



# TOWER TOPICS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

**First Baptist Church**

NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

## ***IN THIS ISSUE:***

- ➔ Basket Auction                      pg 3
- ➔ ABW Report                            pg 4
- ➔ Moderator Report                   pg 5
- ➔ Rev. Lawrence Thoughts           pg 6

**VOLUME 63**

**NUMBER 6**

**June 2011**

## **FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**

554 Main Street

Corner of Main and Fourth

Niagara Falls, New York 14301

# June 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 Pentecost is a major Church festival. It's the birthday of the Church. Invite a friend, relative, neighbor, or acquaintance to come to church with you on June 12 <sup>th</sup> . As the spring season winds down and summer approaches, many people have more time to do things. What a grand opportunity for them to come and learn what First Baptist is all about!			1  12:15 Inasmuch Luncheon	2	3	4
5 <b>ASCENSION SUNDAY</b> 10:00 Sunday School and Adult Class 11:00 Divine Worship with Holy Communion 5:00 L.I.F.E.	6	7	8  7:00 Diaconate/Trustees	9	10 ↓↓↓↓↓↓ 3:00 - ? <b>Basket Auction at the Elks Club</b>	11
12 <b>PENTECOST</b> 10:00 Sunday School and Adult Class 11:00 Divine Worship 12:15 Second Sunday lunch 7:30 Bible Study	13	14  Flag Day	15 ABW 2:00 – 4:00 at Betty Richardson's home	16	17	18
19 <b>TRINITY SUNDAY</b> 10:00 Sunday School and Adult Class 11:00 Divine Worship 12:15 Reception for Jonathan Lawrence  Father's Day	20	21  Summer begins	22	23	24	25
26 <b>2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST</b> 9:45 Breakfast for Everyone 10:00 Sunday School and Adult Class 11:00 Divine Worship 7:30 Bible Study	27	28	29	30	 Are you saving up rummage for our next sale? It's not too early to be setting things aside.  How are your baskets coming for the basket auction?	



# TOWER TOPICS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

## First Baptist Church

NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

### JUNE 2011 SCHEDULES FOR THE MONTH

Sunday	6/05	10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service 5:00 L.I.F.E.
Wednesday	6/08	12:15 Inasmuch Luncheon
Sunday	6/12	10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service 12:15 Second Sunday Lunch 7:30 Bible Study
Wednesday	6/15	7:00 Trustees/Diaconate Mtg
Sunday	6/19	10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service 12:15 Reception for Rev. Jonathan Lawrence
Sunday	6/26	9:45 Breakfast for All 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service 7:30 Bible Study

### June Birthdays

6	Eileen Palmer
9	Connie Davis
10	Dorothy Jackson
22	Joanne Coons
22	Christeen Palmer Solimbene

**Please continue to pray for:** Carole Buchalski, Marge Blakely, Hal Faba, Margaret Payne, Dawn Schutz Lynn, Mike Gunther, Robert Hogan, Tara Clifton, Judy Einstein, Jack Mercer, Berth and Harold Bissell, our Church family, our Country and all those who serve our Country.

**Church Women United** invites you to attend the annual meeting on June 3 at 1:00 at Baptist Church of Ransomville, Youngstown Lockport Rd in Ransomville. Guest Speaker is to be Elder Law

Attorney, Michael A. Gold Esq. He will be speaking on "Elder Law". Munchies will be served by the Baptist Women. All are welcome.

**L.I.F.E.**

**"SUNNY SUMMER"**

**June 5, 2011**

**5:00 P.M.**

**POT LUCK**

**Bring a dish to pass**

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Migrant Kits. We assembled five kits. These will go to Church Women United and will be distributed to local migrant workers.

### BASKET AUCTION

**TO BE HELD AT ELKS LODGE  
1805 FACTORY OUTLET BLVD  
AND THIRD AVE.**

**FRIDAY, JUNE 10  
3:00 – 7:00 P.M.**

**DRAWINGS TO BE HELD AT 7:00**

**GREAT BASKETS AND BAKE SALE.**

**TO STAND OR NOT TO STAND?**

The question has come up regarding standing during the Gospel lesson, as some may find it difficult to stand for the hymn and the Gospel. In most churches it is traditional to stand for the Gospel, many times with an Alleluia before the Gospel and a sung or said response after. This shows respect and honors the words of our Lord. It is not disrespectful not to stand if one is unable to do so. As stated in the bulletin each week, "Please stand in body or in

spirit." The easiest way, if one does not wish to stand, is to not stand for the Gospel hymn (some churches don't) and then remain seated for both the hymn and the Gospel. This may on occasion be more convenient for some.

**ABW** At our last meeting on May 16, it was decided that having our meetings on Sunday after worship was not the best idea. Therefore, we decided to meet on the third Wednesday afternoon, from 2:00 P.M., at the home of Betty Richardson, 7012 Sunnydale Rd, Niagara Falls, NY 14304. All women of the church are welcome to attend. The first meeting at our new time will be June 15.

Hazel Baxter

Dear Friends,  
Change is often difficult and painful. Change can also be exhilarating and hopeful. In any given situation, these contradictory emotions exist side by side. ABC/NYS is experiencing such a moment. In fact, this time of uncertainty and mixed emotions has been around for a while.

At its April 15, 2011, meeting, the ABC/NYS Board of Mission wrestled with the need to make changes in how we serve the needs of the churches. As we made decisions that will begin to bring change, our basic commitments remain the same:

- Responsible use of the resources we have
- An offer to train local people to be resources to each other when churches are in periods of transition
- Providing contacts and coordination when there is a conflict
- Providing coordination and care to our pastoral leaders

In the last two decades or so, we have provided these services through Region-supported field ministers. As we look to our future, it is essential that we find new ways to provide these services.

The real question around staffing is "how can ABC/NYS maintain and strengthen the connection to and ministry with congregations in the midst of declining income?" Realizing that the Region could not continue its current staffing model, the key features of the new model include:

- A full-time Executive Minister—will have oversight for all Region administration, programming, and ministry. He/she will also

develop a team of pastors to serve the pastoral needs of our local church pastors.

- A full-time Associate Executive Minister—will supervise programs for congregational transformation and will develop and train a region-wide field ministry enhancement team. To begin to implement this process, an Interim Associate will be employed—realizing that when a new Executive Minister is employed he or she will want to fill that position.
- A Region-wide field ministry enhancement team—in cooperation with each Association's leadership, select a person or persons (laity and/or clergy) who will work with churches in their Association with pastoral search processes, emergency needs, and conflict mediation and resolution. Training for these responsibilities will be provided by the Region. These persons will serve under the supervision of an Associate Executive Minister.
- A team of pastors—initially one per Association—who will provide pastoral care to pastors and their families, who will represent ABC/NYS at special events, and who will coordinate clergy gatherings in each Association.

The Executive Advisory Task Force (EATF) and the Board of Mission (BoM) have been attempting to respond to the urgency that faces us — limited reserves and a projected deficit for 2011 that would begin to seriously draw on these reserves. In response to that urgency, the new staffing proposal, following thorough discussion, was approved by a vote of 17 Yes, 2 No, and 2 Abstentions. The Board of Mission is excited and hopeful by some very positive aspects that we believe will emerge in the implementation of this model:

- Strengthening the connection to local congregations more consistently
- Involving each Association and its leadership in implementing this model—thus providing more of a sense of ownership
- More balance in how we work with congregations
- Creating a new climate.

The pain of a transition like this rests primarily with the fact that folks who have devoted themselves to field ministry in ABC/NYS with skill and dedication will no longer be serving as they have so faithfully done. We owe our current field ministers our gratitude for their faithful service. They will be concluding their ministries with ABC/NYS on June 30, 2011, and each of them will receive one additional month's severance. A key issue is how to bring our budget into balance with our income. For two years now the Region's

Board of Mission has been wrestling with budget issues—in actuality probably longer than that. A six-month budget was adopted for the first half of 2010 in order to monitor income against expenses. A budget for the second half of 2010 was then adopted by the Board of Mission at their June 2010 meeting. In December 2010, the Board had a lengthy discussion about the 2011 budget proposal that was balanced only by the use of \$70,000 from the sale of a church property that belonged to the Region. At that meeting another six-month budget was approved with the commitment that the budget for the second half of 2011 would very likely require some cuts in staffing. Consequently, a letter was sent to all Region staff members indicating that, though the Region leadership would hope to not have to make staff cuts, the Region did need to live within its income sources and that staffing would be a serious consideration in developing the July-December 2011 budget.

The primary source of budget income for the Region comes from the Region's share of United Mission—nearly 65% of what is received from our Region's churches. United Mission receipts have been in decline for several years and that decline continues. The Region's share of United Mission for January thru March for 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 is \$109,250, \$97,637, \$90,415, and "79,503 respectively. Total budget income shows a somewhat similar pattern with one exception—Specifics to the Region have shown significant increase but not near enough to offset the decline in United Mission.

Two other areas will receive consideration as this year progresses:

1. An evaluation of our Outdoor Ministries by the American Baptist Institute of Camp and Conference Ministries will help the BoM determine the most effective ways to use our facilities in camp and conference programming and activities.
2. The BoM will be evaluating our support staff needs.

We are attempting to use the resources available to us in the most efficient and effective way possible given the limitations that confront us. We covet your prayers, your continued commitment to our Region fellowship, and your understanding as we move through this time of transition.

**Dr. Wayne M. Paulsen, DMin**  
**Interim Minister for Administration**

### **From the Moderator**

June is the beginning of spring and who doesn't think of cleaning up houses and garages while the weather is good. Our fall Rummage and Chowder Sale will be September 9 & 10 so there's a good place for all your discarded reusable items to go. We take everything except electronic equipment. I will be happy to pick up items you wish to donate or you may bring them to our gym at any time. In years past, we have made between \$600-700 on our sale which goes to our general budget. We have many external and internal repairs to fund for the next few years and the Rummage and Chowder Sale is one of our larger efforts. Feel free to call me at 759-6442 for a pick up time.

Our Sunday morning Adult Sunday school is a combination of Bible study and Sunday School led by Kathleen Ordiway and starts at 9:45 for an hour before the service. Bring your favorite Bible and continue your lifelong learning of Christianity and what it means to be a follower of Christ.

Our fund raising dinner for the Capital Campaign is postponed temporarily. We will be having a series of ethnic theme dinners throughout the year to assist the campaign in reaching the goal of pointing the bricks on all four external walls, repairing the stairs to the gym and rebuilding the tower. The repair season is short and plans have already started. We received a financial boost from a grant received from the NYS Landmarks Conservancy for \$4,000 towards the over \$35,000 goal. Thank you to all who have pledged the \$6800 for the Capital Campaign. As you can see, we're well on our way to our goal in both pledging and fund raising. Working together is key component to getting this job underway in a timely manner. We're 1/3 of the way to our goal and with God's blessing; we'll get the work done.

The Right Hand Of Fellowship was extended to Keith Walters and Nicholas Tisdale on the first Sunday of May. We welcome Keith and Nicholas to the congregation of First Baptist Church. A fall membership class will be started if there are people considering joining the church. Please see Donna Flood or Kathleen Ordiway if you or a family member is interested.

Donna Flood To My

Dear Friends at First Baptist:

As many of you know, this is my last month as your co-pastor. This fall I am taking a sabbatical at Canisius and will be spending my Sundays visiting different congregations to investigate religious diversity in Western New York. I will continue this project after my sabbatical and will still be making research visits on Sundays. I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve as your pastor and to reconnect with many of you after so many years, but I felt it was better to resign and let you move on rather than try to take a leave of absence and keep you waiting for my return. Even though I will still be in the area, I will not be available to preach at Niagara Falls because I wish to allow Rev. Bourdette and whoever else takes my place to lead your services without my seeming to interfere in their ministry.

A couple weeks ago I preached about the recent concerns over the Rapture and the end of the world. As Christians we are called to be ever vigilant and prepared for Christ's return at any time, but we are also told that no one knows when it will happen. For some people predictions of the Rapture were a wake-up call to urge everyone to be saved so that they can go to Heaven. We all need reminders to consider where we are ultimately headed, but I think these recent predictions give us a different challenge – to reflect on how we are living our lives right now.

In times of financial, political, and environmental uncertainty people are worried about their lives now and what will happen when they die. Predictions that God will rescue the faithful and destroy the wicked may provide some comfort but I also believe they distract us from our responsibilities. We are certainly called to prepare ourselves for the end whenever it may come, but I do not believe we are called to sit passively waiting for the Rapture, the Apocalypse, or Armageddon. Instead, I believe we are called to go out into our scary world and minister to those in need. When the end comes, that is where we should be. I know people who were going to lock themselves in their churches and only help believers on New Year's Eve 1999 out of fear for Y2K. I can understand this motivation and certainly encourage people to gather together for prayer. However, once we have become strengthened and rejuvenated through prayer, we are called to go back out in service are called to go back

As I see it, the challenge we face as Christians is to look outward, look for those in need and seek to minister to them, not just hide and pray in fear for the end. I look forward to finding out what heaven is like – some day. But there's a lot of living to be done first – Jesus tells us that he came to bring abundant life. He also tells us that the Kingdom of God is near – it's

is near – it's not far away in time or place, but here, now, ready for us to embrace it. He offers this new life to us as individuals, congregations, and communities. We can ignore this invitation and just keep doing what we've been doing, or we can embrace it, as scary as it might be and open ourselves up to the possibility of great and exciting things happening right here and now.

I am proud of all of you at First Baptist for persevering through all of the struggles you have faced in recent years. In particular I am pleased to note that even when you have faced financial difficulties you have not stopped giving to mission programs or collecting donations for the food bank and Community Missions. Too many struggling churches focus inward and forget that they are called to continue in ministry to their communities. You have continued in your mission activities and I hope that you find that these gifts bring you new enthusiasm for other activities as well.

As I move on to other projects, I would encourage you to reflect seriously about the future of First Baptist Niagara Falls. This may involve considering how things have been in the past, the challenges you face now, and what you want to be in the future. Pastors can help guide this reflection, but the ideas and choices need to come from the congregation not just the clergy. The American Baptist Churches have many resources that can help in such a process, on regional, state and national levels. I encourage you to take advantage of those resources. Many of the national staff members have worked with other congregations facing some of the same challenges that we face here in Niagara Falls. They may be able to help share ideas that have strengthened other congregations.

I thank you for all of your care and support in the last few years. I always tell friends at other colleges how much I enjoy being able to blend my two callings as teacher and preacher. I am blessed in the opportunity to serve as your co-pastor for these years. As I move on to other projects, I will keep you in my prayers and I ask that you pray for me and my family as well. In particular, please pray for us in September when I will be going to teach at Pacific Theological College in Fiji while Jessica and the girls stay here for the beginning of the school year.

Peace in Christ,

Rev. Jonathan D. Lawrence