



March 15 - April 15, 2020

First Things

A Monthly Newsletter for Members and Friends

Who We Are: FBC: Where every person matters and relationships with God and neighbors grow.

What We Do: We are learning to live the life that Jesus would live if Jesus were living our life through:

- *meaningful worship and study*
- *valuing and loving others through service*
- *embracing God's created diversity*
- *intentional connections to our community*
- *caring for one another through all of life*



Rev. Lara Escoffre joined our pastoral staff, in December 2012, as the Pastor of Preaching and Teaching; in June 2015, Lara transitioned into the role of **Lead Pastor**. Lara has a passion for preaching and teaching God's word and for walking with people as they discover who God has created them to be. Lara is active in the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, Mid-Michigan Health Advisory Council, and Faithwalking. She and her husband, Laurent, have three children: Lola, Chloe and Devin.

**WORSHIP SERVICES
have been CANCELLED**

UNTIL EASTER – April 12, 2020

LEAD PASTOR

“We Make Plans and God Laughs.” If I were to write the memoir of my call to ministry, that is what I would call it because my call to ministry was just that: a series of plans I made which God must have just laughed at. As a kid I never wanted to be a pastor, instead I had dreams to be a musical actress or a surgeon. God had other plans for me though. On a hot summer day in 1993 at the age of 14, I felt His call on my life to enter into ministry on Spring Lake in Green Lake, Wisconsin. I remember that moment very clearly as well as the next thought in my mind: “But, I am not going to be a pastor.”

Instead, I decided to go into youth ministry. But, wanting to make myself “marketable,” I chose a degree in Worship with a Youth Ministry concentration so I could be hired for more than one job at a single church. Brilliant, huh? In my senior year of college, it was recommended that a seminary degree would add to my marketability in ministry. After some skeptical consideration, I decided I would go for it. “But I am not getting a Masters of Divinity,” I said, “That is for pastors and I am not going to be a pastor.” “But, if you get a Masters of Divinity,” they argued, “you will have the same degree as the pastor.” That made sense, being young and female, already put me in a position where I can experience potential prejudice. So, I decided to pursue a Master of Divinity degree from Northern Seminary.

The whole time I was in seminary, I continued the same mantra: “I am not going to be a senior pastor.” Even during my preaching class, in which everyone told me what a gifted preacher I was, I continued to state clearly that I was not going to be a “pastor.” Even as I took a job as a Youth Pastor at a church in which most of the congregation was youth! I continued to say, “I will not be a pastor.” Talk about splitting hairs, when you are a youth pastor at a church where 70% of the congregation is youth...you ARE a pastor! “But I am not ordained,” I reasoned.

Then, I was asked to pursue ordination by the senior pastor at the church. I don’t remember his reasoning for it anymore or what it was that changed my mind. But finally I agreed. I would become an ordained minister...and I was a pastor... but I will NEVER be a Senior Pastor!

It was as I met with the Executive Minister of Metro-Chicago to discuss ordination that I heard words that still ring in my ears, “You know you are called to more than this, don’t you?” Even after I decided not to pursue ordination at that time because I was feeling called somewhere else, the words stuck with me. For the years I was not in paid church ministry, they kept being repeated in my heart.

Then, one spring day I met with Dr. Mike Williams at Northern Seminary and he told me about a position in a church in Midland, Michigan that seemed made for me. It was a chance to slowly transition into the role I SWORE I would never take. The same position I am in today.

So, why did I share this story? Was it just to display God's humor? or God's power? Either way, we all have a story to share.... We have times when God's words repeated within our hearts and we ignored. Or we have God's words and Spirit working within our lives which had such a profound impact that the experience may need to be shared. Your life experience may coincide with mine in that "Nope, I'm not doing it"...only to find yourself doing just what God had planned. Again, this needs to be shared. Others may need to hear your story to help them remove the word "nope." They may need your story to realize "I'm not the only one." This summer you have an opportunity to share your own story while I am on my sabbatical. (May 3, 10, 24- August 9) I know that for some of you the idea of doing so may cause a response a lot like I had to entering ministry ("No. Not going to do it. Nope!") But what if, like me, the thing that you are fighting is something that God is going to use to bless and help you grow?

These next few weeks I will be gathering names of those who are interested in sharing their story; please feel free to catch me on a Sunday, call the office, or email me in order to let me know. In addition, I will be asking people to consider this opportunity. I hope that YOU will each give serious consideration to sharing YOUR STORY this summer.

~Rev. Lara Escoffre

PRAYER PARTNERS

For those that grieve: The John Yuill family (Paul's dad)

For the health needs of many of our church family: Rayshell Anderson, Dan Brinker, Kathy Burch, David Hitchcock, Isabelle Mellon, Ruthie O'Dell, Nate Poland, Joyce Phillips, Bruce Rogers, Andrea Ross, Preston & Karolea Streeter, Marcia Williams, Bob Winchester

And the needs of loved ones: Acacia (Walter's granddaughter/infusions/surgery), Beth Coons (health), David & Susan Brown (missions), Ginger Coon/Carol Duncan (relatives of Skyler S. seizures/heart problems), Vaunda Gibson (E. Poindexter's sister), Lewis King (cancer/hopsice), Joe Mortensen, Olivia & Emma (preemie twins/great-granddaughters of Mary Lou Sperry), Tim Richard (leukemia), Lee Sperry, Tristan (granddaughter of John & Marcia Williams), Ben Schultz' mom (cancer)

And the needs of Friends: Arlie McMahon (heart attack), Lee Pastor (cancer), Fran Pepin's brother in law (cancer)

If you know of other folks in our church who need special prayer, please contact the church office by phone: 835-6731 or by email: office@midlandfbc.com.

Christian Education

“We strive to make disciples of Christ, at every stage of life, through intentional spiritual growth opportunities.”

Once again, as was stated last month, I begin with the Mission Statement for the C.E. Ministry Team. I do this because it is a statement we want our congregation to know, be able to repeat, and fully understand the importance. The team has been working together to offer new ministry opportunities to FBC with regards to discovering what it is our congregation needs to aid in their personal spiritual growth.

Our first focus will be offered on **Saturday, April 18 from 9:30AM–11:30AM.** where anyone who volunteers with our children and youth, teachers for children, youth and adults, and small group leaders are invited to attend. **If you are thinking of volunteering in some capacity, this training is for you!** The time will be divided in two: with the first portion to the training of keeping our children and youth safe from abuse, and the second half reviewing spiritual development and teaching methods. Again, the goal is to help enhance your teaching methods and spiritual growth as you teach and learn...all while keeping our children and youth safe in a loving and spiritually renewing environment. Please mark your calendars for this important event!

\$ 180.00

This is how much was gathered during the Youth Scholarship Luncheon. And so, I want to say “THANK YOU” for all those who attended the luncheon and offered a donation of your time in gathering the food, preparing, serving, setting and cleaning up and of course your monetary gift. This money will help defray the cost for many of the youth activities without the need to continue to ask for support for each individual event. **If you weren’t able to make the luncheon, but would like to offer a donation, please be sure to state "Youth Activity Fund" in the “memo” area of your check.** And again, THANK YOU for always being there for our youth. Your support is always appreciated.

In service together,
Karen Boucher on behalf of the Christian Education Team



April 12, 2020 - 8:00AM

Easter will soon be upon us. We are honored to continue the tradition of having the Seamster family provide an Easter morning breakfast at 8AM. **Each year the money that is donated at the breakfast is put toward Youth Activities for FBC Youth.**

The youth will be setting up breakfast on April 11. (The time for set-up has yet to be determined.) We will have Sunday morning service at the normal time of 9:30 am.

MISSIONS & MINISTRY CROP Walk 2019

Congratulations on the Midland CROP Hunger Walk making the Top 100 CROP Hunger Walks in the nation! Their hard work and dedication brought in an incredible \$34,640.15 to bring food to the hungry, clean water to the thirsty, sanitary bathrooms to families and communities, business opportunity and resources of hope in the midst of disaster and displacement.

Thank you to all who may have been part of this great effort!



Our Annual Spring Business Meeting will be held directly after service on Sunday, April 26, 2020

HARLOW FUND REQUESTS – 2020

Each year our church provides ministry grants from the Harlow Fund. The Mission and Ministry Team receives the requests and then prayerfully makes a recommendation to the congregation at the April business meeting.

The criteria used to grant requests :

- a. should be used in mission, service or seminary related projects
- b. should not be given to the same effort/project for multiple years (rather used as seed money for projects)
- c. should not be used for general fund purposes

The Missions and Ministry Team is inviting members to submit requests for grants with the information below:

1. include the name and address of the ministry, the sponsoring group or agency for the ministry and a brief description of the work of the ministry or organization - especially noting how the granted funds will be used
2. include the name of the person(s) making the request.

THE DEADLINE FOR REQUESTS IS APRIL 10!

Requests may be given to any member of the Missions Team (Cindy Wong, Beverly Babb, Janice Wallace, and Victor Atiem-Obeng) or you may email your request to Cindy Wong at cindyhkusa@gmail.com.

The congregation will make the final decision concerning Harlow Fund grants at the April business meeting.

MISSIONS & MINISTRY TEAM

The Missions and Ministry Team will be launching the Stop Hunger Food Drive during the months of March and April. FBC dates will be **Sunday, March 7- Sunday, April 26**. Any food item and monetary donation during March/April will be matched.

Here is a list of some of the EFPN needs:

Baking Supplies: Flour, Sugar, Salt, Cooking oil, Aluminum foil, Plastic wrap

Canned Meats: Ham, Chicken

Pantry Items: Canned Fruit, Coffee, Mayonnaise, Miracle Whip

Laundry / Dish detergent

Paper Supplies: Toilet Paper, Paper Towels, Kleenex

Personal Care Items: Toothpaste, Toothbrushes, Soap, Deodorant, Shampoo, Razors, Shaving cream





We'd like to send Warm Birthday & Anniversary Wishes

March BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Elaine Poindexter
- 4 Shawna Elmore
Tyler Steib
- 23 Ruth O'Dell
- 24 Bobbie Baker
- 26 Barb Neil
Preston Streeter
- 27 Nadine Collins
Mark Neil
- 29 Sheridan Seamster
- 31 David Pellegrom
Emersyn Seamster



March ANNIVERSARIES

- 23 Jim & Debbie Hitt
Chris & Michell Moe
- 30 Roland & Janice Wallace

April BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Gregg Clark
- 3 Lanny Robbins
Trevor Snoddy
- 5 Shirley Sevener
- 6 Devin Heise
- 10 Nolan Hitt
- 11 Isabelle Mellon
- 12 Hillary Hitt
- 14 Nate Poland
- 16 Ada Wong
- 19 Adrienne Wiley
- 21 Margie Seamster
- 22 Marcellous Rogers
- 24 Andrea Ross
- 25 Gary Gibson
Cheri King

April ANNIVERSARIES

No April Anniversaries

FBC Church Services and Functions may be Videotaped for Shut-in distribution and broadcast on MCTV. If you are interested in viewing our services, they will be broadcast on Charter Cable MCTV digital box Channel 191 on Wednesdays at 5:30PM and on Thursdays at 2:00PM. Church services in video format may also be viewed at <http://www.awincom.com/church-movies/>

April-May Newsletter deadline is April 10.