



Sharing the faith, hope and redeeming love of Jesus Christ with all people.

AT FIRST BAPTIST

Interim Senior Pastor

Ivan Crossno

Secretary

Penny Sorokes

Financial Liaison

Pamela Putt

Minister of Music

Sue Neely VanBrunt

Organist

Robert Faulds

Audio Visual Specialist

Casey Sage

Custodian

Rachel Green

Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m.
Sunday School for All Ages: 11:00 a.m.

PHONE: 716- 372-5151

EMAIL: oleanfbc@outlook.com

WEBSITE: oleanfirstbaptist.com

FACEBOOK: [oleanfirstbaptistchurch](https://www.facebook.com/oleanfirstbaptistchurch)

Holy Week Reminders

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE

Interim Pastor Rev. Ivan Crossno has planned a solemn, thoughtful Maundy Thursday service for us at 7 p.m. on March 28. Special music will be presented, along with opportunity to participate in communion.

EASTER SUNDAY

Easter music will fill the sanctuary on Sunday, March 31 as the congregation joins in singing "Christ the Lord has Risen Today"

celebration will



"Arose," "Crown

Crowns," and "I Live," with the Senior Choir and other musicians leading worship as we rejoice in the Resurrection. Rev. Ivan Crossno will provide the Easter message as we celebrate the fact JESUS LIVES!

(Please Note: The nursery will NOT be staffed during worship but available for families that need to use it. Children in church will be given activity bags. There will be no Sunday school due to the Community Easter Dinner.)

17th ANNUAL COMMUNITY EASTER DINNER: MARCH 31

Plans continue for the 17th annual Community Easter Dinner with reserved meals available for pick-up (or delivered by our volunteers) from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. See Sharon Anthony if you might still be able to volunteer in some capacity. Donations are also accepted by making checks payable to First Baptist Church to help defray expenses for this important outreach meal.



FINAL HARVEST IN CONCERT AT FBC SAT. APRIL 6 @ 7 PM

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the Final



Harvest Concert and invite your family and friends!

The message of Final Harvest: God will send to His Church an unquenchable fire.

The wind of the Holy Spirit will cause it to burn hotter than on the day of Pentecost, and spread rapidly. It will spread with fury and devour all that is not holy. Then He will send the latter rain, wash away the dross, refresh and make new. The Glory of the Lord will be seen by the entire world and manifested through His Church. There begins the end time harvest.

This message burns in the heart of Final Harvest as they seriously pursue communicating the gospel of Jesus, the Messiah; the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Through their unique and intricate harmonies, this gospel and message of God's last call for His final harvest has been their focal point since 2006. Their wide range of music style includes southern gospel, contemporary and original classical inspirational.

Tickets for this uplifting, inspiring and FUN event are \$10 each at the door. Doors open at 6:15.

THE FAMILY OF GOD



Happy 50th Anniversary to Dave and Nancy Taylor, whose family feted them in an event at The Hall on Saturday, March 16 in Allegany. Congratulations!



Happy 50th Anniversary also to Jackie and Ray Steiner!



APRIL BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Sunday, April 14

@ Noon Board of Christian Missions

Monday, April 15

@ 6:30 pm – Board of Christian Education

Tuesday, April 16

@ 5:30 - Diaconate

@ 6:30 pm – Trustees



UPDATE OUR MILITARY WALL

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.



The Trustees have designated the 2024 EASTER OFFERING to benefit the Community Easter Dinner

DIRECTORY UPDATE: Nancy Dake*; 9 Crane St., Apt 303, Jamestown, NY 14701

THANK YOU'S

Thank you to the Senior Choir and my church family for your recent generous love gift to me. It is truly a blessing, an honor and a privilege to provide music and accompaniment for our worship services. While I am thankful to be here to fill in during Bob's absence, I will be happy to return the organ bench to him as soon as he is able to be back with us!

~Penny



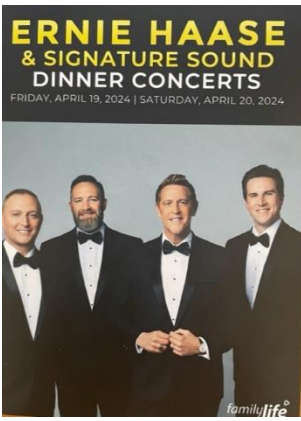
- 2 Yvonne Perry Clark
- 4 Jean Kwiatkowski
Karen Moore
- 6 Madison Davenport
- 7 Karen Woodring
- 12 Jack Croft
Geoff O'Dell
- 19 Nancy Lennon
- 20 Carleigh Spiller
- 21 Janell Martin
- 23 Abrianna Hladik

APRIL ANNIVERSARY

- 20 John & Jean Kwiatkowski
- 21 Trevor & Karen Moore



Linda Kennemuth 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 Linda at chico.lindy@gmail.com or 716-904-0860.



ERNIE HAASE & SIGNATURE SOUND will be in concert at Family Life Ministries on Sat. 4/20 @ 5:30 pm. This dinner/concert event is sold out, but we have six seats available; tickets are \$41.50 ea. Contact Penny Sorokes for more information or to purchase a ticket



ANNUAL SPRING CLEAN-UP DAYS: SATURDAY, MAY 4 & JUNE 8

Start Time: 9:00AM
There will be further information announced from the pulpit and in the weekly bulletin as it becomes available!!



CONTINUING EDUCATION

Our church offers financial scholarship to assist with expenses for church members

planning to continue their education. An application for consideration is available in the lobby information tower and should be submitted by **April 26, 2024**. It will be reviewed by the Scholarship Committee that is appointed by the Board of Trustees who administers this fund. This committee will consider factors such as dedication to Christian principals, evidence of Christian service, participation in FBC programs, educational achievement, extra-curricular activities and financial need. Letters of congratulation will be mailed to recipients, who will be recognized in worship on a Sunday in June. Eligibility requirements:

1. Be an active participant at Olean First Baptist church for at least 3 years, a church member for 2 years
2. Be at least a high school graduate/scheduled to graduate by August
3. Possess the motivation to pursue post-secondary education/training
4. Demonstrate financial need
5. Submit all available transcripts or copies of grades and/or evidence of growth during recent years of education/training
6. Complete entire application and write accompanying essay

ABCNYS REGION OFFERING 2024

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we read: "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." — Hebrews 13:16

The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the Christian believer's call "to do good and to share what you have". American Baptists do this work first through the life of the local church, yet we know that we can do more when we collaborate with our fellow churches.

Together, when we share our resources, we do good through the Regional ministry of American Baptist Churches of New York State. Your church's support of ABCNYS creates ministry opportunities and supports what would not happen otherwise!

- Our Region provides support to churches in pastoral transition and opportunities for church leaders to learn new skills and navigate difficult challenges.
- ABCNYS facilitates a growing Lay Study Program to help inform and develop lay leaders and potential local church pastors.
- Each year, our Youth Convention welcomes over 120 youth from our churches.
- Weekly, ABCNYS staff are on the road, the phone or ZOOM visiting and encouraging our churches and Associations, thanks to the funds we receive through the ABCNYS Region Offering.

Thank you for sharing so all of us can do good for the glory of God!



*The very first Easter taught us this:
that life never ends and
love never dies."
--Kate McGahan*



A WORD FROM THE PASTOR.....

I want to begin this article by offering a heart-felt thank you for the warm and caring reception you have given me in my first three weeks as your

Interim Pastor. I have been made to feel a part of your groups and fellowships in a way that reveals you are truly gracious in every way. So, thank you!

When I go to meetings or attend seminars, I like to see agendas or syllabi which show where we are going. In preaching I like to give you my agenda so you know where I am going. In knowing this you can even prepare for sermons and ‘get’ into the flow in ways that allows the Holy Spirit to apply the content more effectively to your life. So, strap in because this is our agenda for the next several Sundays (unless the Spirit leads otherwise and I am always open to that).

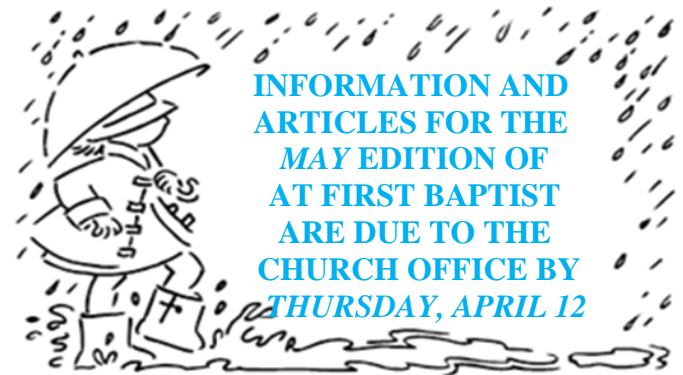
- **EASTER SUNDAY:** *Do You Really ‘Get’ Easter?*
- The Final Sermon in my DNA of the church: **ENGAGED IN MISSION**
- Going back to being **GROUNDING IN THE WORD** I am going to preach you through the Bible in a series of sermons on the Great Acts in Holy Scripture. This will take several Sundays. These sermons will reveal to you my understanding of the great drama that is the Bible that can actually be considered in 6 acts like in a play. But this is a drama that moves you beyond being a spectator and invites you into it.
- After that I am going to return to being **EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT** with a series of sermons on what the life of the Spirit looks like in the ‘fruit of the Spirit’.

You will find that I am relentlessly focused on the Word of God and its life-changing implications for our lives today. So, join me on this journey as God challenges us to be **GROUNDING IN HIS WORD, EMPOWERED BY HIS SPIRIT AND ENGAGED IN HIS MISSION.**

Pastor Ivan

THE PULPIT/SEARCH COMMITTEE

The process of searching for our next senior pastor continues with the formation of the Pulpit/Search Committee. This team takes the reigns from the Transition Team who, with the help of the congregation, did much of the foundation work for this part of the search. This committee’s members are: Co-Chairs: Pam Nutt & Penny Sorokes; Secretary: Jamie Riesdorff; Linda Longo, Laurie MacNeill, Pamela Putt, Judy Wightman, Eli Rust and David Torrey. While most of the work that we will be doing over the coming months **must** remain confidential, we will keep the congregation posted on our progress as we can.



GENESIS HOUSE ANNUAL SALE

The annual geranium sale is underway at Genesis House. This is the biggest fundraiser for our homeless shelter. The sale includes top-quality geraniums and hanging baskets. Watch the Sunday bulletins for more details on flower choices and prices as well as the delivery date.



Remember that the revolving tower near the office window contains copies of recent board minutes from our church boards (Trustees, Diaconate, Christian Education, Christian Missions, and Advisory Council) as well as forms for building use, scholarship applications, and more. This is an important way to stay up-to-date on the happenings/workings of the church. Please help yourself to a copy. If you find that something is not available, please leave a note in Penny’s office mailbox or send a message to her at oleanfbc@outlook.com.



THE MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

One of the more interesting discussions (or arguments?) I participated in during a theology class at St. Bonaventure

University was related to the following question: What is the most important Christian holiday? Many chose Easter because it was the day Jesus rose from the dead... conquering death and providing us a path to eternal life. Others argued that Christmas was most important because it was the day that God became man... and Jesus had to be born before He could die and rise. It seemed like it would be a battle between those two days until someone suggested that Good Friday should be #1 because it is the day Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice. He noted that there could be no resurrection without the death. The sacrificial lamb had to die for our sins. I remember many being annoyed, even angry, that someone would suggest Good Friday was more important than Christmas or Easter. I understood their negative reaction. After all, Christmas and Easter are “feel good” days... our Savior was born... our Savior was risen... giving us reasons to celebrate. Conversely, Good Friday is typically considered a “downer day” of sacrifice, suffering, sadness, and death. Why would anyone put it first? After much discussion, the group finally concluded that all three are equally important. Jesus became a man (Christmas)... Jesus died (Good Friday) ... and Jesus rose from the dead (Easter). The story is not complete without all three. However, there is something special about Good Friday. It is a uniquely Christian “holiday.” While Christmas and Easter are celebrated by Christians and non-Christians, only Christians recognize the importance of Good Friday. There is no counter-Christian or secular celebration on Good Friday. If anything, the secular world tries to force us to ignore it. I remember when Good Friday was recognized as a holiday... a day off from work... but few companies or organizations include it on their holiday schedules these days. Regardless, as Christians, we should pause on Good Friday and truly consider what Jesus went through for us! The mock trials... the abuse... the humiliation... the brutal scourging that ripped His flesh from His body... being abandoned by those closest to Him... being forced to carry His cross to Golgotha... the searing pain of the nails piercing His hands and feet... the agony as His body hung on the Cross... gasping for breath... the taunting... the hate... and finally death. There are no words to

adequately describe what He suffered... because of His love for us!

I also often wonder what it must have been like for His disciples and followers. They had so much hope... so many expectations, only to watch their teacher, their rabbi, the Messiah die on a cross and be buried in a tomb. It wasn't supposed to happen like this... or so they thought. They must have been emotionally and spiritually crushed! The emotional high of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem just days earlier... gone!! Their dreams... shattered. I imagine it was a sleepless night followed by a Sabbath day in hiding... confused... dejected... defeated... demoralized. As night fell, they likely slept, succumbing to emotional and physical exhaustion. ***Then came the morning...***

As I have mentioned many times, I draw spiritual inspiration through music. It was not by chance that I ended the preceding paragraph with the phrase in bold italics. That is the name of a popular Gospel song. Many have performed “Then Came The Morning...” but my favorite is by Ernie Haase & Signature Sound... and, in particular, the version that is available on YouTube from 2016 (<https://youtu.be/cJc-HrfLqtM>). While I probably shouldn't admit it, despite having watched that video countless times, it still brings tears to my eyes. It is an incredibly powerful song that takes the listener from the lows of Good Friday to the exhilaration of Easter morning! Though you might not like that style of music, I strongly recommend you take time to listen to the song... at least once. And please listen closely to the lyrics.

By the way, if you do like what you hear, as noted elsewhere in this newsletter, Ernie Haase & Signature Sound will be performing at Family Life Network on Friday, April 19th and Saturday, April 20th . It is not the same group of singers as two of the four shown in the video have been replaced, but they still put on an inspiring show.

In closing, please join me in praying for our church, our church's leaders, and our new pulpit committee as we embark on our search for our next senior pastor. And please pray for our new interim, Pastor Ivan, as he leads us until our new pastor arrives. We are blessed to have such an experienced pastor filling the void during the search process.

*Blessed are the Peacemakers,
-Jim Sorokes, Moderator*



Writing Book Eased Burden of Grief

By Deb Wuethrich

Those who know me or read my column in the *Times Herald* have heard me talk for years about the fact that I wanted to publish at least a couple of books that I've been working on. It has been like a bucket list or a dreamed of

event. I have several almost-finished manuscripts, but I've been tinkering a long time on two that I felt were very important to get in print before I leave this earth. The Lord has been blessing me greatly lately. First, He brought forth the bathroom remodel that I seriously needed, and He did it earlier than had been contracted. It's beautiful! I now have a real, working shower again that doesn't drip down onto the kitchen stove!

Next, He put an opportunity in front of me that gave me a publishing option that I had been seeking for years. A multi-published author and speaker colleague, James Watkins, just began a new publishing venture designed to help Christian authors who just want to get their words out there before family and friends. He's doing this because he loves to help other writers and because he's appalled at how costly it can be to self-publish or impossible to get a bite from the big royalty publishers.

He's my hero! *Dance While the Music Still Plays—Hope & Help for When Your Child is Incurable* is now available on Amazon.com. I'm being careful not to be a "moneychanger in church," but many loyal friends in the congregation have asked how to access this book that's so close to my heart.

It was not an easy book to write, and may not be an easy book to read for some. But I'd like you to consider something. As Christians, we have hope, even when the worst does happen. This is a story of my courageous daughter, our family's journey with spinal muscular atrophy, which has no cure. It's also a story of God's faithfulness throughout our journey.

While I have been working on this book for nearly three decades, I would not have had the Christian maturity to finish it until now. God has been working in my heart each time I've made attempts to smooth out the book's rough edges. Over time, it was God who showed me the themes, the images of how He sings over us while He weaves on the loom of life, encouraging us to "Dance While the Music Plays."

Now that it is done and finally out there, I realize that part of a heavy burden of grief has been lifted.

This process, which included spending hours with God's Holy Spirit in the writing and thought making up the journey, has also been healing. Others have already told me that it has helped them view their own losses—and life-giving opportunities, even in difficult circumstances—in a little different light. This encourages me greatly because that's what I wanted. I wanted to share Michele's story, and in large part, Gordy's and mine, too, but I wanted to focus on what Jesus did for us. He taught us to live each day fully and as joyfully as we could and to see, even now, how one's lifelong lives on, impacting others. He revealed how His songs never end. They're just repurposed for holy use in eternity, where we'll meet again.

There will be a Book Launch Event at Portville Free Library on Thursday, April 4, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. If you don't use Amazon and would like to inquire about a copy, just put a note in my church mailbox or call me. And thank you to so many of my church friends for the interest and support they have already shown. I was "an author" before with work in 11 anthologies and more columns and newspaper articles than I can count. But this one is special. God is so good!

■ Deb Wuethrich

**. "THE RESURRECTION IS
GOD'S 'AMEN' TO CHRIST'S
STATEMENT, 'IT IS
FINISHED!'"**

--S. Lewis Johnson



WORSHIP/STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

If you are looking for additional opportunities to engage in a Bible study or worship time beyond our Sunday morning service (9:30

a.m. with Sunday School at 11 a.m.), you might want to consider the following regular activities:

- 9:30 a.m. Monday Morning Bible Study**
- 1:00 p.m. Wednesdays, Ladies Bible Study**
- 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Pause for Power**