



AT FIRST BAPTIST

Senior Pastor
Rev. James Balson, Jr.
Minister of Music
Sue Neely VanBrunt
Organist
Jeanne Gross

Audio Visual Specialist
Casey Sage
Custodian
Rachel Green

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Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m.

Faith and Fellowship for All Ages: 11:00 a.m.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES



Palm branches and music will fill the sanctuary on **PALM SUNDAY**, March 29th as we join to celebrate Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Our Senior Choir

accompanied by Jeanne Gross, with narrators Jerry Nutt Jr & Heather Schultz-Piche` will present the sermon-in-song "Behold the Lamb", featuring both traditional and contemporary sounds. This cantata follows every step of Christ's Holy Week journey - through the gates of Jerusalem, into the Upper Room with the twelve disciples, and into the Garden of Gethsemane. We continue through trial after trial, along the Via Dolorosa - the Way of Suffering, up to Mount Calvary and finally to that glorious Empty Tomb!

Children will hear a message from Katrina DeGroff and are invited to stay after the service for a special 'Empty Tomb' Easter egg hunt!! Palm fronds will be available to anyone who would like to have a reminder of this first day of Holy Week.

You will want to share this musical message of hope with your friends and family, so please invite them to join you for this special morning worship.



Our **MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE** will be held at 7 pm on Thursday, April 2nd. This observance will help us focus our hearts and minds on Christ with a time of Holy Communion. Just as Jesus met with his 12 disciples around a table in the upper room the night

before His crucifixion, we, as His followers, will gather around a prepared table in the church lounge for this love feast. There we will share precious words of scripture, hymns of the faith, light refreshments and most importantly- -symbols of the Body broken and the Blood shed for us. How meaningful it will be to share these moments of meditation and prayer on this night that commemorates Christ's last supper.

WALK THE WAY OF THE CROSS begins with a prayer service at noon on Friday, April 3, in Lincoln Park. Following the prayer service, the WALK will begin with stops at Harvest Field, Trinity UMC, Central Baptist, EPIC, St. Mary's, and ending at Olean FBC.

EASTER SUNDAY is the day when many Christians around the world celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Alleluia!! On Sunday, April 5th our morning worship will include Pastor Jim's message reminding us of that Day of Triumph over death and the grave.



As we gather amid the beauty of Easter lilies and other spring flowers in honor and memory of our loved ones, we rejoice in our Lord's victory through choral anthems, trumpets, special music and organ sounds. The congregation will lift their voices in celebration as they join to sing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" and "He Arose". The children will enjoy a message prepared just for them. This is a morning you won't want to miss!



Contributions for Easter Flowers will be received in the Church office until **Sun. March 22. Please indicate who your gift honors or remembers on the flower donation envelope and any plans to take the plant home.** A \$10 donation is suggested.

**NINETEENTH ANNUAL
FBC COMMUNITY EASTER DINNER
APRIL 5, 2026
11:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.**

This is a wonderful opportunity for First Baptist to work together with the community houses of worship and assist those less fortunate or those that may be alone on this most joyous day! **Volunteers – We need you!** Volunteers are needed in the following areas: Placement of posters to area churches and service organizations to ensure that those in need are aware of this event; set-up; cooking; serving; delivery, and clean-up. Sign-up on the sheet posted in the lobby.



**Missions Board Seeks Assistance
with Hygiene Bags**

For the fifth year, Olean First Baptist Church is collecting personal care items to include in hygiene kits for individuals and families who are a part of our food voucher program. This component of the ministry has proved popular and helpful.

FBC is seeking community and congregation assistance for donated items. Collection barrels have been distributed at various business sites and our lobby and will be available until the end of March. Needed items include: washcloths; toothbrushes; bar soap/body wash; toothpaste; women's and men's deodorant; shampoo & conditioner; men's razor and shave cream; first aid items/Band-aids; four-packs of toilet paper, Kleenex; women's personal hygiene items; laundry detergent; dishwashing soap; hand sanitizer.

CELEBRATING NEW FBC MEMBERS!

We are thrilled to share that on Sunday March 15th, five of our youth-- Eden Butler, Lylah Butler, Elsa Porcello, Fiora Porcello and Theron Rust-- will walk through the waters of baptism. It is a wonderful moment in the life of a church when we all can witness new believers proclaiming their decision to follow Christ in this way.

In addition, the Right Hand of Christian Fellowship will also be given to Ken Boser II, Jeanne Gross and Brandi Porcello as they join in ministry at Olean First Baptist through church membership. Nancy Balson also joined us on February 1 through transfer of membership.

The Advisory Council has agreed that on this Sunday of celebration, the entire church family might join for a luncheon in Fellowship Hall. So, right after worship, around 11 am, we will gather to share fellowship and friendship around the tables. This early lunch time should allow everyone to stay and attend. This event will replace the First Sunday Fellowship Luncheon for March. New members and their families and friends will be our special guests.

Some attending may contribute financially towards meatballs, sandwich meats and rolls, while others are encouraged to bring homemade soups, chips, and desserts to share.

Watch for an opportunity to sign up, so we are sure to have plenty of food for everyone!



During March, the Board of Christian Missions holds the **GO LOCAL FOR CHRIST OFFERING.** Contributions can be made anytime during the month of March.

Envelopes for this offering will be available throughout the month in the church lounge and in the pew holders in the sanctuary for your convenience. Please indicate that your offering is for the **GO LOCAL FOR CHRIST OFFERING** if you do not use the special envelopes. This offering will conclude on March 31.



FBC CRAFT DAY

The Board of Education hosted a craft day on January 31st, welcoming eight participants who enjoyed painting a festive reindeer shelf sitter. Keep an eye out for details on our next craft day, which will be scheduled in the coming months.



The Board of Education will be hosting the **Easter Egg Hunt** **ANNUAL EMPTY TOMB EASTER EGG HUNT** on March 29. 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.



REMINDER ABOUT THOSE PINK ENVELOPES IN THE PEW RACKS...

The funds collected through your donations using the pink envelopes are used to offer support to OFBC members with emergency needs. Perhaps the need is utility bills, a medical emergency, or groceries. We all experience unexpected financial needs from time to time. Your church family is here to help! Simply let a member of the Diaconate know if you need a helping hand. We'll do our best to be of assistance. So please take a moment, consider donating through the pink envelopes – it allows us to show the love of Christ to our members when they need it most!

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 Faith & Fellowship 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



FBC SCHOLARSHIPS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

Our church offers financial scholarship to assist with expenses for church members planning to continue their education. Applications for consideration are currently available in the document carousel in the church lounge. A Word version may be requested by email at oleanfbc@outlook.com. Upon completion, applications will be reviewed by the Scholarship Committee, appointed by the Board of Trustees, who administer this fund. The committee will consider factors such as dedication to Christian principals, evidence of Christian service, participation in Olean First Baptist programs, educational achievement, extra-curricular activities and financial need.

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 an accompanying essay

Anyone interested should complete an application and return it to the attention of the Scholarship Committee at the Olean First Baptist Church office by May 1st. The Scholarship Committee then reviews all applications to certify their eligibility. Letters of congratulation and scholarship checks will be presented to recipients, who will be recognized during a service of worship in the month of June.



**HAPPY
ST. PATRICK'S DAY
MARCH 17, 2026**

The Family of God



We extend our **LOVE AND SYMPATHY** to the family and friends of Erik Hartburg who passed away on February 13.



Daylight Savings Time begins March 8
(Turn your clocks **AHEAD** one hour at bedtime on **Saturday, March 7**)



MARCH BOARD MEETINGS

Sunday, March 8:

@ Noon: Board of Christian Missions
Diaconate

Monday, March 9:

5:30 pm: Board of Christian Education

Tuesday, March 10:

6:30 pm: Board of Trustees

Tuesday, March 31:

6:30 pm: Advisory Council



COPY AND INFORMATION FOR THE APRIL AT FIRST BAPTIST IS DUE BY THURSDAY, MARCH 19



2026 Board Leadership

Trustees: Matt Sage – Chair/Secretary; Dana Boser– Vice Chair; Pam Nutt—Treasurer/Secretary.

Diaconate: David Torrey – Chair; Laurie MacNeill – Vice Chair; Deb Wuethrich – Secretary; Vi Pettigrew - Treasurer

BoCE: Cheri O’Dell/ Lori Funden – Co-Chairs; Carol Molyneaux – Secretary

BoCM: Nancy Taylor – Chair; Nan Torrey – Vice Chair; Jean Kwiatkowski - Secretary

THANK YOU’S

2026 Thank you so much for the gifts and extended fellowship! We appreciate being appreciated :-)
Casey, Sue and Rachel



Dear Church Family....
Thank you for the special certificate recognizing my 60 years of membership. This milestone is not just a reflection of time, but of friendship and services shared with all of you over the years. I have been blessed with your encouragement and prayers. You have been my spiritual home, extended family, and a constant source of strength to me and my family. I am truly grateful to God for each of you and for the privilege of walking alongside you in His service.

With Gratitude and Love,
LYNN BROWN

Thank you! I appreciate each card, call, and visit I have received, and especially all the prayers that have been offered, during my recent hospitalization and as I continue with my healing and recuperation.

Bob Brookins

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 4 Bob Brookins | 15 Mike Nutt |
| Bayli Pascucci | 16 Jeremiah Moore |
| Dave Torrey | 18 Carol Nenno |
| 8 Jeanette Butler | 19 Caitlin Davenport |
| 10 Donna DeLong | 24 Paige Hannahs |
| 11 Vi Pettigrew | 25 Leah O’Dell |
| Lindsay Cummings | 30 Dale Anderson |
| 13 Matthew Butler | Alli Armstrong |
| 14 Heather Schultz-Piche | Casey Sage |

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

- 16 Dave & Nancy Taylor

If you notice we’re missing birthday and anniversaries, please help us update the list!



TOLLE LEGE

The Latin phrase “Tolle Lege” means “Pick up and read.” The phrase is best known from the testimony of St. Augustine of Hippo who, upon hearing a child chanting these words, opened his Bible and read Romans 13:13,14. His life was forever changed. In fact, through Augustine’s theological influence, the Church herself throughout the following centuries was shaped because of that simple exhortation.

Pick up and read. Simple yet critical. First and most important, like Augustine, we must pick up and read our Bibles. II Timothy 3:16 makes it clear that God purposefully gave us ALL the Bible and that it is ALL useful. Over a certain period of time, it’s important that we are reading all the Bible. Of course we will have favorite portions, but we must make it a point to conscientiously read the other, less favored, portions as well.

Many people use Bible reading schedules that help them to systematically read all the Bible in a year or two. Some schedules go straight through the Bible, others have daily portions from the OT, NT, and Psalms. I’ve even seen a schedule that has the reader read one chapter from 10 different places every day! No matter how we accomplish it, it is so important for our spiritual walk and growth to have daily intake of Scripture in such a way that we are interacting with ALL of God’s Word. On the Pastor’s Table in the lobby, I usually have one or two different reading schedules available. There also phone apps with Bible reading plans and some that will even read out loud while you read the text.

I would also encourage you to “Pick up and read” good Christian literature. In the English language we have such a wealth of resources! History, Theology, Biography, Current Issues, Apologetics, Commentary, Devotional, etc. Modern writings as well as the old tried and true writings (so many of which have been reprinted in recent years). Of course, The Bible is still our final authority, and anything written by mere men and women must be tested against the touchstone of Scripture (Acts 17:11). Yet, to ignore the many good writings available is to disregard the

truth that God has in the past and still continues to give godly men and women to His Church for her edification (Ephesians 4:11-14), not only by their verbal, didactic teachings, but also when they put those same words to paper.

Whenever we find historical examples of revival and reformation or see local churches that evidently display God’s working power through new conversions, strong families, practical outreach, bondage breaking, loving churchmanship, and joyful worship, we universally find readers. God’s people are serious about reading and digesting His Word. God’s people are eager to learn and grow and so, read widely and thoughtfully. If you’ve not been a reader, what a great habit to begin this Lenten season... one that can then continue past Easter and for all of life!

If needed, I’d be glad to recommend resources to help you with your Bible reading. I’d also be glad to make book recommendations. Let’s read!
Tolle Lege!

~Pastor Jim



True worship isn’t merely about occupying a seat...

It’s about allowing God’s truth to challenge our comfortable thoughts, reshape our daily choices, and transform our hearts.

Each Sunday brings an invitation to be changed by His presence and His people.

What unexpected way has God used your church family to stretch and grow your faith lately?”

Chuck Swindoll





ASSISTANT MODERATOR'S VIEW

Yes, you can!

Plans underway for 2026 Advent Collection

Planning often makes the difference between a so-so or successful project or event, and we're off and running on a new one. Well, maybe a revisited one. Though it may seem early, since we've just put the holiday decorations away and we're in the midst of Lent, some plans are now starting for the 2026 Advent season. Namely, an Advent Devotional, created within the church.

Members of the Advisory Council recently discussed the topic with input from the Board of Christian Education, which has been responsible for curating and supplying readings for our Holy seasons, as well as board and committee chairs who make up the council. Our church has been through a number of the available devotionals, plus costs for them keep going up. A suggestion was made that maybe it's time to develop our own collection for Advent. Those who've been around a while may recall previous seasons when folks in the First Baptist congregation wrote their own devotions which were then compiled into a seasonal devotional. While it was done in earlier years, the two most recent were collections called, "Journey to the Cross," in 2016 for Lent and "Reflections" for 2021 Advent. We don't have a title yet for this one, and are open to suggestion! But think of it in terms like, "Witnessing for the King," or "Testimonies of the Savior's Love."

People really enjoyed reading the thoughts and life application experiences and meditations written by people they knew. Some attended together regularly at that time and some were lovingly reprinted from past issues, bringing former members and their lives and contributions to mind. A few were reprints from people who had contributed before but didn't feel they had anything new to say. All were examples of sweet souls volunteering their time and talents during different seasons of life.

NOW YOU... More details will be provided over the next couple of months, but it would be amazing to be able to fill this in-house produced Advent collection with testimonies and witness from current

FBC family and friends, whether attending in person or remote as some do. In previous editions, some were eager to submit more than one, with some printing a second to help fill the volume.

YES, YOU CAN... You don't have to consider yourself a writer to participate. In fact, many past submissions were from people who just had something to say, set thoughts down as a draft and then asked for some editing assistance. The writer gets the last say on how it appears, so no one changes the intent of what you're trying to share. You can choose a Scripture of your own, or ask for a suggestion. (We try not to duplicate, but sometimes people have used the same one, because the body of the devotion is personal and clearly different.) Our young people are also encouraged to submit a devotion!

SOME SPECIFICS... A devotion is like the individual thoughts with a theme you've likely seen in "Our Daily Bread," or "The Secret Place." A devotional is a collection of those devotions. Your submission may be a poem, a brief writing of a couple paragraphs or up to 300 words, but please work to keep it under that word count to fit a page, if possible. Each will start with a Scripture verse at the top, and a brief prayer at the bottom. (Most come in at around 250 words for a good fit.)

I can develop a guideline sheet with a sample or two in the next few weeks for those considering participating. The best way to "get in the Spirit of things," however, is to read from the above-mentioned booklets—or previous years' FBC books, if you still have them. They are wonderful!

We'll be shooting to have all submissions in hand by mid-September, maybe Sept. 1, to allow time for processing and printing by the time the first day of Advent rolls around. Each page will have a date during Advent season. In the meantime, feel free to begin sketching out some meditative thoughts. You can put them in my lobby mailbox. It never hurts to plan ahead and get a head start.

Now, if I can just remember how to format and process a booklet with pages that appear in the right order!

Regards,
Deb Wuethrich, Assistant Moderator