



IM Partner Confronts Slavery in Ghana with the Help of U.S. and Puerto Rico Churches

In parts of the Volta region of Ghana, Africa, a young woman can become a *trokosi*, a "wife of the gods." But this is not the privileged position that the name would suggest. It is a life of forced labor, sexual and physical abuse, social isolation and deprivation of adequate food, shelter, healthcare and education. It is slavery, and it is supported by centuries of cultural tradition.

The process begins when someone commits a crime, or any act that is considered to be an affront to the gods. In order to avoid facing the gods' wrath, the offender's family members must give up a young virgin daughter, usually between ages 8 and 12, who will be forced to serve at a nearby shrine to the gods for the rest of her life. If she tries to escape and return to her family, the village will stone her to death.

The practice of *trokosi* was made illegal in Ghana in 1998. Governmental enforcement has been limited, however, and so far not one shrine priest has been sentenced to the three-year-minimum prison term.

In response, the Ghana Baptist Convention, a longstanding partner of American Baptist International Ministries (IM), founded the Baptist Vocational Training Center (BVTC). The center rescues, rehabilitates and educates young women who have been victimized by the *trokosi* system. It does this by offering a three-year residential training program, with the goal of preparing these women for independent and fulfilling lives in the outside world.

"The vision I have for BVTC can be found in Acts 26:18," explains BVTC Director Grace Akunar. "To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to life.' My ministry is to bring these girls from the shackles, from the darkness, and take them into the light of Jesus Christ."

As soon as they arrive at the BVTC campus, the former *trokosi* women are introduced to their first and hardest lessons-how to maintain personal hygiene, how to wear a dress, what to eat and other basic life skills. The center's leaders also begin the slow process of teaching the women that they are not inferior to other people, and that they are valued by God.

In the second year, the women learn a variety of trade skills, such as sewing, cooking and hair styling; and in their third and final year they choose one skill in which to specialize. Upon graduating, each woman is given the tools and financial support she will need to start her own business.

"Since 2001, IM has been supporting this vital ministry through financial gifts to the World Mission Offering," says the Rev. Dr. Eleazar Zimherambere, IM area director for Africa. "These funds have helped keep the rescue efforts going. Over 200 women have graduated and started new lives thanks to BVTC and gifts from American Baptist churches."

"I want to thank everybody for their support," says Akunar. "When Jesus was teaching, he told his disciples, 'When I was hungry, you fed me. When I was in prison, you visited me. When I was naked, you clothed me.' That is what you are doing for these girls. And they are now living as human beings."

Roughly 2,000 women and girls are still held captive in the *trokosi* system. Akunar longs for the opportunity to rescue more of these girls and to offer them training in a wider variety of skills. "My challenge," she says, "is to have bigger classrooms. Classrooms that can have workshops, staff common rooms, restrooms and computer labs, so that I can take in more of the girls and give them skills alongside the word of God, so that they can have a future."



Grace Akunar, director of the Baptist Vocational Training Center

It is clear to me that I am not the only one who recognizes the need for ongoing education and training of professionals in Liberia to help improve health services to patients. This trainer, a masters-level professor of nursing, was a phenomenal mentor to clinics where we visited during my time in Monrovia. He is not the only one. There were other, highly trained individuals, looking for opportunities to help their own country pull itself out of this tragedy, and I was privileged to work alongside them.

So back to the question, What comes next?

The first, and most obvious answer is to support those people or organizations that are working on the ground, partnering with local leadership and personnel, to meet the needs of Liberia today. Yes, this is also a plug for supporting my work in Liberia and in other countries where I serve. I cannot continue to travel to these areas if I do not have monthly committed donors financially supporting my work. I wish it was different, but it is the reality of being a missionary. It is also one of the hardest parts of my job...asking for financial support. Working in some of the most desperate and hard to reach areas of the world, often in crisis, requires that I have funding available at all times. If that funding is too low, the reality is that I am just not able to go to these places and help. If you would be able to become a regular monthly donor so that I can continue to work around the world, I would be honored to use that gift to continue to bring hope to places that often don't feel much hope anymore. You can click the following link to become a monthly donor [YES, I WILL SUPPORT KRISTY](#)

There are other ways to support ongoing work in Liberia. International Ministries [One Great Hour of Sharing](#) is an offering that is available for crises, like Ebola, and sent immediately when our partners need funds to respond to disasters. [Medical Teams International \(MTI\)](#) continues to battle Ebola through their outreach programs, sending supplies and staff as well as partnering with local programs. It is my hope that through my volunteer service with them MTI and International Ministries will continue to work together on future projects. [Doctors Without Borders \(MSF\)](#) continues to be one of the best medical relief agencies that I have seen on the ground in Liberia. They are working with other agencies and trying to partner and build communication. I saw them reaching out and sharing information so that we could all work together. They were the first agency to take Ebola seriously and I believe in what they are doing.

You can also pray specifically about the situation. I know it always seems like such a small thing to do but I want you to know that it isn't small at all. There are so many times that I have been traveling and was in danger but "for some reason", came out ok and I guarantee you it was because someone was praying. Pray for the Ebola situation. Pray for the trainers still going out each day. Pray for safety of health workers. Pray for governments and NGO's that fund programs. Pray for healing in countries where so much pain has been a part of their life for so long. Pray.

Finally, maybe you are being called to volunteer. Volunteering doesn't always mean going overseas. There may be organizations right here in the US that need help with the Ebola crisis. There may be ways you can reach out to West African populations in your own city that are being shunned right now and need to feel love and hope. You can educate yourself about Ebola, be rational and safe, but be educated. Share that knowledge with others and keep others up-to-date with the crisis. Just because it isn't the headline in the news doesn't mean it is no longer affecting thousands of lives. Lend a hand. Help someone. Volunteer. If you are looking for ways in which you can help and you don't know where to start, you can begin by contacting [Volunteer Services](#) at International Ministries (IM). I will be honest; there are not any current volunteer positions in Liberia under IM...few agencies are taking volunteers to work in West Africa. [Medical Teams International \(MTI\)](#) may have openings and you could also contact them. But if you feel led to volunteer your time, please find a way to do that...either here in the US or overseas. Helping others will bless your life and theirs.

Thank you for following me on this journey in Liberia. I am so honored to have your support and feel so many walking beside me each place that I go. I hope that you continue to pray for the needs of Liberia and West Africa...for those that continue to fight against the spread of Ebola and for those who, even today, are seeking ways to change the course of this disease.

Kristy Engel
1-800-222-3872

What comes next?

Part 3 of the Liberia journey



Part 3 of the Liberia Newsletters

Thank you for joining me as I have shared about my time in Liberia...the joys as well as the struggles...the challenges and the triumphs. This last newsletter will share where things were left and what has happened since I've returned to the US. There is so much yet to be done and so many ways that you and I can still help. I hope you will see the challenges we still face together and join with me to meet those head on!

Now that I have left Liberia, finished my 21 days of self-monitoring and hopefully helped you to understand what the situation is like in West Africa...what's next? Is all forgotten now and the next new adventure just waiting for me? The answers to those two questions are, plenty and no!

Liberia has many things in play that will affect how they come out of the crisis with Ebola. As I mentioned in a previous newsletter, they were only just beginning to rebuild their healthcare systems from a brutal civil war when Ebola hit them. Now with 30% of their doctors gone and who knows how many of the nurses and ancillary health professionals, it will be a long road to health care recovery.

One of the newest strategies adopted by the Liberian government and which [Medical Teams International \(MTI\)](#), the group I worked under in Liberia, is now managing is called the [RITE strategy](#). RITE stands for Rapid Isolation and Treatment of Ebola. It involves identifying cases of Ebola, getting patients to facilities to care for them and then beginning the quarantine and tracing of contacts all within 24-72 hours. The hope is that with this strategy in place, through national and county level teams, Ebola will stop spreading throughout Liberia.

The other focus is to restore basic health care to citizens...a task that was interrupted with the outbreak of Ebola last spring. This involves rebuilding structures (both physical buildings and personnel), training, addressing water and sanitation issues, finding solutions for waste disposal and rebuilding the serious issue of proper nursing and medical education in the country. Even when a doctor or nurse is educated well, it is hard to get them to stay. The "brain-drain" that is so common in third world and developing-world countries is very prevalent in Liberia. Everyone who can leave is trying to leave.

I continue to stay in touch with the Liberian trainers I worked with in Monrovia. One of them wrote to me two days ago about the ongoing work of visiting health facilities and I think what he said deserves to be repeated here. He wrote, *"One of my greatest passions is to help these facilities with regular capacity-building trainings (health assessment, provision of holistic care, maternal and child health, primary health care, proper customer service, WATSAN etc.). As I tour facilities in and around Monrovia, I have noticed, with key interest, that most of the clinicians at these facilities are not professionals but are performing the responsibilities of professionals. The few professionals are not even aware of the recent renewed medical practice. I think one thing that could help could be to provide regular in-service training and then do a performance-based appraisal to ensure that these trainings are adhered to. This could develop their capacity and improve patient care subsequently."*



Our Prayer List is weekly and can expand or contract to include you or your family's needs. Prayers can be for the unnamed as well. Facing life's tribulations with health, stress, unemployment, or infidelity is difficult alone. Call the office or Kath or Brian if you know someone to be named or unnamed is standing in the need of prayer.

In March our Lenten Vesper Series on Wednesday evenings is ongoing. See the calendar to view whose preaching. Invite a friend to attend for spiritual uplift and deepen your understanding of Christ's suffering those 40 days in the desert. Whether you are into giving up something or giving back during Lent, our Vesper Service opens a new avenue for faith development and comfort.

Family Night is different every month and Game Night in the gym was the February event. There are many children in the area and making connections to our changing area will keep our church strong and moving forward. Are you a newcomer or veteran (aka Old Timer)? Our Family Night is open to the community so invite a friend.

New Comers are very welcome and as we make new connections we all become stronger. Care to share your faith journey? Gain support for living in Christ? Need to give back? We will have a membership class this spring. It's always a thrill for me to schedule Baptisms, accept new members and extend the Right Hand of Fellowship to welcome you. See Kath or Donna to join the class.

Easter lilies and hyacinths add so much to our Easter celebration. There's an order form in Sunday bulletins and can be ordered by calling the office and sending in a check. We moved ahead with technology and can easily do phone orders and use credit cards.

Donna Flood, Moderator

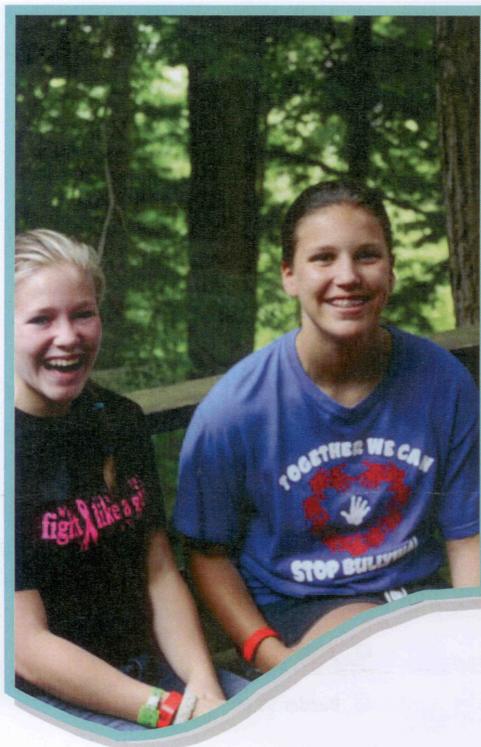


The Family Night is turning out to be a big hit.

Our new large screen 60" TV with extra "sound bar" audio equipment provides a big, engaging picture with superior sound to captivate the audience, young and old(er).

We need a few people from our congregation to volunteer to be at the Family Nights to speak to the people who come in. It's not enough to pass out free popcorn and a brochure on the church; the personal touch is what's needed. This is a real opportunity for outreach and service. Can you be there some nights?

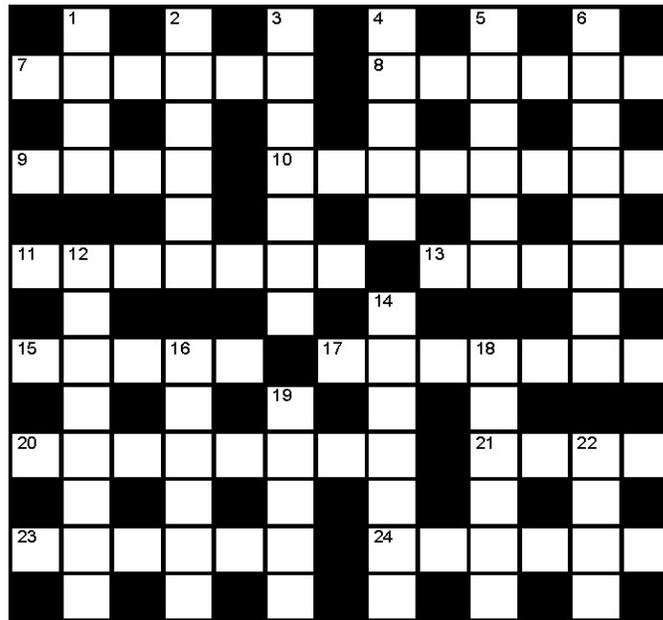
March 26 is Family Movie and Game Night with *Noah and the Ark*.



Vick and Pathfinder Camp and Conference Ministries

Bible Crossword Puzzles (King James Version)

2 Peter



Across

- 7 “Wherefore the _____, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” 2 Peter 1:10 (6)
- 8 We have been _____ from our old sins. 2 Peter 1:9 (6)
- 9 A sign in the sky that announced Christ’s birth. (4)
- 10 One of the characteristics Peter urges us to add to our faith. 2 Peter 1:5-7 (8)
- 11 The archangel. Jude 1:9 (7)
- 13 Peter makes reference to Paul’s letters. He says that some people distort them, as they do _____ scriptures. 2 Peter 3:16 (5)
- 15 “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made _____ unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” 2 Peter 1:16 (5)

- 17 Peter wants others to remember his words even after his _____. 2 Peter 1:15 (7)
- 20 Christ has given us “exceeding great and _____ promises.” 2 Peter 1:4 (8)
- 21 2 Peter 2:15 says that some have “forsaken the right way, and are _____.” (4)
- 23 Heavenly creatures. (6)
- 24 The next word after the answer to clue 21 in 2 Peter 2:15 (6)

Down

- 1 To abstain from food as a spiritual act of worship. (4)
- 2 Synonym for the Body of Christ. (6)
- 3 Peter desires that we are mindful of the words that are spoken by the holy _____s. 2 Peter 3:2 (7)
- 4 Peter refers to false prophets as blemishes, or these. 2 Peter 2:13 (5)
- 5 Christ is both king and this. (6)

- 6 Peter gives warning of false prophets and _____. 2 Peter 2:1 (8)
- 12 “But, beloved, be not _____ of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” 2 Peter 3:8 (8)
- 14 Christ, the anointed one. (7)
- 16 “... Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the _____, fall from your own stedfastness.” 2 Peter 3:17 (6)
- 18 God saved Noah, the _____ person. 2 Peter 2:5 (6)
- 19 If one escapes the pollutions of the world and is entangled again, “the latter end is _____ with them than the beginning.” 2 Peter 2:20 (5)
- 22 A “preacher of righteousness” among the “world of the ungodly.” 2 Peter 2:5 (4)

THREE TESTAMENTS

Shalom, Peace, Salam

A Three Act Drama addressing the Terror of our Times

Written by Brian Arthur Brown



June 12th - June 21st 2015 at 7:30pm

First Baptist Church

554 Main St., Niagara Falls, NY

\$18 US / \$20 CDN / \$10 Seniors & Students

Rev. Brian Arthur Brown, the author of this truly wonderful play, is graciously providing

Two Complimentary Tickets

To everyone in the congregation of First Baptist Church.



Promoting Religious Liberty in India

Dear American Baptists,

Greetings in this New Year as I enter my 14th and final year as General Secretary.

When I began serving in this position, I never imagined how large a role ABC would be called to play in the defense and promotion of religious liberty. Through world circumstances, it has become a major role for me as I voice our concerns for the right of conscience in faith.

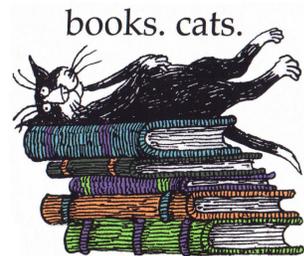
While in India just before Christmas, Christians were voicing to me their concerns for the increasing attacks by radical Hindus against Christians and Muslims. Even in the brief two weeks I was there, a church was burned in Delhi and there were reports in the news of an attack upon Banjara Baptists for singing Christmas carols.

Such attacks are in part fomented by hate-speech by politicians at regional and local levels aligned with the radical Hindu party BJP.

As President Obama prepares to travel to India at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who is a BJP party member, I have sent to him a letter expressing our concerns urging him to press the Prime Minister to speak against such violence and to voice his opposition to legislative initiatives that negatively impact the civil liberties of non-Hindus in India.

Religious liberty is at risk in many places in the world. From Thomas Helwys' plea to King James I in the 17th century, Baptists have long contended no entity has the right to interfere with one's choice in faith since each of us alone is ultimately accountable for such choices. Protection of that liberty is our sacred duty.

A. Roy Medley



life is sweet.

Our Church library is constantly becoming larger and more up to date. Recent additions include Henry van Dyke's *The Other Wise Man*, a truly heart-warming and emotional story that everyone should read.

Along another line, Deepak Chopra's *The Future of God* is on display on the coffee table in the Friendship Room. Check out the many titles on display and in the Library. These books are available for loan and this is another important example of your Church providing for you.

[from page 4]

Changing Church. I have faith that we will leave the program with new ideas and a fresh outlook on the possibilities for outreach and spiritual development when we see growth as a reality.

Over the next few months I will be writing a series of articles on what the younger generation is looking for in a church (some things we can offer, others we might not be able or interested in). Via survey, I will be reaching out to the 20 somethings, the 30 year olds, even the 40's crowd to see what a church home looks like to them and what would make our home more welcoming – without watering down the Message or turning our members away.

If you have someone with whom you'd like me to share the questionnaire, just let me know. It's not focused on getting them to join our church, it's just a tool to see what they are looking for or, if they already have a church home, what drew them to that church.

A year from now we can have an active Sunday School, a nursery needing supervision, a Christmas pageant reminiscent of days of old, a choir, a Children's Message every week, more outreach to our community and the promise that our church will continue to serve God and God's children after our we are gone.

Kathleen Ordway

Attending a wedding for the first time, a little girl whispered to her mother, "Why is the bride dressed in white?" The mother replied, "Because white is the color of happiness and today is the happiest day of her life." The child thought about this for a moment then said, "So why is the groom wearing black?"

A Sunday School teacher asked her class why Joseph and Mary took Jesus with them to Jerusalem. A small child replied, "Because they couldn't get a babysitter."

*You don't stop laughing because you grow old,
You grow old because you stop laughing.*



L. I. F. E.
 Lively Interesting Fellowship for Everyone

Sunday, March 1, 2015
5:00 PM
 “Three Months of Fun”

Pot Luck.
 Bring a dish to pass.
 Sign up in the Friendship Room.

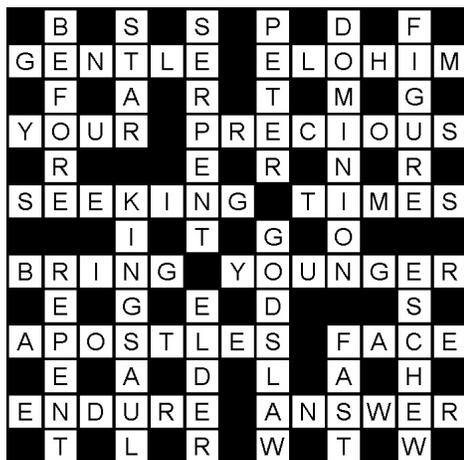
If your birthday doesn't appear on our list, **please** call the office (716-282-4666) to let us know your special date so we can include it.

March 8, 2015 – 12:15 PM
SECOND SUNDAY LUNCH

And at 2:00 PM:
Gift of Music presents
 Peter Gonciarz
 In an Organ Recital

Last month's answers

1 Peter



Our sympathies are extended to the Hoopsick family on the passing of Mary Kay Wilson, whose Memorial Service was held at First Baptist on Tuesday, February 17, 2015. Mrs. Kathleen A. Ordiway officiated.

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US TO GROWTH

I believe that we all want to have a larger church membership. The benefits are enormous.

- We would gain a larger circle of friends
- We could get our Sunday School program active again
- We could provide a diverse range of programs to our members
- We could help our community more than we are able to now
- We could send more money for mission needs
- Our service would be filled with joyful voices
- We could have children's pageants again
- Our lives would be enriched by new activity
- And think of all the talented people we already have in our membership and imagine how much more talent is out there!

So how do we go about growing? The first thing we do is to continue to be the warm and welcoming congregation that we are known to be. Be a cheerful host to visitors. Make sure they know the location of the bathroom. Invite them to have a cup of coffee and a cookie. Invite them to our Second Sunday lunch or any other event we have planned.

Next, we invite our children to join us, especially if they are still members. We invite our neighbors to join us. We invite our coworkers to join us. Let everyone be aware that they are welcome to worship with us. Invite them to our special events. Invite them to our fundraisers (who wouldn't want to check out the great bargains at the next rummage sale, or participate in our next Scavenger Hunt ... this spring).

We stop worrying about change and realize all that God has in store for us if we become the church many of us envision. At the end of March, nine of are attending an ABC-NYS led program entitled *Change, Church,* [Continued on page 6]



TOWER TOPICS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

First Baptist Church

NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK



Birthdays

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



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



March 1 – Sunday

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

- 10:00 AM Pre-service Fellowship
- 11:00 AM Divine Worship and Communion
Mrs. Kathleen Ordiway, preaching
- 5:00 PM L.I.F.E. “Three Months of Fun”

March 4 – Wednesday

- 12:15 PM Inasmuch Luncheon
- 7:00 PM **LENTEN VESPERS**
Alison Miculan, preaching
“Tell the Rabble to Be Quiet; We Anticipate a Riot”

March 8 – Sunday

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

- 10:00 AM Pre-service Fellowship
- 11:00 AM Divine Worship
Rev. Brian A. Brown, FRSA, preaching
- 12:15 PM Second Sunday Lunch
- 2:00 PM **Gift of Music:** Peter Gonciarz, Organ

March 11 – Wednesday

- 6:00 PM Diaconate/Trustees Meeting
- 7:00 PM **LENTEN VESPERS**
Rev. Cheryl Wood-Thomas, preaching
“My House Shall Be a House of Prayer”

March 15 — Sunday

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

- 10:00 AM Pre-service Fellowship
- 11:00 AM Divine Worship
Mrs. Kathleen A. Ordiway, preaching
Third Sunday Food Collection

March 18 – Wednesday

- 7:00 PM **LENTEN VESPERS**
Rev. Brian A. Brown, preaching
“One of You Will Betray Me”

March 22 - Sunday

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

- 10:00 AM Pre-service Fellowship
- 11:00 AM Divine Worship
Rev. Dr. Charles Lamb, preaching

March 25 – Wednesday

- 7:00 PM **LENTEN VESPERS**
Rev. Cheryl Wood-Thomas, preaching
“Father, If You Are Willing, Remove This Cup From Me”

March 26 - Thursday - Family Night

- 6:00 PM VeggieTales: *Noah’s Ark*

March 29 - Sunday

PALM SUNDAY

- 10:00 AM Pre-service Fellowship
- 11:00 AM Divine Worship
Mr. Joseph Heasley, preaching

Church Office Hours: 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Monday — Friday

716-282-4666 — nfb@niagarafallsbaptist.org — www.niagarafallsbaptist.org

March 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT 10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship with Holy Communion Mrs. Kathleen Ordiway, preaching 5:00 L.I.F.E. "Three Months of Fun"	2	3	4  OFFICE HOURS: 2 - 5 12:15 Inasmuch 7:00 Lenten Vespers	5	6 10:00 Men's Coffee Time 	7
8 THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT 10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship Rev. Brian Brown, FRSA, Preaching 12:15 Second Sunday lunch 2:00 <i>Gift of Music:</i> Peter Gonciarz, organ	9	10	11 OFFICE HOURS: 2 - 5 6:00 Diaconate/ Trustees Meeting 7:00 Lenten Vespers	12	13 10:00 Men's Coffee Time 	14
15 FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT 10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship Mrs. Kathleen Ordiway, preaching <i>Third Sunday Food Collection</i>	16	17 	18 OFFICE HOURS: 2 - 5 7:00 Lenten Vespers	19	20 10:00 Men's Coffee Time  Spring Begins	21
22 FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT 10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Divine Worship Rev. Dr. Charles Lamb, preaching "Moving Right Along"	23	24	25 OFFICE HOURS: 2 - 5 7:00 Lenten Vespers	26 OFFICE HOURS: 2 - 5 6:00 PM Family Night. VeggieTales <i>Noah's Ark</i>	27 10:00 Men's Coffee Time 	28
29 PALM SUNDAY 10:00 Pre-service Fellowship 11:00 Festival Service with distribution of Palms Mr. Joseph Heasley, preaching	30	31	SPECIAL UPCOMING SERVICES: April 2 – 7:00 PM – Maundy Thursday with the Lord's Supper April 3 – 12 Noon to 3:00 PM – Three hour Good Friday service with seven sections and seven speakers on the Seven Last Words of Christ. April 5 - Festival Service: EASTER! The Resurrection of Our Lord!!			

1842



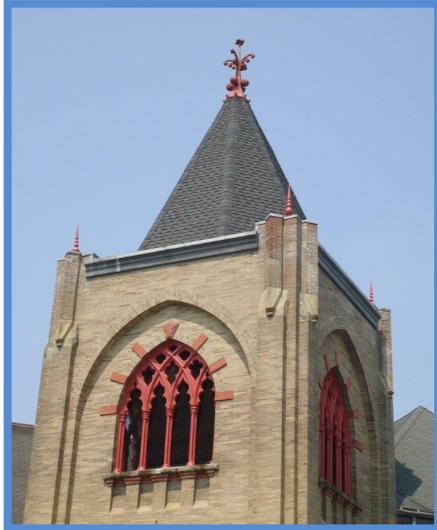
TOWER TOPICS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

First Baptist Church

NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

2015



IN THE MARCH ISSUE:

- p. 4 — Kathleen Talks About Growth
- p. 5 — A Little Godly Humor
- p. 6 — A letter from Roy Medley
- p. 7 — Three Testaments Play Poster
- p. 8 — Bible Crossword: 2 Peter
- p. 9 — Moderator's Notes & Family Game Night
- p. 10 — Kristy Engel: What Comes Next?
- p. 12 — IM Partner Confronts Slavery

VOLUME 67

NUMBER 3

2015

First Baptist Church

554 Main Street
Corner of Main and Fourth
Niagara Falls, New York 14301