



TOWER TOPICS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF

First Baptist Church

NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

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MARCH 2012

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

554 Main Street

Corner of Main and Fourth

Niagara Falls, New York 14301

March 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>✠ On Sunday, March 25, 2012, we are hosting the congregation of St. James United Methodist Church in order to provide them with a venue for a baptism by immersion. Let's all be in church especially on that Sunday to welcome our guests.</p> <p>✠ The <i>Gift of Music</i> on March 11, 2012, is Peter Gonciarz' Senior Recital as an organ performance major at Villa Maria College. He is a pupil of James Flood.</p>				1	2	3
4 2 nd SUNDAY IN LENT 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Divine Worship with Communion 5:00 L.I.F.E.	5	6	7 12:15 Inasmuch luncheon 7:00 Bible Study	8  Purim	9	10 9:30 AM– 4:00 PM Women's Retreat: "The Ripple Effect"
11 3 rd SUNDAY IN LENT 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Divine Worship 12:15 Second Sunday lunch 2:00 <i>Gift of Music: Peter Gonciarz</i> <i>"American Music for an American Organ"</i> Daylight Savings begins	12	13	14 7:00 Trustees/Diaconate meeting	15	16	17  HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S day
18 4 th SUNDAY IN LENT 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Divine Worship <i>Third Sunday Food Collection</i>	19 Spring begins	20	21 2:00 ABW 7:00 Bible Study	22	23	24
25 5 th SUNDAY IN LENT ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD 10:00 Breakfast for Everyone 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Divine Worship with Baptism <i>Service with St. James UM Church</i>	26	27	28	29	30	31



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MARCH 2012 SCHEDULES FOR THE MONTH

Sunday	3/04	10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service 5:00 L.I.F.E Program
Wednesday	3/07	12:15 Inasmuch Luncheon
Saturday	3/10	9:00 Mrs. Ordiways Retreat
Sunday	3/11	10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service 12:15 2 nd Sunday Lunch 2:00 Gift of Music Peter Gonciarz, Organ
Wednesday	3/14	7:00 Trustees/Diaconate Mtg
Sunday	3/18	10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service
Wednesday	3/21	2:00 ABW Meeting 7:00 Bible Study
Sunday	3/25	10:00 Breakfast for Everyone 10:00 Sunday School 11:00 Worship Service

February Birthdays

12	Christopher Kingsley
24	Marge Bozigar
25	Ronald Bowser
29	Elaine McGrath
30	Timothy Baxter

Please continue to pray for: Carole Buchalski, Marge and Ron Blakely; Mark Clark; Paul Einstein; Paul Ordiway; Margaret Payne; Hal Faba; Dawn Schutz; Mike Gunther; Tara Clifton; Judy Einstein; Jack Mercer; Bertha and Harold Bissell; our church Family; our country and all those who serve our country.

ABW will meet at Betty Richardson's home for the monthly meeting on Wednesday, 3/7/12 t 2:00.

L.I.F.E.

“LIONS, LAMBS AND LEPRECHAUNS”

March 4, 2012

5:00 P.M.

Potluck

Bring a dish to pass

Wear something Green!

Lively Interesting Fellowship for Everyone

The two Sundays in March to complete the collection for assembling School Kits that go to Church World Service are:

March 4: 6 New Pencils with Eraser

March 11: 1 Box of 24 Crayons

Please place the articles in the basket in the Friend-Room.

Betty Richardson

Everything was red at our February L.I.F.E. Program. We participated in and enjoyed a red fashion show. Marissa took home a basket full of red things. Kath won the jar of red candy. The jar was decorated by Marge Bozigar. Remember – L.I.F.E. Is For Everyone.

Thoughts from Wes:

How do we interpret the Bible? Well, how Christians interpret the Bible matters, in fact it matters a whole lot! Very often, we see someone – Bible in hand (I was confronted by someone at a church meeting – it was being used to exclude certain people) claiming that his version was the only version – justify punishment, retribution, prejudice, slavery, and the pursuit of “Christ’s will” at either end of a gun barrel or a sword. Some Christians are known to use the Bible to reject the scientific pursuit of knowledge. There are some

interpreters who claim they are not interpreting at all, but are simply presenting the definitive, unadulterated word of God. Well, that's nonsense!

In truth, we all interpret, in fact, it is our responsibility to interpret. It is our responsibility as Christians to articulate in communities of interpretation – congregations, schools, and study groups – in order to read, listen, speak, reflect, and decide what WE think God is doing in the world and what the work of God is calling each of us to do.

Having said this, many clergy will begin their “message – sermon – thoughts” by quoting the 14th verse of the 19th chapter of Psalms. Well, there happens to be at least five different interpretations and versions. Which one is used? The Hebrew from the Hebrew Scriptures is all the same. It is how one uses his/her skill. Here they are NAB – New American Bible (this version is often used by the Roman Catholic Church): “Let the words of my mouth, and the thoughts of my heart find favor before you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.” And the from the Anchor Bible (a series of Bible commentaries, using Old English (pre 1066), Early Modern English (1500-1800), Modern Christian (1800-), Modern Jewish (1853-), “May the words of my mouth be according to your desire and the thoughts in heart, according to your will, O God, my Mountain and my Redeemer”.

A third version comes from the TEV – Today's English Version and states: “May my words and thoughts be acceptable to you, O Lord, my Refuge and my Redeemer”.

A fourth version comes from the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version – this is the version which is used by First Baptist – 1989-90): “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

And finally there is the RSV (Revised Standard Version 1952/53) “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

And , of course, even the Lord's Prayer has three versions: “And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” or “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” and then there is that version which we use at First Baptist “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sin against us”. Now, which one is right? They all are!

It all depends on how one interprets the Biblical Greek.

My next ‘thoughts’ will conclude the names used to describe Jesus! I described seven and the conclusion will describe seven more!

From the Moderator...

A detailed report from ABC Mission Support indicates we're ahead in 2011 of our 2010 giving. We gave to:

United Missions Basic	\$41.00
Love Gift	\$445.00
America for Christ	\$166.00
World Mission	\$120.00
One Great Hour of Sharing	\$334.00
Blanket Sunday	\$ 95.00
Christi Engel Support	\$100.00
Total	\$1,300

The increase in 2011 over 2010 was \$262.00. There were only 4 Baptist congregations out of 33 that showed an increase. Way to go my friends!!!

I hope by now that you've wandered into the kitchenette and seen the new flooring and noted the new refrigerator and roamed into the Friendship Room and Library to see the new carpeting. There was a big attention to details in the installation. The kitchenette took less than a day for the tear out, new sub floor, and the laying of the new vinyl. The carpeting at this writing is projected to take two days to complete. The materials were purchased from Custom Carpet with special gifts by generous congregation members and not funded out of our operating budget. Our congregation may be small, but it is very active.

Speaking of active, do you knit? Would you like to learn? A few folks are doing charity knitting for Roswell Park and are making plans to start a program in our church. See Donna if you want to join in the effort. Yes, crocheting is welcome as well. We're working on squares that will be combined into lap robes for cancer patients.

Our mission for March is America for Christ and the theme is “Open my eyes, my heart, my hands.” Mark 10:46-52. The offering will be distributed to regional ministries (29%), ministries of ABHMS (59%), and promotional and deputation costs (12%). The ABHMS ministries support: Children in Poverty, Neighborhood Action Program Christian Centers, Chaplaincy Programs, American Baptist Homes and Hospitals, The Christian Citizen Magazine and has responded to help for local churches during disasters such as fire, flood, tornado and winter storm related

damages. This is only one part of the effort which goes on into support for discipleship, evangelism, and transformation with other programs. The final leg of the endeavor is through intercultural ministries, refugee resettlement and immigration initiatives. Check our website link to Christi Engel to see a video of our work in Haiti a year after the earthquake.

Let us not forget that we're in the season of Lent and invite someone to come to church to receive blessings and inspiration to come closer to Christ.

Donna Flood

The Mission envelopes in the March Tower are for **America for Christ**. Your gift supports Christ-centered ministries that engage discipleship across the United States and Puerto Rico, through evangelism training, Missional church learning experiences, discipleship resources, youth initiatives, volunteer ministries and disaster response, plus initiatives that fight poverty and so much more. Please give.

"The Ripple Effect", a Women's Retreat and Workshop, being led by Mrs. Kathleen Ordiway, is being held at First Baptist on Saturday, March 10 at 9:30A.M. to 4:00 P.M. The cost per person is \$20.00 and includes a Continental Breakfast, Buffet Lunch, booklet, handouts and surprises. Questions or to RSVP, contact Mrs. Ordiway, 716-283-3225 and send your payment to 258 83rd St., Niagara Falls, NY 14304. Retreats are non-denominational, Christian events.

Lenten Thoughts from Kathleen Ordiway

Did you know that Jesus did not tell us to give up chocolate or pretzels or even to put ashes on our foreheads? He didn't even tell us to observe the 40 days of Lent. But He did tell us to follow Him, to prepare for His second coming, to love and serve others. If, as a part of our observance of Lent, we also lose 10 pounds, knit 50 scarves or add to our collection of devotionals – it can't be a bad thing. Each week during the month of March, read one of the following devotions and hear what God is calling you to do. Because of Jesus' passion for us and His love of His Father, He was obedient to God and died on the cross for us. How do we respond to God's call to follow Him? Are we being even a little bit passionate?

DON'T LOOK FOR THE REWARD Read Matthew 6:1-18.

When I was a child, my parents encouraged me to give something up for Lent. As most children do, I gave up chocolate, knowing the reward of an Easter basket filled with chocolate would await me on Easter morning. At first, I didn't understand why my parents suggested giving something up. I think it took a few year before I "got it".

My Dad was instrumental in my understanding of Christ's suffering for me and how I could become more like Him. If Christ could willingly go to the cross, suffering a death both horribly painful as well as humiliating, how much easier would it be for me to suffer the loss of something for which I deeply cared, albeit, chocolate seems kinds of "lame" now.

As I got older, my parents told me that I didn't have to choose chocolate once again, I didn't even have to choose giving up riding my bike or talking on the telephone. They encouraged me to give up a bad characteristic of which I couldn't let go (like selfishness) or "give up" personal time by spending time in prayer every day or serving others. They encouraged me to do something that would become a permanent change.

The hardest part of it all, we were reminded that we shouldn't be bragging about what we were giving up or what we were doing for Lent. Worse yet, we weren't to complain to everyone how badly we missed chocolate or how much less time we had now that we spent 30 whole extra minutes each night praying or reading our Bibles – no glum faces please. For, doesn't Matthew chapter 6 tell us "when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets", (vs 2) "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others, (vs 5) "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting" (vs 16).

Yes, verse 17 tells us to wash our faces and do not be obvious, for our reward will come from God, we shouldn't be looking for the reward here on earth.

This week, consider what part of you God is trying to change. Does He wish you to be more giving, more cheerful, more accepting, more loving? Look to a Heavenly reward, rather than an earthly one, even if that earthly reward is a “You poor thing, no dessert for 40 days!” or “What a good person you are, praying for people you don’t even know.” I’d rather hear the word, “Well done, good and faithful servant” – that’s reward enough for me.

PRAYER MATTERS Read Luke 22:39-46

Pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16. Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Colossians 4:2. there is no more significant involvement in another’s life than prevailing consistent prayer. Charles Swindoll.

Pray whenever you think of it. Pray for the people you encounter in everyday life. Quietly scatter blessings on strangers in the airline terminal or at the grocery store. Pray for the people who come to mind and for the events and people you hear of in the news. Frank Laubach.

Many Christians rarely pray. They doubt that prayer matters, they doubt that God will listen to them- sinners, they doubt that God has time for our prayers, or they just don’t have the time or desire to pray. But prayer does make a difference. God wants a personal relationship with us and how can we have a relationship with someone if we don’t take time to talk! Be confident that God listens, that the Holy Spirit will lead us in our words.

All we have to do is to just start talking to God. The more often we pray, the more confident we feel in bringing our prayers to God. With continual prayer, we begin to take the time to listen; to look for signs of God’s response in our lives; we start hungering to read the Scriptures; we begin to want to pray with others; we think less and less of ourselves. The Holy Spirit begins to change us.

This week, find more time for prayer. From your Bible, pray God’s Word back to Him. Use your calendar and pray for those in need as their birthday or a doctor’s appointment or a school test arrives. Try

Drive-By Praying, as you drive through a neighborhood, pray for those living on the street, working at the businesses, playing in the yards. This week, become closer to your Heavenly Father in prayer.

SEE THE FACE OF JESUS IN ALL YOU MEET.

Read Matt 25:31-46 and John 21:15-19

Just before the section of Matthew dealing with Christ’s death and resurrection, we find the passage you just read. Jesus tells His followers “What you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (NIV).

As we strive to be more Christ-like, remember to see the face of Jesus in everyone you meet. When you see Jesus’ face, what can you do about it? You may look at the face of an innocent child and quickly see Jesus. You may look to the face of a dear close friend and easily see Jesus. You may look to the face of a kindly stranger and see the obvious face of Jesus. These are the people to whom we happily reach out – giving a stranger our seat on the bus, sharing a cookie with a small child, sending an encouraging note to a much-loved friend.

But we are all children of God. True, not everyone has accepted Jesus Christ, not everyone even desires to believe in our God or to hear a single word that we might share – but God stills love them and feel great sorrow for those who turn their backs on him. God loves those who have a hard time loving themselves.

That being said, can you see the face of Jesus when you look at the man just released from jail and trying to become a member of society? Can you see the face of Jesus when you look at the angry teenage girl who has run away from home for the third time? Can you see the face of Jesus when you look at the grim-face man, holding his hand out for any change you can offer?

In John 21:15-19, Jesus tells His disciples to feed His lambs, take care of His sheep and to follow Him. This week look closer and see Jesus’ face. We do not need to welcome into our homes those who would cause us pain, who would spit in Jesus’ face if

they could, who would strike out at us in anger. But consider what you are going to do when you see Jesus' face.

Many serve in prison ministry, bringing God's message to those in jail through Bible studies and sharing scripture. Many serve in the soup kitchens, bringing God's love to those who are hungry. Many create packages for battered women and children who have left all their possessions behind as they flee from their homes. What can we do?

This week, as you look for Jesus' face, promise to add one thing to what you already do for the least of these. For you, it might be as simple as praying every morning for the lost, the lonely, the hurting. It might be collecting canned goods from your friends to add to the food you bring for the Third Sunday food collection. It might be making blankets to send to shelters. It might be baking cookies for the shut-in down the street. Or, you may be the one called to physically serve, to reach out and bring God's touch to His Children.

See Jesus' face. Serve the least of these.

SPRING CLEANING AND CARING FOR THE TEMPLE Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and 6:12-20

This week consider how you can better honor God by caring for yourself.

Going back to the whole idea of giving up something for Lent, I want share with you my plans. Now, this puts me in danger of going as the hypocrites, but I humbly share with you in the hopes that it might be something that you want to do.

My son-in-law has a gym in his basement where I train 3 times a week. On every wall is scripture, reminding us that God is Master and wants us to care for our bodies. One wall shares this from 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "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 at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."

Knowing that I cruelly treat this temple of the Holy Spirit, I have chosen this year to fight my weakness, asking God for strength in what I'm doing- I have decided to fast from all deserts and snacks, which is going to be a true challenge. Ridding my body of the things that would weaken me will allow me to work more diligently for Christ. I will have more stamina and I will learn that my personal gratification is far less important than following Christ's path. I God has plans for me 30 years from now, I need to be alive, and continuing to eat the way I do will definitely have its affect on me

I am using this time to cut back on the things that distract me from focusing on God, food being a major distraction. I'm also having a spring cleaning of my life. I'm literally spring cleaning my home, purging it of the things that I cling to foolishly. I'm spring cleaning my calendar, ridding my life of any busy-ness that doesn't glorify God. I'm spring cleaning my mind, pushing sin to the trash, making room for more wholesome and holy thoughts.

Focusing on God, cutting back on useless distractions, ridding your life of all that comes between you and God, honoring the temple of the Holy Spirit – this can be your focus this week.
