



125 Sedgefield Street  
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA 24201

## THE FIRST WORD

March 2023

First Baptist Family,

Now that we've had our Fat Tuesday/Shrove Tuesday pancake supper and Ash Wednesday service, we've officially entered the Lenten season, and we have a few events planned this month that I believe will help make your Lent even more meaningful. **First, on Sunday, March 12, we're going to be joined in worship by our friend, Jessica Hearne.** As I'm sure you remember, Jessica is a CBF missionary serving in Danville, Virginia. Jessica and her husband, Josh, joined us via Zoom on a Wednesday night in June 2021. And then last year, Jessica joined us in worship, where she preached and updated us on the good work she's doing in building community while addressing housing and food insecurity in Danville. I know that you'll want to hear an update from her just like I do, so I hope that you will join us on the 12th.

In the latter part of March, we'll have two events on back-to-back nights, events that I know you don't want to miss. **On Monday, March 27 at 7 PM, we'll host composer Lucas Richman, who will speak about his "Paths to Dignity" concerto as part of the King Institute for Faith and Culture lecture series.** That lecture will be in the sanctuary. **Then, on Tuesday, March 28 at 6:30 PM, Richman's "Paths to Dignity" concerto will be performed in the sanctuary as a free concert for the entire community. The concert is sponsored by the Symphony of the Mountains, Food City, and the Bristol Area Ministerial Alliance (BAMA).** After the concert, we'll have a panel discussion in Rosser Hall that I'll moderate, where we'll discuss homelessness in Appalachia and across America. In fact, the entire concert series, of which we're a part, is to raise awareness about homelessness. Food City has also graciously agreed to provide boxed meals for this event. I'm incredibly excited about both events, and I hope that you can make it to both.

Two years ago in my Ash Wednesday meditation, I quoted Martin Sheen. Sheen was interviewed by Krista Tippett for her podcast "On Being," and the two discussed the importance of prayer. In that interview, Sheen stated that "piety is something you do alone. True freedom, spirituality, can only be achieved in community." Community is a vital, though often overlooked, part of Lent. This season as we focus on our frailty and sinfulness, as we focus on our need for

repentance and seek to grow deeper spiritually, let us also remember that we're God's beloved children. Let us also remember that death is not the end of our story. Let us also remember that God can do remarkable things with dust. And let us remember that we get those reminders most frequently when we're worshipping and in community together. After all, that's when we see that we're part of something bigger. That's when we see that we can be agents of redemption in a broken world. That's when we see that out of the ashes comes abundance. And that's why I talk so much about doing things together and remaining together. It's good for us both individually and congregationally. It's good for our personal walks with Jesus Christ and it helps us collectively. That's why I use this space to inform you about events. I think they'll help your relationship with Jesus grow. It's why I encourage you to join our discipleship offerings like small groups and Sunday School. It's why I encourage you to give of your time, talents, and treasure. It's why I encourage you to look for a way to serve. All of it is so that you might grow spiritually yourself and so that we might grow collectively as a congregation. That is our goal. So, this Lenten season I want to encourage you to not only focus on the things that separate you from God that you need to give up. I want you to focus on the things that you can start doing that will allow you to grow in your relationship with Christ. Find a Sunday School class if you aren't already in one. We have several great ones to choose from. Commit yourself to attending worship more regularly. Come on Wednesday night if you don't normally come. Look for a place to serve. Give joyfully and generously. Invite a friend to church. In fact, invite more than one. Welcome and sit next to a stranger. Get to know the overlooked and ignored in this community. Because if you do, you'll experience true freedom. Your spirituality will grow and deepen. You'll find yourself in the sort of beloved community that we all desperately need and crave. And, I promise, you'll end up with one of the most meaningful Lenten seasons you can possibly imagine.

As always, it's a privilege to be your pastor.

Grace and Peace,  
Kris



Vacation Bible School  
2023 will be

Wednesday, June 21  
through  
Saturday, June 24  
at 6 p.m.

in the evenings!

Emma Vance is our VBS  
director and is looking  
for volunteers  
for all areas!

Contact Ben or Emma at  
FBC!

**WHERE  
IS  
GOD**

July 10-14 Youth Camp Unidiversity Theme  
"Where Is God?" cost \$180 total for early bird  
registration – now through March 14. Total  
cost for regular registration

March 15- through May 10 \$220.

To Register - \$50 of total cost will reserve a  
spot. All Youth are invited to work fundraisers  
to offset their costs. Registration is open now.

Contact Ben, fill out information sheet and  
either pay \$50 to register or work for  
registration cost.



Youth Mission Trip 2023 – June 10-17<sup>th</sup> to  
Charleston, South Carolina. We are working  
with Sea Island Habitat for Humanity  
building a home for a family in need!!! It's a  
wonderful trip working hard to provide a  
home for a family! Oh, and we will go to the  
beach and do some fun stuff too! Total cost for  
a student to go is \$150 or 15 hours of work for  
FBC Volunteer local missions and fundraising.  
Participants will need to train by volunteering  
at our local habitat for humanity. Days and  
dates are to be determined.

# NOTES *From Leigh...*

I would like to thank Kris and Ben and the congregation for the privilege of preaching in February. As I have said before, many women are never affirmed or encouraged to pursue the “Calling” God has placed on their lives.

My sermon was based on the idea that God can only move and work in our lives if we create space for Him. Too often every minute of our day is committed to other things – not unimportant things, necessarily. But, we tend to fill our days with tasks and meetings and activities and – the list goes on – until we find there is no time or energy for God. We’re too tired to write a card to someone who’s grieving, to make that meal for someone who’s lonely, to invite a friend for coffee, to open our Bibles for study, to spend time in prayer, or to invest in our own self-care.

God commanded and demonstrated rest for us in scripture. He invites us to *Be Still*. Jesus says, “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest”. Jesus taught us that rest is essential to life and to ministry. He knew who He was and was clear on His purpose – Love God, Love Others, Serve.

We can be more like Jesus when we embrace our identity in Christ. When our activities and achievements are about us, we take pride in our busyness and we don’t leave any room for God. Jesus practiced rest by spending time in prayer and by not getting caught up in the stress and anxiety that was part of His daily life. He wasn’t in a hurry – He always had time to: heal the sick, teach about God, feed the hungry, talk with the stranger, break bread with His loved ones, celebrate life, and spend time with God in prayer.

We can and should do the same. Hopefully during Lent, instead of only finding ways to “sacrifice”, we can “add” ways to be intentional about our time invested in others and ourselves. And more importantly, our time spent with God.

As always, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in this wonderful place.

Blessings, Leigh



*Susan Banks*




## 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 Pennington .....Organist

Ms. Marcine Robinette.....Parish Nurse  
 Ms. Terri Thomas ..... Church Administrator  
 and Financial Secretary  
 Ms. Niki Judy..... Administrative Assistant



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 You can also find us on  
 Facebook. 



**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**  
 125 Sedgefield Street  
 Bristol, VA 24201

### Deacon of the Week for March

|          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|
| March 05 | Nancy Hyde        |
| March 12 | Bob Love          |
| March 19 | Tom Makres        |
| March 26 | Jordan Pennington |

### March FBC Minister On-Call Schedule

|               |                 |                |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| March 04 & 05 | Rev. Ben Ondrak | (423) 217-8934 |
| March 11 & 12 | Dr. Kris Aaron  | (803) 225-0795 |
| March 18 & 19 | Rev. Ben Ondrak | (423) 217-8934 |
| March 25 & 26 | Dr. Kris Aaron  | (803) 225-0795 |