



## AT FIRST BAPTIST

**OPEN**  
Senior Pastor

**ROBERT FAULDS**  
Organist

**SUE NEELY VANBRUNT**  
Minister of Music

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

**DEB WUETHRICH**  
Church Secretary

**RACHEL GREEN**  
Custodian

**PAMELA PUTT**  
Financial Liaison



### Family Life Network Event Featured Jill & Erin Kelly

Jill shared inspiring background on her personal and family's faith and how God helped them through many challenges, including the death of their son, Hunter, born with a rare disorder; Jim's bouts with cancer; and other issues. Erin also brought a different perspective, including how when a young child loses a sibling, they may enter a new grieving phase when they are adults, something she said she experienced. Through faith, counseling and sharing their lives, both feel they are fulfilling God's purpose. Both were extremely open with their stories and invite others to share theirs. Most in the audience received an inspirational boost from the Kelly's heartfelt openness. They also signed books after the talk. Proceeds benefit Hunter's Hope, a foundation they founded in Hunter's memory.

Eighteen FBC women (and friends) traveled to Family Life Network in Bath on Dec. 1 for the annual Ladies' Christmas Luncheon. The event was an FBC Women's Ministry activity and featured hearing former Buffalo Bills quarterback Jim Kelly's wife, Jill, and daughter, Erin, speak on their family's challenges and successes.



Hundreds of women attended this typically sold-out-in-advance event. Thanks to Penny Sorokes we had our tables purchased early this year and will be watching early fall next year.

The food was, as usual, delicious, cranberry glazed chicken or a glazed ham entrée, sides and wonderful dessert selections, prepared by FLN's own chefs.



FBC had two tables in front of the stage in a very full room at Family Life Network's Ladies Christmas Luncheon.

## Not Too Late!

Since this issue of AFB is scheduled to go out a little ahead of the New Year, there's still time to make note of some events happening at or around the church.

## Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service is the Senior Choir Cantata, "Messiah—Heaven's Glory." It all begins with a prelude at 6:45 pm with special instrumental selections by Robert Faulds, Dave Taylor, Lori Funden, Katie Eifert and Jerry Nutt III. Worship begins at 7 pm and includes a children's talk, carol singing, the cantata and the lighting of individual candles as we close with "Silent Night." Encourage family and friends to join us!

Our Christmas morning service will be a Celebration of Christ's birth at our normal 9:30 am worship hour, a time to remember Jesus, the Reason for the Season!

## New Year's Eve Concert

Our Music Ministry Department is lining up musicians for the Annual New Year's Eve Concert scheduled for Dec. 31st at 7 pm in our sanctuary. The evening is sure to include a lineup of talent from within our church and community. All are welcome!

## ANNUAL CORPORATE MEETING TO BE HELD JANUARY 15

As required by our Constitution and By-Laws, the congregation will gather after worship on Sunday, January 15 to go over the reports of all the church staff members as well as our boards and committees. A quorum of 40 voting members is required to carry out the business and we need your input, so please make your best effort to join us. Voting members age 18 and over are eligible to vote in the corporate meeting.

### JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

3 Dave & Nan Torrey

### FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

24 – Nick & Brandi Porcello



## UN-HANGING THE GREENS

We'll be un-decorating the church on Sunday, January 8, following Sunday School. Just as in the decorating, it takes many hands to put the trimmings away. Please plan to stay and help us put away the decorations that have made the Christmas season so festive.



## Family of God



We extend our **LOVE AND SYMPATHY** to the Firth family on the December passing of Larry Firth; and **LOVE AND SYMPATHY** to the Crowley family on the passing of Gail Crowley on Dec. 13, 2022. We also extend additional **LOVE AND SYMPATHY** to Shelly Woods and her family on the passing Dec. 13 of her husband, Bob.

## Thank You

*The Schultz family wishes to say THANK YOU for the many cards, prayers and love received on the passing of Sandy Schultz. They are very grateful for the support and love throughout Sandy's challenges.*

### BIRTHDAYS

#### JANUARY

4 Cheri O'Dell  
Okey Taylor  
Linda Longo  
11 Cari Matejka  
15 John Samuelson  
17 Violet Butler  
Steve Rosel  
20 Pam Nutt  
22 Gaylord Sage  
24 Gloria Spiller  
30 Lylah Butler

#### FEBRUARY

9 Darlene Selph  
12 Dana Boser  
Nan Norton  
16 Katrina DeGroff  
24 Brian Sanders  
27 Terri McDowell  
28 Elizabeth Spiller



of beloved members of our church family who went home to be with their Lord in 2022:

- Harriett Wilday – 1/24/22
- Mary Wichert – 5/20/22
- Beverly Firth – 8/7/22
- Gladys Hirsch – 8/26/22
- Sandy Schultz – 10/19/22
- Larry Firth – 12/10 /22
- Gail Crowley – 12/13/22

(Apologies for any church members' names missed.)

### ***Soup & Salad Luncheon Coming***

Our FBC Women's Ministry will be hosting a Soup & Salad Lunch on Saturday, Jan. 14, from 11 am to 1 pm here at First Baptist. We invite you to bring your favorite salad to share, and soup will be provided.



Please plan to join us for this time of fellowship!

### **Dedicate a Service**

If you would like to be a part of this important ministry at Olean First Baptist by dedicating a service in memory or honor of someone, a sign-up sheet is posted on the window for 2023 dates. This is such a nice way to honor or remember someone on a special occasion.



**Just a reminder: JOIN PASTOR MILLARD AT PERKINS RESTAURANT IN OLEAN AT NOON ON THURSDAYS FOR A WEEKLY MEN'S LUNCHEON**



We would like to thank the 2023 Nominating Committee members and all who stepped up to fill open positions on FBC Boards and Committees for 2023 and terms beyond. A few open spots still remain and it's not too late to offer to serve. This is one way to make a difference at your church and in your community, sharing in the work of First Baptist and the family of God. See any board chairperson, or Moderator Casey Sage if you would like more information about how to include your time and talents as part of your church giving.

### **Coming Board Meetings**

- Jan. 8, Noon Board of Christian Missions
- Jan. 10, 6:30 Board of Christian Education  
Diaconate, Board of Trustees
- Jan. 24, 6:30 Advisory Council (Tentative)
- Feb. 12, Noon Board of Christian Missions
- Feb. 14, 6:30 Board of Christian Education  
Diaconate, Board of Trustees

### **RETIRED MINISTERS AND MISSIONARIES OFFERING**

**“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”**

**1 Thessalonians 5:18**

The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering is being collected in January again this year. Envelopes for this purpose will be available in the pew racks. Mission Board members remind us that ministers, missionaries and their spouses dedicate their lives as full time servants of our Lord. Think back over your lifetime of these special people who influenced your life. Many live on small pensions because the churches they served were not able to pay their retirement. This extra gift to them means more than just money – it means they are not forgotten! Let us remember some of the ones who served this church all around the world and are now retired with our prayers and offerings.



**MIDWEEK PAUSE FOR  
POWER CONTINUES!**

On Wednesday evenings at 5:30, Dave Torrey continues to lead “Pause for Power,” a Midweek Prayer and Worship opportunity. Attendees gather for a special time of sharing the cares and joys of their hearts, followed by prayer, hymn sing and Bible study. With all the things going on in the country and our world, this might be a good time to invite others who might be looking for a midweek worship/study opportunity to join in as well!

**ARTICLES WILL BE DUE FOR THE MARCH ISSUE OF AFB ON THURSDAY, FEB. 9. WE NEED AND WELCOME THE ASSISTANCE OF BOARD CHAIRS AND OTHERS TO HELP US STAY UP-TO-DATE ON EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS AT FBC.**

**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS  
MONDAY thru FRIDAY**

**9:00 a.m. – Noon**

**Morning Devotions approximately 9:00-9:30**

**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.**

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**Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m.**

**Sunday School: 11:00 a.m.**

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**The FBC Church office will be closed on Monday, January 16 in commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Also, on Feb. 20 for Presidents’ Day**



**A Word On Prayer**

**Prayer is need finding a voice. Prayer is embarrassment seeking relief. Prayer is friend in search of friend. Prayer is a quest in the darkness of midnight. Prayer is knocking on a barred door. Prayer is communion through both darkness and closed doors. Prayer is shameless insistence in the name of another. Prayer is expecting and receiving all things whatsoever we need to meet the demands when Jesus our Friend calls on us.**

**--Ralph A. Herring**



## THE ASSISTANT MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

Some might be confused by the title on this article, so let me

explain. As I write this edition, I still have about two weeks left on my five-year term as Moderator. As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Casey Sage will assume the role of Church Moderator. At that time, I will become the Assistant Moderator, so depending on when you read this newsletter, I am either still the Moderator OR I have assumed my new role as Assistant Moderator. I agreed to be the assistant for at least a year to support Casey as we go through the transition period... i.e., bringing in an interim pastor, searching for a new senior pastor, setting our vision for the future, etc. Please note, I did **NOT** accept the role because I thought Casey could not handle the Moderator responsibilities. She is more than capable, and I believe she will do an excellent job. However, I also recognize that there will be more than the usual challenges in the coming year, so I wanted to be there to help her if or when needed.

While on this subject, God gave every one of us unique gifts, personalities, and perspectives. We are not all the same and we do not view the world the same way. Therefore, we cannot expect everyone to conduct themselves the same way or do the same things. Casey is not me (*and Matt is very thankful for that*), so she will almost certainly have a different approach to running meetings, getting information to the congregation, leading the Advisory Council, etc. And that is OK! She also might not write a monthly article for the newsletter, though that remains to be seen. Nothing in the "rule book" requires the Moderator to put anything in the newsletter, so maybe she will and maybe she won't. That is OK, too! For those wondering, I decided that I will continue the "Musings" but will do so under the title "Assistant Moderator's Musings." As I have noted many times, I truly enjoy (love?) writing. I have come to believe it is one of the gifts God gave me... and I am eternally thankful to Sister Phyllis, a Catholic nun who was my freshman English teacher at St. Bonaventure, for recognizing this gift in me. It literally changed my life. So, like it or not, these articles will continue. 😊

I also want to clear the air regarding another rumor that reached me. Some folks were or are concerned that Penny Sorokes was elected to the Board of Trustees while Jim Sorokes is still on the Board. Please understand that there is nothing in our By-Laws that prevents spouses from serving together on any Board and

there is precedence for this on the Board of Trustees. Maxine and Bernie Miller were on the Trustee Board from 2003 to 2005. Numerous couples have served on our other Boards. As noted above, everyone brings different perspectives, personalities, and gifts to the Boards and Committees. And it probably will not shock you to learn that spouses quite often do NOT agree on everything!

Continuing on this theme, I think all of our church leaders believe that what they are doing is in the best interest of the church. However, given differences in personalities and perspectives, everyone will not agree that it is. In those instances, as Christians, we must be willing to bring these disagreements into the light and work together to resolve them. If we aren't willing to do that, are we *really* any better than non-Christians? Let's make a resolution for 2023 to be more open and honest with one another, to do our best to find common ground, and to strive for true unity in our church! As Paul suggests, let us "put away childish things" and be brothers and sisters in Christ, through Whom we can do all things... even get along with our fellow church members!!

*"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought."* – 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:10

Blessed are the peacemakers...

-Jim Sorokes, Moderator -or-  
Assistant Moderator

### A Thought for the New Year:

*"Write it in your heart that every day is the best day in the year."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## HOW TO PRAY

- Pray where you are. God is present everywhere and ready to listen.
- Pray when possible in a quiet spot where you can be alone. It is well to fix your mind deliberately on God, apart from confusing distractions.
- Pray to God simply and naturally, as to a friend. Tell Him what is on your mind. Get help from the prayers of others.
- Pray remembering the good things God has done for you. Reckon up your blessings from time to time and give thanks for them.
- Pray for God's forgiveness for the unworthy things that you may have done. He is near to a humble and contrite heart.
- Pray for the things that you need, especially for those that will make your life finer and more Christlike.
- Pray for others, remembering the situations they confront and the help they need.
- Pray for the world in its need, asking God to bring better things and offering your plan to help Him.
- Pray above everything else that God's will may be done in you and in the world. His purposes are deeper and wiser than anything we can imagine.
- Pray, and then start answering your prayer.

DEANE EDWARDS

### THE SECRET PLACE

**Each soul has its secret place,  
Where none may enter in  
Save it and God—to them alone  
What goeth on therein is known—  
To it and God alone.**

--JOHN OXENHAM

*Prayer is the contemplation of the  
facts of life from the highest point of  
view.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## *Tattered Memories, Tattered Hearts* **PEACE STILL POSSIBLE IN HIM!**

I was dutifully reading a devotional from "The Upper Room" the other morning. The first subscriptions were gifts from my mother, so I have continued receiving them in her memory. It sort of helps me see her as still being involved in my life and even spiritual development.

December is a time when "the blues" and a low-level melancholy can slip in. I'm not the only one who feels this, I know. When I hit Dec. 13 this year, memories still slammed into me, recalling a frigid cold morning when my husband collapsed at a farm where he was helping keep the books. It's now been 12 years since that time, but memories are like that.

At a dance recital for my niece, Amelia, I unexpectedly burst into tears watching her as her helper, Jen, spun "Amy" in the wheelchair on the stage at St. Bonaventure. Amy kept up the sign-language she had learned from a fellow dancer, flapping her arm around to the beat. My tears were two-fold. The sight hit my heart with an emotional remembrance of a time over 40 years ago when another girl, my sweet Michele, loved dancing so much, she choreographed hand-jives and other moves for herself and fellow students at Henry H. North Elementary School, a school that NEVER EVER said, "You can't do that!" They always made a way and accommodated your ideas for inclusion.

That's what I was feeling that day: memories of Michele; gratitude for the school's "can do" attitude during her lifetime; and a thankfulness that there are folks here in the Olean area who go to great lengths to ensure involvement to the fullest extent possible for those with disabilities.

The devotional I read the other day brought memories of a different kind. The writer, Graham N. West, from Wisconsin, wrote about how his wife brings out a tattered recipe for Christmas pudding she's made for decades, an inherited recipe that is "faded, smudged and stained," but still brings joy.

Graham wrote about how when the Christmas season and end of year rolls around, his heart is also often tattered, that joy from the beginning of the year has faded, clarity of vision smudged. "I am stained by letdowns, setbacks, and defeats," he said.

*"That's when I know it is time to bring out the well-loved story of the angel announcing Jesus' birth in Luke chapter 2. The angel announcing the birth of Christ our Savior brings joy to our expectant hearts. After a hard year of challenge, stress, and struggle this is truly good news and great joy! God has never forgotten us and comes to renew us each year at Christmastime."*

I decided this was so true. Whether the holidays find you bringing out tattered recipes, ornaments or just experiencing triggers of bittersweet remembrances of cherished past moments, I hope the Christmas story revives your heart and soul!

--Deb Wuethrich