



FBC First Baptist Church

Family By Choice all are welcome...really!

VISIONS

October

2019

A Welcoming & Affirming
Congregation

Conversation, Communication, & Community



A congregational meeting of First Baptist Church was held on Sunday, September 22nd. It was a time for conversation, communication, and community. By unanimous vote, the congregation affirmed Corinne Griffiths as Chairperson of the Worship and Music Board and Doris Stutzman as a member of the Worship and Music Board. The congregation also approved by unanimous vote the hiring of Nancy Unruh for the position of Building Caretaker, combining her position of custodian with the position of building coordinator. With regret, the congregation voted to accept the resignation of Teri Hoffman as Lead Musician. A time for the congregation to express its gratitude and express its appreciation for Teri's years of service to FBC will be held on Sunday, October 20th.

Dr. Myra Forrest, one of FBC's Co-Moderators, facilitated conversation on issuing a call to Rev. Dr. Marcia Bailey as pastor of First Baptist Church. Pastor Marcia has been serving the church as Acting Pastor for the past year through a series of

short-term contracts. The Ministry Coordination Team recommended issuing a call to permanent part-time ministry as pastor of First Baptist Church. Myra outlined the history of connection that Pastor Marcia has had with FBC. The relationship began when Pastor Marcia served as a supply pastor preaching on occasion during Rev. Dr. Marvin Marsh's pastorate. Pastor Marcia served FBC as Transitional Pastor along with Rev. Dr. Deborah Winters after Marvin Marsh's retirement. More recently, Pastor Marcia came on board as Acting Pastor after the departure of Rev. Teresa Ely. Pastor Marcia has shepherded us through times of healing after the loss of two pastors and has led visioning sessions to help us not only discern our mission in the community, but to build relationships with community partners. Pastor Marcia has been an integral part of the continuing visioning process at FBC.

Pastor Marcia offered her own statement giving insight as to who she is and how she views her ministry with the congregation of FBC. (You are encouraged to read the transcript of her statement on the following pages.) After some discussion and questions, a vote was taken unanimously electing Pastor Marcia as pastor of First Baptist Church!

We are excited to have a settled pastor to work with us in this continuing journey of visioning and re-imagining our congregation's mission in this community and in the church at large. Come join us in celebrating Pastor Marcia's ministry! Worship and work with us, as together we discern God's evolving plan for First Baptist Church.

Co-Moderators of the Ministry Coordination Team
of First Baptist Church
Dr. Myra Forrest, Laura Alden, Debra Brauner

Getting to Know Marcia Better...

(shared at the September congregational meeting before the congregation conversation and vote)

If I was a traditional candidate in a traditional search process, I would have filled out a lot of forms, met with a small group and then been invited here to preach a sermon and chat with you. We would have been overly polite, trying to size each other up, wondering what we were missing, wondering if this was, for each of us, the right thing.

But that's *not* how we got to know each other. And being aware of that makes me think that we have gotten to know each other on much more honest terms than I have ever known a congregation before I joined them. But there are still things we have never said to each other, things we have never asked each other, things we don't know about each other even yet.

And so I tried to think of the things I wanted you to know about me, about who I am and what is important to me...things I would want you to ask and things I would want to say (not that we necessarily would have) if we had come together in the conventional way. So here it goes. I want you to know *this* about me:

Sept 14 marked my **33rd year of ordained ministry**. During that time, I have **served** two congregations on a long-term basis, and four congregations as their transitional minister. I have **consulted** with countless other churches in my ministerial life on issues related to

- non-hierarchical pastoral team ministry
- women in ministry
- the work of the transitional period and calling a pastor
- welcoming LGBTQIA folks into congregational life and society
- And probably a few other things I can't recall at the moment
- I have been an American Baptist all my life.

I have been **teaching full time** at Temple University in the Intellectual Heritage program for 11.5 yrs. I teach four classes with 14 *different* texts each semester, 2-3 semesters a year. (That means in an academic year I work with an average of 225 students).

- I develop my own curriculum

- I create, give, and grade hundreds of assignments each semester
- I serve on faculty committees, meet with students, attend workshops and various other meetings.
- I chair the Promotions Committee for my department and this year,
- I am the Intellectual Heritage Program Director for Summer 2020 in Rome, Italy.

I want you to know some things that are **important** to me (In no particular order):

- Inclusivity, of all kinds
- Interfaith relationships
- Inclusive language for humanity and God
- Relationships
- Health and wholeness
- Collaboration

I also want you to know that

- I am deeply committed to reading the **Gospels as a paradigm for social change**
- I believe that the Gospels are clear in describing God's **preferential option for the marginalized**
- I believe the two words that best characterize God are "**Love**" and "**Just**"
- I am **not interested in "doing church"** like it was 1950, 60, 70, 80, or even 2000
- I am *not interested* in being a chaplain to a dying congregation
- I **am** interested in discerning God's transformative call to **a new way of being "church"** in the world, beginning with our neighborhood, the community of Pottstown and beyond.

I want you to know that

- I experience God most consistently and profoundly outdoors
- I struggle to afford myself the same grace I genuinely offer to others
- I meet with a spiritual director regularly
- I mourn the loss of what has been familiar to most of us about church life, mostly because it is familiar and therefore easy to replicate, and at the same time I am energized to imagine what new realities we have yet to discover on the path of bringing forth the reign of God.

I want you to know that

- I read the scriptures expecting to hear a new word each and every time
- Sometimes God's voice comes to me in the words of poets, philosophers, theologians, musicians, social scientists and novelists just as, or more clearly, than the biblical text
- I have to *work* at finding time daily for quiet contemplation...
- In part, because I don't sit well...and because even God knows, sometimes sleep is more essential

I want you to know that

- It is important for me to **prioritize balance** in my life: to have time for exercise, work, play, prayer, friends and family, not necessarily in that order, in order to be whole
- I don't eat broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts or most fish/seafood. Please don't think you can change that.

I want you to know that

- I **do** love dark & semi-sweet chocolate, ice cream, Italian food, and someone else's cooking
- I love to travel, anywhere, but the only place I actually sit for any prolonged time is at the beach
- I want you to know that my mother is 89 and I don't know what I would do without her
- I have three adult children who are making a difference in their worlds
- My divorce is final; that's a good thing and that I am living into a new perspective on my life.

I want you to know I dream about

- Being part of a faith communion so deeply committed to following Jesus that they change their community and maybe the world
- Being afraid to try something new and doing it anyway
- Speaking another language fluently
- Having enough time and energy to be all-together present everywhere I want to be
- Collaborating with others in new ways
- Retiring and finding new ways to use my gifts

And sometimes I literally dream that it's the end of the semester, I am a student, I have just realized I have been assigned a math class which I have *never* attended, I am supposed to take a test, and I cannot find the classroom! It's *truly* my quintessential nightmare!

I am grateful

- For all that I have received
- For all that I have to give
- For all who have touched my life
- For all the lives I have been honored to touch
- For each day and the opportunity to live it
- For this congregation and the ways you have welcomed me and cared for me and accepted me and loved me over the years I have known you
- The honor of accompanying you again in this last, difficult season of your communal life
- For the possibility of dreaming with you God's dream for this communion into the future.

--Pastor Marcia

Greetings from Eleazar and Speciose!



This summer are beloved members, Eleazar and Speciose Zihembere, moved to Brundi with the vision of eventually starting a school to train pastors. Marcia has been corresponding with them and with their permission, shares with us a recent email.

"Our home in Pottstown was the home where we lived the longest time in our lives. The same is FBC of Pottstown! Leaving all the friends we have there is just hard on us. We have youth who were born when we are at the church! We have people whose spouses have gone to live with the Lord, and

of course our memories are with them. We truly miss FBC! Even as we are here, we feel that we are FBC missionaries in this land of ours which, with so many years have made it foreign to us.

When I left Pottstown (USA), I was committed to train pastors who have not been privileged to go to the Bible School, let alone the Seminary. I have not yet started, but intentionally, I am planning it, in order to do it right. Of course I have a challenge to get from the churches, resources to do this. While pastors will travel to one location where we would spend four to five days, while I am so far securing venues with rooms, mattresses, etc. I am finding it difficult to get food for the participants. This is a place where it costs \$5 for all the meals a day, which means that I will be looking for \$20 to \$25 for each participant for that week. The same pastors will get from their churches and families, the transportation fare to and from the venue.

Pastor, even though we are native Africans, I must confess that we have had such a huge cultural shock. We have people who are extremely hungry. One example that comes in my mind, when we were doing a work fixing our future residence, a young woman named Passy was hired as a mason's aid. She had a baby on her back and carrying a backed of 55 pounds. Her baby, who is a little more than a year, is not even able to stand, because she has had no nutritious food. She was lucky to earn each day \$1.05 a day (8 hours). She has to pay rent for her room for \$3.50 a month. Speciose saw this sad situation and decided to help her. She gave her three months rentals (\$10.50), and a small capital to sell vegetables. Speciose is happy that Passy is selling vegetables, and gets some profit for her food. When she asked Passy how she wants to be helped, she said "I want food for my child, I don't want to see her starving to death", Speciose is happy to see that she can now feed that baby who was (and still is to some extent) with signs of kwashiorkor. Sadly, in the community where we live, we have many Passy's!

Please pray for us, pray for discernment of what God wants us to do. We commit to pray for you, you personally as our permanent pastor (full time job and part time salary!!!!), pray for our Family By Choice church, and of course, we pray for our great country: America."

May God bless you all!
As ever,
Eleazar and Speciose

Getting to Know Our Neighbors



On Sunday, October 6th, a group of FBC'ers and friends have tickets to Steel River Playhouse to see "The Mystery of Edwin Drood." If you haven't got a ticket yet, call the church office or contact Steel River directly. It's \$20.00 a ticket.

Then, on Sunday, October 13 the "exchange" goes the other way as Steel River comes to FBC to talk about their mission in our community and ways we can connect with them in mutual support. A spokesperson will be present in worship and will take our questions as we continue to build our relationships with our neighbors. Come and learn!

Lucky Number 422



We're having a Scavenger Hunt in October! It's easy. As you read the newsletter, look for **Lucky Numbers**. 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!

FBC & The Amazing Raise



You have heard us talking about The Amazing Raise and "raise day" is almost upon us!

"The **Amazing Raise brings the region together as one community, raising money and awareness for our local nonprofits during the 24-hour online giving challenge.** We inspire people to give generously to nonprofits making our region stronger, creating a thriving community for all."

Sponsored by TriCounty Community Network (TCN), a nonprofit providing support services to other nonprofits, all gifts made to FBC via TCN/ The Amazing Raise are automatically increased as we

share in the generosity of others. FBC is a member of TCN, and as a member, we can grow our gifts alongside others as we support the organizations we love and the people they serve.

How do you give? **Go online to our website (www.fbcpottstown.org/amazing-raise) or to the TNC website (www.amazingraisetricounty.org) and follow the steps to use your credit card or bank account. If you want to contribute by check, make it out to FBC but in the memo line write "Amazing Raise".** Anything that we get between September 15th and October 15th will be increased by a percentage determined by the total raised. **Anything raised on "raise day", October 15th, will earn much more than previous gifts. If you go online and make a pledge now, it will be recorded on October 15th, generating the greatest increase possible!**

Here's how some folks are telling us they are participating.

"I am giving the rest of my pledge for the year on October 15 so that it can increase its value to FBC as much as possible!", one person said.

Another said, "I am going to give my September and October offering via the TCN website so it can benefit FBC above and beyond what I could normally give."

Here's another way you can participate.....

Christmas In October!



On Sunday, October 13th, two days before "raise day", we will host a "Christmas in October" party after Learning Community with Christmas carol singing, cookies, hot chocolate and decorations to celebrate our generous giving to the Amazing Raise (see above). Join us for some pre-season fun. There will be computers and helpers ready to help you give to FBC thru the Amazing Raise, anyway you want to do it. It will be private, confidential and fun! Joy to the world and to us!

Lucky Number: 100

YWCA Rally Against Gun Violence

Join us on our own front sidewalk as we greet our neighbors and support our partners the YWCA who are hosting a Rally Against Gun Violence for Pottstown on October 17th 6-8pm. We will offer our neighborhood friends a warm beverage and bookmarks with prayers for families of victims, our community, schools and overall peace. Come and represent our church's witness for gun-free zones and peace. We need people to greet others, to pour beverages and hand out FBC material and prayers. Please come!

Budget Season



A reminder to all Boards and committees that budget season is upon us! All budgets are due on Sunday, October 20th. All FBC'ers, join us on Sunday, November 3rd after worship when the proposed budget will be presented! 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.

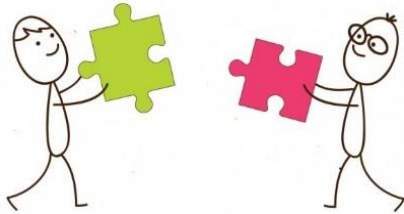


Celebrating the Ministry of Teri Hoffman

With deep regret, the Ministry Coordination team and the congregation accepted the resignation of Teri Hoffman, who has been our long-time lead musician for many, many years. Teri has been involved with FBC for most of her life, and she has offered her musical gifts and abilities resulting in beautiful vocal and piano works and a talented, seasoned choir. Teri is ready for some new energy in her life, and so while she will still be an active part of our music ministry, she is stepping away from the responsibility of organizing and directing the choir.

We will celebrate Teri's service on Sunday, October 20th. Please honor Teri with your attendance.

Let's Connect with Dennis Landon



With Halloween fast approaching, this month we talk with Dennis Landon. Some of you (like me), may be surprised to learn what will occupy his time this month!

Following is our interview (edited for space):

Q. Can you tell me what it is you do in celebration of Halloween?

A. This will be the third year I've served as a volunteer actor at 'Terror Labs' in the Coventry Mall. Four nights a week in October I hang out in dark corridors and scare people!

Q. How did this come about?

A. I walk for exercise at the Mall, and two years ago saw a sign for applicants as actors. I like performing - and who doesn't like scaring people!

Q. Who joins you in this way of celebrating?

A. There are about twenty fellow actors, most considerably younger than I and all of them people I would never have met otherwise. It is a reminder that lots of people we might consider strange really aren't. After all I am one of them. I've learned a lot about technique (yes, scaring people requires technique), and make-up, but mostly I have learned that people are bound together by common interests even if they are very different in other ways. Something helpful for the church to remember.

Dennis, that is a perfect reminder to us as we strive to be a good neighbor to those around us! Thank you for your insight!

For those who might want to see Dennis in action, 'Tower Lab' is open 6pm - 10 pm Thursday - Sunday through October. A portion of the proceeds benefit The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. (Not recommended for people under 13.)

Community of First Baptist Church



The Membership Directory is still under construction! We met again on Sunday, September 15th, and agreed to title the directory "Community of First Baptist Church". If you know that there need to be changes/additions to your phone number, address, email, or cell phone numbers, please help us by calling or emailing the church office with your updated information! Send information to office@fbcpottstown.org.

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

Holy Currencies



Join us each Sunday as we read and discuss Eric Law's challenging book, "Holy Currencies: 6 Blessings for Sustainable Missional Ministries". This book invites us to see our reality as an opportunity and to assess what we have already been given to engender new life and vitality in our church. You don't need to have read the book to participate!

Oct 6 The Currency of Truth (chapters 5 & 6)
Marcia Bailey, leading

Oct 13 The Currency of Wellness (chapters 7 & 8)
Laura Alden, leading

Oct 20 The Currency of Gracious Leadership (chapters 9 & 10)
Dennis Landon, leading

Oct 27 The Currency of Time and Place (chapters 11 & 12)
Laura Alden, leading

Nov 3 The Currency of Money (chapters 13 & 14)
Marcia Bailey, leading

Nov 10 Holy Currency Exchange: What have we learned? What will we do?!
Dennis Landon and Marcia Bailey, leading

Time for Fun & Treats



Youth Learning Community meets each week! Meet in Echo Hall for bible study and activities!

The CE Board is considering having a Trunk and Treat on October 31st in our church parking lot from 6pm-8pm. If you are willing to donate BIG bags of candy, we appreciate it. Also, if you are willing to participate by opening your trunk or hatchback and handing out treats to our community kids, see Nancy Unruh for more information.

There will also be a sign-up sheet for an all church outing at Wilcox Farm on PA 562 outside of Boyertown (1134 Reading Ave, Boyertown, PA 19512). There will be a corn maze, hayrides, and a fire pit to roast hot dogs if we want. The date is October 26th starting at 1pm. The price for groups of 10 is \$6.00 plus \$4.00 for the hayride. Sign up or call Nancy at 610-858-8884.

Don't forget our Learning Community Hour (Sunday School) is now held after Worship.

-from the Board of Christian Education

Chairperson: Nancy Unruh

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



Shower of Blessings

In October, the Cluster's Bring the Basics campaign has a goal of 31 bathroom sets (shower curtain, toilet brush, and plunger).

It's not too early to be thinking of holiday gifts and pledges. With that in mind, as we have for the last several years, we are collecting gravy for the **Cluster Holiday Food Baskets**. We need 200 cans of turkey gravy by December 1, 2019 (no glass please).

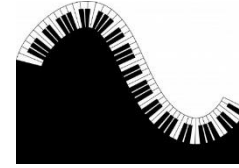
All donations can be placed on the shelves in Echo Hall.

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

Hymn and Awe



The Worship and Music Board of FBC met on September 8, 2019, after the church services. Much of our discussion related to music for our services, both the choir, soloist and organ or piano accompaniments. We discussed introducing New Hymns at services and how to, or if it was possible. Also, we discussed the possibility of a hiring a new person for the choir altogether.

After this discussion, Tim Raub and Teri Hoffman agreed they would work together with the choir, and the choir would sing two Sundays per month. Other Sundays would be special music either instrumental or vocal. 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 first Sunday in December.

Our discussion for a proposed budget for the 2020 year will be discussed at our next meeting which will be on September 29, 2019.

- from the Board of Worship & Music

Chairperson: Corinne Griffiths

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



Preparing for Winter

The Trustees are happy to report that the leak in the radiator in New Fellowship Hall has been fixed. The Trustees are also working to replace broken windows and the exhaust fan on the roof.

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



Springs of Living Water

The ABC World Mission Offering is the primary fund raiser for International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches; "a time for congregations to come together to celebrate and support the ministries that God is using to transform the world. This year's offering is highlighting the Ministry Priorities of Evangelism and Discipleship, Immigrants and Refugees and Education."

The Biblical theme is found in Jesus' discussion with the woman at the well and Jesus' offer of "LIVING WATER " as found in John 4:14. "Whoever drinks of the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Our support of this offering permits International Ministries and its partners to share Jesus' words of hope and love worldwide - giving springs of living water. Our giving goal is \$200.00; informational inserts and giving envelopes will be placed in the October 20th and October 27th bulletins.

In September, we collected \$250 for Blanket and Tool Offering. This Church World Offering is used to provide blankets, tools, tents and medical supplies to meet emergency needs across our globe such as refugees fleeing from their homes due to human-made or natural disasters. In addition, the offering is used to fund long term demands of recovery and rehabilitation by providing care for traumatized children, rebuilding homes and schools, and rebuilding food security by providing seeds, tools, fishing equipment and training. Thank you for **Joyfully building up others and blanketing the world with our love.**

- 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 Scavenger Hunt drawing.

October Birthdays

- 1 Sydney Bowers
- 4 Glenn Hessler
- 5 Jim McNaney
Maricarmen Trexler
- 7 Lucas Scott Reid
- 9 Jacqueline Purington
- 13 David Trexler
Parker Elizabeth Kurtz
- 15 Assata Kamara-Bender
- 18 Bella Rosa Grohoski
John Yeager
- 19 Noemi Bender
Chelsea Ziherambere
- 20 Debra Brauner
- 22 Suzanne Grace
Judy Miller
Marcella Ortiz
- 23 Bill Forrest
- 26 Kayleigh Gibson
- 31 Bob Walk

October Anniversaries

- 6 Jeff & Kim Reid
- 20 Charles & Lois Hayer
- 27 Doug & Joan Breidenbach

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



FAMILY BY CHOICE

Lucky Number: 77