



Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School for All Ages: 11:00 a.m.

Holy Week Reminders

PALM SUNDAY CANTATA

Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday, April 13th when the Sr. Choir will present the Easter season cantata, "I Know My Redeemer Lives," during our 9:30 a.m. service. This musical provides a time to share who Jesus is, what He did, and how He penetrated our hearts, changing our lives forever. Our redemption has been secured. Our hope is real. Our future with Him is certain. All because our Redeemer lives! The wonderful story of His cross and resurrection will be narrated by Jerry Nutt Jr. and Heather Schultz Piche. The talented 25-voice choir is directed by Sue Neely VanBrunt, and includes special selections by Jeanette Butler, Yvonne Perry Clark, Alexander Freer, Jim Molyneaux, Michael Schultz, Casey Sage, Cheryl Smith and Jim Sorokes. The music is artfully accompanied by pianist, Penny Sorokes; flutist, Lori Funden; and guitarists, Matt Sage and Jim Sorokes. The story of the good news of Jesus is too important not to share! Be sure to invite friends and family to join you on this special morning. Let's fill the sanctuary with people and praise!

EMPTY TOMB EGG HUNT

The Board of Education will be hosting the **ANNUAL EMPTY TOMB EASTER EGG HUNT** on April 13th. We are asking for donations of candy or small treats. If you are able to support this fun activity please leave donations outside the BOE office or see a board member.



AT FIRST BAPTIST

Interim Senior Pastor

Ivan Crossno

Secretary; Organist

Penny Sorokes

Minister of Music

Sue Neely VanBrunt

Audio Visual Specialist

Casey Sage

Custodian

Rachel Green

PHONE: 716- 372-5151

EMAIL: ofbc133@gmail.com

WEBSITE: oleanfirstbaptist.com

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

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE

Interim Pastor Rev. Ivan Crossno has planned a solemn, thoughtful Maundy Thursday service for us at 7 p.m. on April 17, with an opportunity for communion. The Sr. Choir will provide special music as we reflect on the love and sacrifice of Christ at the Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane and Calvary. Meditation music will be provided by Kate Eifert on violin and Penny Sorokes on piano.

EASTER SUNDAY

While Easter flowers fill the sanctuary with beauty, Easter music fills our hearts with joy! Easter music will fill the sanctuary on Sunday, April 20 as the congregation joins in singing resurrection music to include: "Jesus is Alive Medley," and "Come and See," enthusiastically shared by the Sr. Choir. Kate Eifert directs the In One A-Chord Handbell Choir, as they ring the well-known "Crown Him With Many Crowns." The congregation will be invited to join in the singing of Easter favorites, accompanied by Dave Taylor, trumpet, and Penny Sorokes, piano. 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.)

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

--Kate McGahan

18th ANNUAL COMMUNITY EASTER DINNER: APRIL 20



Plans continue for the 18th 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.



The Trustees have designated
the 2024 EASTER
OFFERING
to benefit the Olean Food
Pantry and Genesis House

ABC/NYS REGION OFFERING 2025

Let me begin by saying “Thank You” on behalf of our ABCNYS Board of Mission. The board set the Region Offering goal for 2024 at \$25,000. You gave \$29,344.09. Your generosity surpassed the board’s vision! Now on to 2025.

Our Region Offering theme this year is “Planting for the Future.” We are centering our vision on Mark 4:26-27: The Kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. To plant faithfully is to believe that God blesses our best efforts and makes a way into the future for us. It is faith in the mysterious ways of God that moves us to plant. The Region’s calling is to strengthen the ministries of our churches through the training of pastors and lay leaders and the development of youth to lead our churches in the future. Region staff consults on envisioning, property issues, financial management, communication, and conflict resolution. We provide care and encouragement to those who lead our churches. We provide opportunities for mission experiences beyond the local church. We foster connections between congregations and pastors. We walk with pastoral search committees and candidates as they seek God’s leadership. All of this is a way of planting seeds that will grow by the grace of God. The Region is our shared affirmation that God has a future for us that even now in the soil of our churches.

Our goal for the 2025 Region Offering is \$27,500. May your generosity exceed our vision again!

~Rev. Jim Kelsey



On April 6 at 12PM the Board of Education will be hosting the monthly **FIRST SUNDAY FELLOWSHIP LUNCHEON**. This month is breakfast themed. If you would like to bring your favorite dish or donate an item off the menu list please sign up on the sheet on the BOE bulletin board.



RE-DESIGNATION OF ELEVATOR FUNDS

A Reminder on the Request from the Board of Trustees: As published in last month’s newsletter, the Board of Trustees is working to find the funds to continue the refurbishment work on the church exterior. We have proposed using the \$32,000 designated to the Elevator Fund and have asked if anyone who donated money toward the Elevator Fund objects to this re-designation. If so, please contact any member of the Board of Trustees as soon as possible. If we receive no objections by Easter Sunday, April 20, we will re-designate that money to the planned repairs. Due to time constraints and other distractions, the overview of the upgrade project did not occur on March 9. A special meeting will be held on this subject once we receive an updated proposal from Clark Bono.



A SPECIAL DONATION TO THE FAMILY LIFE BIBLE QUIZZING TEAM

Olean First Baptist Church made a \$700 donation to the Family Life Bible Quizzing Team to help offset their travel expenses to the national competition in Green Lake, Wisconsin. The Seekers Class contributed funds from their savings and the Board of Trustees donated the balance to bring the total to \$700... the amount needed to send one Bible Quizzer to the competition.



THE FAMILY OF GOD

Sheila Faulds continues to experience health issues. Your prayers for her as she recovers are appreciated. If you would like to send a card of encouragement, you can reach her by mail at this address:

Sheila Faulds
c/o Anthony Mason
50 Marsdale Road
Cheektowaga, NY 14215



APRIL BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Sunday, April 10

@ Noon Board of Christian Missions

Monday, April 11

@5:30 pm – Board of Christian Education

Tuesday, April 11

@ 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.



BIRTHDAYS

- 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 Ivan
- 21 Janell Martin

ANNIVERSARYS

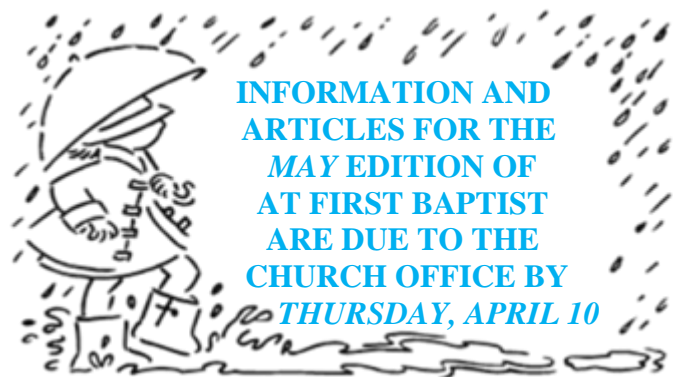
- 21 Trevor & Karen Moore



ANNUAL SPRING CLEAN-UP DAYS: SATURDAY, MAY 3 & JUNE 7

Start Time: 9:00AM

There will be further
information announced in the weekly bulletin
as it becomes available!!



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.



A WORD FROM THE PASTOR.....

Last month I shared with you some thoughts on one of the great words of our faith

‘justification’. What characterizes

the Living God to declare a sinful human being ‘not guilty’

when we are in fact guilty as, well, sin? While there are probably several words we could insert here, I just want to suggest one: grace. Justification is about God doing for us in Jesus Christ what we could not do for ourselves. And that, frail children of dust, is grace. So, a few quick thoughts on grace.

Let me begin with Paul, the burning apostle of salvation by grace through faith. Pick up your Bibles and read Romans 5:6-11. Notice the following:

Verse 6: While we were weak Christ died for the ungodly (grace)

Verse 8: While we were still sinners Christ died for us (grace)

Verse 9: We shall be saved from the wrath of God because of the blood of Christ (grace)

Verse 10: While still enemies we were reconciled to God through Christ (grace)

You can just read the wonder and surprise in Paul in these verses.

But let me add to the biblical wonder at the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Read with me

Luke 15:11-24. You know this parable of Jesus quite well—the parable of Prodigal Son.

Without plunging into too much depth in this great parable, I just want to hold up some evidence of the grace of God in this story. Remember, the word parable comes from two Greek words para and ballo. Para means ‘alongside’ while ballo means ‘to throw’ (like in our word ‘ballistics’). A parable then is a story ‘thrown alongside’ to illustrate a truth or teaching. So what does this story illustrate about grace? Here are a few suggestions to spark your wonder and worship.

At the very first we begin to see the problem of humanity from Eden right down to now, from Adam and Eve to you and me. We see a son who wanted autonomy from his father. He even insults his father by asking

for his ‘inheritance’ before

his father was dead. That was in effect saying, ‘I wish you were dead’. When the father gave him the freedom to do his thing, he ended up being a total wreck working with pigs. So, the end of sin.

The son thinking he will die decides to return home and seek employment as a hireling instead of being a son.

What might the father’s reaction be to the returning son? Would there be welcome or rejection? Instead of a flogging or punishment the father runs to meet his son (not something a father would normally do) hugs him and kisses him.

How is the son treated? Just notice these words in the parable:

- Quick! Bring the best robe!
- Put a ring on his finger!
- Put sandals on his feet!
- Bring the fatted calf and kill it!

And that, brothers and sisters, is the nature of grace. What we did not deserve God freely and joyfully gives us. The prodigal son probably expected to look into the face of a father he had insulted and left and see reproach and loathing. Instead, he saw love and joy. When we come to the Father through the Son that is what we encounter. Again, let me say it: THAT IS GRACE! So, pause and worship in the reality that grace is ours.



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

9:30 a.m. Wednesdays, Ladies Bible Study

5:30 p.m Wednesdays, Pause for Power



THE MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

I had originally planned to write about steps we might take to address our continually declining membership. However, two things caused me to change my plans. First, I received no comments on last month's article... absolutely none. No e-mails. No face-to-face comments... no anonymous notes... nothing. I interpreted this to mean: (a) there is little interest in the topic or (b) no one read the earlier article. Regardless, it didn't seem worth my time or effort to write a follow-up article. However, a better reason for setting aside my earlier plan was the happenings in my family over the past two weeks.

It all began on Thursday, March 13th. Our daughter Kelli had a medical procedure to help her pass several kidney stones. I should mention that Kelli was scheduled to be married on Saturday, March 22nd. The procedure went well, and she was discharged from the hospital the same day. However, the next day, some complications arose, and she was back in the hospital. The doctors decided everything was fine, so she was sent home again.

On Saturday afternoon (the 15th), I received a text message from my sister that my Mom had been rushed to the emergency room with a high fever and difficulty breathing. As the day wore on, her condition deteriorated, and they put her in ICU. Her heart rate was fluctuating wildly from a low of 50 beats per minute to over 120 beats per minute. While some other family members were there, her heart stopped for 1 – 2 seconds a couple of times. We went to bed Saturday thinking Mom would not be with us in the morning. That's when God stepped in! Sunday morning, we received word that Mom was remarkably better. Her heart rate had stabilized, and she was breathing much better. I made the mistake of breathing a deep sigh of relief, because just after Sunday School started, Penny poked her head in the Seekers Classroom to let me know she was on her way to Rochester because Kelli was back in the hospital with intense pain in her lower back! Something was wrong with her right kidney! UGH!!! So, while Penny raced to Rochester, I went to the hospital to check on my Mom in ICU. She seemed quite good and two days later, she was moved to a normal room. I visited her on Tuesday, and we had a very nice conversation about the good ole days. OK... hold that thought.

Meanwhile, Kelli continued to be in intense pain. Ultimately, the doctors determine that her right

kidney was swollen and inflamed because it was not able to discharge any fluid. The pain was excruciating, but the doctors felt it would correct itself. They gave her pain medication but were hesitant to do anything more.

Back to Mom, Tuesday afternoon, just an hour or two after I left Mom, my sister visited and found Mom to be a little confused and a bit disoriented. When my brothers visited later that day, she was totally disoriented and delusional. She would ultimately be diagnosed with a urinary tract infection.

It's now Wednesday and Kelli is still in the hospital in severe pain. The wedding is just three days away and we're beginning to wonder if the wedding will have to be postponed. The doctors decided that afternoon that they would take steps Thursday morning to help the kidney drain. This is where God stepped in again!! Thursday morning, they did some bloodwork on Kelli prior to the surgical procedure. The results showed that her kidney function had improved, so they did an ultrasound and discovered that her right kidney was fully functional. The surgical procedure was canceled, and Kelli was released from the hospital that afternoon... effectively pain free!!!

On Saturday, I was honored to perform the marriage ceremony uniting Kelli and her new husband Taylor. I noted the miraculous way that Kelli's situation had turned during Wednesday night without any further efforts from the medical staff! God had a plan!

When we return home on Sunday, we learned that Mom had also taken a positive turn. They have the UTI under control, so she is back in touch with reality. She still has some other issues, but at 94 and a half, that is to be expected.

The past week and a half has taught me that God has a plan. We might not see it or understand it, but we need to accept it. And I guess, all things considered, the same can be said for the future of our church. What I do or do not write is of no consequence. The only thing that matters is God's will!!

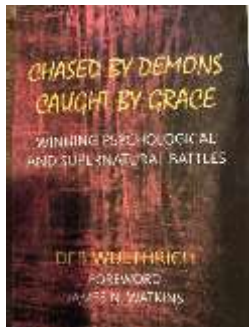
Listening for that still small voice,
-Jim Sorokes
Assistant Moderator



Faith, Grace and New Life

By Deb Wuethrich

I'm finding it kind of interesting that my latest book is coming out during the Easter season. It is such a time of reflecting on all that Jesus has done for us, including bringing us the hope and renewal that comes as we believe and marvel at His resurrection.



Chased by Demons, Caught by Grace—Winning Psychological and Supernatural Battles is not the kind of book I would ever have thought I would write. In fact, there was a time I might have laughed if you had told me I'd be writing in the Christian publishing genre at all.

BUT GOD... He knows the plans, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future,” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Chased is a different kind of book. Like *Dance While the Music Still Plays*, released last year, the narrative comes from personal experience. Some, however, may be a little rattled by this one. I have made no secret in recent years that I once “heard voices” (20 years ago). It was a combination of grief and life struggles, the traumatic aftermath many including me felt with the tragedy of 9/11, my position in (lukewarm) faith, brain biochemistry and an invasion by the demonic, bringing about a need to do spiritual warfare.

Heavy stuff? You bet! To live it was a real challenge. My dear, late husband Gordy had to help me through a very strange time, something we totally would never have expected. It was, in the end, God's grace and faithfulness, our growing faith and attendance in church after several years away, and the kindness and influence of several Christians that brought me through—along with a dose of God-provided medical and pharmaceutical science.

Every life is a journey in some way. The Bible tells we are to “testify,” to “witness,” to share “what Jesus has done for me.” That's the basis for my books, taking that “this is my story, this my song” call and sharing it with others, in the hope that God might be able to use something from within it to point someone toward Christ or bring them closer.

While it took me two decades to finalize everything into a cohesive narrative, I think I needed the time for my faith to mature. I had to be able to look at all that I experienced from a godly perspective and not be scared of it anymore.

That doesn't mean I haven't experienced any further opportunities to do battle—only now I know, the battle is the Lord's. We have roles in being alert about the hungry lion's prowling, donning spiritual armor, yet bad things still happen. I especially encourage prayer before and while reading this book. But writing the book taught me so much about living with faith and trust in God, who is sovereign and walks by our side. Even in the bad stuff. Not only that, He'll use it to test, refine and redeem! It's the outcome of RENEWAL that God desires, because of the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ.

My book designer and I surely DID experience more warfare in our attempt to get this book published and up on the Amazon.com platform. We kept getting locked out of my accounts. Jiggidy things happened, even to the final product, and I expect they still will as I work to share the book on a wider scale.

There were also God-winks and some unexpected blessings in the process. Like the fact that the fellow helping me, a writer well-known in the Christian publishing community named James Watkins, added a Foreword with a supernatural experience of his own and endorsed my book. People I've shared parts of the story with have shared little pieces of their own experiences. When you think the devil is after you, it can feel pretty lonely.

But never doubt, God sees everything. He's still in charge. We need to wait with a faithful expectation for what it is He's accomplishing in our lives. We may not see it right away, but He never stops working!

To complete this story, like my first book, is a kind of catharsis for me. It really does feel like a renewal, with further chances to live life FOR HIM! After all, Jesus gave **everything** for us!

(Find the book on Amazon.com. Deb will also be making copies available by the first week in April. Also, to receive a free related Bible Study [from the author only] let Deb know of your interest for when it becomes available. Contact her at deborahmarcein@gmail.com.)

GENESIS HOUSE ANNUAL SALE

The annual flower sale will soon be 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

