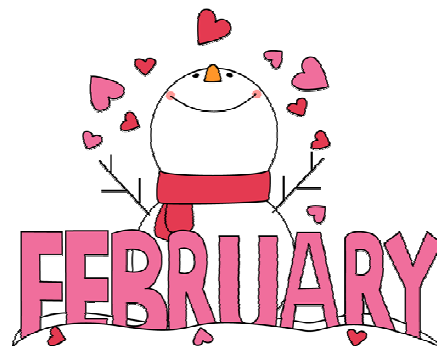
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1		3	4	5 10:00 AM Men's Coffee Time 	6
<b>7 EPPHANY 5</b> 11:00 Divine Worship with Holy Communion Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching	8	9	10	11	12 Men's Coffee Time  Chinese New Year	13
<b>14 TRANSFIGURATION</b> 11:00 Divine Worship Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching 12:15 Trustees/Diaconate Meeting 	15 	16	<b>17</b>  7:00 PM Service	18	19 10:00 AM Men's Coffee Time 	20
<b>21 FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT</b> 11:00 Divine Worship Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching	22	23	24 7:00 PM Virtual Vesper Service	25	26 Men's Coffee Time  Purim	27
<b>28 SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT</b> 11:00 Divine Worship Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching	† Lent and the Easter season are somewhat early this year. We will have our traditional Ash Wednesday service on February 17, 2021, and then the Lenten Vespers will be virtual. Go on Facebook and search for First Baptist Church Niagara Falls, NY, to view the Lenten Vesper services as well as any other service you cannot attend in person. At present we are planning to have Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services as usual in the sanctuary. Details in the March Tower Topics.					

## February Birthdays

20 Carole Buchalski  
28 Patricia Dibble



PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY for Hazel Baxter, Elaine Meranto, William Cody, Carole and Hank Buchalski, Sara Gromniak, Janet Keebler, our Church family, our missionaries, especially Carmella Jones, our Country and all those who serve our Country, and all Christians persecuted for their faith.



### Feb. 7 — Sunday — EPIPHANY 5

Holy Communion  
Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching

### Feb. 14 — Sunday -TRANSFIGURATION

Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching  
**12:15 Trustees/Diaconate Meeting**

### Feb. 17 — ASH WEDNESDAY

7:00 PM Service  
Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching  
With the Imposition of the Ashes

### Feb. 21 — Sunday — LENT 1

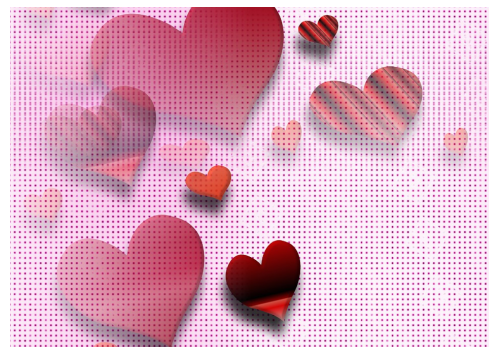
Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching

### Feb. 24 — Wednesday

7:00 PM Virtual Vesper Service

### Feb. 28 — Sunday — LENT 2

Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching







## Elizabeth (Jardin) Richardson

Jan 22, 1933 — Jan 02, 2021

Elizabeth (Jardin) Richardson, 87, wife of the late John Richardson, of the Town of Niagara, passed from this life on January 2, 2021 at Niagara Hospice House. Born on January 22, 1933 in Niagara Falls, NY, she was the daughter of the late Harold and Ella May (Martin) Jardin.

Betty, as she was known, attended local schools and graduated from Buffalo State College with her Bachelors and Masters Degree in Elementary Education. She was employed as a school teacher for the Niagara Falls Board of Education, where she taught at the 79th Street School for over 43 years, until her retirement in 1998.

Betty was a congregant of First Baptist Church in Niagara Falls, and taught Sunday school for over 50 years, the Retired Teachers Association, Rainbow Club, St. John's Seniors, Christian Women and Church Women United. She

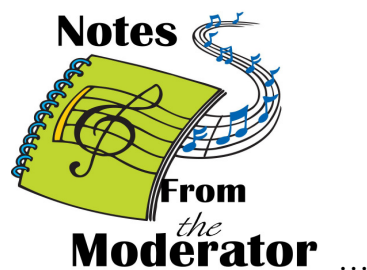


enjoyed crafts, gardening and reading.

Betty is survived by her pastor and dear friend, Rev. Kathleen (Toby) Ordiway; and many special friends and caregivers.

Private prayers of committal and interment in Riverdale Cemetery, Lewiston, NY.

Professional arrangements by Michael R. Goodlander, owner of OTTO REDANZ FUNERAL HOME, 2215 Military Road, Niagara Falls, NY (716-297-9007). Share condolences at [facebook.com/goodlandercares](https://facebook.com/goodlandercares) and [GOODLANDERCARES.com](https://GOODLANDERCARES.com).



JANUARY WAS A TIME OF REFLECTION on all things political and health concerns. In a letter received after the Jan. 6 attack on the Capital Building in Washington, it is noted that we are Baptists who take their faith seriously. If and when we disagree, we study, discuss, evaluate and come to mutual conclusions. We pray for our political representatives for we are the hands and feet of Christ in our time and are fueled by the spirit of the Almighty. At this writing the new administration has not been sworn in and we pray for them as well.

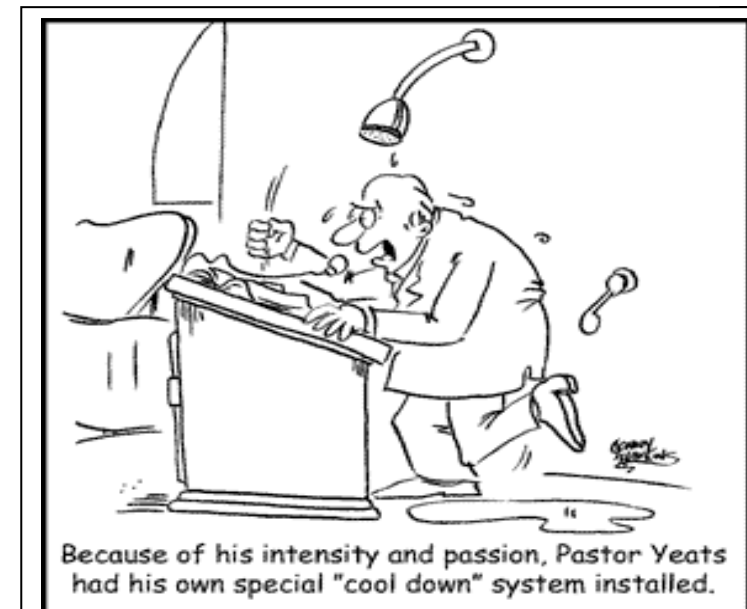
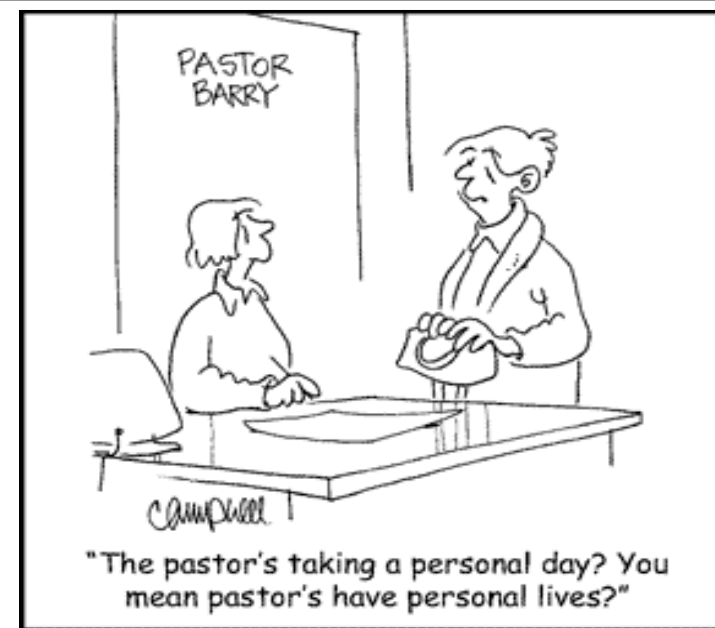
The February mission is our collection for Blanket Sundays for CWS. Church World Services provide blankets purchased in the country of disasters for those who have endured major upheavals with storms, politics, and immigration. For storms victims, clean up buckets and supplies are purchased and distributed. This outreach crosses denominations and we are part of a great effort to help those in need around the US and the world.

Our Diaconate and Trustees have met to discuss our Lenten observations and there are a few changes. We will have an Ash Wednesday service at church and on line. The Vespers during Lent, however, will be virtual and on our Facebook page. We are not sure as of this writing about the Holy Thursday and Good Friday events, so stay tuned for the latest developments. Our Facebook Christmas Tea was very interesting with conversations from California, Buffalo, and Niagara Falls on Facebook Messenger. Delightful!

As we move through the year, we are planning about a month ahead. The Covid-19 situation continues to dominate our activities but not our creativity. We have candy for sale at reduced rates of \$8 per box, 2 for \$15. We thank all those who have made or purchased our sweet treats and hope everyone enjoyed the taste of the season. Call the church for a drive-by pick up or stop in for your purchase. Lent will be here soon and so will the meditation booklets to be mailed to all members.

May you be blessed with the spirit of Epiphany and find peace during these times of stress.

**Donna Flood**  
Moderator



## “What W.H. Auden taught me about God and surviving Covid-19 by Looking Forward to Easter”



W. H. Auden in 1971

Jay Parini is a Baptist who teaches Interfaith Studies at Middlebury College in nearby Vermont. The texts for his classes are books I have written, and he brought students to First Baptist to see my play, *Three Testaments: Shalom, Peace Salam*, in 2015. His own most recent books are *The Way of Jesus* and *The Damascus Road*. Parini wrote the following words in Lent of 2020, just as the pandemic was getting well under way. Jim Flood always asks me for something “scholarly” in space reserved for me in *Tower Topics*, and so for February this year I wish to share the words of my colleague for Lent 2021, which begins in a few days on February 17.



Jay Parini Visiting First Baptist Church

This is a time of recollection and hope for Jews as well, with Passover. In biblical times, those who were able to make the journey traveled from far-flung parts to Jerusalem to celebrate the liberation of Israelites from captivity in Egypt. This captivity was, then as now, as much emotional or spiritual as physical. Jesus and his followers were among those Jews who made their way to Jerusalem.

As Easter approaches in a time of global anxiety and, often, despair, I find myself trying to remember things I've been told that have mattered. As a Christian, I pray, meditate, and read the scriptures -- the Bible, of course, and my favorite poets as well.



I'm 72, with "underlying conditions." A lot of water has passed over this particular dam. But one memory in particular comes rushing into my head.

About 50 years ago, I was in a bleak mood. A graduate student at the time, I was doing some research at Oxford, and had gone up to London to a library for the day. Walking back to the train station in late afternoon, on a crowded street, I felt overwhelmed. My hands grew sweaty, and I couldn't breathe. For respite, I found a quiet passageway where I sat in a doorway for an hour, quite certain I would die.

I slowly made my way back to Oxford by train. Heading into the college gate, I ran into the old poet W. H. Auden, whom I had known a little. He was living at Christ Church in a cottage in a garden behind the Senior Common Room. Auden saw I looked glum and said, "Whatever is the matter, dear boy?"

I told him I felt gravely ill, and he said, "What you need is a stiff drink."

He led me to his ramshackle cottage and sat me down on a sofa that smelled of rotten sandwiches and damp newspapers, bringing me what looked like a cereal bowl full of vodka. "Drink this, and you'll soon feel better."

I drank it perhaps too quickly, and soon felt strangely better.

Auden had a cracked and wrinkled face, like a baked mudflat, and he told me that he would soon be dead. (Indeed, he died a couple of years later.)

"I've learned a little in my life," he said. "Not much. But I will share with you what I do know. I hope it will help."

He lit a cigarette, looked at the ceiling, then said, "I know only two things. The first is this: There is no such thing as time." He explained that time was an illusion: past, present, future. Eternity was "without a beginning or an end," and we must come to terms with what underlies time, or exists around its edges. He quoted the Gospel of John, where Jesus said: "Before Abraham was, I am." That disjunctive remark upends our notions of chronology once and for all, he told me.

I listened, a bit puzzled, then asked: "So what's the second thing?"

"Ah, that," he said. "The second thing is simply advice. Rest in God, dear boy. Rest in God."

Auden's two points of wisdom have taken decades to absorb. He was telling me, I think, that our frantic search for meaning in the calendar and clock -- the race against time -- is foolish in the context of a larger universe or God's eternity (one can define "God" in so many different ways). "Ridiculous the waste sad time," wrote T. S. Eliot, urging us toward "the still point of the turning world."

The advice to rest in God seems more and more relevant to me. It invites us to relax into the power of the universe that sustains us, that holds us up, embraces us -- even to the point of death. This is, I think, the Easter message in a nutshell: trusting in God's power to transform our lives into something better.

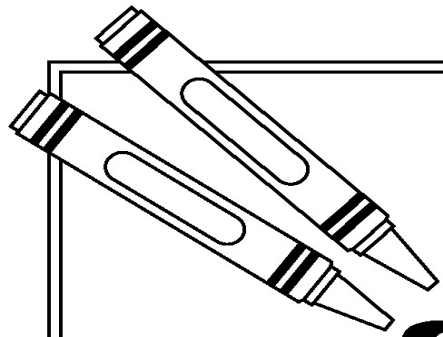
As I left his cottage that night, Auden asked me to join him at the college chapel that weekend for Sunday worship. I agreed to this, and I've been going ever since. In fact, I've never been more grateful to Auden than now, in this time of pandemic, and political as well as economic apprehension, with the Easter season coming upon us with a resurrection.

Resurrection thinking has never seemed more relevant.

Let's use Lent to prepare for a post-Covid Easter resurrection at First Baptist Church. Joining together in worship is as important as those virus shots we need.



Brian Arthur Brown, Scholar-in-Residence



# Just for KIDS

## God's Plan

Jesus was resurrected from the dead. He appeared to his disciples, and he told them about the plan of God.

On the blanks in the first section, write the words that fit the definitions. Transfer those letters to the numbered lines in the second section. Read the Scripture verse. Unscramble the circled letters to finish the sentence at the bottom of the page.

1. Water that falls from the sky    1   2   3   4
2. Birds lay them in nests    5   6   7   8
3. A newly hatched hen    9   10   11   12   13
4. Bloom in the spring    14   15   16   17   18   19   20
5. A caterpillar transformed    21   22   23   24   25   26   27   28   29
6. Dirt mixed with water    30   31   32

"J 5   8   31   20   8   2   3   32, 'I   2   30'

19   5   23   31   26   4   11   4   6

24   16   30   29   F   2   23   10   18   26

2   4   32   29   16   22   1   F   2   24   10   25   19,

23   16   30   29   G   16   32   2   4   32

29   16   31   1   G   16   32   .'" (taken from John 20:17, NIV)

Jesus has    \_   \_   \_   \_   \_   !

Answer: rain, eggs, chick, flowers, butterfly, mud  
 "Jesus said, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"  
 Jesus has risen!



## OUR HISTORY CORNER



We are delving into our archives to bring our wonderful past to light. Read the answer below to last month's picture. Do you know who and when and what?

- ❖ Who is in the picture? Name them all..
- ❖ What was the occasion?
- ❖ When and where was the picture taken?

ANSWERS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ANSWER TO LAST MONTH'S PICTURE: A family gathering at church.

## Top Three Lessons I Learned This Christmas

By Global Servants Gordon and Lee Ann Hwang



*Christmas outreach party in Japan, 2018*

At many stores in December, we hear Christmas carols in Japan. Amazing! But many do not know the true story of the Lord's birth and saving work. Some Japanese people think Christmas is Santa's birthday! So, at our Bible study Christmas party we shared the account of Jesus' birth by lighting Advent candles, reading scripture and singing Christmas carols. Each year I learn (or re-learn) something new. Here are my top three lessons I've learned this Christmas 2020:

### **Lesson #1: Attitude of Gratitude**

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7, NIV). Anxiety is natural during this time of uncertainty due to the pandemic. However, the Bible gives us the antidote: prayer with thanksgiving. With gratitude, we can pray and God replaces the anxiety with peace! I need this lesson every day.

### **Lesson #2: Be Flexible**

We are following our governor's edict to stay safe this Christmas and will be celebrating with just the two of us at home. Technology allows us to connect and be flexible in this situation. We'll share part of Christmas day with our kids in Tokyo and with cousins in virtual meetings later in the day! We will be imaginative and create new traditions this year.

### **Lesson #3: Serve and Share**

In Japan, we helped with singing Christmas carols and playing accordion at Nishiya Baptist Church's "open church" event. We hosted a Christmas Tea open house for the Soshin School teachers and staff. This year, we'll be praying for our Japanese friends as they serve without us, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ during this season. We can encourage others from the safety of home.

May the Lord give us all hearts filled with gratitude, flexible for his work, and willing to serve in this world full of need, to show his love through Jesus Christ! May we each have a blessed Christmas full of thankfulness and a joyful New Year!

Much Love, **Gordon and Lee Ann**

## The Month of Love, The Year of Love

**EVER SINCE WE WERE IN GRADE SCHOOL**, we were taught that February is the month of love – you know, Valentine’s Day and all! We decorated boxes to make them mailboxes. We would sign cute little homemade or store-bought cards with hearts and puppies and kittens for everyone in class. We gave cards to our moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas. If we were really lucky, one of our classmates would attach a piece of candy or a sucker to the cards they gave out.

When we got older, Valentine’s Day was always a special date night. As a teenager, maybe you and your beau would go to dinner and a movie, or roller skating. As an adult, maybe roses would exchange hands; definitely dinner or a box of chocolates. If you had children, Valentine’s Day became a family affair.

But why just February? Is that the only month for Love? No!

I believe that every moment of every day is made for love! When I’m done talking to my loved ones on the phone, I say “I love you.” When a loved one leaves my home, I say, “I love you.” When I sign an email or a letter or a card, I say, “I love you.” Just before I close my eyes, I tell my husband, “I love you.” Something is missing if I don’t share those words at least several times a day!

Scripture tells us that we are to love everyone. The love we share with others may change their lives and it definitely changes ours when we choose to love. Yes, I said **CHOOSE** to love. Love is usually thought of as a feeling or a sensation that comes over us, but it’s also a choice. John 13:34-35 ... “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” With our love, we make sure that others don’t go without what they need; no one will be hungry, no one will be thirsty. With our love, no one will be lonely. With our love, no one is a stranger. “Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.” Romans 13:8.

And there’s John 4:9-12 “This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that **HE LOVED US** and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.”

In Matthew, Jesus says we are to love our enemies and pray for those who hurt us. This is not within our human nature, but with the power of the Holy Spirit, we can love our enemies. This isn’t to say that we are to allow a person to continually hurt us or to walk on us, that would mean we have failed to love ourselves as God loves us; but we are to love all of God’s creation with the Spirit’s power, while protecting ourselves. Praying for our enemies is an act of love and of mercy that we choose. Prayer changes our hearts and allows us to see our enemies as people in need of God’s love.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

And probably the most familiar passage about love is found in John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” What unmatched, amazing love!

So every day – love one another and feel God’s love for you, too!

*Rev Kathleen Ordiway*



## THE IMPACT OF YOUR GIVING

### *Fizi Primary School Building Project*



We are currently working to promote literacy and increase access to education by constructing a three-classroom primary school building to serve ninety orphaned and street children in the Fizi district of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Access to education is limited (and in some places nonexistent) throughout the Congo. Many school buildings were destroyed during the war, or are abandoned and dilapidated. The children in the Fizi district have additional difficulty getting an education because schools are miles away from their villages.

We are partnering with Global Servants Christina and Lance Muteyo and the community of South Kivu in their vision to build a local school in response to this need. Construction has begun and funds are needed to purchase bricks and other materials to complete a primary school building. Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and improving life for everyone in the community.