



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 DEGROFF
Social Media Specialist
Audio-Visual Technician

RACHEL GREEN
Custodian



SEPTEMBER 11

Welcome to Fall Sunday School at OFBC!

Plan to come and celebrate with us on Sept. 11, 2022 for Rally Day. This is our church's annual Kick-off to celebrate the new Sunday school year. This year we are launching a "Hand-in-Hand Mentor Program."

We are seeking spiritual mentors/prayer partners for mentoring the youth of the church. This would involve praying for them, writing encouraging notes, talking to them to find out how life is going and creating a bond and friendship that will lead them to a closer walk with Christ. If you are willing to come alongside one of our young people, please reach out to Cheri O'Dell.

Rally Day is always a special day as we kick off the new Sunday school year. You are invited to attend an all-church picnic with hot dogs, chips and beverages following the service. If you are able, bring a dish to pass. Pastor Jason will be holding an all-church Sunday school while the food is being cooked.

We will also celebrate our children that are moving up to a different Sunday school..



Kids tossed whip cream pies at Youth Group during last year's Rally Day event.



FBC children gathered around Pastor Jason for a hands-on lesson at 2021 Rally Day

VBS COMBINES FUN AND FAITH LESSONS

Pastor Jason and several willing volunteers led another successful Vacation Bible School from June 27-29 here at First Baptist. As is customary, VBS activities blended lots of fun and crafts within the lessons. Pastor Jason's alter-ego was "Mad Scientist Professor PB&J" with a theme of "Hero Headquarters." Teens also assisted, some dressing up as superheroes. Tiffany and others led campers through arts and craft activities. Youngsters tend to remember their VBS experiences as children—no matter where their faith journeys take them in the future. Thanks to all our volunteers!



Cari Matejka received a special hands-on blessing from FBC youth prior to her mission trip to Africa.



Vi Pettigrew was among volunteers For VBS, registering participants.

CHILDREN & YOUTH SUNDAY 2022



It was great seeing our young people take the helm for Children & Youth Sunday on June 26. The kids worked with Pastor Jason to fill worship leading spots throughout the order of worship and performed a special skit depicting one of the miracles of Jesus. They turned the tables on the Sunday school teachers, making them the students receiving the lesson. At the close of the service, the youth and Pastor Jason prayed for Cari Matejka and her team and laid hands on her prior to her summer mission trip to Uganda.



A MUSICAL MOMENT

"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"

This verse from Colossians 3:16 is one of many verses that encourages a singing church. Hopefully you were able to express your gratitude as we sang congregational favorites during our services this summer. It was interesting to hear the back story to some of these songs and know that they were written by folks with diverse backgrounds who were simply bringing their offering of praise and worship to the Lord. A word of thanks goes out to the summer vocalists and instrumentalists who led in worship these past couple of months. Your time and talents were so appreciated by all who heard. We are so fortunate that you are willing to share with us. And musical sharing continues into the fall! The **In One A-Chord Handbell Choir** will resume their rehearsals on Wed. Sept. 14th at 7 pm. If you would like to give bell ringing a try, talk to Bob Faulds about joining the group. And...our **Senior Choir** will resume rehearsals on Thurs. Sept 15th at 6:45 pm in the Chapel. If you like to sing and can find the melody (or harmony!), then you are qualified to join in! If you've not been part of this group before and would like to see what it's all about - just come out and sit in on a rehearsal any week. We'd love to have you - and your joyful noise!

'Sing'cerely, Sue Neely VanBrunt, Minister of Music

The Family of God



We extend our **LOVE AND SYMPATHY** to: Victoria Dennis and the family of Michael Dennis, who passed away in July; the Kerls family on the passing of Baby Zoey; Christy Siau (Region

ABCNYS) and family on the loss of her husband and young daughter; and Jim and Penny Sorokes & family on the passing of Penny's Aunt Emily Jordan. We are also mourning the loss of Beverly Firth, who passed away Aug. 7, and extend love and sympathy to her family.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to Cari Matejka who will be host photographer for a showing at the Olean Public Library in October. A recent Olean Times Herald article mentioned that Cari's work as CEO of Literacy of Love will depict the difficult but hopeful life in Uganda.



SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Sunday, September 4 @ Noon

Board of Christian Missions

Tuesday, September 13 @ 6:30 pm- Board of

Christian Education , Diaconate,
Trustees

Tuesday, Sept. 27 @ 6:30 pm

Advisory Council



Small Hands, Big Hearts Yard Sale

The Small Hands, Big Hearts Yard Sale will be held Aug. 27 in Fellowship Hall from 9 am to 4 pm. This year's sale will benefit the LEEK Preserve, a hunting and fishing preserve for wounded warriors. The one-day sale will also include basket raffles. If you can loan a table, see Judy Wightman. Mark the tables clearly for proper return.

Former FBC Pastor Authors New Book

Former pastor Mac Shotwell, a gifted preacher and author, has written another book! It is now available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble with an Ebook to be available soon.

Here's an overview of the book: Focusing on the thirty-three recorded sayings of Jesus after his resurrection and before his ascension, the invitation in this book is to come and see what Jesus said and did, and then go, tell Jesus' message to a needed world.

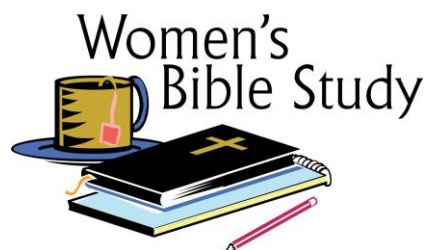
During these days of social unrest, the Christian church, and all who claim the name of Christ, face challenging times. We are being asked to rethink our mission, our reasons for being. We need to be challenged to discover creative ways to share the Good News of Jesus and his call for love and justice in today's world. This book will ask penetrating questions surrounding the post-Easter sayings of Jesus. It will address "the elephant in the room."

The author, the Rev. Dr. Malcolm (Mac) Shotwell, pastor, teacher, administrator, extends this invitation and urges a contemporary response to the great commission.

"My hope," writes Dr. Shotwell, "is that the research and thoughts in this book will add to the ongoing message and mission of our Savior and Lord, who said, 'I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly'" (John 10:10).

"As you journey with me through these sayings (and perhaps share in small group), my prayer is that the meaning of Jesus' resurrection words will speak to you and help you find ways of discovering direction and good in the midst of life's situations."

--Mac Shotwell



The Wednesday Ladies Bible Study led by Rita Wymer continues to meet in the Board Room at 1:00. The group will be studying Prayers of the Bible, beginning in September. All are welcome to join them this fall.

THE HISTORY OF WHITE CROSS

For generations, American Baptists' helping hands have been reaching out to people in need. During World War I, women in the church assisted the American Red Cross by providing surgical dressings, bandages and other medical supplies for U.S. service personnel. As they met these needs, the women became convinced that similar methods would be of great help in the work of Christian mission. In 1919, following the end of the war, American Baptist women organized the White Cross Service League, "channeling the war effort into support for Baptist mission," to use their words.

Through the years, women have provided leadership to this ministry. Today, men, youth, children and entire congregations have embraced White Cross. Your gifts continue the legacy of providing practical help and needed supplies where IM serves around the world.

WHITE CROSS PROJECTS

White Cross supports vital needs around the world to promote Health and Wellness, Education and Abolishing Global Slavery. The importance of White Cross is Immeasurable and God multiplies the impact of your support in the countries' International Ministries serves. Today, just as it has for the past century, White Cross needs your helping hands! Your White Cross gifts provide assistance to ministries where IM (International Ministries) global servants work and more:

Africa: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, South Africa

Central and South America, Caribbean: Bolivia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Panama

East Asia and Southeast Asia: China, India, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Philippines, Thailand

Europe and Middle East: Lebanon, Palestine

Those who benefit from your kindness, affirm that White Cross is a lifeline. Remember these White Cross groups will benefit from your prayer. Without your generosity, many of the White Cross projects would not be possible. You continue to transform lives by supporting IM ministries in health services, recovery and restoration to wholeness. 1 John 3:17-18 reminds us, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? . . . let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

The White Cross collection Sundays are on September 11th and 18th. There is a poster in the lobby, donation envelopes in the pews and the Christian Mission Board will have a table set up in the Narthex to receive donations before and after the Worship Service. ~Rita Wymer



MINISTERING TO OUR CHILDREN

One way that we can touch our children with our love of Jesus is through the Children's Sermons. If you would like an opportunity

to present a message to our little ones during worship on Sunday mornings, please give us a call in the church office. The schedule for 2022 will be prepared in the next few months and we have a need for several new volunteers. We would love to have you be a part of this ministry.

I'd Like to Make a Difference

God has given me a place on earth
To be here for a while.

I hope that as I'm passing through
I will make somebody smile.

I want to make life easier
For all the ones I meet.
I ask God for His blessings
To the strangers on the street.

I hope I'll never fail a child
If I can help somehow.
I want to be as generous
As my resources will allow.

And when my life on earth is done
It will be my final plea.
Let someone, somewhere think of saying,
"You made a difference to me."

--Anonymous





THE PASTOR'S PAGE

Dear friends and family of Olean First Baptist Church,

Last week I spoke with our Moderator, Jim Sorokes, and Jim Kelsey, the Executive Minister of American Baptist Churches of New York State, letting them know I will be stepping down as pastor of Olean First Baptist Church. This is not a decision that I am making lightly or without sadness, as I have come to love the families and ministry here.

God informed me early on in Olean that my purpose was to see our congregation through a time of transition. I was unclear what that was at the time, but as we traveled through the mandated shutdowns and uncertainties surrounding COVID, and then as Pastor Millard announced his retirement, it became clearer. We have made it through these challenges, and I have been prayerfully considering the vision and purpose God is giving to Olean First Baptist Church in this new season. I have also been praying for my family and my place in our church's ministry. It has become clear that you need a new kind of leadership to make it into the days ahead. If God has called me to see you safely through the last few years, He will call someone with a clear vision to see you into the years ahead.

The other factor which led to this decision was family. It has been incredibly hard to raise our children, so far removed from our family. This summer with inflation and gas prices we had to make the hard decision not to vacation in Illinois. Tiffany has been searching for a teaching job for two years now. We prayerfully considered looking to see if there were any jobs closer to her family and within two days of applying, she was offered a full-time position which would honor her twenty years teaching experience.

I do not in any way regret my time with you. God has shown me how strong and faithful you are as individuals and as a congregation. I have complete trust and faith in the leadership of this church and know you will be up to the challenges that my absence will create. Keep loving each other and serving our community in the Spirit of our Lord. God will give you strength for the days ahead.

The time with you has been full of blessings and I am indebted to you for the love and support you have shown to me and to my wife and children.

--Your Servant in Christ,

Pastor Jason Hladik

Act as if what you do
makes a difference. IT
DOES!!!

--William James



THE MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

It has been a time of very mixed emotions. As I write this, I am sitting in our rental home on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. This is one of, if not my favorite places to visit. There's just something about relaxing in a chair with my feet in the sand, watching and listening to the waves roll onto the shore, and hearing the call of the gulls. Despite the sometimes-overwhelming array of sights and sounds, I feel strangely at peace. I am also fascinated by the beauty and the power of God's creation but also by the ever-changing nature of the ocean's shore. The ocean can be incredibly beautiful but also devastatingly destructive. Not far from where we are staying, several homes were washed out to sea during a recent storm... a stark reminder of the temporary nature of our earthly creations and of our time on earth. In that regard, shortly after arriving at our beach home, a rainbow appeared over the ocean. We marveled at its brilliance and that we could clearly see both ends as they intersected the horizon. (Unfortunately, the photo at the right does not do the rainbow justice. No photo ever does.) A little while later, we learned that Bev Firth had passed away after her long battle with heart and lung ailments. Curiously, the timing of her death coincided with the appearance of the rainbow. Coincidence? Maybe. Or was God letting us know that Bev is now safely in His loving arms... free from the pain and suffering she felt in her earthly body. I felt sadness for those who will miss her, including me, but also gladness that she has received her heavenly reward. As I wrote in the beginning... very mixed emotions.

It was with likewise mixed emotions that I learned that Pastor Jason will soon be leaving our congregation. He called me to let me know as I was building a sandcastle with my grandson, Owen. Another coincidence? I think not. Anyone who has ever built a sandcastle knows that they do not last forever. If not destroyed by others, the wind and the waves will blow or wash away the castle, often in less time than it took to build, leaving a smooth beach waiting for the next artists to use the plentiful sand to assemble a new creation. Thankfully, unlike a sandcastle, whose foundation is sand, our church is built on a reasonably solid foundation that will not be washed away with the departure of our senior pastor. And while we will be saddened to see Pastor Jason

and his family leave, we also know that this is God's will for him and for our church. God is calling Pastor Jason to new challenges and God likewise must have His eye on a new leader for our church... one who will guide us as we establish a new vision for our church's role in our community. We have been through many pastoral changes over our history and our church leadership will work hard to make the upcoming transition as smooth as possible. Throughout the process, we will need your thoughts, your suggestions, and your support. But most of all, we will need your patience. As we learned during the search that brought us Pastor Jason, this can be a long and winding road.

As a closing thought for this edition, I thank those who sent me notes or let me know that they do read and get something from the monthly Moderator's Musings. I especially thank the southern contingent



who expressed their appreciation for what I write. While all of us seek to store up our treasures in Heaven, as imperfect humans, it can be uplifting and motivating to occasionally receive recognition or gratitude while here on earth.

Blessed are those who mourn...

-Jim Sorokes
Moderator

*"Every place where God leads, there is
your field."*

*"I am sure the happiest days of my life
have been when I have tried to do the
will of God as far as I know it to do."*

(Two quotes from D.L. Moody)

MISSION BOARD NEWS



PARTNERING WITH 'HEAT ON THE FEET'

FBC is partnering with the "Heat on the Feet" project led by the Pastor Tyrone Hall and the Church Without Walls. A barrel has been provided in the church lobby for new socks and sneakers to benefit area youth. Last year, this event provided more than 600 pairs of shoes on kids' feet for the Back to School season. This year's goal is 1,000 pairs of shoes for this community. A special event will take place at Lincoln Park on Sept. 4, 10 a.m. The theme is "Run to Jesus."

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD:

Due to growing project and ministry costs in providing evangelism and discipleship materials to shoebox recipients, the per shoebox suggested donation will increase from \$9 to \$10 in 2022. As economic and supply chain challenges continue, we are experiencing significant increases in many areas, specifically the printing of materials and overall transportation and shipping costs. A suggested donation of \$10 per shoebox is critical to transporting and delivering shoeboxes into the hands of a child in need. It also provides ministry materials such as cardboard shipping cartons, The Greatest Gift Gospel booklet for children, and the Ministry Partner Guide for local outreach event training. The decision to increase the suggested donation has been made prayerfully, with a great deal of input from Samaritan's Purse leadership. We trust God to continue providing for the ministry of Operation Christmas Child and look forward to seeing how He moves in 2022! --God Bless! Sharon Anthony

BARREL DONATIONS

We have had some questions about donations for Genesis House/Olean Food Pantry. Here are some guidelines:

- 1) Please make sure food is not expired.
- 2) Food must be in unopened and original packages because we don't wish to have unwanted visitors (rodents) in the church.

Your donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your support.

WORLD MISSION OFFERING IN OCTOBER

This year's World Mission Offering will be conducted from Oct. 2-30th. Envelopes will be in the pews and more information will be provided in the October AFB.



[The following was written by Jim Kelsey, ABCNYS Executive Minister and printed in a recent newsletter following the tragic circumstances that claimed lives in the family of one associated with our Region's ministries.]

We Want to Know Why

Tragic things happen to us and people we love; and we want to know why. We believe if we can understand why, it will ease some of our grief. We suspect that if we can make sense of this thing, it can bring some healing to our broken hearts. Sometimes we can draw some lines of causality. A drunk driver hits and kills someone. The driver was callously irresponsible, and a death resulted. Such cause and effect scenarios, however, do not really get at the deeper questions that haunt us. Why was this person struck and not another? How could this driver act with such callous disregard for the well-being of others? Why did God allow this to happen?

In tragedies that strike closest to home, assigning guilt or blaming God does not really get at the deep places in our hearts. Such facile analysis does not settle our disquiet. But still, we want to know why. We want to make some sense of it.

Sometimes we are asking questions that we will never be able to answer. There are some losses that will be forever unexplainable, that will never make sense. We live in a broken world, a world sometimes so far from what God intended that it is hard to maintain a vision of Eden. Paradise seems so lost; we wonder if it was just a dream we created to comfort ourselves.

These struggles are part of our human frailty. It does not mean we have too little faith. It means the brokenness of our world sometimes outstrips our capacity to absorb and process it. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians:

For our knowledge is imperfect...For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide; but the greatest of these is love (13: 12-13).

Someday our troubled hearts and uncomprehending minds will be stilled. For now, our understanding, like our whole being, is bathed in incomplete and distorted images. Mirrors in the day of Paul did not reflect clear images; one got the blurry outlines of a visage only.

There are things in this world we will never understand. There are questions to which we will never have answers in this life. To start making up answers is a mistake. Faith in the goodness of God involves the grace to live with unanswered, unanswerable questions. Faith, hope, and love abide; sometimes they must be enough for now.

If we cannot make sense of the hard things of life, our next question is: Where is God in all this? To that question we have an answer: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us [John 1:14].”

God in Christ entered our world and lived out his life among us. As Jesus stands in line with sinners awaiting the baptism of repentance, a baptism he in no way needed, we see his total identity with us through his life in this world, in a life like ours (Matt. 3:1-17). He is “all in” with us.

Elie Wiesel tells a story in his memoir *Night* about an experience he had as a prisoner in Auschwitz. The prisoners return from work one day and see three gallows. Three innocent people are executed. Wiesel describes the moments after the hanging. The prisoners are ordered to march past the victims.

Behind him, Wiesel heard a man ask: “For God’s sake, where is God?” Wiesel writes of his response to this question:

And from within me, I heard a voice answer: “Where He is? This is where—hanging from this gallows...”

This is where God is immersed in our world’s brokenness. In the book of Jeremiah, the tears of God are so mingled with the tears of the weeping prophet over the tragic choices of the nation, we cannot tell where the tears of one ends and the tears of the other begins. We have a God who grieves our losses in common with us.

Why do hard and horrible things happen? That question is often unanswerable. We cannot make sense of it all sometimes.

There is a question we can answer. Where is God in all this? God is with us, beside us, around us, grieving our loss and pain with us. About this there is no doubt. This unchanging truth is the source of our strength and hope in all the seasons of our living. So writes the author of Hebrews:

“Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

This is the unshifting rock on which we stand.



Here’s a list to keep around. It really puts perspective into life.

The most destructive habit...Worry
The greatest joy...Giving
The greatest loss...Self Respect
The most satisfying work...Helping Others
The ugliest personality trait...Selfishness
Our Greatest national resource...Our Youth
The greatest “shot in the arm”...Encouragement
The most effective sleeping pill...Peace of Mind
The most crippling failure disease...Excuses
The most powerful force in life...Love
The most dangerous pariah...A Gossiper
The world’s most incredible computer...The Brain
The worst thing to be without...Hope
The deadliest weapon...The Tongue
The two most power-filled words...“I Can”
The greatest asset...Faith
The most worthless emotion...Self-Pity
The most beautiful attire...Smile
The most prized possession...Self Esteem
The most powerful channel of communication...PRAYER
The most contagious spirit...Enthusiasm



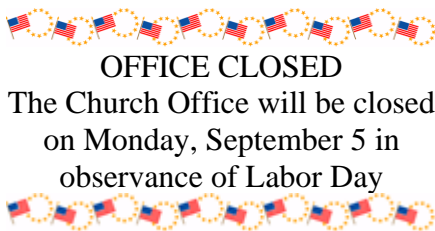
SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Randy Samuelson
- 2 Shelly Woods
- 4 Jodie Martin
Rachel Green
- 5 Sharyn Garey Hornburg
- 8 Dave Anderson
Paul Geise
- 20 Louise Croft
- 22 Sheila Faulds
- 24 Molly DiCapua
- 25 Sharon Anthony
- 26 Sam Longo
- 29 Linda Kennemuth

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES



- 1 Sam & Linda Longo
- 4 Paul & Jamie Geise
- 16 Paul & Lindsay Cummings



Please let us know in the office when you plan to fly south for the winter months so that you'll continue to receive your church mailings and we won't incur fees for returned mail.

INFORMATION AND ARTICLES FOR THE OCTOBER EDITION OF AT FIRST BAPTIST ARE DUE TO THE CHURCH OFFICE BY THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8.

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY thru FRIDAY

9:00 a.m. – Noon

Pastor: 9 am to 3 pm (Mon.-Thur.)

Morning Devotions approximately 9:00-9:30

(Note: The pastoral staff's schedule can sometimes be unpredictable due to visitations, emergencies, etc. If you stop by and find "nobody home", we ask for your patience and understanding. We will do our best to be here during posted office hours.)

Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School: 11:00 a.m.

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