



125 Sedgefield Street
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA 24201

THE FIRST WORD

February 2023

First Baptist Family,

Last month I promised you that I would review how we ended 2022. Now that I'm able to do so, I want to make good on that promise. Financially, we had a great 2022! Our budget for 2022 was \$458,750, and we received \$468,135.03 for the year. So, our giving exceeded budget by \$9,385.03 or roughly 2.05%. Because we did so well last year, we were able to take some money from the General Operating Fund to complete some much-needed building repairs in addition to faithfully paying all of our mission, ministry, and staff financial commitments. This is obviously wonderful news worth celebrating! And because all of you were so faithful in your giving and so confident in the direction God is leading us as a church, we were able to raise the budget again for 2023. As a congregation, we chose to continue to step out on faith, and your votes at the Annual Business Meeting back in December helped make that possible. Thus, we have a lot of positive momentum built up as we head into 2023, and we all need to continue to do our part to ensure that it continues. I am convinced that now is not the time for us to rest on our laurels, but for us to be encouraged to continue in the good work that we've already begun.

Of course, part of that good work includes continuing to give joyfully and generously, which is something this church has a long tradition of doing and is something that I know you will continue. But our good work isn't financial alone, and 2022 wasn't just a great year for us financially. It was a great year for us, period! Last year at this time, I wrote to you, "The fact is, though, we don't have church, we don't do church just so we can have nice looking balance sheets. We do church together so that we can worship God, strengthen our individual walks of faith, grow closer together, and be empowered to share the Gospel with other people. We do that primarily through missions, ministries, and worship." I stand by that statement, and I'm proud to report to you that our missions, ministries, and worship for 2022 were strong. We're in a great place as a church. We're healthy financially, both exceeding budget and not having any congregational debt. We have a strong staff who works well together and likes one another. We have strong programming that's continuing to get better. We have powerful, moving worship services with excellent music (and I'd like to think that the preaching isn't half bad either). We continue to increase our visibility in the community. We have more and more children and youth in worship. We have visitors joining us on a near weekly basis. We don't have any ongoing or even simmering conflicts. People seem to be happy and getting along. If there are folks who are fussing and fighting, then I don't know about it. To quote the old hymn, right now "there's a sweet, sweet spirit in

this place, and I know that it's the spirit of the Lord." And from what I read and hear, tragically, what we're experiencing right now as a church is more the exception than the rule. That's why our continued unity and our continued commitment to stepping out boldly in faith remain so important. They allow us to continue down the path we believe that God is calling us. And my brothers and sisters, I believe that our path is going to continue to get more exciting, more fruitful, and more full of possibility. Our theme for 2023 highlights just that.

Last month I told you that our theme for this year is Putting Hands and Feet to Hope. The needs of the community and this region continue to grow. And those needs are opportunities for us to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. It's been said that if you want people to learn more about Jesus, then teach them theology. But if you want people to **know** Jesus, then love them first. The fact of the matter is, the world needs both, but we have to start with love. The growing needs we face as a community, the growing homeless population, the growing number of people suffering from addiction, the growing mental health needs among people of all ages, all of them are opportunities we have to show people the love of Christ and to put hands and feet to the hope we have in Jesus. Maybe 2023 is the year we begin hosting recovery groups for addicts or the year we become the home to a new counseling practice. Maybe this is the year we become more tangibly involved in serving the unhoused of this community. Maybe this is the year we renew, restart, or rebuild some feeding ministries because we see that the number of people in our community who are hungry is going up. I don't know what the new year will hold. I don't know what projects will capture our congregational imagination, but I do know that God didn't place us here and give us these opportunities for us to turn around and let them all go by. God didn't bless us with the congregational health and sweet, sweet spirit we currently have for us to not use them. We are in a great place as a church, and now is the perfect time for us to recommit ourselves to such Kingdom work. I hope that you'll join me. I hope that you'll not only continue to be faithful, but that you'll be imaginative, too. I hope that you'll take putting hands and feet to hope seriously. And I hope you'll start by being here regularly on Sunday morning and Wednesday night. Your presence is a gift, and things just aren't the same when you aren't here.

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

Grace and Peace,
Kris

Local



M I S S I O N S

We will take up an **offering** for local benevolence needs as you leave the worship services on **Sunday, February 12, 2023**. This is a great chance to give to those in need on a day when we often indulge rather selfishly. Be part of sharing God's love with those in need. Please give generously



on Super Bowl Sunday. Every dollar donated goes to helping local people in need through the benevolence ministries of our church.



The Boy Scouts of America is sponsoring a Food Drive **throughout the month of February**. All donations can be dropped off in the hallway between the office and the CLC.



Deacon Ministry

Deacon Chair:
Jennifer Rouse

2023 Deacons:

New Deacons:

Leigh Gleis and Darin Denton

Previously Ordained Deacons:

Bob Love, Jeff Burnette, David Crockett Jr., and Tom Makres

Returning Ordained Deacons:

Roberta Yowell, Mike Browder, Jamie Barger, David Hicks, Leroy Doran, Mark Fuller, Nancy Hyde, Jordan Pennington, Linda Pruner, and Melissa Roberts

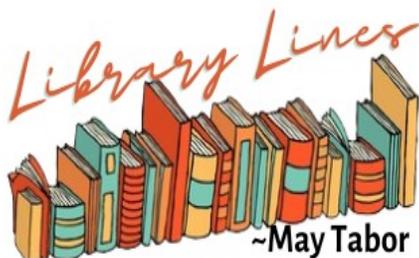
NOTES

From Leigh...

I sure hope your New Year is off to a great start. Several years ago, I began the *One Word* for the year process. (If you're not familiar, it is a book by Jon Gordon, Dan Britton, and Jimmy Page.) I've had different words for different years depending on my "season". But I find it way more useful than resolutions. Anyway, my word for this year is PEACE. In previous years I've chosen words like healthy, strength, joy, and intentional.

What does choosing a word mean? Well, there are no rules...but, for me it means that I try to view situations (especially challenging ones) with some questions - "Do I have a sense of peace with this decision?" "Will this decision bring peace to me/to others?" "What will bring peace in this situation/choice/relationship/job/health, etc.?" "Why don't I feel peace in _____". I would encourage you to investigate the idea and even read the book (it's a very short book". Maybe God will lead you to a *word* that will help you focus on hearing and seeking Him spiritually and in everyday matters as well.

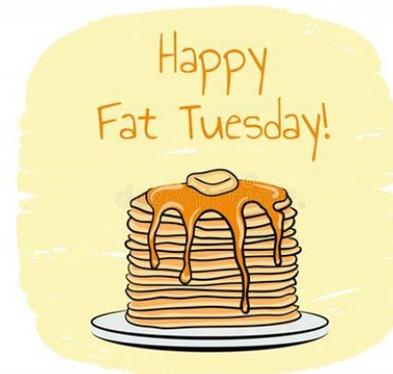
Our new book study, *Bad Girls of the Bible* by Liz Curtis Higgs, is just getting underway. Our women include Eve, Jezebel, Rahab, the Woman at the Well, and Delilah among others. Some were *Bad to the Bone* others just *Bad for a Season* or a *Moment*. The book is scripturally based, very applicable, and it leads to good discussions in class. It's not too late to join us at 6:15 on Wednesdays!



A little black book with no colorful jacket often goes unnoticed, however, **STRENGTH TO LOVE** by Martin Luther King, Jr. is worthy of attention. In the pages of this book,

Dr. King's words encourage and inspire readers to go the "second mile," to see people not as things but as fellow human beings molded in the same divine image. Dr. King expands the scriptures with illustrations from personal experiences and quotes from notable individuals. He shows how many of the world's most influential personalities had exchanged their thorns for crowns--Helen Keller, for example. He reminds the reader that powerful living involves victories over one's own soul and situation, He concludes with the hope that, "in a dark, confused world, the Kingdom of God may yet reign in the hearts of men."

A children's book with the theme of inclusion is **WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?** by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Sasso. This colorful book based on the parable of the Good Samaritan encourages new ways of seeing others and ourselves.



Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner
Tuesday, February 21, 2023
6:00 p.m. - Rosser Hall

Ash Wednesday Service
Wednesday February 22, 2023
6:00 p.m. - Chapel



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. Daniel Anderson.....Sexton
 Ms. Terri Thomas Church Administrator
 and Financial Secretary
 Ms. Niki Judy..... Administrative Assistant



Contact Information:
Church Phone: (276)669-8191
Fax: (276)669-5082
Hours: info@fbcbristol.org
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 February

February 05	Leroy Doran
February 12	Mark Fuller
February 19	Leigh Gleis
February 26	David Hicks

February FBC Minister On-Call Schedule

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