



## AT FIRST BAPTIST

**JASON HLADIK**  
Senior Pastor

**SUE NEELY VANBRUNT**  
Minister of Music

**DEB WUETHRICH**  
Church Secretary

**PAMELA PUTT**  
Financial Liaison

**ROBERT FAULDS**  
Organist

**CASEY SAGE**  
Social Media Specialist  
Audio-Visual Technician

**RACHEL GREEN**  
Custodian

### Fernando Ortega Strives for 'Songs That Shimmer'



**Christian Recording Artist coming to Olean First Baptist May 6**

Christian artist/composer Fernando Ortega is humbly grateful for a career that has spanned more than 25 years. He will bring his artistry to Olean First Baptist Church on Friday, May 6 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are still available. The event is co-sponsored by OFBC Women's Ministry and Family Life Ministries of Bath.

Ortega is sometimes surprised by the longevity of his career.

"I am so thankful for it," he said by phone from his New Mexico home. "I love what I do and hope it doesn't go away."

With such songs as, "This Good Day," "Jesus King of Angels," and stirring rearrangements of beloved hymns such as, "Give Me Jesus," and "Be Thou My Vision" in his impressive catalog of work, Ortega is aware that things can change.

"I have friends who are super talented and did music for a while but weren't seeing sales anymore," he said. A voice can lose its elasticity after a while and Ortega shared a story about listening to some music with his daughter that he recorded when he was about 30. Ruby, who was 11 at the time said, "Dad, you sound so young!"

"I could go pretty high back then but there is less elasticity in my voice now," he said. "I hope I don't lose it."

Ortega is a native of New Mexico where his family has lived for eight generations. He was five or six when

family friends traveling to Europe left their piano at his house.

"I was immediately drawn to it," he said. Lessons came a couple years later, which he resisted because he didn't like them, but he liked to play.

"I was talking to some friends here in Albuquerque recently and they said I didn't play in the street much with them because I was always at the piano," he said.

He would receive formal training at the University of New Mexico and recalls beginning songwriting in the late 80s or early 90s. When he heard the songs back, they didn't seem that good. "But I liked a couple enough to hone my skill at it and then enrolled in poetry classes at a local college," he said.

It was there he met professors Elaine and Peter Rubenstein, who became longtime mentors. His collaboration with Elaine produced the haunting, "Breaking of the Dawn," a song Ortega said she wrote when her mother had a stroke. "It's about her trip across the country to see her and expressed how vulnerable she felt at that moment, traveling before cell phones and such," he said.

The song became the album title and is still in most of his play sets. "I perform it a lot. I never get tired of it," he said.

Like Nichole Nordeman who performed at Olean First Baptist the Christmas before COVID-19 quarantines, Ortega often writes from within life's questions and struggles.

"I think that a Christian songwriter should write about people they know, relationships they have and places they've been," he said. "Hopefully their world view and view of God will be reflected in that."

An example comes from another much-requested work, "Lord of Eternity," written by Ortega and John Andrew Schreiner. It was written for a college chaplain going through a difficult time about 20 years ago. Big questions live in lyrics such as, "Sometimes I call out your name/But I cannot find you./I look for your face,/But you are not there." The artist then implores that God lift us anyway.

“Songwriters shouldn’t be afraid to address and own their brokenness,” he said, adding the questions, even within faith, are there for more people than not.

While he has many inspirational praise and worship compositions to his credit, he is known for deeply thoughtful and intentional renditions of sacred music.

“I like to distinguish between music for the church and congregation and other music,” he said. “It should be very direct in its expression of its theology, pointing away from self and extolling God.”

As he rearranges hymns, he’s faced his share of critics.

“Especially with one as well-known as, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” Ortega said. “Some people in my congregation were a little angry when I released that one. One fellow in his 90s said the hymn, his favorite, didn’t need any changing, but after hearing it for a while, he liked my version, too.”

Ortega cut way back on touring for the first five years of Ruby’s life, taking jobs at first an Anglican Church then others. He attends an Evangelical Free Church now. Sometimes Ruby travels with him when school is not a conflict.

“It’s fun to have her backstage,” he said. He also noted balancing family and career and other commitments can complicate the touring schedule, but said it’s worth it, especially to be present for Ruby.

With Ortega at the piano and orchestral influences on many of his albums, the music can be described as conveying a sense of elegance and grace as well as praise. From his own catalog, he chooses, “Shadow of Your Wings,” as a personal favorite.

“All the songs but one, I think, are based on Bible verses,” he said. He released a Christmas EP in 2020, noting some previous recordings are owned by record companies who are taking some out of print. “This time I want to own the masters,” he said.

Ortega is a fan of the author Flannery O’Connor who once wrote, “The writer should never be afraid to stare.” He sees this as a call to constantly observe and make mental notes. Observation can provide the impetus of a song; even if the original thought ends up on the chopping block, it can leave something to work from.

“Elaine Rubenstein always talks about the same idea,” he said about finding something that prompts you to write. “She says you have to polish something until it shimmers. You work and work until you get it right.”

Ortega explored his creative side during the pandemic by writing and releasing a book, “Fernando’s Birds: Photographs and Tales.”

He also hopes to convey the universal in his songwriting, to touch the hearts of others through his music.

“For me, if a listener identifies with something from my life experience and it resonates for them, I hope they take from it what they will,” he said. “My hope is that they will find something that resonates from within a song that shimmers.”

Tickets are available by calling 716-790-1948, or order online at [olean-first-baptist-church-womens-ministry.ticketleap.com](http://olean-first-baptist-church-womens-ministry.ticketleap.com). Prices are \$35 artist circle; \$30 general admission; and \$25 students and seniors 65 plus (additional \$5 at door if tickets are still available). Doors open at 6:45 p.m.

--Deb Wuethrich

## Joyous Palm Sunday Cantata

It was a joy to hear our Senior Choir and Kids Choir “making a joyful noise” on Palm Sunday in our sanctuary. The Easter Cantata, “Is He Worthy?” directed by Sue Neely VanBrunt, our Minister of Music, and accompanied by Robert Faulds on piano drew others to our church for this wonderful event. Thank you to all who took part, attended or participated in planning!

Easter Sunday was also a joy with In One A-Chord Handbells, Sr. Choir, Dave Taylor’s trumpet and Pastor Jason Hladik’s solo. FBC is blessed with musical talent as evidenced this Holy Week—and throughout the year!



“Is He Worthy” (He is!) was beautifully performed.



This dapper young man (Maddox Keim) was decked out for Palm Sunday (pictured with Grandma Sue Keim).

## MOTHER'S DAY MAY 8

Mother's Day is always a special occasion at First Baptist. The Board of Christian Education will have gifts for all our moms and Pastor Jason will bring an inspiring message from Proverbs 6:20-23 on "Honoring Mothers."



Our Board of Trustees is asking all of those who would like to offer some of their time and talents to help with our annual property and facilities clean-up. **"Clean-Up Day" is Saturday, May 14** and work will begin at or around 9AM. In the event of inclement weather, we will work indoors. If the weather cooperates, we'll have teams working both indoors and outdoors. There is a lot of work to be done so we need a large number of volunteers. NOTE: Even if you cannot do manual labor, you might be able to help with delivering drinks or arranging food or getting tools, etc., so don't assume you can't help! Hope to see you on the 14th!!



Memorial Day is a time to remember and honor military personnel who died in the service of our country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle. The first "Decoration Day" was celebrated on May 30, 1868 at Arlington Cemetery.

Join with us on Sunday, May 29, as we honor the brave men and women from our country who have given the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms.



### MAY BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

**Sunday, May 8**

@ Noon – Board of Christian Missions

**Tuesday, May 10**

@ 6:30 pm – Diaconate  
- Board of Christian Education  
- Board of Trustees

**Tuesday, May 31**

@ 6:30 pm – Advisory Council

## The Family of God



We extend our Love and Sympathies to the Kirkpatrick family on the passing of Ruth Kirkpatrick on March 21, 2022. Also to the Rosel Merkle families on the passing of Florence Merkle,

March 25, 2022. Know you are in our thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

## Congratulations to Landon Downing!

One of Landon's creative writings was chosen to be published in a book with several other kids his age. The book, "Ridiculous Writers" arrived April 19. Landon is Bob Brookins' grandson, son of Wendi Brookins and Landon Downing, Sr.



During the month of May, there will be an offering taken for the St. Gianna Pregnancy Center of Cattaraugus County. The

center serves life by providing material, emotional, and spiritual support to mothers, fathers and families with children from conception through toddlers. There will be empty baby bottles available in the lobby of the church for this offering. Please prayerfully consider an offering to this worthy cause.

## BLANKET THE WORLD WITH LOVE

Church World Service was born in the wake of the devastation of World War II. Seventeen Christian denominations came together “to do in partnership what none of us could help to do as well alone.” In their early days, the CWS family mobilized more than 11 million pounds of food, clothing and medical supplies for war-torn Europe and Asia. In the United States, they began to welcome refugees who were looking to start new lives in safety, resettling more than 100,000 refugees in their first 10 years.

Over the decades, the specifics of their programs have shifted and evolved. The CWS family has grown. And their foundation of collaboration and welcome has remained unshakable. We proudly serve as the toolbox that their neighbors near and far use to build healthy, dignified lives. Their congregation is actively involved with the Church World Blanket Program. For many years, their church has been helping to keep their neighbors warm by providing blankets to families here in the United States. Their church will be taking special donation offerings on May 8 (Mother’s Day) and May 15 to help provide blankets and other emergency items to families facing devastating circumstances. Please stop by the table in the FBC foyer and make a donation for this year’s drive.



### VBS JUNE 27-29

Mark your calendars now and spread the word! **Vacation Bible School** will run Monday through Wednesday from 6-9 pm with a Hero Headquarters theme. Plan to join our leadership team and bring your kids, grandkids and neighbors for this exciting outreach! A family picnic will take place Wednesday.

### ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

The Board of Christian Missions has extended its collection of offerings to support those in Ukraine. Use the ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING envelopes in the pew racks for this purpose. As the struggle continues, it’s important that the people not be forgotten.



We are accepting pictures for our Military Wall of Honor. If someone in your family or circle of friends is currently serving in a branch of the US Military, please bring a picture (up to 5x7) and address for the bulletin board in the lobby so that we can put a name with a face to offer a more personal prayer for safety and send a card or note of thanks to them. It is important that we don’t forget those who are allowing us the freedoms that we enjoy every day

## SPIRITUAL MENTORING OPPORTUNITY

The Board of Christian Education is seeking adults who might consider becoming spiritual mentors/prayer partners with children and youth in our congregation. Youngsters growing up in a church often build lifelong relationships with individuals they’ve encountered there. If you’d like more information, contact Cheri O’Dell or a Board of Christian Education member.



## **THE PASTOR'S PAGE**

Last week we had an amazing time working with the children of our church with our Spring Break Drop In. We had 12 students join us on the different days and almost as many adult volunteers help us

from planning activities, cooking meals for the children and leading lessons and activities. I know the kids had a wonderful time and I am glad we were able to help parents who needed to work this week. Children and Youth Ministry has always been a priority in my ministry, and here's why:

1. The bible clearly teaches the Christ Jesus calls the children to himself (Matthew 18:1-14, 19:13-15). Jesus said to adults, "Compel them to come (Luke 14:23), but he said of children, "Let them come unto me." (Matthew 19:14) Much more readily than adults, children feel the need of the savior and gladly come when they hear that he is near, if only parents and teachers are willing to take the time to lead them gently to him.
2. A study of when people come to faith shows that 85% do so between the ages of 4-14 and another 10% do so between the ages of 15-30. If we want to see spiritual growth in our church we need to be ministering to these important age groups.
3. The most favorable soil for sowing seeds of faith is the heart of a child. Early childhood's natural faith and dependency are soon outgrown. Faith is natural to a child, for complete physical dependence is accompanied by absolute emotional confidence.
4. Studies also show that habits of the first seven years of life are often permanently established. If you want a person to see the value in attending church, then you have to build the habits of attendance early on. If we want families to see the importance of attending our church we need to have ministry and worship experiences that are meaningful to these young children and their older siblings and parents.
5. Children have their whole lives ahead of them for service. I am reminded of a story of a pastor who made the comment that he had just baptized two and a half people, "You mean you baptized two adults and one child?" the other person asked. "No," replied the pastor, "I baptized two children and one adult. The adult's life is half over but the children still have their entire life ahead of them." That is not to say that ministry to older adults and

seniors is unimportant. We are called to serve both the widows and the orphans.

6. Ministry to the younger generations is extremely important. Suppose that Paul had been converted at seventy instead of twenty-five. There would have been no epistles of Paul written in the bible. Many of the churches he founded may never have been created.
7. A teacher's own life is matured as they see themselves as God's child learning his higher ways. The disciples of old were amazed to discover not only that Christ gave children preference over adults, but that also that adults had something to learn from children. One children's worker said, "Outside the Word itself, no other single factor has helped me grow spiritually as has work with children." (Lois E. LeBar, *Children in the Bible School*)

Let us be in prayer for our children's ministry here at Olean First Baptist Church and for our adult leaders. I look forward to what God is going to do in the lives of the children we are called to bless.

Your servant in Christ,  
Pastor Jason



Our Advisory Council (represented by every FBC church board & committee) began a conversation April 19 regarding our church's future. We all want FBC to survive and thrive. Please pray for God to guide us collectively and reveal His will in this venture. Stay tuned for more information as the process unfolds.

**“Where there is no vision,  
The people perish”  
Proverbs 29:18**



## THE MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

Do you ever get the impression that there is far more bad news in our world than good news? Does it seem like you are bombarded each day with new concerns, more reasons to worry, upsetting news about relatives and friends, and a general sense that there is no hope? Well, imagine how Jesus' disciples must have felt that fateful Friday afternoon as Jesus' body was pulled down from the cross and sealed in a tomb. I mean, seriously, think about it. They thought Jesus was the Messiah... or at least that is what He had claimed. They had to be emotionally and spiritually devastated! They had given up their normal lives to follow Him! He said He was the way, the truth, and the life. What way? The way to death? What truth? That evil would win in the end? What life? He died!! And worse, the Jewish leaders were now hunting for them. Would they, too, be crucified? Is it any wonder that Jesus's disciples went into hiding? And if Friday was bad, imagine what Saturday must have been like. It was the Sabbath... the day to worship God... but what had God done for them? He abandoned their leader... He abandoned them. And put yourself in Peter's place... he had denied even knowing his teacher... his mentor... his friend! And now Jesus is dead! Imagine Peter's regrets! Imagine the thoughts that must have been tearing at him! He had to be utterly despondent! That devastating Friday afternoon... that excruciatingly long Saturday as Peter pondered over what to do?... where to go?... how did it all go so bad so fast? Why did I deny him??

Then came Sunday morning. The women pounding at the door. The body is gone! How? Who took it? Then Mary claims to have seen Him... ALIVE! She must be delusional! That cannot be! He was dead and buried! Must go to the tomb! Stooping down... looking inside... the burial clothes lying by themselves. Could it be? Could it be?? Did He rise from the dead???

Back in my days at St. Bonaventure University, I took several theology classes. An assignment I was given in one of the courses was to write a paper about a theologically controversial issue regarding Jesus. I

chose to write about the Resurrection. Theologically controversial? Unfortunately, yes. Many theologians argue that Jesus did not physically arise from the dead. Rather, they claim He only arose spiritually. They believe that there is not enough evidence that Jesus physically rose. How they can claim this given the stories recorded in the Bible is beyond me. Didn't Thomas put his fingers in the wounds? Didn't Jesus eat when He appeared to the disciples and others? Oh, ye of little faith!!!

So, what does this have to do with the first two paragraphs above. Well, when skeptics ask me why I believe in a physical resurrection, my first response is faith. When they reject that answer, I say because the Bible tells me so. When they laugh at that, I ask them to explain why eleven terrified, emotionally devastated, and cowardly men suddenly became outspoken proponents of a risen Christ! What made them willing to challenge the religious leaders of their day... at the risk of their own lives? After hiding in fear of the Romans and Jewish leaders, why were they now willing to die for the cause of Christ? Something incredible had to happen for such a transformation to occur in the lives of eleven men and the other followers of Jesus. Do you really think the apostles could have faked such a transformation? Could you? And would people still be talking about the Resurrection today if it weren't real? Not a chance!!

When you wake up tomorrow morning, spend a few minutes thinking about what happened on that Easter morning those many years ago. We serve a Risen Savior! He is our hope! He is our salvation! And if we believe in Him and put our faith in Him, He will take our sins, our infirmities, and our cares away. Everything will be made new and we, too, will be raised up to spend eternity with Him in Heaven! Now **THAT** is **GOOD NEWS!!!**

*Blessed are the pure in heart...  
-Jim Sorokes  
Moderator*

**“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” Colossians 3:16**



*Birthdays  
of the Month*

**MAY BIRTHDAYS**

- 2 Terry Schnell  
Sue Neely VanBrunt  
Jack Crowley
- 3 Josh Rosel
- 5 Frank Snyder
- 7 Bev Firth  
Nick Sanders
- 9 Sue Keim  
Nancy Taylor
- 10 Mary Anne Kirkpatrick  
Jim Sorokes
- 11 Gwen Tyler
- 21 Mike Schultz  
Paul Cummings  
Dawn Snyder
- 23 Nan Torrey
- 24 Faith Boyce
- 25 Jonah Rosel
- 27 Carrie Samuelson  
Abigail Rust
- 28 Diane Buckley
- 30 Jerry Nutt Jr.



**MAY ANNIVERSARIES**

- 16 Jim & Penny Sorokes
- 27 Mike & Lori Funden
- 29 Dan & Terri McDowell



**INFORMATION AND ARTICLES FOR THE  
JUNE EDITION OF  
AT FIRST BAPTIST  
ARE DUE TO THE  
CHURCH OFFICE BY  
THURSDAY, MAY 12.**



**IF YOU GET A CHANCE, CONGRATULATE  
OUR MINISTER OF MUSIC, SUE NEELY  
VANBRUNT ON MARKING 45 YEARS  
SINCE SHE FIRST STARTED A NEW JOB  
AT OLEAN FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH. WE  
APPRECIATE YOU, SUE!!! THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR MINISTRY AND SERVICE!**

**Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m.  
Sunday School: 11:00 a.m.  
PHONE: 372-5151  
Pastor Jason Hladik: 716-307-1721  
pastorhladik@icloud.com  
EMAIL: oleanfbc@outlook.com  
WEBSITE: oleanfirstbaptist.com  
FACEBOOK: oleanfirstbaptist**