



FBC First Baptist Church

Family By Choice all are welcome...really!

VISIONS

February

2020

A Welcoming & Affirming
Congregation



Navigating the Non-Negotiables: Reacting to Change

We have been focusing on the parable of the “Good Samaritan” during this Epiphany season, opening ourselves to the Light that shines in and through the pages of the biblical text. As we continue to explore the depths of this familiar story for new meaning, I want to preface our upcoming congregational retreat (more about this in this newsletter) by thinking about what we *don't* want to change in the midst of our rebirth.

How do you generally react to change? Do you embrace it as a new and exciting adventure? Do you retreat and hold on for dear life to the things and ways of the past? Do you play along with the change only to back away or disappear? Does change make you anxious or fearful? Do you wish things could just stay the same? We each react differently, depending on our experience with change and our sense of power in regard to it.

As we talk about the changes that are both results of recent experiences in the life of our congregation, and are also of our own deliberate making in response to where we are, I don't want to incite unreasonable discomfort, create distrust or scare anyone away. What I do hope for is the courage to discover a new sense of call and vitality within us that leads us out into the world, the place we are called to serve. But even when doing that, there are things that become non-negotiable. What might be on that list for you?

For some the non-negotiables are tangible things, like brass candlesticks and worship in the

sanctuary. Others resist giving up the style of, or the day of worship or the type of music we play and sing. In the midst of talk about selling our educational building, you might find yourself feeling reluctant about that proposition. And for some this whole notion of going out into the neighborhood is not something you want to do. All of this would be important to know about ourselves. There are non-negotiables that can become the *basis* for our future, not obstacles to it.

When I look at the text, Luke 10:25-37, what is clearly the non-negotiable for Jesus in the story is **mercy**. It is the one who has mercy that is the true “neighbor”. It is a key to the story and our call as disciples. “Do this, and you will live,” Jesus says.

What does “mercy” look like, in our relationships with each other and with those in the community who share our sidewalks, use our building, ask for things they need? Mercy is having compassion (not pity) for those who are in positions of less power than the one who offers it. Mercy intentionally crosses boundaries between those who have and those who don't, those who can and those who can't, for whatever reasons.

As we prepare for our retreat, where we will think, pray, listen and speak our discernment about our future in this community of faith and our place in the wider community, I invite you to think about what is non-negotiable to you in all this. What is the foundation on which we build? What might mercy look like for us and for the wider community? What *can* we change and what cannot be on the table for you? Think and pray about these things and know I would love to hear your reflections and your ideas.

Gratefully,
Marcia

**Congregational Retreat:
Friday, Feb. 7th from 6-9 pm &
Saturday, Feb. 8th from 9-3 pm**



It's exciting to see how many of you have signed up for our congregational retreat! If you have not yet let us know that you will come for part or all of our gathering, there is still plenty of time; call the church office to let us know (610-326-2273). Important things first: there will be dinner on Friday evening and a light breakfast (and plenty of coffee/tea) Sat, along with lunch. So, you will be well fed. **It would be helpful if you could each bring something to share for dessert!**

We will be building on the thinking we began together last fall on the six currencies of time and place, gracious leadership, relationship, truth, wellness, and money that flow through thriving churches; and we are fortunate to have them all! The challenge is to cultivate and share them in order for them to continue to serve us and others and grow.

We will be led by Rev. Dr. Marcia Patton (I know, another Marcia?!). Marcia (Patton) is a good friend of Marcia (Bailey) She is the Executive Minister Emerita of Evergreen Association of American Baptist Churches. She was given this title when she retired after her work with the establishment of the Association and serving as its Executive Minister for its first 13 years. Previously she was Associate Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of the Northwest.

She was born in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, raised in Temperance, Michigan. She is a graduate of Michigan State University (B.A.) and twice a graduate of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (now Palmer Theological Seminary), with a Master of Arts in Religion and a Master of Divinity. In 1989 she earned her Ph.D. from Temple University. She served churches in New Jersey, Salt Lake City, Utah and Hatboro, Pennsylvania. She was ordained in 1976 at First Baptist Church, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Thank you for joining us for this exciting time together. I am praying that God's Spirit will give us the courage and wisdom to embrace God's call to us for the days ahead.

**FBC Applies to the
Philadelphia Baptist Association**



At our recent congregational meeting, you voted unanimously to instruct the Moderator's to apply for membership in the Philadelphia Baptist Association (PBA), a region of our American Baptist Churches. Acceptance into this region would end our regional affiliation with The American Baptist Churches of Pa/De (ABCOPAD), our current regional association.

Why change? FBC's commitment to welcoming and honoring all persons and their gifts for ministry is not currently appreciated or supported in ABCOPAD. PBA is a much more ethnically, racially, and theologically diverse region and FBC will find a wider acceptance and a more appreciative welcome amongst these churches and their leaders. A small group of us will be meeting with the PBA Commission on the Ministry to share the story of FBC and to learn more about our new relationship with the Philadelphia Baptist Association. (Looking ahead-- Save the date! The PBA Annual meeting is a great time to meet others in what we expect will be our new region. Mark **May 2nd** on your calendar and watch for more details!)

**The Missions
Committee Needs
You!**

WE NEED YOU!



Are you interested in outreach to our community and to the wider world?

Would you be helpful in setting mission giving goals and helping to promote our mission offerings and activities? Would you like to work with a small group who shares your interest and with the pastor and church office in helping ensure that those in our community and around the world get our support?

We are looking for people who hear a call to outreach and would help us! We have a basic schedule of mission offerings for the year, thanks to our former Missions Chair, Kathy Purington. But we need your help to make these things happen! There would be occasional meetings as needed at a time that works for you. Help us help others! If you are interested, please see Marcia Bailey!

Supporting AWAB as They Support Us

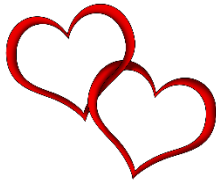


“Since 1993 AWAB has been supporting churches in being and becoming Welcoming and Affirming of all people regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. We work as individuals, congregations, regional groupings and as a national body to advance the Radical Welcome and Love of God in Jesus Christ through being the Ministry of Reconciliation and building up the Beloved Community where all will be one.” (from their website: <http://www.awab.org/>)

In 2019, AWAB supported FBC in many ways. They provided pamphlets, key chains, prayer cards, buttons, and bumper stickers which FBC handed out during events we hosted as well as events we were invited to attend. AWAB supported Joel Dugan in his interactions with ABCOPAD, and they also sent letters supporting Joel and FBC in the aftermath of Joel's committee decision.

In February, FBC will collect an offering for AWAB. Our goal is \$250.00.

Thank You All!



Our Dear FBC Family:

Rick, Scott, Trevor, Tyler, Trent and I want to thank each and every one of you for all the love, prayers and support you have given our family throughout these last several months. It has been an unbelievably tough year. We thank God for all of you! Someone is always by our side to give a hug or just a kind word of encouragement.

We Love You All,
The Unruh Family

Let's Connect with Joel Dugan



Q. What is it that you are passionate about? What energizes you?

A. If you were to take a look around my room, your first guess would be that it is books. Actually, it is learning.

What currently energizes me is the study of Theology. I consider myself to be somewhat of a 'Bible Geek.'

Q. When did this passion begin?

A. It began when I realized that I could think for myself, and I didn't have to just believe what I was told to believe. Reading and interpreting the Bible for myself instead of just believing what the church leaders said.

Q. How do you act out this passion?

A. I read a lot of books. I listen to a lot of lectures. I put on a headset and listen to lectures during work hours and go to sleep listening to sermons. I collect books on topics of interest to me. Basically, I immerse myself in a topic.

Q. What is the current topic?

A. There are currently two. The first is understanding what the Bible meant to the people it was originally written to. The second is how the Bible and Christianity relate to LBGT topics. I have been studying that for probably 20 years.

Q. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

A. My passion for learning comes from childhood. I was called lazy and told I would never amount to anything. I went to school before ADD and dyslexia were really diagnosed. All those teachers who did not believe in me spurred me on to learn as much as I could about the topics that interest me.

Good for you Joel! Thanks for sharing your learning with our congregation!

Jane Gruen for the Diaconate

Serving at The Lord's Table



Each month we celebrate Holy Communion and recall God's great love for us. We invite members to volunteer to serve communion to others on the first Sunday of each month. We need two volunteers for each communion service. You may volunteer to serve once a year, once a quarter, or for a particular month. Need more information? We can help with that! Contact one of the Diaconate Board members to volunteer.

– from the Diaconate Board
Debra Brauner, Chairperson
Board members – Jane Gruen, Ruth Chonka

Save the Date for Summer Fest! August 8th



Christian Education meetings resumed on January 13th and will continue meeting the second Sunday of each month after the Learning Community Class.

This year's Annual Easter Egg Hunt will be held on April 11th from 10-11:30 am. "I checked with the Easter Bunny and he put us on his calendar"! We will be filling the eggs on April 5th. If you are willing to help with the Egg Hunt or filling the eggs, please let one of the CE Board members know.

This year we will be having the Community Summer Fest again. The Board is already coming up with a lot of new ideas to make the Summer Fest bigger and better than last years. The event is planned for **Saturday, August 8, 2020 from 1-4PM**. Everyone is welcome to share your time, talents and ideas! More information to come as we discuss plans!!

Don't forget to save those Redners tapes!

-from the Board of Christian Education
Chairperson: Nancy Unruh
Board members: Lauren Emmell, Dennis Landon, Kathy Purington, Joel Dugan

Helping Our Community Find Comfort



In February, the Cluster's Bring the Basics campaign has a goal of 29 sets of queen sheets and 29 queen or twin blankets. All donations can be placed on the shelves in Echo Hall.

The Cluster also needs:

- One-gallon food storage bags
- Half-gallon food storage bags
- Sandwich bags
- Plastic bags
- One-inch brown masking tape

Cluster Fundraisers: Professional Pharmacy register tapes (includes prescriptions). Place in Ruth Chonka's mailbox.

Pamphlets are available on the tables in Echo Hall and the Sanctuary to help explain the services available at the Cluster in Pottstown.

-from Cluster delegate Ruth Chonka

Listen for the Alarm...

The Trustees are happy to report that biannual testing of the fire alarm system was completed in December. In addition, we would like to thank Nancy for conducting monthly fire drills for the YWCA.

If you notice any repairs needed around the building, please contact John Forrest or Rick Unruh.

- from the Trustees

Co-Chairpersons: Richard Unruh & John Forrest



A Thank You
from CWS



We received a letter of thanks from Church World Service for the donations to the Blankets and Tools program. Rev. John L. McCullough said: "On behalf of all the people who feel more hopeful and less alone because of your generosity, we thank you."

As Kathy Purington mentioned in our 2019 Annual Report, FBC has given \$11,429 toward the Blanket and Tool offering since 1983.

The Ricketts Community Center Open House



The Ricketts Community Center (658 Beech St, Pottstown) is now a part of Boyertown Area Multi-Service, and the Pottstown Ministerium is sponsoring an open house at the center on Thursday, February 13th from 2pm to 6pm. The public is invited, and reservations are not needed. Come join the community to see the Ricketts Community Center's updated look, and find out what programs might be available for you.

February Birthdays

- 1 Tayo Ogundipe
- 2 Lisa Kemmerer
- 3 Trudy Arters
- 6 Tomisin Ogundipe
John Hessler
- 9 Annie Heffner
- 11 John Jolley
- 17 Joelle Morris
- 22 Charles Hayer
- 23 David Kurtz
Rosalie Norman-McNaney
- 25 Peggy DeWysockie
- 26 Jack Heffner
- 28 Folu Ogundipe

Are we missing your name? Send us your birthday so we can invite others to celebrate with you!

February Anniversaries

- 14 Glenn & Sue Bradshaw

