



125 Sedgefield Street
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA 24201

THE FIRST WORD

April 2024

First Baptist Family,

Sometimes it's good to catch your breath. That's largely what we're doing in April. After an incredibly busy March and what's shaping up to be a very busy May, things are intentionally a little slower this month. That slower pace gives us some time to reflect on what we've done, plan for what's next, and try some new things to see what sticks. And that's exactly what I want us to do together.

First, March was a great month in the life of the church. We ate some good food and had some wonderful fellowship with both our church-wide breakfast on March 3 and with the Youth Spaghetti Luncheon and Bake Sale Auction on March 10. The Bake Sale Auction, in particular, was great! Not only did we raise nearly \$6,000 for a great cause, youth missions, but people had a blast, too. I had one church member text me the day after the Bake Sale and write, "If church was always as fun as yesterday, I'd attend 7 days a week!" If you weren't able to make it to our Youth Fundraiser, you missed out. You also missed hearing a powerful testimony and inspiring message in worship that day from our friends and missionaries to Ukraine, Gennady and Mina Podgaisky. Like I mentioned that Sunday, Gennady and Mina have chosen what is good rather than what is safe, and their work inspires us to do the same. March also saw Clary and me finish up our Marriage Enrichment Study, which while lightly attended, was good. And, of course, I certainly can't forget about Holy Week and all of our festivities. Our children captivated our attention waving palm branches on Palm Sunday. Our Maundy Thursday Drop-In Communion Service and Good Friday Tenebrae Service reminded us of the sacrifice that Christ made out of love on our behalf. Our Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 30 allowed us to both celebrate and minister to the children and young families of this community. Ben and Emma did a great job with that event! And finally, Easter Sunday was especially powerful and moving. We started out the day with our annual sunrise service in East Hill Cemetery. We were joined again by our friends from First Presbyterian Church, and this year we were joined by our friends from Lee Street Baptist Church, too. It is my hope that our annual ecumenical sunrise service continues to grow and be interracial.

March was a very good month for us to worship together, fellowship together, and do life together as a church, and I'm excited that we will continue that work, at an albeit slower pace, in April. **In April, we're going to be finishing up our Wednesday Night series on the 10 Commandments and moving to a study on the Johannine Epistles (1, 2, and 3 John).** The idea is that we will move from learning more about the commandments to seeing how to better put them into prac-

tice. **We'll also be having our FBB 101 class again in April. We'll meet for 3 weeks during the Sunday School hour (9:45 AM) in Rosser Hall on April 7, 14, and 21. If you are a new member, a frequent visitor, or if you're a long time member who would like to learn more about the church, I invite you to join me as we look at what it means to be Baptist and the kind of Baptists we are here at FBB, the organization and structure of the church, and ways in which you can get more involved in the life of the church.** I'll be leading FBB 101 the first month of each quarter, so even if you miss a session, you can join us again in July. **Additionally, I'm starting a new online Bible study/devotional in the month of April. The goal is for this study to be roughly 10-15 minutes. It will be posted on the church Facebook page on Thursdays during the months of April and May, and the first study will be on Paul's letter to the Philippians.** This, along with our new promotional materials and visitors' bags, is an attempt to reach new people, and it's a way to meet people where they are. It's also a way in which you can help. If you're on Facebook, like and share the new Bible study. Tell your friends about it, particularly those who are looking for a church. Then, invite them to join you on Sunday morning or Wednesday night.

Finally, we're planning for what's next, and May is shaping up to be a busy month. **On Sunday, May 5, we're going to recognize our graduates, so if you know of someone who is graduating, please let Terri and Niki know in the church office. Then, on Sunday, May 12, Mother's Day, we're going to have a Children's Sunday, in which our children will lead us in worship again this year. Emma Vance will be preaching for us that Sunday, too.** Good things are happening here at First Baptist Bristol, good things that you'll want to be a part of and invite people to – so I encourage you to do just that. You'll be glad that you did.

As always, it is a joy to be your pastor.

Grace and Peace,

Kris

First Baptist Church has a rich heritage in the heart of downtown Bristol, Virginia. Three years after the establishment of the town of Bristol and three years after the first passenger train arrived in Bristol a Baptist church was organized and has now existed for 165 years. The hope is First Baptist Bristol will remain a vibrant church for years to come.

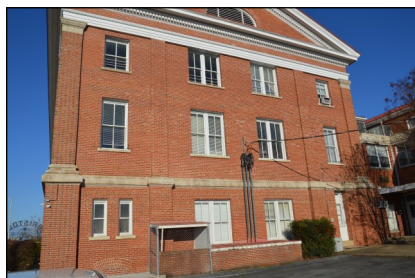
The exterior of the Sanctuary building is in need of restoration and repairs. Over the past few years, the leaders of the church along with congregants, have been discussing this project and seeking contractors with the expertise to perform the highest quality work and maintain the historical accuracy of the building.

An ad hoc committee was appointed by the Board of Administration to oversee the project. The members include: **Kris Aaron, Mike Browder, Jeff Burnette, Leroy Doran, Nelson Gwaltney, Debbie Gwaltney, Tom Makres, Michael Warren, and Terri Thomas.** The committee invites all questions, concerns, and input from you the congregation.

The project has an estimated cost of \$176,000. A bequest from Regina Walters will provide \$50,000 of the project, an additional \$16,000 was designated in gifts from donors. The Bristol First Baptist Foundation will donate \$66,000 and provide a loan in the amount \$40,000 to ensure the completion of this project. If members of the congregation would like to donate to the restoration in a form of a gift over and above their budget giving, this will offset the amount of monies loaned by the Foundation. Gifts can be designated by marking FBC Building Fund in the memo of your gift.

The committee plans to finalize the scope of work in the next few weeks. A series of congregational meetings to answer questions or provide additional information will be scheduled. Hopefully, a congregational vote on the project will ensue on Sunday, April 28, 2024 at the next Business Meeting. Work could begin late spring of 2024 and finish by the summer of this year.

What can you do? Take a walk outside around the sanctuary building when you are at the church next time. Look at the windows and see the raw wood exposed, the cracked and chipped paint, and the glazing that is cracked and or missing. Be in prayer for the committee that the decisions made are in the best interest of First Baptist, consider giving a gift to the project, and make plans to attend an informational meeting.



Notes...from Leigh

We have “sprung” into Spring! I don’t know about you, but I am enjoying the longer days and warmer weather! Thank you for your continued faithfulness through the Lenten and Easter season. We enjoyed some very meaningful worship services together.

The book study group that I facilitate on Wednesdays has been reading a book entitled: *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*. We have had some great discussions on spiritual gifts, intimacy with God and His extravagant love, serving, and grace. The conversation, the time of sharing, the openness to learning and listening – it is all so inspiring and uplifting. Please let me encourage you to join a small group or two – there are lots of options (Sunday School, Prayer time, Monday book study, Wednesday nights). Being a part of a small group is the best way to get to know one another and to find a place to serve.

Finally, I want to report that we have 6 adults who have committed to our summer mission trip to Folly Beach, SC. I am so excited! I will be sharing more information in the near future about the work that we will be doing and ways that you can be involved – that’s right – you aren’t just “sending” us, we are all going *on mission* together!

What a blessing to serve our Lord and King together in this place. If you feel the same, tell others and invite them to join us!

Blessings,
Leigh



A People’s History of Christianity: the Other Side of the Story by Diana Butler Bass, historian and religion expert.

An excerpt from her introduction: “From Constantine to Christendom to the Christian Right, ‘after Jesus’ can be remarkably depressing for thoughtful and sensitive souls. This dismal historical record surely was not what Jesus intended as he preached a merciful kingdom based on the transformative power of God’s love.” Encountering stories of people of faith like John Newton led Bass to the academic study of church history, and then when teaching, she discovered that for vast numbers of people history has ceased to exist. Thus, she states, “We inhabit a post-traditional world.” Her book is about memory found and the ways in which Christian history tethers contemporary faith to ancient wisdom.



Our Quarterly Business Meeting

will be held at 12 p.m. on Sunday, April 28, in the sanctuary following morning service. According to our church’s by-laws, chairs of teams and boards are asked to give a quarterly report of the group’s activities. The report can be either written or oral. If the report is written, please give a copy to the church office so copies can be made for the membership. Please submit the report no later than Wednesday, April 19. The information you share will be helpful in keeping the membership informed of what is happening in our church.

Sunday, May 05, 2024,
Family Breakfast
Rosser Hall

9:00 a.m.

There will be a full or partial breakfast available at no charge.


So, come and enjoy a meal and some fellowship before heading off to Sunday School.

First Baptist Church of Bristol Staff

Dr. Kris Aaron.....Senior Pastor
 Rev. Ben Ondrak.....Associate Pastor
 Rev. Leigh Clark.....Minister of Music
 Mrs. Jackie Burnette.....Pianist
 Mrs. Andrea PenningtonOrganist

Ms. Marcine Robinette.....Parish Nurse
 Mrs. Emma Vance.....Ministry Asst. for Children
 Ms. Terri Thomas Church Administrator
 and Financial Secretary
 Ms. Niki Judy..... Administrative Assistant



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Website: www.fbcbristol.org
 You can also find us on
 Facebook. 



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

125 Sedgefield Street
 Bristol, VA 24201

Deacon of the Week for April

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|----------------|--------------|
| April 07, 2024 | Gene Eller |
| April 14, 2024 | Nancy Hyde |
| April 21, 2024 | Linda Pruner |
| April 28, 2024 | Chris Tipton |

April FBC Minister On-Call Schedule

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| April 06 & 07 | Rev. Ben Ondrak | (423) 217-8934 |
| April 13 & 14 | Dr. Kris Aaron | (803) 225-0795 |
| April 20 & 21 | Rev. Ben Ondrak | (423) 217-8934 |
| April 27 & 28 | Dr. Kris Aaron | (803) 225-0795 |