



**March 15 - April 15, 2021**

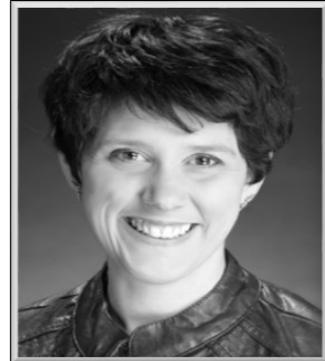
## **First Things**

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 PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS**

**Our Office is only open by  
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

As part of my routine, I spend about an hour at the gym running, lifting weights, and practicing TaeKwonDo six days a week. One would think that since I work out so often, it would be easy for me. Let me tell you, it is not! There are so many days that I have to convince myself to get through my workout with a promise that it will be worth it when I finish.

For the past month, I think Rev. Dr. Karen Boucher and Ceonni Williams have had a similar feeling in regard to the sermon series I have been preaching on Jeremiah, "We know this will be worth it! But we wish this were over!" Why the "complaints"? The answer is, this series has been filled with stories and issues which, at first glance, can be hard to fit into a hymn or a children's story. (But, they did a great job!) After all, the passages we have look at have included: bloody battles, harsh consequences, and even mutilation!

While Jeremiah can be difficult to read and preach through, it also lays an incredible foundation for what God is going to do in Christ. The prophet Jeremiah not only promises that God is going to do a "new thing," he also "holds a mirror" to Israel in order to show them how their behavior and ways of thinking had been holding them back from living into God's plan for them.

This is where we can get stuck. It is clear that God had a plan for Israel in the Old Testament and it is clear that God is doing something new in the New Testament. We don't always understand how those two are connected. Take for instance, the idea presented in worship this past Sunday; that of Israel's election as God's chosen people. We might wonder: how are these two connected? How Jesus' life and death impact Israel's relationship with God and how we fit into the picture as Christians?

This lack of clarity has made it hard for us to tell God's Gospel story (the story from Genesis to Revelation). But more so, it can leave us with questions about God's plan for humanity. Did God just "do away" with His promise to Abraham's descendants? If not, what do I do with it as a non-Jew? These questions can leave us feeling like God's story is disjointed and wondering if perhaps God could possibly change again, this time leaving my fellow Christians and myself outside His good graces. (Which is exactly the argument of the Islamic faith, who argue that Christians "got it wrong" and that Muhammad set things right.)

My hope is that in this series on Jeremiah, the truth of how Jesus' coming fit into and fulfilled what the prophesied started to become clearer as we explored God's covenant Abraham, the consequences of Israel breaking that covenant, God's grace in offering redemption, and God's promise to honor that commitment in the future. This of course, also laid a foundation to gain a better

understanding of the importance of the titles we often impart on Jesus around Easter: messiah and king.

But it is my conviction that we have only scratched the surface of a topic which I believe is vital for our lives as Christians. It is my personal belief that we can get a greater appreciation for Jesus ministry on earth, His sacrifice, and our lives as His followers when we see His life and teachings in light of His Jewish roots and God's story. That is why after Easter we are going to begin a new series called "Out of Exile: Seeing the Gospels through Jesus' Jewish Roots."

My hope is that this series will help us grasp the gospels and the Gospel (meaning God's story) in a revived and powerful way, and right when that is exactly what we need! With the rising number of individuals being vaccinated, the number of new COVID cases shrinking, and restrictions being lifted, the time is coming when our world will be "opening back up." This then, is a time of preparation when we should be looking for how we will share the good news of Jesus with the world. It is my hope that this series will help us that grow, not only in our understanding and but in our passion around God's incredible story! A story which the Gospels are the crux and fulfillment of! When we see the gospels through those lenses, Jesus ministry and His impact on the world becomes so clear!

I hope that you will join me, starting April 18, as we take a look at Jesus' narrative through the lenses of the whole of God's story. May our eyes and hearts be open to a renewed passion for our Lord as we look upon His ministry with fresh eyes. For His glory now and forever, Amen!

~Rev. Lara Escoffre

## **PRAYER PARTNERS**

**For those that Grieve:** Joyce Cook's family (Rena Walker & family)

**For the health needs of many of our church family:** Gale Bradish (kidney cancer), Kelly Bishop Kloha (cancer), Pat McCourt (recovery-strength, recovery, healing), Elaine Poindexter (fractured vertebrae/in-patient therapy/hospital or Stratford), Tansley Rogers, Karolea Streeter (insulin treatment), Rena Walker (job opportunity), Marcia Williams (migraines)

**And the needs of loved ones:** Tanya Gillespie (struggle w/addiction - prayers for God's help in remaining clean), Hunter Grove (nephew of Ruth Pangborn-aggressive cancer treatment), Kevin Cuthbertson (cancer/surgery/chemo), Kristy (Jim Kent's daughter-brain aneurism), Julia Page (healing of back, elbow, knee), Sara (friend of Andrea Snoddy – aggressive cancer/chemo treatment), Janis Smith's daughter Tia (pregnancy)

**Contact Info for Preston & Karolea Streeter:** Florida Landline: 813-783-8688 - Cell: 989-600-6815, Address: 6053 Alpine Rd, Green Hills Estates, Zephyrhills, FL 33542

**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.

There are online Sunday School classes offered Wednesdays @ 4:00PM w/Mark Neil & Karen Walker-Freeburg and on Fridays @ 1:30PM w/Pastor Lara. Contact the church office if you'd like details on how to join.

### **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.



## CONGREGATIONAL CARE

*Serving with Love*



### SHUT-INS

Consider calling one of our Shut-Ins...

**Joyce Phillips** 989-832-2940  
40 Rosemary Court, Midland, MI 48640

**Ruthie O'Dell** 989-259-7303  
Brookdale Assisted Living, 4004 Waldo Ave, Midland 48642

**Bruce Rogers** 989-878-1844  
Colonial Villa, 5007 Universal Dr, Midland, MI 48640

**Shirley Sevener** 989-832-3010  
4815 Russell St, Midland, MI 48640



## Holy Week is Coming

Is Lent a special time in your faith walk?

Looking for more meaning as we approach Holy Week and Easter?

You'll soon be receiving a special Lenten Bag, prepared by Christian Education Team, and delivered to your home (if you live locally). It includes daily scripture, music, and activities to help prepare your heart for Easter!

Deliveries are planned for Saturday, March 27, just in time for the first day of Holy Week, Palm Sunday.

## MISSION & MINISTRY

**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/>

**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



We'd like to send Warm Birthday & Anniversary Wishes

### 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

### April BIRTHDAYS

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



### March ANNIVERSARIES

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

### April ANNIVERSARIES

None

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## MARCH & APRIL YOUTH SCHEDULE

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



**CALENDAR - 2021**

**Regular Schedule**

**ABIDING SCRIPTURES**

**MARCH - ROMANS 9:30-10:13**

**APRIL - JOHN 20:1-18**

<b>Sundays</b>	9:15 AM	Pre-Worship Zoom Fellowship Time
	<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>Worship Service - Communion Service is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of each month</b>
<b>Mondays</b>	6:30 PM	<b>Team Network Mtg-Media Rm - 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday</b>
<b>Tuesdays</b>	5:30 PM	<b>Stewardship &amp; Finance Meeting - 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday</b>
	6:30 PM	<b>Property Management Meeting - Media Rm - 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday</b>
<b>Wednesdays</b>	9:30 AM	<b>Facebook Prayer Time &amp; Sunday School w/Allen Ross</b>
	4:00 PM	<b>Sunday School on Zoom w/M. Neil &amp; K. Walker-Freeburg (No class 3/31 or 4/7)</b>
	7:00 PM	<b>Youth Zoom Meetings w/Karen Boucher</b>
	7:00 PM	<b>Enhanced Spiritual Care (Stephen Min.) - Media Rm - 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday</b>
<b>Fridays</b>	1:30 PM	<b>Sunday School on Zoom w/Pastor Lara - details/date to come (No class 4/2 or 4/9)</b>
<b>Saturdays</b>	9AM-2PM	<b>FBC Serves at Open Door - 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday</b>

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Special Event</u>
Mar 21 (Sun) –	10:00 AM 11:30 AM	Worship Service – In-Person, & Zoom & Facebook Live Youth Activity - Hearthside Room
Mar 28 (Sun) –	10:00 AM	<b>PALM SUNDAY Service</b> – In-Person, & Zoom & Facebook Live
Apr 1 (Thur) –	7:00 PM	<b>MAUNDY Thursday Service</b> in the Sanctuary
Apr 4 (Sun) –	10:00 AM	<b>EASTER Service</b> – In-Person, & Zoom & Facebook Live
Apr 11 (Sun) –	10:00 AM	<b>BVTC Service</b> – In-Person, & Zoom & Facebook Live (Special Guests)
Apr 18 (Sun) –	10:00 AM	Worship Service – In-Person, & Zoom & Facebook Live
Apr 25 (Sun) –	10:00 AM	Worship Service – In-Person, & Zoom & Facebook Live Celebration of <u>Ceanni's</u> Ministry

Office is Closed except by Appointment - Call or Email the Office for appointments.

Pastor Lara will be On Vacation March 29 - April 1. (Lois Crosby is On-Call for Pastoral Emergencies)

Shelley Page will be on vacation for her son's wedding and father-in-law's surgery April 5-16.

