

CALENDER OF EVENTS

Wednesday, March 15

12 Noon – Lenten Service @ First ARP Church
5:30 pm Family First Feast
Menu: Sloppy Joe Sandwich/Slaw/Chips/Dessert/Drink
7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, March 19

9:45 am Sunday School
11:00 am Worship
Kid’s Zone – room 106

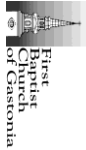
Wednesday, March 22

12 Noon – Lenten Service @ First Baptist Church
5:30 NO Family First Feast
7:00 pm Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, March 26

Deacon Ordination

9:45 am Sunday School
11:00 am Worship
Kid’s Zone – Room 106



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The Builder

First Baptist Church of Gastonia

Volume XII Number 9

Week of March 19, 2023

NOTES FROM PASTOR DWAYNE

DOERS OF THE WORD

Last week I asked Jamie Lewis, who directs our SEAM program if her students would create a few visuals to help us see the reality of just what is happening, perhaps more correctly what is not happening in today’s Gaston County Churches.

Jamie recruited Josephine and Brie (pictured on page 2) and they agreed to lend their artistic talents. The students did a great job creating five poster-art pieces for us.

The numbers on the boards represent the realities of five key Baptist churches across our county. The aggregate demographics of these five congregations are beyond astounding.

First, consider the combined **64.49 acres** of real estate on which the five congestions are housed. The second key demographic is the combined heated square feet of these churches, which totals **188,649 square feet**. This is two and a half times larger than Bank of America Stadium where our Carolina Panthers play their home games.

Of course these church buildings and land are also extremely valuable, with a combined tax value of **\$13,900,000**. I noticed in the news this week that Panthers newly hired coach Frank Riech just purchased a \$3.4 million dollar house. I guess the church can’t really point fingers at his perceived opulence when we are housed in properties that average almost **\$3,000,000 each in value**.

But the final two numbers are perhaps the most disconcerting. I have visited and preached in each of these five churches. This has permitted me to witness firsthand that the combined weekly attendance of all five congregations is no more than **385 people**.

To add one more element to the visual before us consider one final number. That number is **65**. What does 65 represent? I am glad you asked. This number 65 tells a story that sounds an alarm.

Our community does not have only the five churches whose demographics are summarized here. Rather we have over 700 plus congregations whose chief instruction from Christ is to love God and in turn, love our neighbors as ourselves.

Yet while this overwhelming “Christian” county has found the wherewithal to construct extravagant worship sites for a tiny few, it has exhibited only the begrudging will to build and barely sustain a single crisis homeless shelter that can house a mere 65 souls.

Night after night, cold week after cold week, and sweltering summer day after day, over 400 men, women, and children remain unsheltered and unprotected from the elements while 385 of us file in and out of **multi-million dollar facilities**. And the number of unhoused neighbors is growing - all while the **385 attendance** number continues to plummet and age.

My prayer is that we, who for generations have heard God’s Word, will become doers of God's Word. May our facilities become houses of prayer and healing for all people. May we not merely be moved by the numbers before us. May we finally be changed to meet needs all around us.

Church E-Mail: fbcogastonia@gmail.com

Church Website: www.fbcgastonia.org

Worship Greeters

March

Bill and Julia Blalock, Lewis Denton

April

Ann Costner, Art Queen, Ann Siva

May

Amy Avery, Cary Craig, Scott Irvin

MEMORIALS

In Memory of: Ann Lowery

By: Ann Siva



Sunday, March 26

Deacon Ordination

Sunday, April 2

Palm Sunday

Friday, April 7

Good Friday Service

Sunday, April 9

Easter Sunrise Service

Easter Morning Worship

SYMPATHY

Our Christian sympathy is extended to Dr. Charles Lowery, upon the death of his wife, Ann, on March 5, 2023

FLOWER CALENDAR

The following dates are available on the flower calendar for you to put flowers in the sanctuary in memory or in honor of a loved one or just because. Call the church office to reserve.

March 26

April 16, 23, 30; May 7, 14, 21. 28

June 4, 11, 18, 25

Friday, April 7 – Good Friday Service

Tenebrae Service 6:30 pm

Sunday, April 9 Easter Sunrise

Service on back lawn 6:45 am

Sunday, April 9 11:00 am

Easter Service



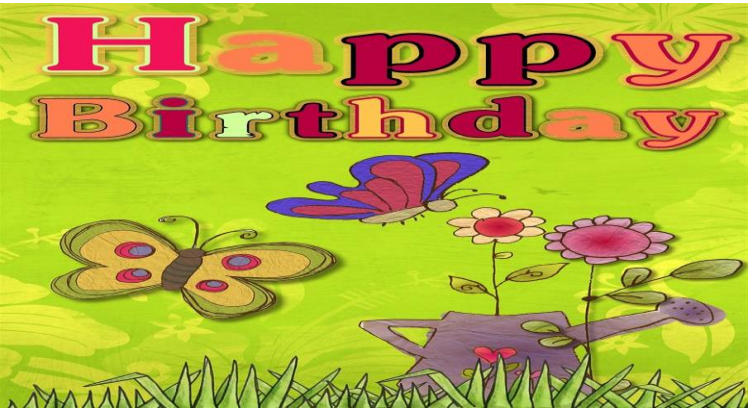
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A place to belong, a place to become, a place to bear witness



March 13-31

- 13 – Nancy Carter
- 22 – Richard Hart
- Meredith Nanney
- 23 – Will Blalock
- Doris Craig
- 27 – Bill Smith
- 28 – Tom Carson
- Susan Null
- 31- Suzanne Long
- Dan Wynkoop

From Pastor Dwayne

After last Sunday’s service a visitor approached me in the narthex and told me an amazing story.

She said:

“Some time back when I worked at Hardee’s a lady pulled away from the pick up window. Stopped. And then backed up to the window again. She told me that God instructed her to give me a copy of her book.

I took that book home and read it and it was powerful. That lady was Cassandra Farmer. Now I know who she is and can’t wait to see her and hear her speak at First Baptist.



Lenten Services/Lunch

Theme: Grace
Time: 12:00 Noon – 1:00 pm
Cost of lunch: \$7.00
Offering: SOCKS

March 15

First ARP Hosting
Rev. Tom Corbell (Holy Trinity)

March 22

First Baptist Hosting
Rev. Justin Lowe (First United Methodist)

March 29

First United Methodist Hosting
Rev. Shawn Griffith (St. Marks)

From the front page article



WORSHIP

Sermons and Scripture Reading
Sunday, March 19

“Moving from the Pew to the Pavement”
Isaiah 58

Identity with Direction
By Novella Cruce
Jer 17:5-8

5 This is what the Lord says: “Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans, who rely on human strength and turn their hearts away from the Lord. 6 They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future. They will live in the barren wilderness, in an uninhabited salty land. 7 “But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. 8 They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.

When we are not rooted in our identity in Christ, we tend to place more trust and confidence in human beings. We are swayed and even changed by our circumstances. Every time we expect people to be the plumbline for the ultimate truth, we are turning aside from God. Everything we receive through anyone on earth must be viewed through the lens of God’s truth. God establishes leaders in our lives to guide, teach and disciple us, but it is extremely easy to become dependent on them rather than the one who sent them.

We are susceptible to deception and have to keep our focus on God so that we are not led astray by the outward.

We do not find our security in the economy, politics, a spouse etc. We find our security in God. God leads us along the right path if we allow him to. Sometimes that path looks like we are in the valley of the shadow of death. We can be confident and fear no evil if we are looking in the right direction.

Paul said in Philippians 1:21, NIV: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." The word live in this passage in Greek means to actively live as opposed to being stagnant. The next verse in Philippians speaks of fruitful labor while living here on earth. Our job is to be kingdom focused so that we aren’t distracted and overwhelmed.

Do you know where you are going? Is your path fruitful?

PRAYER FOR TODAY

Jehovah, Almighty, our world is filled with voiceless, marginalized people who must feel alone, abandoned and fearful. Today I pray that these brothers and sisters will experience an awareness of Your holy presence. May it be inexplicably clear to each marginalized heart that You will never leave them or forsake them. May it be clear that neither height nor depth nor trials nor tribulation nor death separate from the love that is ours in God. Amen

MISSIONS

BACK PACK MINISTRY

Monetary donations are still needed to buy the items that are needed. Thanks for your help.

Thank you for the contributions of money to help buy food items. It is very much appreciated!!
Jim & Ann Costner

We now have 8 families with a total of 42 people.
The bags are now delivered to Southwest Middle School on Tuesdays before 10:00 am.

March 26 @ 11 am
Special service of deacon ordination for Dottie Eddings

EASTER LILIES
Please sign the attached form and return to the church office with your check prior to Monday, April 3, if you would like to purchase an Easter lily for \$12.00. Payment must accompany form.

NAME: _____

NUMBER OF
LILIES: _____

AMOUNT
PAID: _____

IN HONOR
OF: _____

GIVEN
BY: _____

IN MEMORY
OF: _____

GIVEN
BY: _____
