



AT FIRST BAPTIST

DAN MCDOWELL
Senior Pastor

SUE NEELY VANBRUNT
Minister of Music

ROBERT FAULDS
Organist

PENNY SOROKES
Church Secretary

MILLARD COOK
Asst. Pastor Senior/Adult
Ministries

BRUCE LAVERTY
Director of Family Ministries

BONNIE KETTLE
Financial Secretary

MICKI ELLIS
Audio Visual Specialist

GERALD NUTT
Custodian

GO LOCAL FOR CHRIST OFFERING

March is the month that the Board of Christian Mission has designated for the **GO LOCAL FOR CHRIST OFFERING** to be received.

Each year we choose an organization that we feel is worthy of our support and located locally. This year we have chosen this offering to be given to the Miriam Counseling Services, (Mental Health Counseling), with facilities being located at the St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Olean.

With the closing of the Cattaraugus County Mental Health Association office in Olean and the suicides that have plagued our community in recent years, this newly formed ministry could not be more timely! A representative from the Miriam Center will share the mission of this organization with us during worship in March.

Contributions may be made anytime during the month of March. Envelopes for this offering will be available in the bulletin on the first and third Sundays of March, as well as in the church lounge and in the pew holders in the sanctuary for your convenience, throughout the month. Also, please indicate that your offering is to go to the **GO LOCAL FOR CHRIST OFFERING**, if you do not use one of these special envelopes.



EIGHTH ANNUAL FBC COMMUNITY EASTER DINNER APRIL 5, 2015 12:45 - 1:30 P.M.

The First Baptist Church and the Olean Food Pantry are once again teaming together to offer a Community Easter Dinner to those in need. Founding director Judy Whiteman has stepped away from working with it this year so we are calling for "all hands on deck" to keep this ministry vital! The dinner will be "free of charge" and will be served as "dine-in" in our fellowship hall. Take outs will be available by reservation. Seating is limited and reservations will be required prior to March 30. This is a wonderful opportunity for First Baptist to work together with the Olean Food Pantry and assist those less fortunate or those that may be alone on this most joyous day!

Items Needed for Donations: fruit pies (no cream or custard). Cash donations and checks made to First Baptist Church (please note Easter Dinner on your check or envelope) are also appreciated to assist in defraying the cost of this event. Please make all donations to FBC by Sunday, March 29. Call Penny or Pastor Dan at 372-5151 in the church office if you are able to donate, would like to make reservations, or need more information.

Volunteers – We need you! Volunteers are needed in the following areas: set-up and decorating of dining hall; cooking; serving; deliveries, and clean-up.

**THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR
TIME – TALENTS – AND MONETARY GIFTS!**



MISSIONARIES DAVID AND JOYCE REED TO JOIN US MARCH 8

David and Joyce have been our special interest missionaries for several years. We have sent several teams to work beside them in Mexico but they are getting ready for a new phase in their ministry – taking them to the Caribbean! We will host them on Sunday evening, March 8 at 5:30 for a potluck dinner and a presentation by the Reeds. Don't miss it!

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION SUNDAY - MARCH 22

We would like to say a big **THANK YOU** to the many people who volunteer at Olean First Baptist Church. You, your time, talents and work are greatly appreciated. We'll be offering special recognition of the volunteer ministries in our fellowship during the morning worship and celebrating with a special fellowship time. Please take the time to say "Thank you" to someone you know who is a volunteer.



Contributions for Easter Flowers will be received in the Church office until Tuesday, March 31. Along with your check, please indicate for whom your gift is in honor or remembrance. Also indicate if

your plant may be given to a shut-in member of our church family. A \$10 donation is suggested.



This year's Easter cantata, performed by our Senior Choir, will be presented on Palm Sunday, March 29th during the 9:30 service of worship.

The selection this year will be one of the most popular Easter musicals, "**Cornerstone**". If you would like to be part of the seasonal choir for this event, please come to weekly rehearsals beginning this Thursday at 7 pm in the music room. All voice parts are welcomed. This is a great opportunity to minister to others while enjoying fellowship and fun with other singers!

YOUNG MUSICIAN OF THE MONTH

Throughout the year we will be highlighting various children and youth as they share their musical talents with the congregation. Each month you will be introduced to a **Young Musician of the Month**.



The youth chosen for January is Logan Funden who plays the flute, has played in our Bell Choir and sung in the Junior and Senior Choirs. Logan is an 8th grader at Portville Central. When asked why she likes music she said *"I like playing because after I go to solo fest I get more*

challenging music and it's fun to try to figure it out. I hope to keep with music until my senior year. I have been doing it for 3 years so far." Logan is the daughter of Mike and Lori Funden; granddaughter of Art and Lynn Brown.



Our Young Musician of the Month

for the February is Ashley Sage. Ashley plays in the Bell Choir, has played violin and clarinet and has been part of the Children's Choirs growing up in our church. She is a senior at Olean High School. When asked to comment about music she said, *"I like playing music*

because it gives me something to look forward to and it's something I enjoy". Ashley is the daughter of Matt Sage and granddaughter of Gaylord Sage. It's wonderful that Logan & Ashley serve the Lord through music!

The Family of God



We extend our **LOVE AND SYMPATHY** to Darlene and Larry Selph and their family on the passing of Darlene's mother, Evelyn Ottewell, on January 21.

DIRECTORY CHANGES

Nancy Williams: **c/o Harold Same; 2532 Parrot Ct; Lake Wales, FL 33859**

Tim Sherlock: **315 Elm St. Olean, NY 14760**

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

To Pam Nutt on her recent retirement from BOCES after 28 faithful years of teaching and nurturing young people with special needs in our community. Best wishes for a long and happy retirement Pam!



Attention High School Seniors and College Students!

If you are graduating this year, please let us

know in the office so we can make sure to include you in our graduation recognitions and in the June At First Baptist. Green information forms are available in the lobby rack and are due to the office by May 15. FBC Scholarships are also available to help with those college expenses! Check with the church office for more details!! Application due dates will be coming up soon.

MARCH BOARD MEETINGS

Monday, March 2:

6:00 Board of Christian Education

Sunday, March 8:

Noon Board of Christian Missions

Tuesday, March 10:

6:30 Diaconate

7:00 Board of Trustees

THANK YOU'S

Many thanks to the Board of Trustees, Fellowship Committee, and Church Family at Olean First Baptist for the Staff Appreciation Sunday on January 25.

Your thoughtful words and the gift certificate are much appreciated.
~Penny Sorokes

I would like to thank my church family for the calls, cards, prayers, love and support during the passing of my mother Evelyn Ottewell. Thank you!

~Darlene Selph

Thank you for your generous gifts from the Birthday Party for Jesus. What a wonderful assortment!!

~Linore Lounsberry, Genesis House

Thank you so much for the plant, lap robe, book, cards and phone calls. I wish each a blessed holiday. ~Vi Eddy

Thank You! The throws brought by Bob Brookins were much appreciated, also the poinsettia.

~Jack & Louise Croft

To our wonderful church family: the beautiful gifts of a perfect poinsettia plant and lap robes are truly appreciated. They both have brightened our home and are being enjoyed by friends and family alike.

Thanks so much! ~Pete & Ann Cole

Thank you so much for allowing us to use the house of God to help ourselves return to better life!! I appreciate the snacks and such but I am extremely thankful for the building. You will never know how many lives you are saving by allowing us to have our meetings here! Thank you for the support! Thank you so much for the snacks you left us – we all appreciate it!

~NA, AA, Life Recovery Groups

A special "Thank You" to everyone who donated used sheets and all who helped tear, stitch and roll the 75 3"x5 yds. bandages for Congo-Africa. The bandages have been mailed so they are on the way to a hospital in Congo! Thanks so much! Remember if you have used sheets you are willing to donate, please give them to Rita Wymer or leave them in the office for the next box of bandages. The sheets can be white, colored, or printed.

~Rita Wymer



FROM THE PASTOR'S HEART

Although you will get this newsletter at the beginning of March, I am (as usual)

writing this article in mid-February. The sub-zero temperatures have wreaked havoc on more than a few of our homes and I am finding that most people I talk to are exhausted by the cold and looking forward with “warm” anticipation to a break in the weather. I know I am too.

My cell phone was buzzing recently with text messages from other pastors wondering whether to cancel worship when the temperature was well below zero (and the wind chill even worse). Many of the Buffalo area churches were doing so, but to my knowledge nobody did in our community. Worship attendance was down though.

It's hard to blame people for wanting to stay indoors when it gets that frigid. But I am also aware that getting out and about – and sharing fellowship with others is one of the key elements in fighting the winter blues. What could warm your heart more than to be with your Christian brothers and sisters, enjoying an inspiring time of worship, instruction from God's word and comparing notes with others during Sunday School?

It reminds me of an old story about a country preacher who came to church during the middle of a blizzard, not expecting to see anyone else present, but wanting to make sure that at least the pipes weren't frozen. To his surprise one faithful member of his flock (a rancher) had made his way through the driving snow and was waiting for him. They exchanged greetings and together they checked things out around the church.

Once they saw that everything was copacetic, the pastor said, “Well, do you think we should cancel worship since it is just the two of us?” The rancher looked at him and said, “Pastor, when I go out to feed my cows I don't take attendance. If one of them shows up, I take care of him.” The pastor felt ashamed for having asked the question and this energized him.

So he got out his sermon and he really went to town! He passionately preached one of the most fiery messages of his life. After 30 minutes or so he concluded his remarks, glistening with sweat and emotionally exhausted. Then he turned to his

meager congregation of one and asked, “How was that? The rancher replied, “Pastor, when one cow shows up to get fed, I feed him but I don't dump the whole load on him!”

That story has always stayed with me because I relate to the dynamics of what was going on between the pastor and his “sheep”. When I was just out of college and working in youth ministry in Nebraska I was given the rare opportunity to preach. It was the Sunday after Thanksgiving and the Senior Pastor was out of town on vacation. Lo and behold a blizzard blew in over the weekend and it fell on me to decide whether we would open up on Sunday morning.

I lived just a couple of blocks from the church at that time, so it was no big deal for me to get there but I knew that a lot of people came in from farms miles away from plowed roads. Would we put people in danger by encouraging them to come out? On the other hand, how much damage would we do to the church's finances by closing and thereby preventing the offering from being taken? For a tenderfoot rookie to ministry it was a daunting decision. Thankfully I was advised by some people with far more experience and we shut it down.

Poor weather has an impact on people. It's not just the cold, the snow or the rain – it is the lack of sunshine. Moods tend to grow sour, depression runs rampant and we tend to “hunker down” and a lot of us “zone out” in front of the television (not a place where you find yourself getting cheered up very often). So where does one find encouragement?

Music is one answer. I find that listening to – or better yet, singing can do wonders to lift the spirit; at least when you are singing something uplifting! Another uplifting experience is to visit someone or reach out to help someone in need. I find that I have to force myself to make visits to the nursing homes for example (or to a jail or prison) but I have never made such a call and regretted it. I always walk away feeling like it was a worthwhile expenditure of my time and effort (well, almost always anyway...)

Recently I wrote my weekly newspaper article about why people stay away from church. In that article I maintained that one of the primary reasons for people to gather together in congregations is to encourage one another and “edify” one another (build one another up). That is a challenge I take seriously every Sunday but especially during Lent. Please ask yourself, “What am I doing to build up my church family?” “What should I do?”

~Pastor Dan



SERVING DAILY

Psalms 61:8 “So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.”

I have daily vows or duties. Those things that God has called me to do. Each of us has particular tasks and obligations that God has assigned to us. If or when we fail to perform our duties we not only injure ourselves but the many others that our life affects. For you see that we must be a servant that is found faithful (Mat.25:23); one that will be faithful until death that he may receive a crown of life. (Rev.2:10)

The Bible lists several things that we must do daily. First we are to praise God. “Daily shall he be praised” (Psm.72:15) To praise is to kneel, it is an act of adoration, or to worship. Daily your home needs to be a place of worship. Praising God for who He is and all that He has done for you.

Prayer - “I cry daily unto thee” (Psm.86:3). Alone with our praise we then come with our heart felt cries for the burdens that weigh heavy upon us. The needs of the day before us and the faith for tomorrow.

Seeking - “Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways”(Isa.58:2). To have the hunger and desire to know the will of God for your life for this day. Are you truly seeking God's will for your life or are you only going through the motions? You get up go to work come home eat, watch TV and go to bed and then do it all over again tomorrow. Or are you asking daily “God who can I touch today with the light of the Gospel.” Or “How can you use me today Lord to make difference in someone's life.”

Studying - “They received the Word of God with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily.”(Acts 17:11) We must feed upon the Word daily if we are to have strength to face the trials of life and be victorious over them. There are some that have never as of yet read through their Bible even one time. Begin today by saying I will spend 15, 30 or 60 minutes a day in the Word. The Word of God is central to spiritual growth. I have yet to meet a strong fruitful Christian who ignores his Bible. We must daily spend devotional time in the Word seeking the mind of God. We must also study the Word regularly in a disciplined way so that we

may better understand what it teaches.

Full surrender – Paul states “I die daily” (I Cor.15:31). The act of total submission to the will of God for your life. Each day putting down the pride and self-exalting interests and willing open our hands to whatever the Lord has for us. As we do we find that His gifts far exceed our dreams, it is just a matter of getting our our desires in line with the His will.

So as we look back to our original text we see that if we are to accomplish our daily duties we must start with an attitude of praise. Have a song of love for the Lord Jesus. This needs to be on your heart and in your mind so that you can go forth to be and do all that God desires for you.

~Pastor Millard

PASTOR DAN'S SERMON SERIES IN LENT: March 1: The King is Coming (Matthew 21:1-11)

Jesus, the Passover Lamb, heads into Jerusalem, where He initiates a massive public demonstration as He offers Himself to be King of Israel. This event is the inauguration of the Prince of Peace as King of kings.

March 8: We Would See Jesus (John 12:20-26)

Having heard & observed, these Gentiles were attracted or drawn to Jesus & they wanted to believe in Him, they wanted to "know" Him. Jesus therefore challenges them - and us - to die that we might live.

March 15: Paradoxes of the Passion (Mark 15:21-32)

To speak of the Paradoxes of the Passion is to disclose the very center of that which is the object of our faith. Paradoxes of the Passion call us to look past the shallowness of man & see the Crucifixion of Christ from God's perspective.

March 22: Signs and Witnesses (Matthew 27:51-56)

At the moment of the Messiah's death, God provided three miraculous signs. Matthew alone records all the supernatural events that accompany Jesus' death. He also tells us of some of the people who witness the event and how some of them were affected.



NEW CHURCH FAMILY FINDS “GOOD FIT” AT OFBC

New members

Bill and Julie were recently looking for an American Baptist Church and found what they needed at Olean First Baptist Church. “This is a good fit for us,” said Bill, who is currently teaching an Exegesis of Galatians for Sunday School. He and Julie are missionaries and Bill enjoys training leaders in a variety of places who, in turn, train others. “Multiplication is the idea,” he said, and referred to 2 Timothy 2:2 as a good reference of this: “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

Bill and Julie and their three children have all become active at the church. “I’m really happy with the kids’ program here,” said Julie. She admits she and her family also enjoy the special snacks served during fellowship each week. “I’m impressed by all the people who help out, those who work behind the scenes,” Julie adds.

The couple shares a passion for spreading the gospel. At age 12, living in the Philadelphia area, Bill was already studying the Bible and different religions and trusted Jesus Christ at age 14. Julie said she grew up in a Christian home, living in New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan, and came to Christ at the age of five. They came to Olean to have a home base when not traveling, and Julie has family in the Smethport area.

Their father said the children are home schooled and enjoy spending time together. Paul, 7, is an eager learner and likes studying the Bible, science and history, playing in the park, and video games, an interest he shares with Benjamin, 4. Benjamin also enjoys special time with his parents and playing outdoors. Katie, 2, enjoys playing with her toys with her brothers. “She also loves to have stories read to her,” Bill said. Katie may also be recognizable by the pretty dresses she wears each Sunday.

Those who have participated in Bill’s Sunday School class have found his enthusiastic line-by-line Bible teaching method promotes a basis for healthy discussion. “I don’t mind questions, even debate at times, because it helps people dig deeper,” Bill says.

He believes helping people learn what the Bible really says, exposing what he calls, “liberating truths of the gospel,” empowers people. “I think when people understand these things, they find freedom. Christ gives us the power to live for God, to live better lives and to know God. It’s something people need to hear.” He also encourages others to study the Bible on their own. “When I teach, I try to show not just why I believe but how I arrived at these conclusions,” he said. “Through discussion, I hope others will learn to dig deeper on their own.”



You are seen. You are known. You are free.
Connect with a community of women that gets what
you’re going through . . .
and with the God who loves you more than you
know.

Our annual trip to Women of Faith will be a bit more of an adventure in 2015! Instead of the familiar drive to Rochester, we’ll be traveling to Philadelphia, PA on August 21 to worship, fellowship, and grow with Women of Faith 2015 Loved: The Farewell Tour. Sadly, WOF will no longer be holding conferences in cities across the country. To celebrate their 20 years of ministry, they are welcoming back speakers who have been with them since their beginning in 1996. Speakers and artists included at this time in the Philadelphia event are: Patsy Clairmont, Mary Graham, Marilyn Meberg, Luci Swindoll, Thelma Wells, Anna Trent, Sheila Walsh and the musical group Building 429.

We have 30 seats on the floor of the arena at a greatly reduced price of \$65 each. We also have a few “outreach tickets” that were purchased at a further reduced price. If you’ve never attended WOF, we can offer you one of those tickets. The entire cost to attend the event including your event ticket, hotel (includes Sat. breakfast), and bus is \$200 plus Friday dinner, Saturday lunch and dinner. A group t-shirt will be available at a cost of \$10. Boxed lunches are available at the Sat. event at a cost of \$12. We will be leaving Olean on Friday morning, August 21, and returning after the conference on Saturday evening which should get us back to Olean around 1 a.m. with a stop for dinner. We will be holding a fundraiser in the coming months to help reduce the cost of the trip for those who help with the fundraiser.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact Penny @ 372-6379. We would **LOVE** to have you be a part of this inspirational, fun trip!!

BOOK REVIEW: “PURSUED: GOD’S DIVINE OBSESSION WITH YOU,” BY JUD WILHITE

There are not a lot of books about the story of Hosea and Gomer as found in the Book of Hosea, but I’ve heard at least one radio preacher call the story “a love letter from God to His people.” Author Jud Wilhite underscores that interpretation in “Pursued,” in sharing the story of these unlikely people through whom God chose to share a message.

Wilhite confesses he once saw God as the “ultimate cop waiting to nab me for my crimes,” and said he was guilty of carjacking and addictions, among other sins. After fleeing from facing these things for many years, Wilhite was finally worn out and stopped running. There he learned of God’s goodness and stopped seeing the “angry cosmic cop.”

He finally realized God was pursuing him to give him the life he was meant to live, one displaying God’s love and grace. But even then, he started trying to serve God by works, forgetting about grace. Then he noticed God’s pursuit didn’t stop with his initial surrender. People can still run from their past failures and try to overcompensate with activities, even church-oriented things. God still pursues to love us.

The author notes the book is especially for people wrestling with shame, those trying to keep it together and feeling they don’t measure up. Exploring the unlikely and often unheralded story of the prophet Hosea and his prostitute wife, the book demonstrates God’s pursuit and obsessive love for His people. God uses the prophet’s marriage to Gomer as a metaphor to demonstrate how He longs to show us His love.

Wilhite said he has never seen a movie made of this story and points out how God explains his reason for commanding Hosea to marry a prostitute. “This will illustrate how Israel has acted like a prostitute by turning against the Lord and worshiping other gods (Hosea 1:2).

He explains that as “irrational, unexpected and painful as it may seem to us, God is so passionate about us that He commanded Hosea to engage in a marriage that would crush his heart, just as God’s heart had been crushed.”

The theme that God doesn’t pursue just to convert people to religious practices but to lead people into a loving relationship with Him — with marriage as an example — runs throughout the book. The emphasis is not on religion or ritual but on relationship, with

God. And Wilhite said reading the book of Hosea has taught him “that relationship is the more fulfilling approach because it is God-centered, it’s about how God loves us.

Hosea’s story demonstrates no matter how sinful we’ve been, God still pursues and “stakes us out in a radical grace based on Himself” and when we run away, He’ll still pursue, wanting to find and heal our pain and hurt.

The book also includes case histories from contemporary culture as readers are encouraged to embrace grace and reminded that when we obey God, it gives Him joy. He wants us to wrap more than our minds, but also our hearts around grace. There are three parts to the book: Pursued for Relationship, Pursued in Grace, and Pursued to Become.

Wilhite also acknowledges it is tough to let someone else drive. “When it comes to spiritual growth, we have a hard time pulling our hands off the wheel and not panicking. Yet growth comes when we surrender, realizing God is driving and trusting Him to get us through the twists and turns.”

Every Christian has a story of God’s pursuit and how they were called into relationship with Him. This biblical story bears out such pursuit with a reminder that we need to read such stories as part of learning to know the Pursuer.

Finally, the Hosea analogy has a call to community — the body of Christ — as God calls for His people to return to Him. And He says our new identity “brings renewed mission into our lives. We get to join God in His mission to renew all things,” through shared relationship with Christ and service. The story shows redemption can happen for everyone as the author points out: “If we want to experience the abundant life Jesus told us He came to bring, then we must accept no substitutes. We’re called to return our hearts to the one who loves us like no other, our Creator — God.”

Reviewer: Deb Wuethrich



Terri McDowell is the contact person for our church **PRAYER CHAIN**. If you would like to be included in the circulation or if you have a prayer concern to share, please contact Terri at terri0254@yahoo.com or 716-307-1327.



March 8

(Turn your clocks AHEAD one hour at bedtime on Saturday, March 7)

**COPY IS DUE BY THURSDAY,
MARCH 12, FOR THE
APRIL AT FIRST BAPTIST**

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 Frank & Pat Sherry
- 3 Carl & Joanne Samuelson
- 16 Dave & Nancy Taylor
- 31 Ed & Sue Neely VanBrunt

ATTENTION TEENS (AND THEIR PARENTS):

AN OVERNIGHTER is being planned for our youth on **MARCH 29 AND 30** (Palm Sunday evening through Monday morning) here at the church! There will be games, activities, devotions and discussion as we go into holy week. Sign up on the registration sheet in the bulletin or call the church office with any questions.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Maxine Amore Lucas
- 4 Bob Brookins
- Bayli Pascucci
- Lauren Samuelson
- Dave Torrey
- 5 Gail Crowley
- 8 Jeanette Butler
- 10 Donna DeLong
- 11 Vi Pettigrew
- Lindsay Cummings
- 13 Matthew Butler
- 14 Carl Samuelson
- Heather Schultz
- 15 Ted Norton
- Mike Nutt
- Anastasia Peck
- 18 Carol Nenno
- 19 Caitlin Davenport
- 24 Jim Bartlett
- 25 Leah O'Dell
- 26 Michaella Rhodes
- 30 Dale Anderson
- Alli Armstrong
- Casey DeGroff
- 31 Gordon Olson