



FBC First Baptist Church

Family By Choice all are welcome...really!

VISIONS November 2019

A Welcoming & Affirming
Congregation



A Different Kind of Budgeting

As November rolls around it invites us to consider the blessings of the year nearly past and to consider our vision for the year to come. To that end, the Ministry Coordination Team and all the Boards have been talking for several months about what God is calling us to be and do in the year ahead and how we plan for that ministry now.

This year, on **Sunday, November 3rd**, we are handing out our **Proposed and Narrative Budgets**. You can pick one up at FBC or you can find it on our website. Call the church office if you would like us to mail a hard copy to you. A “**proposed**” budget is just that: a reflection of our financial needs for the future based on the ministry we believe God is calling us to. We offer it as a challenge and a guide; an opportunity to begin or to stretch your own generosity by taking a realistic look at what it costs to do ministry in this day and time. A “**narrative**” budget might be new to most. It tells the story of the numbers you see on the page. It endeavors to capture the hopes and dreams of people who hear God calling them to ministry. It describes in words what the numbers represent as we discern God’s vision for the community in and around our church.

Why are we doing this? Because we are a small, passionate group who is beginning to see a new way of being in relationship to our neighborhood, near and far. We have been talking about the flow of the “currencies” that are at our disposal: the currencies of gracious leadership, of time and place, of relationship, truth, wellness, and yes,

money. What we have been learning is that we have all of these things in varying measure, and when we use what we have, it comes back to us in some other form to meet our need. When we invest in relationship, we deepen our ability to be truthful with one another and we become more generous with one another! All of these currencies flow into one another in an endless cycle of blessing. And you can be a part of that cycle of blessing when you take the time to consider your own relationship with FBC and what God is inviting you to do here and in the world.

Want to know another reason why we’re calling it a “proposed” budget? Because we can only fulfill these missions if we have your support! After you read our story and see the numbers, we hope you’ll decided to support FBC in whatever way you can, even if it’s a stretch for you! We will ask for your **pledge by Sunday, November 24th**. After we have all the pledges, we hope to present this budget to the congregation in January. But if our pledges fall short, we will need to make cuts before January in order to be fiscally responsible. Make no mistake, we have no shortage of dreams and hopes for FBC in the year to come. But our finances are limited. This is a very important year for us; it will tell us something crucial about our future. We don’t believe God is finished with us yet!

Numbers never tell it all; our words and actions flesh out the invitation we are experiencing from God. Consider both and then make your pledge to support this vision for the year to come. Join us for worship in November! We will be celebrating all the many things God has accomplished through us in this past year and what we hope to do in the year to come!

Blessings,
Marcia

Lucky Number 1



The winner of our October Lucky Number Scavenger Hunt is Doris Stutzman! Doris will receive 4 tickets to Magic and Illusion by Tom Yurasits.

Want to participate in the November Lucky Number Scavenger Hunt? Just look for **Lucky Numbers** as you read this newsletter. Email the lucky numbers you find to the office at office@fbcpottstown.org, and you'll be entered into the drawing for a surprise. Each lucky number is another chance to win, so find them all!

Our Blessings Grew!



Thank you for your participation in the Amazing Raise! We are overjoyed to report that our gifts resulted in us raising \$12,736.20 for FBC by October 15th. AND, on October 29th we received the remaining matching funds raised by TCN!

We previously received matching funds from TCN for a special event donation as well as for being a first time Amazing Raise participant organization (\$1,300). Today we received matching funds for donations given directly to FBC and donations sent through the Amazing Raise website (\$1,471.54) as well as an additional \$100 from the Pottstown Hospital! Our grand total for the Amazing Raise (all donations plus all matching funds) is **\$15,607.74!!!!**

Congratulations and thank you!



Building Our Budget

Pick up your copy of the 2020 Proposed Budget as well as the narrative explanation that goes with it. This will give you an idea of what we are envisioning for the year ahead and help inform your prayerful giving to FBC and its ministry, here and around the world.

In January, we will vote on the finalized budget, adjusted in response to your pledges.



Let's Connect with Karen Golden

Karen (and Charles) have recently returned to PA after spending their summer in Ocean Grove NJ, so now is a good time for us to reconnect!

Gardening has been a part of Karen's life since she was a little girl. She remembers the flowers in her Grandmother's backyard and being allowed to help pick them. She was also a tree climber! She and her sister would climb the cherry trees in her Aunt's backyard and pick the cherries - their contribution to the cherry pies her Mom would make over the winter.

She became a gardener in her own right after she and Charles were married, and she planted pansies in their backyard. The same plants came up every year, and Karen was hooked. They have lived in 6 homes over the years, and each one has had flower gardens for her to tend - and 3 of them had vegetable gardens as well - including a half acre garden at their farmhouse.

A secondary passion is traveling. She and Charles have made traveling a part of their marriage since the very first year. She is often able to combine both her passions by visiting Botanical Gardens around the world.

Welcome back Karen and Charles! When Spring returns, I will be asking you my gardening questions!

- Jane Gruen for the Diaconate



We Need Your Help!

The Membership Directory is still under construction! Now called the “Community of First Baptist Church”, it’s a labor of love.

We have the working copy on the podium in Echo Hall, and we could use your help. Please check the information listed and mark any changes/updates in the space to the right of your entry. If you can’t make it to the church, you can send any changes/additions (to your phone number, address, email, or cell phone numbers) to the church office! Send information to office@fbcpottstown.org, or call 610-326-2273.

The Diaconate Board is exploring other ideas for promoting fellowship that extend beyond worship. If you have suggestions, please feel free to offer them to any of the members of the Board. We would love to hear from you!

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

Lucky Number: 1976

“What Does the Bible Really Teach Us About Jesus’ Birth?”



That’s the question we will try to answer in our Nov/Dec Adult Learning Community with the help of *The First Christmas*, a scholarly yet accessible book by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. As we read the stories of Jesus’ birth in Matthew and Luke, we will consider questions like, Are these stories true? Why are only Matthew and Luke concerned with Jesus’ birth? What do these stories actually mean to our faith today? Together we will explore the biblical texts, both Old Testament and New, in order to more deeply understand and appreciate the Advent and Christmas season.



We Challenged the Corn Maze

The all church outing to Wilcox Farms on October 26th was a blast. The adults found all the monsters in the corn maze! Way to go!



While the youth group was still finding its way through the maze, we tried to eat all the s’mores!



They made it back just in time to eat up some hot dogs and s’mores before finding some pumpkins.

FBC also joined Emmanuel Lutheran and St. James Lutheran for a fun Trunk or Treat event on Halloween. The weather couldn’t stop the fun as we dressed up, decorated our trunks, and gave out

treats. Thank you to all who donated candy, crackers, pretzels, rice crispy treats, and even fidget spinners! We handed out 54 loaded pumpkins with all the candy, and there were over 100 kids!



Youth Learning Community meets each week at 11:15 am! Meet in Echo Hall for bible study and activities!

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



Cooking Up Blessings

We received a lovely card from Barbara Wilhelmy that read:

“Dear Friends at First Baptist-

It was a pleasure to participate and host your worship service on September 29th. I enjoyed meeting all of you and having the opportunity to show you, firsthand, how your faithful support to us lifts many in our community.

We are also grateful for the donations of household and cleaning supplies. They will be much appreciated by the families we serve.

With much appreciation,
 Barbara Wilhelmy”

In November, the Cluster’s Bring the Basics campaign has a goal of 30 sets of pots and pans.

All donations can be placed on the shelves in Echo Hall.

The Cluster also needs volunteers to both pack and/or deliver orders. If you are interested, please call the Cluster at 610-970-5995.

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

Lucky Number: 43

Save the Date



Christmas Concert

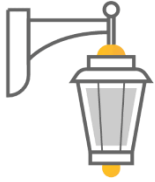
Save the date! The Christmas concert will be on Sunday, December 8th at 2:00 pm with an art show and a reception sponsored by Cody Systems. Come enjoy the music, art, and fellowship!

The Worship and Music Board of FBC met on September 29, 2019, after the church services. Much of our discussion related to music for our services, both the choir, soloist and organ or piano accompaniments.

Tim Raub and Teri Hoffman will continue to work together with the choir when enough singers are available. This is on a temporary basis before a final decision is made. We also set up the schedule for instrumental music to accompany the service through the second Sunday in January.

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

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



Lighting Our Way

The Trustees are happy to report that the furnace is working, and there is heat in the Sanctuary. The lights over the outside doors are all working, and they are all set to come on when it gets dark and to turn off when it gets light.

The Pottstown Fire Chief came by for a brief inspection, and he just wanted to remind everyone to make sure no items are blocking the fire doors from opening completely.

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



Holidays at the Cluster

We are again collecting gravy for the Cluster Holiday Food baskets. We need 200 cans of turkey gravy by December 1st. (No glass please!) To date, we already have 24 cans.

The Cluster *is* collecting and distributing toys this year; please accept my apology for any confusion here. The unwrapped toys need to be at the Cluster by December 6, 2019.

In October, we collected \$120 for the ABC World Mission Offering. Thank you for **supporting International Ministries and its partners as they share Jesus' words of hope and love worldwide – thereby giving springs of living water.**

- Our Missions

Chairperson: Kathy Purington

Committee members: Jane Gruen & Ruth Chonka

Congratulations! You made it to the end! Did you find all the lucky numbers?

Email the all the lucky numbers to office@fbcpottstown.org for entries into the November Scavenger Hunt drawing.

November Birthdays

- 3 James Grace, IV
- 5 Marvin Marsh
- 6 Mary Alice Beutler
- 10 Charles Washington
- 16 Pam Wolfgang
- 17 Terryl Marsh
Kyle Smith
- 18 John Rand Yeager
- 24 Horace Smith
- 28 Allyson Kemmerer

November Anniversary

- 19 Tayo & Bola Ogunidipe

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



FAMILY BY CHOICE

Keep reading for an article by Rev. Dr. Eleazar Zihembere published in the Baptist Peacemaker (September 13, 2019).

Living in a World of Violence



Eleazar Ziherambere (left) at the Global Baptist Peace Conference in Cali, Colombia last July. Also at the table is Boaz Keibarak, a tribal mediator in Kenya. Photo by Katie Cook.

A World of Violence

We live in a world of violence! However, as Jesus commended his disciples and is commending us today: We are the salt of the earth, we are the light of the world. In the next few minutes, I want to share with you how, together, with Jesus, we can achieve much in this journey. We will then say with the apostle Paul that “We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us” (Philippians 4:13).

In our National Park in Kenya, just like in any other game reserve in Africa, we have many animals living together in the forest. Those animals include lions, leopards, antelopes, and others. What strikes me is the fact that the antelopes are food for lions and leopards. However, while many antelopes die, many more survive. This kind of survival in the forest can be compared to the survival of people in this world of violence.

All of us at this conference know about the so-called Islamic State and the horror it has imposed on the peace-loving people of Syria and Iraq. In Africa, we are still traumatized by untold suffering imposed by Boko Haram in West Africa, and Al Shabab in East Africa. You have seen on your TV screens the drowning of hundreds of Africans in the Mediterranean Sea, trying to escape the economic situation in Africa and reach the shores of what they see as the Promised Land. Every day we see the suffering of divided families from South and Central America as they try to immigrate to North America.

The violence in Africa today has its roots in the past.

The heart of God must be bleeding! Think about the horrors brought by what we call Mother Nature, such as hurricanes—and, very recently, the devastation of Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and neighboring countries. All the while, we know that what is perceived as

“Mother Nature” is, in fact, the lack of responsibility in caring for this planet that God has entrusted to us, and we have to pause and reflect.

I often wonder “How long, O God, how long” until God’s peace is felt—until the *shalom* described by the prophet Isaiah shall be accomplished:

*The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.*

*The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*

(Isaiah 11: 6-7)

Historical Facts that Still Undermine Peace in Africa

The violence in Africa today has its roots in the past. Let us begin with slavery. Strong and healthy men and women were hunted like animals, not for slaughter but for business. When I visit the castles in Cape Coast, Ghana, and see the magnificent buildings built in the 16th century, I understand that the slave trade was a very lucrative business back then. It could be compared to today’s oil business. Sadly, even now in the 21st century, that slave trade business looks like very much the human trafficking business, which I understand provides a net profit of billions of dollars each year.

When slavery was finally abolished, one would think there would be hope for a better life for indigenous Africans. In the 19th century, famous explorers such as Sir Morton Stanley, and the great missionary David Livingstone—with the best intentions in the world for good—ended up giving information that prompted powerful Western Europe to begin the colonization of Africans.

In my career as an African Baptist leader, I have visited many African nations. The richer a country is in natural resources, the more its people are poor. Often, these wealthy-in-resources nations are victims of bloody wars. And, even though machine guns and other sophisticated weapons are not manufactured in Africa, those weapons are what Africans use to kill each other.

In the Berlin Conference of Nov. 15, 1884, through Feb. 26, 1885, the colonial powers—England, France, Germany, Portugal and Belgium—sat down and sliced up Africa as a cake at their will, without any African present at the table. My country, Rwanda, then became part of German

East Africa, later to be given to Belgium after the defeat of Germany in World War II.

In the 1960s, many African nations became independent. Others followed soon. The last one to be independent was South Africa with its historic 1994 election. Then South Sudan was the latest nation to be born when it separated itself from Sudan.

In the Berlin Conference of Nov. 15, 1884, through Feb. 26, 1885, the colonial powers England, France, Germany, Portugal and Belgium sat down and sliced up Africa as a cake at their will, without any African present on the table.

In the case of Africa, former colonial powers have kept, behind the scenes, their power over the former colonies. One can argue that, to be a good leader in Africa, you don't have to necessarily care for your own people, but to make sure that you are in league with Washington, Brussels, London, Paris and, to some extent, Lisbon. Once those countries are behind you, media such as the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN) and Radio France Internationale (RFI) will present you as the "visionary leader" in Africa.

While African countries have gained independence since the 1960s, economic independence is still far from reach. Generally, those who control the economy end up controlling politics as well. The currency of former African French colonies is guaranteed by the French Treasury.

The international financial institutions designed to help economies of the world have had a huge negative impact on Africa. Many people do not hesitate to say that they are, in fact, the cause of the poverty in Africa. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were set up at the end of the World War II to help rebuild economies in Europe. In order to implement their policies, they made loans to poor countries on the condition that these countries privatize their economies, and allow western corporations access to their raw materials and markets.

That was a poverty trap that many countries realized too late. The way Western corporations flourish while the poor die miserably in other places could be interpreted to mean that the poor in Africa continue to feed greedy Western corporations. Hence, the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer.

Dr. Kato Gogo Kingston of Rivers State University in Nigeria reflects on the two above-mentioned financial institutions:

The impact of the policies advocated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Africa are under increased scrutiny. African scholars and international NGOs concerned with Africa's development have asked whether the policies imposed by the World Bank and IMF in Africa have actually helped or hindered the objective of increasing living standards for the majority of Africans.

The policies that are supposed to be purely economic end up being mixed with politics.

Kim Yong, the former high official of the World Bank, admits that any leader who doesn't obey the World Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organization and other such organizations, is considered a "terrorist" and must be assassinated in most cases. For example, when there is an oil discovery in a developing country (that owes money to the World Bank) and the leader of that developing country is not ready to cooperate (so that Western corporations can easily take over the oil exploration), the World Bank and others quickly get rid of such a leader. Sometimes it is done by declaring war, like what happened in Iraq. The World Bank and company elect their own "obedient" leaders to rule those poor countries so that they can control that country's economy and market.

Violence in Rwanda and the 1994 Genocide

Rwanda is a small country—only 26,000 square kilometers. It is roughly the size of the state of Maryland in the United States. Both Rwanda and Burundi are almost the same size, Burundi being a little bit bigger than Rwanda. Both countries share history; both were part of German East Africa, and later under the protectorate of the Kingdom of Belgium. They both became independent from Belgium on July 1, 1962.

There has never been peace between the two countries since they became independent. Before independence, before the Belgians left, they made sure the Hutu people were in charge in Rwanda, while the Tutsi people were in charge in Burundi. However, in both countries, Hutus represented 85 percent of the population, Tutsis represented 14 percent, while the Pygmies represented only 1 percent.

In 1994, for geopolitical reasons, the world powers needed regime change in Rwanda. In the

process, we lost more than 2 million people, even though media reports only spoke of 800,000 people.

The war was started on October 1, 1990, by Tutsi refugees—with all the support of the international community. Relations between Hutus and Tutsis had deteriorated. As a pastor, from the pulpit, in my sermons, I pointed out that Hutu should not fight Tutsi, or Tutsi fight Hutu. Tutsi and Hutu are not enemies of one another, but the devil, the Satan, is the enemy of both. My message was that we should fight the Satan, not each other. Besides, I always said, it would be reasonable (though not appropriate) to punish me for being a Christian or a pastor. But nobody should punish me because I am Hutu or Tutsi, because I did not make the decision to be who I am. In the same way, nobody should punish me because I am Black, because I did not make the decision to be a Black person.

The war was between the Rwandan army and the Tutsi rebels, who lived mainly in Uganda and other neighboring countries. The aim was to replace the Hutu government by a Tutsi government. It was supposed to be a quick war, but it dragged on and on. During that time, the church in Rwanda was asked to facilitate peace talks. The wider international community appeared to support those efforts. Eventually, almost three years later, a peace deal was signed in Arusha, Tanzania. It paved the way to form a unity government that was supposed to lead the country through transition.



Eleazar Ziherambere (left) with Henna B. Caipang of the Philippines and Laura Parjón from Nicaragua, who were responding to his plenary presentation. Photo courtesy of the Global Baptist Peace Conference.

All these initiatives were halted on April 6, 1994, when the Hutu president of Rwanda and the Hutu president of Burundi were both assassinated. It was an act of terrorism, because the airplane carrying them and their aides was shot down; all aboard perished. It is worth noting that, now after 25 years, the United Nations has not yet done any investigation to bring those who committed that crime to justice. That act of terrorism ignited the genocide in which more than 2 million people perished.

I was then the leader of the Baptists in Africa, and also general secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches in Rwanda. From that night of April 6, mass killings started right away. The Hutu majority, blaming the Tutsi rebels for the death of the president, began to kill Tutsis and any Hutu who supported Tutsis. This is where I saw the horror of the violence. As a Hutu, I was seen by many Hutu people as a traitor because of my messages since 1990, because I opposed hatred, let alone killing, of anyone because of his or her tribe.

April 6 was also our last day in the executive committee meeting of the Union of Baptist Churches in Rwanda. After the tragedy, the government imposed a 24-hour curfew for the first three days. The killings were approaching us, and news and rumors were causing everyone to panic. My fellow pastors and lay leaders begged me to leave the country, because I was perceived as a traitor of my own tribe.

As I drove my car through, with corpses all around, many of them beheaded, I thought that it was over. I stopped praying for God to spare my life but instead asked God to allow me and my children to die quickly—by gun, not by machete.

As a pastor, how do you flee, leaving behind the church you are supposed to shield? It was a painful decision for me to make. I was only able to do it, convinced that my departure would keep the militia from coming to our church headquarters to kill me. On Saturday, April 16, I decided to leave the country. I planned to leave my home at Butare (20 miles away from the border with Burundi) and take my children to my mother, who lived very close to the border, hoping that no one would go after her. From there, I was hoping to cross into Burundi, and hopefully find safety.

What I did not know was that there were roadblocks all over the country by now, and many people were butchered at these roadblocks. As I drove my car through, with corpses all around, many of them beheaded, I thought that it was over. I stopped praying for God to spare my life but instead asked God to allow me and my children to die quickly—by gun, not by machete.

My wife was in Europe then. When I could not get to my mother's house, I decided to drive straight to the Burundi border. Here again another challenge was waiting for me. As a Hutu person from Rwanda, Burundian Tutsi soldiers at the border could kill me in retaliation for what Hutu people in Rwanda were

doing against Tutsi people. When I approached the border on the Rwanda side, everyone said that, once I got to the Burundi side, Tutsi soldiers would shoot us dead.

I was actually happy to hear that, because I thought God was answering my prayer to die quickly. Truly, God made a miracle for us! After 25 years, I am still alive to tell you this story.

The point was for me as a Hutu person to work hand in hand with a Tutsi person, in providing relief to both Hutu and Tutsi.

I am saying this to help you understand that I have been through violence. I know what it is, and as long as I live, I will always speak against it, and if possible, show a way out.

Hate Cannot Drive out Hate, Only Love...

There is no excuse to harm anyone! Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." When I was finally able to flee from Rwanda, go through Burundi and arrive in Kenya, I had to live with both Hutu and Tutsi in Nairobi. I teamed up with a Tutsi brother in Christ, and we organized a relief effort for those refugees living in Kenya. The point was for me as a Hutu person to work hand in hand with a Tutsi person, in providing relief to both Hutu and Tutsi.

Such an action, even as small as it seems, has inspired much in the area of reconciliation between our two tribes. Following that small example, other people initiated much larger groups and organizations to promote peace in Rwanda. As I am speaking, I want to recognize that much progress has been achieved in relations between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda.

As I served American Baptist International Ministries and traveled in many countries in Africa, I was fascinated by the progress made in the area of peace and reconciliation. These groups have something to do with the Baptist Global Peace initiative. I can name a few:

- **Peace-Building, Healing And Reconciliation Program (PHARP)**. It is based in Nairobi, Kenya, and it serves Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Rwanda and South Sudan
- **Trees of Peace**, based in Harare, Zimbabwe, serves both in Zimbabwe and Zambia.
- **Maison Prisca** (Priscilla House), based in Bangui, Central African Republic, is very active in fostering peace between Muslims and Christians in the context of the civil war in that country.

Toward a World without Violence

With the challenges around us, it is possible for the pessimist to see no light at the end of the tunnel. The darkness is so much around us. However, even a little light will drive out the darkness. This simple song gives me so much hope; let us sing it together:

*This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!*

In the case of Africa, I am encouraged by many small initiatives for peace, across the continent. I want to call upon each one of the participants of this conference to remember that each little light we can carry will drive out the thick darkness.

May the Prince of Peace be with you all!
Rev. Dr. Eleazar Ziherambere