



125 Sedgefield Street
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA 24201

THE FIRST WORD

January 2024

First Baptist Family,

Happy New Year! I hope that your Advent and Christmas seasons were restful, worshipful, and recharging. Advent and Christmas are always great seasons in the life of the church, and that was no different for us in 2023. We heard beautiful music thanks to Leigh, Jackie, Andrea, our sanctuary choir, our handbell choir, numerous instrumentalists, and various soloists. We had good food and even better fellowship at our annual Christmas Dinner and at the drop-in reception Clary and I hosted. And we were overjoyed and amazed at the Christmas program put on by our children and youth. As great as our ending to 2023 was, and it was great, I'm even more excited about 2024. We have lots of exciting things planned, and new years also bring with them lots of exciting new possibilities, too. So, I hope you prioritize being at church more in 2024.

Our theme for 2024 is Becoming More Healthy, Holy, & Whole. It struck me recently just how prevalent unhealthiness is, and I'm not just talking about health from a physical standpoint. For example, people all around us are suffering from unhealthy and broken relationships. Many have suffered from abuse – not only physical abuse, but also mental, emotional, and spiritual. Some people's only experience with church is a negative one because they've been beaten up and told that they aren't good enough for anyone to love them. Others, because of emptiness, brokenness, and trauma, look for something to numb their pain, and they end up becoming ensnared in a web of addiction. Poverty is sticky and pervasive, and it harms people in ways too numerous to count. All around us, people are sick and hurting, and I'm reminded that Christ didn't come just to save people for the sweet by and by, but that Christ came to save people in the here and the now. And that type of present day saving, well, that's something we can help do! By providing community in the face of overwhelming loneliness, by modeling healthy relationships amidst the torrent of broken ones, by showing people that there's another way to do church other than focusing on judgment, hellfire, and damnation and instead highlighting faith, hope, and love, those kinds of things are not only what the people of this community need, but they are things that we are well-equipped to do! That's why we're going to have events scheduled periodically throughout the year that focus on relational, emotional, and spiritual health, and it's why, if we're going to be successful, we need you to be here and to bring people with you. We all need to become more healthy, holy, and whole. And by not only participating in but by inviting others to join us, we have the chance both to be blessed ourselves and to be a blessing to others.

One of the ways we're going to look to become more healthy, holy, and whole is with our Wednesday Night Bible Study topics. **We're resuming our Wednesday Night activities on Wednesday, January 10, and we've got two different Bible study options for adults. Leigh is going to be leading a book study on Joanna Weaver's "Being a Mary in a Martha World" and I'll be leading a Bible study on the 10 Commandments.** After doing a brief overview of all of them, we'll then cover a different commandment each week. And it's worth noting that the primary way we'll be looking at the 10 Commandments is not just a list of "don'ts" or "thou shall not's," but as ways we can have healthy relationships both with God and with our neighbors. If you haven't already, I hope that you'll join us in one of these discipleship opportunities on Wednesday nights. **We'll also be having our FBB 101 class again in January. We'll meet for 3 weeks during the Sunday School hour (9:45 AM) in Rosser Hall on January 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 April.

Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't stop and recognize the anniversaries of some of our church staff. Back in November, Ben Ondrak celebrated 10 years of service at First Baptist Bristol. Then, in December, Terri Thomas celebrated 20 years of service here at the church. **And now on January 22, Jackie Burnette will celebrate 10 years of service herself. When you see these folks, please be sure to stop and thank them for all that they do.** I can assure you that all of them do much more than people realize, and we are blessed to have them on staff here at FBB.

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

Grace and Peace,

Kris



First Baptist Church acknowledges with gratitude each gift you have given in memory of or in honor of your loved ones and friends.

FBC Building Fund

In memory of Charles Campbell
In memory of Dean Cloyd
In memory of Lu Ann Crockett
In memory of Rachel Cruet
In memory of Nelson Link
In memory of Sean Lovins
In memory of Tom Parker
By Mike & Linda Browder

General Operating Fund

In memory of Tom Parker
By Jason Bailey, Tina Parker, Opal and Iris
By Lynda Wiles

In memory of Julian & Zelma Burroughs
By Kay B. Stueve

In memory of Nelson Link
By Serena Crumley

In memory of Lu Ann Crockett
In memory of Tom Parker
In memory of Nelson Link
By Chris & Lisa White

Lottie Moon Fund

CBF Global Missions Fund

In honor of Karen & Jeff Shelton
In honor of Elizabeth Shelton
In honor of Sarah & Stu Brunk
By Gene & Jane Eller

Special Music/Concerts Fund

In memory of Frances Hicks
In honor of David Hicks & Family
By Bobbi & Bill Godwin

Notes...from Leigh

2023 sure went by in a hurry!! But, I feel like we (the church, our congregation) ended really well. Our emphasis on Cultivating Connections followed by the season of Advent, really created some opportunities for spiritual growth and meaningful corporate worship. Advent was especially meaningful for me this year. I hope that you and your family were able to participate in many or all of our services and activities.

As the Music Minister, I must express my gratitude to all the people in the music ministry that work diligently and faithfully each week to provide music for every worship service. The sanctuary choir rehearses weekly to not only prepare for the Christmas cantata, but to also provide special music for our 11 o'clock service each week. Our Praise team – Nevaeh, Elayna, Libby, Ben, and Jackie – is a blessing to work with each Sunday. We also have a devoted group of men and women who show up at 8:30 am on Sundays for hand bell rehearsal! Kevin and Ann Townsend are incredibly talented and willing to share their gift of music whenever asked. We have numerous soloists who are always ready. And what can I possibly say that would be enough to express my gratitude for Andrea and Jackie.

We are not in competition with other churches – every church has their style, their focus, their purpose. But I would challenge you to find another congregation our size that has more talent, commitment, or quality in their music ministry. FBC is truly blessed with an overabundance of music riches! I hope you will take the time to regularly acknowledge and thank all those involved.

I think 2024 is going to be an exciting year for our church. We have so many opportunities to serve – missions, youth and children, music, teaching, etc. We have discipleship opportunities for all ages on Sunday mornings and Wednesdays. There is something for everyone. Please make sure to get involved wherever you can – you won't regret it!

Blessings,
Leigh



Special Words: Notes for When You Don't Know What to Say by Joyce Landorf

Heatherly are for those handwritten notes that can make a vital difference in the lives of the people we know and love. This book contains 200 actual letters, organized by theme and written with compassion, encouragement and sensitivity, that readers can use for inspiration in writing their own notes to friends and relatives for special days: in appreciation, during grief, when you are sorry, to offer congratulations, to bring hope, etc.

**Make it a New Years'
resolution to visit your
church library.**

Jackie Burnette




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
Mr. Jacob Pensinger.....Sexton
Mrs. Emma Vance.....Ministry Asst. for Children
Ms. Terri Thomas Church Administrator
and Financial Secretary
Ms. Niki Judy..... Administrative Assistant



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December FBC Minister On-Call Schedule

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