

TOWER TOPICS

The News Magazine of

First Baptist Church

Niagara Falls, New York



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First Baptist Church

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January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>❄ Here we are at the start of a New Year. We all hope that 2021 will prove to be a better year than 2020. Epiphany only runs through the second week of February this year, and Ash Wednesday is early, on February 17.</p> <p>❄ After service on Sunday, January 17, 2021, we will have the Annual Budget meeting. It will be short, just to approve the church budget for 2021. Please plan to stay for a few minutes to vote.</p>					1 Name of Jesus 	2
3 CHRISTMAS 2 —EPIPHANY (Observed) 11:00 Divine Worship with Holy Communion Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching	4	5	6 Epiphany of Our Lord	7	8 10:00 Men's 	9
10 BAPTISM OF OUR LORD 11:00 Divine Worship Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching 12:15 Trustees/Diaconate Meeting	11	12	13	14	15 10:00 Men's 	16
17 SECOND SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY 11:00 Divine Worship Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching 12:15 Annual Budget Meeting	18 Confession of Peter 	19 Week of Prayer	20 For Christian Unity	21 ----->	22 10:00 Men's 	23 ----->
24 THIRD SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY 11:00 Divine Worship Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching	25 Conversion of Paul	26	27	28	29 10:00 Men's 	30
31 FOURTH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY 11:00 Divine Worship Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching	<p>❄ The theme for the 2021 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is “Abide in My Love... You Shall Bear Much Fruit.” It was discerned by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland and finds its origins in the Gospel of John (cf. John 15:5-9).</p>					

January Birthdays

5	Ken Bowser
13	Sara Gromniak
10	Kathleen Buckley
14	James Flood
14	Joseph Heasley
14	Christopher Taylor
14	Albert Schweitzer
14	Benedict Arnold
22	Betty Richardson
22	Gisela Scott



PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY for Bruce Guy, Sr., 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.



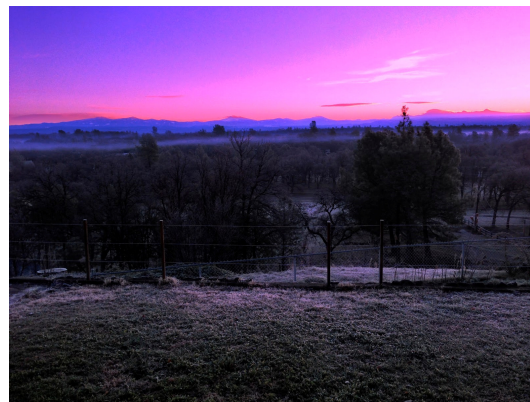
**Jan. 3 — Sunday — CHRISTMAS 2
EPIPHANY (Observed)**
Holy Communion
Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching

Jan. 10 — Sunday — BAPTISM OF JESUS
Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching
12:15 Trustees/Diaconate Meeting

Jan. 17 — Sunday — EPIPHANY 2
Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching
12:15 Annual Budget Meeting

Jan. 24 — Sunday — EPIPHANY 3
Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching

Jan. 31 — Sunday — EPIPHANY 4
Rev. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching





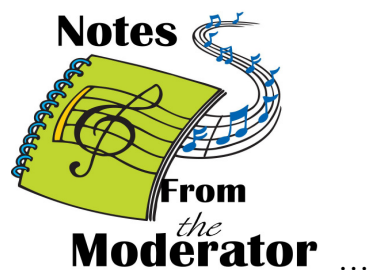
How about a new T-shirt for winter? We have a shipment of T-shirts with First Baptist Church, Niagara Falls, New York, imprinted on them below the “I Love My Church” slogan.

Sizes available are Large and Extra Large (they will shrink a little).

Only \$10.00 each

No shipping or tax.

Call the Church office (282-4666) or see Jim Flood or any trustee after church on Sunday.



HAPPY NEW YEAR TO EVERYONE and pray that life returns to normal. As customary as it is to make New Year’s resolutions and forget about them in no time flat, it’s hard to project anything at this writing so here’s a suggestion. Postpone making those self-improvement resolutions for now until later or think more about what you can do for others.

The Retired Ministers and Missionary Fund appeal is our mission for January. Those who have served in ministry and/or mission have devoted their time and talents to serve the Lord and help others. In their retirement, costs for everyday living rise while their retirement income does not. The reality of this situation is the same for many retired folks and it prices drugs, food, and medical treatment out of reach for many which is why we take a collection during January for their benefit.

While many shopped, baked, and decorated, the Finance Committee of First Baptist Church went through the budget from last year and projected costs for the upcoming 2021. Thank you to Jim, Rev. Kath, Connie and yours truly for comparing and projecting what we as a church will be able to do with the budget numbers. Our annual budget vote is on the third Sunday of January. There are no special projects in it so it’s a “hold the line” budget. With God’s grace, we’ll continue.

A special week in January, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, is January 17-23. We have the opportunity to pray during the week for things that concern all Christians: for our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their faith, for equal justice and opportunities in our country for all regardless of race or ethnic background, for peace between our brothers and sisters in our country and healing of our leaders in government. There’s more, but those come to my mind; think about it and join me. Come up with your own list as well.

Lastly, keep in prayer all those families who have suffered great loss this year, the doctors, nurses, support staff and emergency providers. May God bless all in 2021!

Donna Flood
Moderator

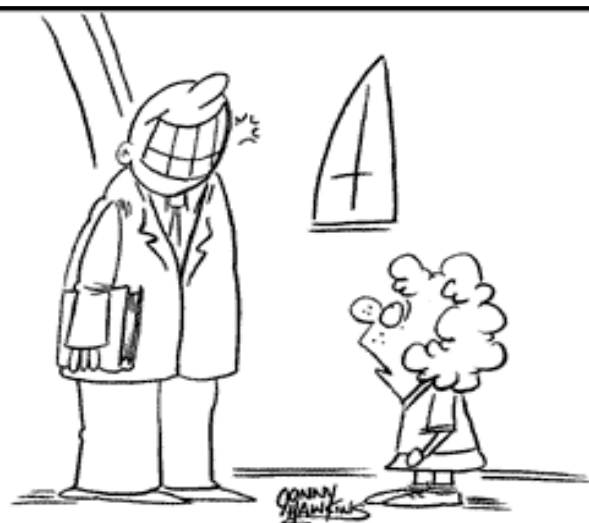




"Perhaps a less biblical designation for the pastor's secretary would speed along the hiring process."



"Here comes the flock, son, not the herd."



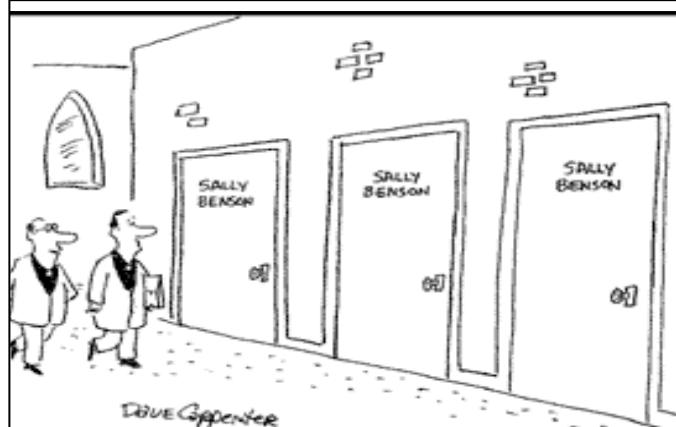
"I asked about the Pearly Gates, not your Pearly Whites!"



"Please pull up page 184 and double click Numbers 15:32 ..."



"We enjoy your visits, Pastor Bob, but your sense of humor is disturbing."



"Sally does the work of three people around here."

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh for Our Epiphany

Christmas cards, nativity scenes and Sunday School pageants all seem to present the shepherds and the wise men both at the birth of Christ, but the Bible says that the wise men, or “Magi” came later, “after Jesus was born” (Matthew 2:1). In the ancient church, even before a date for Christmas was agreed upon, the arrival of the Magi was celebrated on Epiphany, January 6, a date still the most important in parts of the world beyond North America. They believe the Holy Family was still in Bethlehem through the twelve days of Christmas, and Epiphany is the big conclusion of the season (when Father Christmas also arrives in many countries). I hope you are expecting the arrival of Magi in Epiphany 2021.

The word Magi is a little bit related to magician, but strictly refers to priests of the Zoroastrian religion. Many of you know that part of my ministry is the strategizing of Christian mission in the twenty-first century by beginning with mutual respect between religions, to gain for us a respectful hearing, the way St. Paul did with the Greeks in Acts Chapter 17. The magi visiting Bethlehem were Zoroastrians. The word “Epiphany” means “revealing,” celebrating the “showing forth” of Jesus, the Redeemer, to the world he came to save. Are there any Magi in the world today, any new neighbours who may show Christ to us?

I should not have been so surprised when, shortly before the pandemic, Jenny accompanied me when I spoke at the Zoroastrian Temple in Chicago. To our amazement, in the worship service that followed, the priest (a Magi) used gold, frankincense and myrrh in the service to celebrate the coming of the Saoshyant (“Redeemer” in English). I did not know they were looking for such a one.

Zoroastrians have always looked for a Redeemer, and many believe that the Jews picked up the expectation of a Messiah (again “Redeemer”) from the Zoroastrian rulers in Babylon, during their captivity there. Neither Jews today nor Zoroastrians as a whole believe that Jesus is necessarily that Saoshyant-Messiah-Redeemer, but a correct understanding of this expectation from our perspective is what we might share. To do so, we Christians may need get over our historic arrogance toward those who have experienced us as bullies, associated with colonial powers in many parts of the world and other bullies here.

So I asked the Magi in Chicago, “what do the symbols of gold, frankincense and myrrh mean to you?” He replied that gold is offered as a tribute to the Saoshyant who will be a perfect human being. We burn Frankincense to ascend with our prayers to the Saoshyant who is also divine. The myrrh is to predict his death, when the women will anoint his body before he ascends into heaven.”

I said, “But you must know that Christians believe that Magi presented these gifts to the baby Jesus, to recognize him as the expected Redeemer. Why don’t you accept him as such?” My friend replied, “There are many such things we have to learn from one another. Christians could learn what the rest of the world needs in a Redeemer instead of always trying to make us over into your cultural image. And yes, the day may yet come when all the world will realize that Jesus is indeed the one.”

We got a Christmas greeting this year from those folks, and we are reminded that we have much to learn about how to be Christian in the crazy world where some try to pack their supreme courts with a certain narrow-minded Christianity, and practice other forms of bullying in education, economics and social mores. In this Epiphany season, is God using any non-Christian friends or neighbours to reveal Himself to you? The message of Christmas may shine brightest when we are engaged by others in our world, especially in these challenging times. I believe they are coming in kindness and they have gifts to bring. Opening ourselves to newcomers and neighbours of difference is one way Christ is revealed to us.

I have been humbled by what I am learning. For instance, I now know the meaning of gold, frankincense and myrrh. I am pleased at the openness of First Baptist folks to how God is calling the church today to a new approach to welcoming others in relationships in which we are both teachers and also students of God’s way. The Bible does not say that “God so loved the church” but that “God so loved the world” that he sent his son. We know that God loves us, but going forward at Epiphany into a new year, let us be aware of how much he loves everybody in every culture, situation and condition, and let us be prepared to learn from them. They may then even be open to learning something from us as well.



Brian Arthur Brown

www.BrianArthurBrown.com



IM Responds to Record-Breaking Hurricane Devastation in Central America.

Two back-to-back category 4 hurricanes, with 120-mph to 140-mph wind gusts, hit Central America in November. Hurricane Eta struck the northern coast of Nicaragua on November 3. Two weeks later, Hurricane Iota made landfall near Haulover, Nicaragua, only 15 miles south of where Eta had come ashore. This is the first time in nearly 170 years of record-keeping that two Category 4 hurricanes have struck within 15 miles of one another in a period of only two weeks.

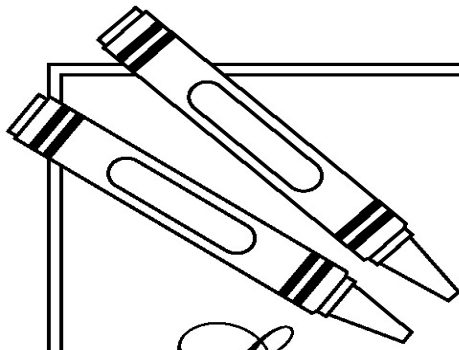
This unprecedented occurrence has caused massive devastation in Nicaragua, Honduras, and other parts of Central America in the form of landslides, floods, roadway collapses, power outages, communication interruptions, crop destruction and significant loss of life. For communities already struggling to respond to the economic and health challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to remain safe and socially-distant when seeking refuge with family or at shelters increases vulnerability. The World Food Program expects that continued flooding will impact the incoming harvest, severely strain subsistence farmers, and extend the emergency into mid-2021.

IM'S PRESENCE AND RESPONSE

With heavy but determined hearts, IM is responding to this crisis with solidarity, love, and practical aid. IM has released initial One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) emergency relief grants totaling \$8,500 to partners in Honduras and Nicaragua who are responding with food, clothing, blankets, water filters, medicines and other needed supplies. Additional relief funds will be released as contributions are received for OGHS-Central America Relief.

IM Global Servants Dilia Zelaya (Honduras), Ingrid Roldán-Román (Panama), and Ricardo Mayol-Bracero (Guatemala) are safe, and are checking in with families that are served by IM partners in the affected region.

Please join us in prayer for the children, families, and IM global servants and partners in Central America who have been impacted by these devastating hurricanes. We know that God is near to the brokenhearted and through Christ we can find peace that surpasses understanding.

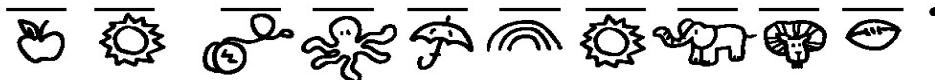


Just for KIDS

Love is the greatest commandment!

What did Jesus say when asked about the greatest commandment of God?

Write the first letter of each picture on the lines below.



Mark 12:30-31

Answer: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and ... Love your neighbor as yourself.

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: From left to right, enjoying a meal together: Betty Hayes, Marjorie Scott, Rosilie Scott, Billie Purdue, John Miller, Mrs. Doris Miller.



Superior candy making with a superior team. Use the order form to get yours!

A New Year, A New You (Me)

EVERY NEW YEAR, I THINK ABOUT resolutions ... should I make them? Should I skip them? Should I make resolutions that are easy to keep or ones that are a challenge? Should I think about my health? My family? My career? My home? My spiritual life? How I spend my time? What about you?

I've made resolutions to lose weight, to declutter my home, to spend more time with my husband, to read my Bible more, to exercise more often, to save money... with some successes and some failures. Being realistic definitely helps, rather than just crossing my fingers that something amazing might happen. I've had the most success with my resolution to read my Bible more and to spend more time with my Toby. Those are pretty important things, so I'm happy. But you don't know how badly I've wanted the "declutter my home" resolution to be successful! Isn't it realistic? Yes, but I can be so busy and so lazy at the same time ... I admit it! Maybe I'm not willing to put the necessary work in, or maybe I just don't know where to start!

The best way to be successful in changes we want to make in ourselves, in following through with our resolutions, is to call on God and ask for His help. In Romans 7:18, Paul said, "I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." BUT, Philippians 4:13 tells us, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

So what makes sense for me, and maybe you, to resolve this year?

1. **Spend more time in Scripture.** Reading the Bible everyday shouldn't be a chore. We should enjoy reading God's Word – seeing it as alive and active, an adventure, filled with promises and hope. We should feel rewarded when we read it. Throughout the Bible we find "Have you not read..." An important reason to read the Bible every day is found in Psalm 119:9-11 "How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to Your word. With my whole heart I seek You; do not let me stray from Your commandments. I treasure Your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against You." Which brings me to my second resolution...
2. **Strive to turn away from sin** – to become more like Jesus every day.
3. **Lose weight.** (Exercise, get in shape.) To live my best life and to be the most service to God, I need to be healthy. I want to be around for my kids for as long as I can and be able to keep up with them. I remind myself that God wants me to be in by best health, too, because ... "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV) The Holy Spirit resides inside of me and you and I need to keep my body fit for the Spirit's use!
4. **Live my life purposefully**, not just going through the motions. As many of you know, about 20 years ago I was given some very good advice: If you dream of doing something do it, don't be afraid of failing. Twenty years from now you don't want to look back and regret not even trying. And here I am, 20 years later, following God's lead. But it's not just about my spiritual life. It becomes too easy to sit on my couch and watch TV or get lost on my phone, and then realize 4 hours have passed and I've wasted it. It's one thing to plan to relax and another to squander my time. James 4:14 can either be considered morose or be an encouragement: "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." Make the most of this life God has given us!
5. **Declutter**, declutter, declutter. To be my best self, I need to get rid of all the clutter that distracts me from what's important, so that I can center on what's best in this life. Simplifying my life means decluttering my brain, my calendar and my home. Matthew 6:19-21 – "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; For where your treasure is, there your heart must be also."
6. **Take more mini adventures.** I want to see more of what God has created! I want to lead a peaceful life, spending quality time with those I love. We should replenish ourselves so that we can continue following God's lead! Mark 6:31 – "And He said to them, 'Come away by yourself to a desolate place and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat."
7. **Send handwritten letters.** I want to be more thoughtful, more considerate, more encouraging to others. I love receiving a handwritten letter so I want to be writing to my friends, family and to you guys reading this! Paul wrote letters thanking the church for supporting him, encouraging him, sharing in his distress, praying for him, financially supporting him. Proverbs 16:24 "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body." And 1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing."

Rev Kathleen Ordiway

IMPACT OF YOUR GIVING

I Remember

From Global Servants Ann and Bill Clemmer

Training and Capacity Building, Educations, Health and Wellness



Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other. (Isaiah 46:9)

THERE IS NO DOUBT 2020 has been a difficult and challenging year for so many: lost lives, lost jobs and livelihoods, lost respect for others, lost opportunities, and for many, lost hope. As fall approaches and with it the end of a tumultuous year, I want to remember the good things that happened... and remind myself that God is as much with us in the darkest days as in the brightest ones.

I remember Christine, the 'Proverbs 29' woman who was later crippled and unable to care for herself or her family. With the help of a walker and rehab, she healed. She tells me that she 'hung that walker over her bed' and begins each day by rejoicing and thanking God.

I remember Francine, a young girl abandoned at the age of eight. She struggled to survive and to be able to attend school. She will soon be starting her last year of law school ... a great accomplishment for a young woman in eastern Congo!

I remember Dr Justin's family and neighbors who lost their homes in a horrific fire. An outpouring of love brought funds to help them rebuild their homes.

I remember Nyiramwiza. Her husband and one son were killed in a militia attack while Emmanuel was shot and left paralyzed and bedridden for 10 years. We found a wheelchair for him and he has enrolled in classes. They also have a new little house to live in! Nyiramwiza told me that in her distress she thought she had no one ...but God did not forget her. She shared with me, "I know He cares for the widow and orphan but who am I that God would prompt persons from across an ocean to respond in love to our needs?" She cried and praised God in prayer meeting at HEAL Africa Chapel.

I remember Arlette, the young orphan with a foot deformity. She used crutches far too small until we found new ones that fit. Later, following surgery she now can walk and run freely without crutches at all! She continues to thrive in school and in Sunday school.

I remember Monique and her 5 young children. She lives on the lava flow, and her house did not provide protection from the rainy season. Her home has now been rebuilt and she rejoices that God has answered her prayers.