



**February 15 - March 15, 2021**

## **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.

**DUE TO RECENT COVID  
RESTRICTIONS**

**OUR OFFICE IS ONLY OPEN VIA  
APPOINTMENT**

**Please contact the Office via phone or email.  
Office: 989-835-6731**

**Email: [Office@midlandfbc.com](mailto:Office@midlandfbc.com)**

**Someone from our office will get back to you.**

## LETTER FROM PASTOR

In Jeremiah 29:11, the prophet declares: “For surely I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord, “plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” These words, as we have learned these past few weeks through our current sermon series, were spoken during a time of great upheaval in the history of God’s people: the Exile. Life was turned upside down in Judah, as the nation struggled to understand how to be God’s chosen people in the chaos. To deal with the turmoil, people looked to the heavens and asked “When will this be over?”

This is a perspective which has become all too familiar to us in this last year. We, too, live in a world turned upside-down. We, too, are people questioning what it means for us to act out our role as God’s people in this time. We, too, are experiencing a period of uncertainty, and we are left wondering when it will end.

As we have ventured through Jeremiah’s writings this past month, and as we have come to understand that, even during the chaos of the Exile, God was still on the move, we have been challenged to see the same is true today! Despite the outward circumstances, our congregation, as we have heard, has been blessed. We have experienced financial stability, continued to worship and study together, have grown together by the telling and hearing of one another’s stories, and we have provided support for one another through this difficult time!

But as we learned from that very passage in Jeremiah which I began with, Jeremiah 29:11, as God’s people we cannot wait for the world to “go back to normal,” in order to resume our task of being a church where: “Every person matters, and relationships with God and neighbors grow.” Yet, at the same time, we should not be too quick to return to our previous methods of how we live this out. In many ways, 2020 has wiped the slate clean. While we have continued to strive to “live the life that Jesus would live...” through worship and study, the methods we have used to do that have had to change, adding streaming capabilities to our Sunday morning worship and Sunday school times. We have continued to seek connections with our community, not only through physical events like the Ice Cream Social, but also have started to recognize Facebook as a platform for reaching the community of Midland and those around the world! While we have continued to care for one another, our understanding of what it means to be present together has had to grow to include telephone calls and fellowship times online.

Uncertain as to what 2021 holds for FBC, with both the promise of vaccines and the new strains of coronavirus, I invite us to lean on our learnings of this past year and from this series on Jeremiah for strength and direction as we

face whatever may come. While this year may hold more challenges, it also holds opportunity for transformation. As I said last week, it is times such as this (when we feel like we are in exile or in the wilderness) that God often transforms us to advance His great kingdom work.

Transformation though, as we see in Jeremiah, does not necessarily mean scrapping everything that was. Instead, it is just as much a return to God's purposes and intentions for His people, as the creation of something new. So this year, let us return to who it is we know God has called us to be "FBC: Where every person matters and relationships with God and neighbors grow." How can we show one another and our neighbors that they matter right now? How can we grow in our relationships? How do we grow in our faith?

In some ways, we already know the answers. We have committed, in our "What We Do statement" that growth happens in worship and study. We show one another that each person matters, within the community of First Baptist and outside, through intentional service and care.

The methods and ways we do these things may need to change considering the impact of COVID on our world. We may need to invest in different places. We may even need to be open to having our perspectives challenged.

So, I invite you to join the Missions Team is thinking and praying about how to make connections with our community in this time. I invite you to join the Congregational Care team in thinking and praying about how to best care for those within our body. I invite you to pray and dream with the Christian Education team as they discern what areas of study will help us move forward as a church to the goal we have set for ourselves to grow in our relationship with God. I invite you to pray for our new leader who we will hire to join us in this task, and lead us in worship of our Lord.

Prayer and dreaming are important aspects of service to our church body. But, as a church who has committed to "valuing and loving one another through service" I want to invite you to also pray about where it is that God is calling you to serve in this time. Perhaps you have a heart for offering other members a listening ear in this time. Maybe you have a dream or a vision of how we can better make connections in the community. Maybe you do not have the time, but you have the space available to offer to our new Youth/Music person to live OR you feel led to help lessen that financial gap we will face in hiring the person. Now is the time to invest in the future of our congregation.

We may not know what our future holds as a church, but we do know who holds our future. Our history includes hard times and good, new beginnings and celebrated endings. God is not done with FBC, the next chapter of our life is just beginning. Let us write it together!

~Rev. Lara Escoffre

## **PRAYER PARTNERS**

**For the health needs of many of our church family:** Joyce Cook's family (Rena Walker & family)

**For the health needs of many of our church family:** Gale Bradish (kidney cancer), Sarah Freeburg (quarantine), Grayson Kobel (surgery), Pat McCourt (recovery-strength, recovery, healing), Elaine Poindexter (fractured vertebrae/in-patient therapy/Stratford), Tansley Rogers, Mary Lou Sperry (mini-stroke/recovery), Karolea Streeter (insulin treatment), Rena Walker (job opportunity), Marcia Williams (migraines)

**And the needs of loved ones:**

Karen Boucher's Mom (congestive heart failure) & Karen's brother & sister-in-law, Tanya Gillespie (struggle w/addiction - prayers for God's help in remaining clean), Hunter Grove (nephew of Ruth Pangborn-aggressive cancer treatment), Kristy (Jim Kent's daughter-brain bleed), Julia Page (healing of back, elbow, knee), Sara (friend of Andrea Snoddy – aggressive cancer/chemo treatment)

**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](mailto:office@midlandfbc.com).



**CHRISTIAN  
EDUCATION**

The C.E. Ministry Team will continue to wait on offering in-person Sunday School until further information can be gathered. The youth meet on Wednesday's nights, and adults meet on Wednesdays and Fridays via Zoom.

**ZOOM Link - Wednesdays @ 4:00PM**

Sunday School w/Mark Neil & Karen Walker-Freeburg:

**ZOOM Link - Fridays @ 1:30PM**

Sunday School w/Pastor Lara Escoffre

~Karen Boucher

**FROM THE DESK OF KAREN BOUCHER**

In 1988, I was hit by a car crossing the road. I remember the date, October 7; I remember the color of the car, blue; and I remember looking at the woman driving through the windshield as I lay on the hood waiting for her to stop. She did, eventually, after tossing me about 8 – 10 feet. I suffered a concussion, an injury to my neck, lower back, and a crack in my hip. Because of these injuries the doctors told me that I would suffer some serious arthritic pain and need a new hip “in about 20 years.” Well, it’s been over 30 years now and my body is saying “no more.”

I share this with you because it is one of the reasons I am stepping back from my responsibilities here at First Baptist. My heart and soul remain in youth ministry, but my body is not cooperating at this time. I began youth ministry in 1982 and have loved everything about it, the many hours of teaching, the mission trips, the fellowship events, the many “all-nighters” that weren’t scheduled, and the nights of no sleep while playing games and sardines in the church building. My passion is with children and youth and watching them mature in their lives and in their faith is an incredible privilege to see. Honestly, there is nothing better than watching a young person loving and worshipping Jesus, NOTHING BETTER!

The second reason for my decision is my role as a Hospice Chaplain. The company has given me additional responsibilities in teaching which has added to my workload. As you may know, I love to teach and have a passion, too, for working in hospice care. I simply had to make a decision, although not an easy one.

My hope is to continue to teach and help mentor the next youth pastor. We have wonderful kids, and I simply want what is best for them in this most important time in their lives. I want someone who can give 100% of their spirit and body. I want someone to get excited when knowing they get to spend the weekend on a bunkbed, with no headroom, and a bathroom not in the cabin. Or having to spend an entire week at camp, or painting a house or raking leaves for a mission experience. I was there, wanting and loving it all, but now I believe it’s time to pass the baton and move aside and allow someone else to lead.

I do not have a set date on leaving my position and will continue to offer ministry to our youth until a new pastor is hired. I’m excited to see what God has in store for not only our youth but for First Baptist as we step forward in faith.

Rev. Dr. Karen Boucher

## **JANUARY & FEBRUARY YOUTH SCHEDULE**

**ZOOM MEETINGS - WEDNESDAYS  
7:00 - 8:00 PM**

Youth will continue to meet every Wednesday, via ZOOM, from 7:00 to 8:00PM

**Topic: Wednesday Youth Group Meetings w/Karen @ 7:00PM**  
Time: January 20, 2021 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

**Join Zoom Meeting**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89719583650>**

Meeting ID: 897 1958 3650

**Passcode: 975271**

**One tap mobile**

+19292056099,,89719583650#,,,,,0#,,975271# US (New York)

+13017158592,,89719583650#,,,,,0#,,975271# US (Washington D.C)

**Dial by your location**

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

Meeting ID: 897 1958 3650

**Passcode: 975271**

**GARDEN COMMITTEE MEMBERS NEEDED**

**Volunteers Needed - Committee to redesign Rose Garden space**

The current Rose Garden is requiring more maintenance than what the church can provide and many of the rose bushes are coming to the end of their life. As a result, the time is now to redesign the space to still serve as the church garden but take on a different look and be one that requires much less maintenance.

**Volunteers are not committing to do the physical work but committing to develop a plan** along with costs to present to Property Management and Team Network. If accepted, the committee may oversee the implementation of our plan.

**How many volunteers - We need four to five more people.** Rhonda Vance will lead the team and Jo Clarke will serve as a consultant and ad hoc team member. We will meet 1-2 times a month via zoom or phone (till COVID over) to brainstorm ideas and develop a final plan. All ideas are welcome!

**Please consider volunteering for this committee by contacting Rhonda Vance** via email, phone or text: [Rhondavance2018@gmail.com](mailto:Rhondavance2018@gmail.com); or by calling or texting 989-859-7651.

Remember that there is time for every event under the heavens.....

**FBC LIBRARY** – Did you know there is a library here at FBC? It is located In the Media Room in the lower level of the South Wing. There are both resource, nonfiction and fiction books available to be checked out by our congregation. In addition, there is a smaller children’s library upstairs in Room 7 also in the South Wing. Please remember to return borrowed books when you're finished with it.

**LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES** – There are two Little Free Libraries on the lawn of the church. Help is needed to provide books for both structures. You probably were aware of the first one, but we have been honored to have a second Little Free Library provided as an Eagle Scout project. Please, we do need assistance in providing books for both structures.

Simply bring in some unused books you may have, that are in good condition, and they will be put to use...check your bookshelves at home for books you've outgrown or no longer have an interest in that others may wish to read. **Share your love of reading by passing it on!** (Remember the main audience are school-age children or youth.)

**MISSION & MINISTRY**

## **BIRTHDAY KITS - EFPN**

During the month of March, the M&M Team is sponsoring a "Birthday Kit" donation drive for the food pantry. These kits will enable families in need a way to celebrate a birthday safely and stress free.

Each kit should include: cake mix, frosting, candles, paper plates, napkins and gift bag for items. If you are unable to shop for a kit, monetary donations may also be given to First Baptist Church, please note on the memo line Food Pantry.

Thank you for supporting our Emergency Food Pantry Network!

Janice Wallace, on behalf of M&M Team

## **AMERICA FOR CHRIST**

The Mission Ministry team is uplifting the America for Christ from now through the end of March. The theme for the AFC 2021 Offering is "For the Purpose of Equipping Saints" based on Ephesians 4:11-13: "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry". Our target is \$2,000, please give generously.

### **How can I support AFC 2021?**

You can send a check to church with a note specially for AFC.

### **How is my gift making a difference?**

Your generous AFC gifts support our mission—connecting our partners to cultivate leaders and equip disciples who bring healing and transformation to communities across our nation and Puerto Rico.

### **Your contributions share God's love by:**

- Cultivating Leaders — Strong leaders advance the mission of faith communities.
- Equipping Disciples — Broadening the understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.
- Healing Communities — We believe the power of Christian love can—and will—change the world.

### **How is the AFC Offering used?**

**The offering is distributed in three parts:**

- 59% supports the ministries of ABHMS;
- 12% supports the offering's promotional and deputation costs and
- 29% supports regional ministries. (ABHMS is the only mission board to share its offering with American Baptist Churches USA regions.)

For more testimonials stories and references, please see link here

- <https://abhms.org/support/give/where/afc/>



**We'd like to send Warm Birthday & Anniversary Wishes**

**February BIRTHDAYS**

- 1 Jeff Richards
- 2 John Holmes
- 10 Thomas Johnstone
- 12 Thayer Bradish
- 14 Alan Clark
- 18 Sharon Houghton-Ross  
Emily Richards  
True Rogers
- 20 Marci Rogers
- 25 Rena Walker
- 26 Kelly Bishop Kloha
- 27 Corinne Bishop
- 28 Louise Bergman

**March BIRTHDAYS**

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



**March ANNIVERSARIES**

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

**February ANNIVERSARIES**

- 7 Dave & Mary Beth (Bunny) Mitchell
- 15 Thomas & Margie Seamster



## **CALENDAR - 2021**

### **Regular Schedule**

**Sundays** 9:15 AM  
**10:00 AM**  
**Mondays** 6:30 PM  
**Tuesdays** 5:30 PM  
 6:30 PM  
**Wednesdays** 9:30 AM  
 4:00 PM  
 7:00 PM  
 7:00 PM  
**Fridays** 1:30 PM  
**Saturdays** 9AM-2PM

### **ABIDING SCRIPTURES**

**FEBRUARY - ISAIAH 31:31-40**  
**MARCH - ROMANS 9:30-10:13**

Pre-Worship Zoom Fellowship Time  
**Worship Service - Communion Service is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month**  
**Team Network Mtg - Media Rm - 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday**  
**Stewardship & Finance Meeting - 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday**  
**Property Management Meeting - Media Rm - 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday**  
**Facebook Prayer Time & Sunday School w/Allen Ross**  
**Sunday School on Zoom w/Mark Neil & Karen Walker-Freeburg**  
**Youth Zoom Meetings w/Karen Boucher**  
**Enhanced Spiritual Care (Stephen Min.) - Media Rm - 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday**  
**Sunday School on Zoom w/Pastor Lara - details/date to come**  
**FBC Serves at Open Door - 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Special Event</b>
<b>Feb 21 (Sun) -</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> <b>11:30 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service - In-Person, &amp; Zoom &amp; Facebook Live</b> <b>Youth Activity - Hearthside Room</b>
<b>Feb 24 (Wed) -</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	<b>Prayer Time &amp; SS w/Allen Ross</b>
<b>Feb 28 (Sun) -</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service - In-Person, &amp; Zoom &amp; Facebook Live</b>
<b>Mar 3 (Wed) -</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	<b>Prayer Time &amp; SS w/Allen Ross</b>
<b>Mar 7 (Sun) -</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service - In-Person, &amp; Zoom &amp; Facebook Live</b>
<b>Mar 10 (Wed) -</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	<b>Prayer Time &amp; SS w/Allen Ross</b>
<b>Mar 14 (Sun) -</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> <b>11:00 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service - In-Person, &amp; Zoom &amp; Facebook Live</b> <b>Annual Business Meeting</b>
<b>Mar 17 (Wed) -</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	<b>Prayer Time &amp; SS w/Allen Ross</b>
<b>Mar 21 (Sun) -</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service - In-Person, &amp; Zoom &amp; Facebook Live</b>
<b>Mar 24 (Wed) -</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	<b>Prayer Time &amp; SS w/Allen Ross</b>
<b>Mar 28 (Sun) -</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service - In-Person, &amp; Zoom &amp; Facebook Live</b>



**Dear friends, family, and partners:** We thank you for the lovely pile of Christmas cards we received here in our new home, and some forwarded to us. We are basically settled after our move, and have unpacked and gotten back to work. Please note our new address so we don't miss anything from anyone:

Chaz & Helga Mortensen, 6334 Marlow Street, Portage, MI 49024

Thanks to your partnership in our ministry - prayers, friendship, financial gifts - we are working through this time of pandemic. As this time continues longer than any of us expected, we are glad to have office space and improved technology that helps us continue to work.

ZOOM - meetings, workshops, Hebrew class, meetings, mentor training, consultant training, meetings, Bible studies, team check-ins, meetings, you get the drift. This is our life and our ministry, and Bible translation continues. Tomorrow Chaz begins **two weeks of consulting with three translation teams in Guatemala**. They will be working on the Gospel of Mark. Normally Chaz would be traveling to Guatemala this weekend and spending these two weeks face to face. Instead, the teams stay home and Zoom for hours every day. Yes, it is much cheaper done this way, but the physical presence is sorely missed. Please pray for good health, functioning technology, and clear thinking and harmony for everyone. And pray for sanity for Chaz, who is also continuing Hebrew studies during this time of consulting.

Thank you for ministering with us!

***Chaz & Helga Mortensen***

**Dear FBC:** Thank you so much for the generous donation of \$2,400 to be used for the cleft palate and lip program. Due to your donation, we are able to provide more children with not only the resources, but the financial assistance they need to be able to get surgery.

These surgeries are life changing, not only to the child but to the whole family.

Again, thank you very much for your generous donation from the Partners in Development staff both here in the USA and in Guatemala.

Sincerely, Falitha Marcelin, Assistant Director

**Dear First Baptist Family: Thank you for encouraging me, challenging me, and believing in me. It means a lot to have your support!**

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for anyone who sent cards to cheer me up and to let me know I wasn't alone. Thank you for all the prayers for me and my family...it made a big difference. Thank you for the roomba that makes Chuck's life easier. Thank you for the meals...it was appreciated. Thank you for those that came and sat with me so Chuck could have a respite. Thank you for being my wonderful CHurch family. Love You ALL so much!

~Pat McCourt (BTW: Pat had sent this note PRIOR to receiving the beautiful quilt made below. Thank you to ALL who participated in this quilt!)



**March-April Newsletter deadline is March 11.**



First Baptist Church

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