



FBC First Baptist Church

Family By Choice all are welcome...really!

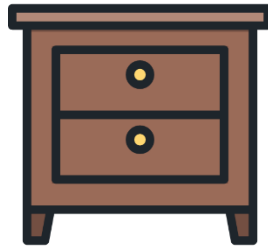
VISIONS

March

2020

A Welcoming & Affirming
Congregation

What's on Your Bedside Table? (aka Lenten Worship Mashup)



If you want to get to know someone, ask the question, "what's on your bedside table?" You may recoil, thinking "that's too personal" but the answer can provide a glimpse into people's lives. Medication tells you something about a person's health; an eye mask or anti-snoring device might tell you about their sleep habits. Pictures give a clue to who's precious to this person. And reading material gives a glimpse into what thoughts and ideas currently fill their mind. It was a realization of what was on my bedside table that led to our Lenten Worship Series this year.

Most nights I read before turning off the light. Recently I found that a constellation of books and magazines had migrated to my bedside table, and I had been alternately reading through them all at the same time. There was a copy of the latest "Time" magazine. There was Henri Nouwen's book *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. On the pile was *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts* by sociologist Brene Brown. Down toward the bottom of the stack is a book on contemporary missiology. And somewhere in the middle, a mystery that I have forgotten the details of (and so hence can never solve!) and a historical novel about Venice. While I think I can honestly say that the novels only direct influence on our worship series may have been creativity, my Lenten mashup came to light as the ideas and themes emerging from Nouwen and Brown directly addressed the reality exposed in

"Time" magazine. We live in a society where power, influence and wealth direct and control the world. Those who have it, use it with willful abandon; those who don't slip farther and farther into an abyss of poverty, suffering, oppression and ill health. What can we, who call ourselves by the very name of Christ, do to effect change? Who and what are we called to be?

Our Lenten Worship theme is "Cultivating a Deeper Life", a life lived not on the surface, buffeted by the winds and wills of those in power and control, but a *deeper* life, a more *significant* life, a more *meaningful* life powered by prayer and service in the likeness of Jesus. Motivated not by the world's values but by the love of God, we enter into a life-shaping transformation when we strive to incorporate not only Jesus' words but actions into our daily living, as he responds to temptation, serves friends and strangers alike, bears witness to truth and risks everything for Love's sake. Through the lens of the biblical text, the spiritual writings of Nouwen, the sociological studies of Brown and our own experience, find yourself invited to choose to live a life more deeply rooted in God's love. **You are God's beloved; start by really believing that!**

- 3/1 Matt. 4:1-4 Not Relevant but Contemplative
- 3/8 Matt. 4:5-7 Not Spectacular but Vulnerable
- 3/15 Matt 4:8-11 Not Powerful but Loving
- 3/22 John 13:1-11 Not In Control but In Service
- 3/29 Mark 6:7-12 Not Independent but In Right Relationship
- 4/5 John 12:12-28 Not Heroic but Courageous (Palm Sunday)
- 4/12 Jn 20:1-18 Not The Last One Standing but The First One Rising (Easter)

Gratefully,
Marcia

A Much-Anticipated Visit

FBC was delighted last month when Rev. Dr. Eleazar and Speciose Zihrambere and their family joined us for worship. Eleazar delivered a sermon on “Mission Impossible Yet Possible” and updated the FBC family on their mission in Burundi.



The Zihramberes also shared their Burundi congregation’s need for instruments, and we reached out to our FBC family. What an amazing response!



The two gorgeous accordions were donated by Janet Conner who is Rev. Mary Etta Mest’s church secretary at Zion UCC in Womelsdorf. They belonged to Janet and her mother Doris (Gettel) Bennethum. Janet began playing when she was in grade school (in addition to her dance lessons), and one year she even played the accordion as she danced. This generous donation will bring joy and music to the congregation in Burundi for years to come.

Debra Brauner was able to locate four harmonicas, and we would like to thank all who reached out to help our extended church family.



Our Journey Toward the Philadelphia Baptist Association



As a congregation we recently voted to apply for membership in the Philadelphia Baptist Association (PBA) choosing by doing so to leave the American Baptist Churches of Pa and De (ABCOPAD). While FBC has had a long history with ABCOPAD, it has not always been a harmonious one. FBC’s inclusive posture in relation to women in ministry and to the LGBTQ community has not found support in most of the churches in ABCOPAD over the years. Recent events have amplified this divide and so we are seeking churches to be in fellowship with that will respect our commitment to inclusion.

PBA is the oldest Baptist association in this country, having been founded in 1707. Today it consists of 128 congregations, representing more than 47,000 American Baptists in the five-county metropolitan area of the Delaware Valley. PBA churches reflect multiple cultures and worship styles, and members speak more than 13 different languages.

Dennis Landon, Myra Forrest and Marcia Bailey represented FBC at a meeting of the PBA Commission on the Ministry after submitting application materials. It was a wonderfully encouraging conversation as we shared our stories of God’s activity in our churches. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend our acceptance to the Board of Directors who will vote in mid-March. Assuming all goes well there, we will be welcomed into the **Philadelphia Baptist Association on Sat. May 2nd. Please save the date! We will want as many as possible to attend!**

“Love Thy Neighbor” America for Christ Offering

Jesus teaches us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:30). The America For Christ Offering allows American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) to serve neighbors with ministries incarnating Christ’s love, justice and

compassion. This special offering supports ABHMS's efforts to cultivate leaders and equip disciples who bring healing and transformation to communities across our nation and Puerto Rico.

Look for information and a special envelope in your bulletin each week this month. Our goal for the America for Christ Offering is \$200.

Wrestling with Gerrymandering



On Sunday, March 1st, FBC's Adult Learning Community will begin a two or three week look at Gerrymandering. That's the process by which politicians manipulate election districts for partisan advantage.

What's that got to do with our ministry? Well, we've talked about Holy Currencies, and how the church can help keep the currencies of relationship, truth, wellness, gracious leadership, time and place, and money circulating through our community. Gerrymandering stops those currencies in their tracks.

Come learn what Gerrymandering is, why it matters, how it effects our communities and what we can do about it. Dennis Landon (Fair Districts PA) and Myra Forrest (Draw the Lines PA) will lead. If you know folks outside the FBC orbit who might be interested, why not invite them to participate?

A Beautiful Note



FBC received a lovely Thank-You card from Arline Gohean in which she said:

"Thank you FBC for the beautiful fruit basket and Mary Etta Mest's visit."

We are all so glad Arline is settling in at Manatawny Manor. Thank you, Arline, for this lovely note.

AWAB Northeast Regional Gathering 2020



Our thanks to all who supported our February offering for the Association of Welcoming and Affirming churches. Our goal was \$250 and we collected \$305!

On May 19th The Green Church (515 Painter Rd, Media, PA) will host the 2020 Regional Gathering of AWAB faith communities and allies. This exciting event will offer both education and fellowship highlighting the important work that our partners are doing for the Kingdom of God. **Rev. Dr. Tony and Peggy Campolo** will be the keynote speakers.

Registration information can be found on the FBC bulletin board outside the church office.

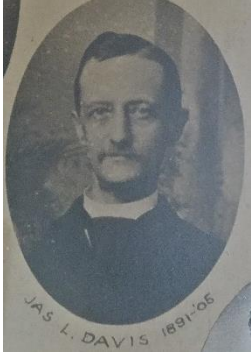
A Blast from the Past



A message on the office answering machine led to an unexpected connection to FBC's past in February. Roseann and Jim Davis reached out from Perkasio, PA to ask if we had any records or information about Jim's great great grandfather, Rev. James L Davis. The inscription on the back of Rev. Davis's pocketwatch (pictured above) reads:

"Presented to Rev Jas L Davis by the congregation of the First Baptist Church of Pottstown, Pa May 17, 1893"

A quick call to Doris Stutzman (always a great source of information) lead me to a booklet commemorating FBC's hundredth year. Rev. Davis of Bridgeport, PA was FBC's tenth pastor from 1891 to 1905. Our records say:



"This scholarly Christian minister, beloved by his church and endeared to the community at large, served for the unprecedented term of 13 years and 11 months...when ill health compelled him to relinquish the pulpit. During his pastorate 268 persons united with the church." (photo in FBC library)

Thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Davis for reaching out and sending us the additional photos of Rev. Davis and his pocketwatch. We are delighted your family was able to reconnect with the FBC family.

Let's Connect with Hannah Davis



I am excited to help you learn more about a newer face around FBC. Following is my interview with Hannah Davis (edited for space).

Q. What is your passion? What energizes you?

A. I always say, 'I have interest ADD'! I appreciate learning about so many different things. But things that really spark my passionate streak are almost any and all social justice issues as well as ensuring young people have access to opportunity. I am also energized by the people who make Pottstown so awesome!

Q. When did these things become a passion for you?

A. As a child attending Quaker Meeting I learned about many social justice warriors - people like Sojourner Truth, Lucia Mott, MLK. (author's note - she listed a lot more! Ask her about them!) My grandparents encouraged me to

question the world around me and to never stop educating myself.

Q. How might we see you engage these passions?

A. I work for a small non-profit, Trellis for Tomorrow, that uses parks, preserves and gardens as living classrooms to teach youth and adults skills we believe are vital for communities to become healthier and more resilient. I volunteer for S.T.R.I.V.E., which provides services to help build the Created for Greatness Mentorship Program at the Pottstown Middle School.

Q. Who if anyone joins you in these activities?

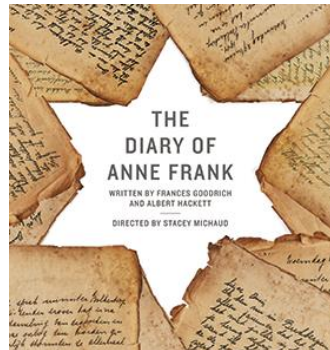
A. I try to surround myself with like-minded friends. I feel privileged to have an eclectic and diverse group of friends who care about Pottstown as much as I do. My friends give me hope and encouragement every day.

Q. Anything else you would like to tell us about this?

A. I love traveling! I enjoy all sorts of adventures, whether it be hiking new trails, exploring new cities or meeting new people. Traveling, near and far, is the best educational experience one can have.

Hannah we are so grateful that God brought you our way! We are excited to share our journey of learning to be being better neighbors with you. Thank you for sharing!

Jane Gruen for the Diaconate



The Diary of Anne Frank

Steel River Playhouse presents *The Diary of Anne Frank* this March. Important, timely, and moving – this will be an experience that won't soon be forgotten.

If you are interested in attending the Sunday afternoon showing of *The Diary of Anne Frank* at 2:00pm on March 22nd with the FBC group, please reach out to the office or to Ruth Chonka. Tickets will be \$21, so please give Ruth money for your ticket no later than March 15th.

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

Christian Ed is Hopping!

Our Annual Easter Egg Hunt is coming up on **Saturday, April 11th from 10am to 11:30am.** We will need helpers to hide eggs, help with crafts and hand out snacks.



On Sunday, April 5th after church we will need helpers to fill the over 1000 eggs for this year's hunt. WOW! There will be a "Pizza Party" for those who stay to help.

The Easter Bunny will be at the egg hunt, too, so hop on over and join the fun!!

Summer Fest plans are under way. This year looks like it will be bigger and better. If you have any ideas to share, please contact one of the CE Members. Our event this year will be held **Saturday, August 8th.** Plan to come and join the fun!

Keep saving your Redners Save-A-Tapes! There is a box in Echo Hall for your convenience.

-from the Board of Christian Education
Chairperson: Nancy Unruh

Board members: Lauren Emmell, Dennis Landon, Kathy Purington, Joel Dugan

Celebration Through Music

The Worship and Music Board met in February and discussed the possibility of inviting outside musical groups to perform during Sunday service or to give a concert. The Board will research these possibilities.



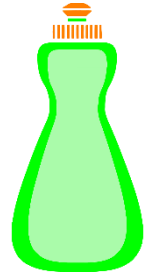
The choir continues to delight the congregation under the joint direction of Tim Raub and Teri Hoffman, and they will perform "Give Me Jesus" as part of the celebration of Pastor Marcia's installation.

- from the Board of Worship & Music
Chairperson: Corinne Griffiths

Board members: Kathy Ballein, Tim Raub, Teri Hoffman, Dr. Myra Forrest & Doris Stutzman

Bubbling to the Top

In March, the Cluster's Bring the Basics campaign has a goal of 31 bottles of dish soap and 31 packs of paper towels (family size). All donations can be placed on the shelves in Echo Hall.



The Cluster's immediate needs include **new or clean and gently used men's winter coats and hats and gloves for men, women and children.** They also need:

- Kids plastic cups
- Kids Microwavable plates and bowls
- Kids Silverware
- Shower Curtain Kits
- Toilet bowl brush sets
- Toilet Bowl Plunger
- Pots and Pans
- Cookie Sheets
- Baking Dishes
- Pillows
- Blankets
- Silverware
- Microwavable plate sets
- Drinking glasses
- Cooking utensils
- Laundry baskets
- Paper Towels
- Toilet paper
- Cleaning buckets
- Can Openers
- Kitchen size trash cans
- Kitchen size trash bags to fit trash cans
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic Wrap
- One-gallon Food Storage Bags
- Half-gallon Food Storage Bags
- Sandwich Bags
- Plastic Bag
- 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

In Hot Water



The Trustees would like to report that Rick Unruh has received a quote on the update to the hot water system that will reduce the water temperature in the bathrooms. In addition, Mike Heinz has submitted FBC's credit card application to the bank.

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



Spring Forward on March 8th!



Don't forget to move your clocks one hour forward on March 8th!

March Birthdays

- 4 Kathryn Ballein
- 6 Rick Unruh
- 9 Dave Heffner
Kristin Jolley
Jennifer Schankweiler
- 11 Joel Dugan
- 14 Rita Paez
- 15 Ronda Keiser
Myra Forrest
- 16 Darrel Rivenburg
- 19 Pearl Fazekas
- 20 Cherie Hessler
- 21 Juniper Kurtz
Barry Sawtelle
- 22 Brittany Endy
- 26 David Ziherambere
- 29 Jon Purington
Kayla Bowers
- 31 Alyssa Creswell Mohan

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