

FBC CONNECTIONS

April 2021

From the Pastor

But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed is going ahead of you to Galilee; and there you will see him.'" Matthew 28:5-7

He is risen! He is risen, indeed! How could this be true? We know that dead people don't rise from the dead. When you're dead, you're dead. Even in the first century, people knew that dead people don't rise. The disciples were convinced that Jesus was raised to new bodily life; so much so that they gave themselves wholeheartedly to the mission that there is forgiveness of sins in his name. The hope that we have for this broken and sinful world is that Jesus has conquered the grave. He is risen! Through this event, we are proclaiming that death, disease and destruction will not win. The hope we have in Jesus Christ is sure.

N.T. Wright, the former Bishop of Durham, says that the meaning of Easter is that now, since Jesus is risen from the dead, we are called to begin the work of the new creation. In fact, we are new creatures in Christ (I Corinthians 5:17). Jesus is Lord, not only of our own lives, but of the whole world. What does Easter mean? It means that Jesus can come into the midst of our situations and suffering and transform them.

Now is the time to leave the old life behind and follow Jesus in His new way. He announces that repentance and forgiveness of sins are available through his name. Through his resurrection, we can proclaim, "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 15:55-57)

At the center of our faith is the account in the gospels of the cross and the resurrection. It is through Jesus' giving of himself sacrificially on the cross for the sins of the world, and God raising him from the dead, that we are given hope for our salvation and transformation of ourselves and the world.

May this Easter bring you a renewed sense of hope and confidence in the risen Christ because God has conquered death!

In the risen Christ,

Pastor Chuck Fox

Don't forget the FBC Church-wide retreat!

April 24—10 a.m.—2 p.m.

Contemporary Christian Concert—April 30—7:30 p.m.

Invite your friends!

First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh



159 N. Bellefield
Ave, Pittsburgh,
PA 15213

www.fbcpg.org



Board of Deacons

FBC Deacon Board

- Barbara Russell, Chair
- Casey Gnage
- Steven Hernandez
- Mary Ellen Johnson
- Sean King
- Robert Smith
- Shirley Stanzione



FBC
PRAYER MEETING
every
Tuesday in
April
7:00 p.m.—7:40 p.m.

**You will receive an
invitation each week
to meet on Zoom!**

Need Prayers?

**Please send prayer
requests to Deacon
Barbara at:**

blrusell2@verizon.net

“In short, I didn’t become a Christian because God promised I would have an even happier life than I had as an atheist. He never promised any such thing. Indeed, following him would inevitably bring divine demotions in the eyes of the world. Rather, I became a Christian because the evidence was so compelling that Jesus really is the one-and-only Son of God who proved his divinity by rising from the dead. That meant following him was the most rational and logical step I could possibly take.” – **Lee Strobel**,

“I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified, they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren’t true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world-and they couldn’t keep a lie for three weeks. You’re telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible.” – **Charles Colson**,

"As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.'" **Mark 16:5-6**

Grace and peace FBC. Hallelujah! Christ is Risen from the dead!! As we continue to thrive personally and corporately despite the pandemic, let’s give all praise, honor, and glory to our Risen Savior. His resurrection, attested to by many, is still the Gospel truth. The power of His resurrection is still powerful enough to convert atheists, and turn the heart, and soul to seek Him at the Cross.

The Lenten/Easter season is a wonderful time of the year to reflect on the finished work of Jesus Christ. I pray that you will have an opportunity to participate in and enjoy our COVID19-conscious Resurrection Service. In the recent past, we held an Easter play and sponsored a lavish Easter spread afterwards. Alas, no play, no food; just a total focus on Christ crucified and the Resurrection.

I remind you again to continue to pray for our sick and shut-ins, for all church leaders, for growth (physically and spiritually) within our church, and for Revival in our nation. Have a Blessed Easter, and a wonderful April.

God bless you, and I will meet you at the Throne of Grace.

—Barbara Russell, Chair



Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees, at the request of our Pastor and on the recommendation of the Board of Deacons, has approved a new part-time position for the congregation titled College Ministry Coordinator. This individual will be responsible for efforts by our congregation to attract faculty, staff and students from Pitt and CMU to our congregation. The pastor and Board of Deacons will draft a job description for the position and we hope to recruit a candidate who will be in place by the end of August 2021. The Trustees appropriated \$15,000 to finance the new position and this will be provided by an increased draw on the Permanent Fund in the 2021-2022 church budget.

This decision has important budgetary implications which must be considered by the congregation. It will expand the draw on the endowment (based on a 5-year moving average) to almost 4% which is the usual upper limit for draws by benevolent and religious institutions. It amounts to a little over 3% of the value of the endowment, as of the end of December 2020, but the church for years has based its draw on a five-year moving average of the Permanent Fund. More importantly, the increased draw will have other implications. The Congregation uses 2 separate budgets which are balanced by the surplus in one and the deficit in the other. The first involves administration and worship which included an income stream from pledged and unpledged giving and a few other minor sources. This helps to pay for all of our administrative and worship activities including salaries of the pastor, secretary, and music director. This budget over the past several years has always produced a deficit; in short, the congregation fails to cover the costs for its worship and administration. The second budget deals with maintenance of the church and missions. Here we have 2 large income streams from the Permanent fund and Schenley Place. The expenses involved are utilities, building repairs, salaries for the housekeeper, maintenance personnel, building engineer and all our payments and donations to missionary activities. Thanks to its income, this portion of the budget always yields a surplus. This surplus minus the deficit from administration and worship provides us with the funds to carry out maintenance projects on the church. Recently we have used funds to repair the roof, replace gutters & downspouts, repair the boiler and many other projects. The increased draw for \$15,000 means the deficit on the administrative and worship side of the budget will increase by \$15,000 and the projected draw for maintenance projects will decline by \$15,000

The last 2 newsletter reports by the Trustees have given a detailed analysis of the situation of repair and maintenance projects for the remainder of the 2020-2021 fiscal year. We are looking forward to our 209th Annual meeting which will be held, Sunday the **16th of May**. There we will elect our new officers and approve a budget for 2021-2022.

- Van Beck Hall

FBC Trustees

- Van Beck Hall, President
- Casey Gnage
- Steven Hernandez
- Vincent Johnson
- Angeline Wong
- Chad Zoll
- Don Fedor (Facility Engineer)



During this time of limited worship due to the pandemic concerns, please send your donations and pledges to:

Secretary/Controller
FBC Pittsburgh
159 N. Bellefield Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213



Trustees Report on the Church Building and Maintenance

“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal.” Matthew 6:20

We are already one third of the way through this new year of 2021. It was April of 1912 that our building was dedicated to the service of the Lord. Unfortunately, time is still taking its toll on our meeting house and “rust and moth” is still something with which we have to contend. We again had some roof damage from a storm and we lost some copper sheet metal on the rear of the building. We are in the process of determining the cost to repair the ridge with the missing copper.

Current projects we have going on at the church include replacing some plumbing for the baptistry that had developed a major leak and installing a new water heater system to the baptistry as the 1912 water heater had some parts that could not be replaced and was not starting up reliably to heat the water anymore. We will also restore the floor on the basement side hall to make that space more presentable, preferably before the university campuses open up from the pandemic. Other than some electrical issues in some of the light fixtures, the side hall renovations should complete this part of the building renovation. We are looking to also refinish the Basement Main Floor in the near future.

As always, please keep the leadership in prayer as to how to use the resources God has given us as a congregation from the support of the congregation and from the investments the church has been given through the years. It is through time, talent and the treasure God gives that God expects us to honor Him. May we be faithful.

— Chad Zoll

Christian Education

We're delighted that our Sunday School classes are fully back in session each Sunday at 10:00 a.m. As COVID19 restrictions begin to lessen, please consider the possibility of returning (or coming for the first time!) to participate in one of the offered classes. Dr. Van Beck Hall continues to teach a Bible class for adults, while John Knox is leading a class through the Celebrate Recovery materials, also for adults. Nara and Cesar Hernandez have done an amazing job with the lower elementary class since June of last year.

New Opportunity

Nara has also been leading a Bible study class, **Course 101**, for the past couple of months on Zoom, but intends to begin an in-person version of that class on **Friday mornings from 10-11 a.m. in the church library** beginning on April 9th. Please contact Nara if interested. The class is open to everyone. Here is the announcement about that class:

“FBC is now offering Course 101, a course in Christian foundations (developed by Gracepoint Ministries). Course 101 gives an intellectual basis for answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about the Christian faith and addresses misconceptions about God, Jesus and the Bible. Both those who have experience with Christianity and those just beginning to consider it will have the chance to explore how Christianity addresses questions about the meaning of life, our purpose, and the longings of our hearts. For more information about Course 101 or a pre-view-trailer, go to this link: <http://www.course101.org/>. The course is a series taking about 7 weeks to complete. However you do not have to commit to the whole series, although we encourage you to go through the whole thing to get the most out of it.”

Graduation Sunday—We will be celebrating with our graduates on **Sunday, April 25th**. Congratulations to Kamari Purcell and Luke Lockhart on the completion of your graduate study programs!



Mission and Outreach

“Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? (James 2:15-16)

Partnering with Local Missions During This Pandemic—As many of you know, we support East End Cooperative Ministries (EECM) and Light of Life Missions throughout the year through financial giving and our annual commitments to specific projects. With EECM, we participate in the annual coat and toy drives in the Fall and Winter. With Light of Life we have recently given financially to provide Thanksgiving meals and hope to continue that in the future. There are many opportunities to give of our time, talents and treasures, even if we do not always do them corporately, but individually instead. We are all one body working together. We want to let you know of opportunities as they arise, so that if you feel led to give, you know how to do so.

Ministries such as EECM and Light of Life have had increased demands since the pandemic. For example, EECM reported recently via their Facebook page that EECM is providing **3 times** the number of community lunches and distributing groceries to **5 times** the number of families through their food pantry. They are asking for financial contributions. Can you help? Donate here: [Donate | EECM](#).

Light of Life recently sent out an email requesting financial donations to provide food and shelter or women and children at their new Women’s Shelter. For \$45 you can help provide a safe, private space for the night, including cribs for little ones, an Easter meal, hot shower, personal hygiene items, and a teddy bear and new book for kids. Doubling or even tripling your giving can provide more guests with food and shelter for a safe night’s rest. You can donate here: [Light of Life](#).

—Petroula Zoll, Local Missions

America for Christ Offering—Thank you for your generosity! Your \$897 is matched by \$500 from our church mission budget for a total of \$1397 to this important offering that helps people in need around our country!

Music Notes

During the month of March, the FBC music ministry had the privilege to host a combination of contemporary, traditional, and jazz-inflected services. The success of these musically diverse services can be attributed to several guest artists including Jeff Grubbs, Lee Robinson, Lee Caplan, Ryan Salisbury, and Zack Mester. The FBC Vocal Trio—Petroula Zoll, Ruth Fox, and Luke W. Lockhart—played a profound role in adapting to these various styles while maintaining the integrity of traditional Christian melodies and hymns. Luke blessed us at our services with 2 solos during March. André Cadidé and Rosany Lisboa continue to breathe new life into each service with their contemporary gospel approach. The upcoming Easter service on April 4th will again showcase a combination of contemporary, traditional, and jazz-tinged interpretations of gospel pieces. In addition to the FBC Vocal Trio’s upcoming special music performance of “On Eagle’s Wings,” we will be welcoming trumpeter Brad Fritcher to share his talents with the congregation. Be sure to be on the lookout for more information about the Contemporary Christian Concert, scheduled for Friday, April 30, and organized by André and Rosany!



Wednesday Night Bible Study

A Reflection on the Psalms

Psalms 119:105 (NIV)- “Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light for my path”

I hope everybody was able to enjoy the Lenten Bible Study: “As Jesus Turned His Face to Jerusalem” as we followed Jesus with Rev. Chuck Fox. With the Easter Celebration on April 4, we will begin a new study on April 7th entitled “*Reflections through the Psalms*” based on the book of the same name by CS Lewis. The book of Psalms is the songbook of the Bible. In some Christian traditions, the Psalms are still sung, especially in Reformed Presbyterian Churches. Of course, as you look at the book of Psalms, you may wonder how in the world we are going to get through this book. There are over 150 chapters and chapter 119 has over 176 verses alone! It will take years to go through this book, and you would be right.

We will be looking through themes of the Psalms such as “Judgement”, the “Fair Beauty of the Lord”, “Word about Praising”, “Sweeter Than Honey” and even “Death in the Psalms”. The Psalms help us realize that we can be honest about our feelings with God and not just use formalized prayer; that God is big enough to take our criticisms and is patient with our cries for help. There are also psalms that offer praises for seeing us through the hard times, as well as to see the beauty of the Lord. The Psalms contain a lot of emotion, meaning, and reflection about God and His work in our lives.

Come and explore the Psalms together on Wednesday evenings at 7pm, beginning April 7th.

Men’s Fellowship:

On March 26, we did meet in person and on Zoom and had a movie night. The movie, entitled “What If,” depicted a story of a person to whom God chose to reach out and ask to reflect on where his life was going. It is fiction but the story had a great theme about faith in God. “It’s simple, but it’s hard... total surrender to God.” Surrendering our views to God is never easy. In fact, God will often challenge our views about how we are living. It would be great if we could all be good examples of servanthood, surrendering to serve people and God faithfully, but that is often not the case as we let our pride and our own interests often get in the way of God’s message to us. Do we stop and take inventory on our lives and are we seeking God’s calling and following his lead? In other words, do we let God grow us?

In April, if the weather holds, we are planning a cookout outside, weather permitting. We’ll have a Bible study by a campfire as well as sharing in fellowship on April 16th at 7pm.

The purpose of the Men’s Fellowship is based on Proverb 27:17 (NASB): “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” The purpose of this group is to provide a time of fellowship as well as encouragement in pursuing the purposes of Christ...to become men after God’s own heart.

Marys and Marthas (Women’s Fellowship)

The Marys and the Marthas have continued to meet every month, on the 3rd Saturday, at 10 am, via Zoom. Please feel free to join us, ladies. Every woman is welcome! We will be meeting this month, on April 17th. Welcome spring and nice weather with us! We can promise you a warm welcome and Christian friendship.



Young Adult Group—Fireflies

Greetings! The month of March brought us the prospect of celebrating Easter and remembering why this moment is so important for us as Christians. During the Lenten period we started a series of studies called “Lenten: The faces of Easter”. This series of Bible studies was divided up according to various characters who stood out during the time when Jesus was being arrested and crucified: the Pharisees, Pontius Pilate, Peter and Judas and the thieves on the cross. The purpose of the studies was to look at these characters, who were real people, and understand their perspectives on how they viewed Jesus, how they responded to the call of the Savior. Furthermore, this study brought us the opportunity to look at ourselves and reflect on how we have been acting and answering the Lord Jesus. To finish the series, we decided to show the film “Risen” (2016) on March 30th. This film shows the reaction of a non-Christian Roman soldier who is hired to investigate the missing body of Jesus after his crucifixion. This activity sensitized the hearts of the participants to what Jesus wants to teach us. We welcome all young adults to join us on Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. in person or on Zoom. May the peace of Christ be with us all! Go Fireflies!



April birthdays—Congratulations!

April 9	Barbara Russell
April 10	Angie Holmen Jones
April 10	Cathy Qureshi
April 15	Pastor Chuck Fox
April 19	Meredith Recht
April 21	Khristina Mykhayliv
April 29	Joseph Gnehm

Happy birthday to
you and may God
bless you!

Stewardship Campaign and Annual Meeting

The FBC Stewardship Campaign has begun! Our fiscal year runs from May 1 to April 30. It is getting close to the time of our **annual meeting**, scheduled for **May 16th**. All members of the church are asked to attend this important meeting when we approve the budget for the coming year. It is SO very helpful to the Trustees to have a sense of our commitment in preparing the new budget. There is a pledge card enclosed in this newsletter as well as in the mailing you received recently. Would you prayerfully consider your gifts to God and FBC for the 2021-2022 fiscal year and complete the pledge card, returning it to the office or giving it through the offering. Your commitment will remain confidential and non-binding. Thank you, and may God bless you for your giving of the past year which has helped us maintain our worship programming and support our church staff.



April FBC Calendar Highlights



For a detailed view of all calendar events, go to www.fbcpggh.org/calendar.

- 2 Apr (Fri) Good Friday Tenebrae—5 p.m. and 6:30 pm
- 4 Apr (Sun) **Easter Sunday and baptism**
- Worship—11:00 am on Zoom and videoed
- 6 Apr (Tue) Young Adults Group—7:00 pm (Zoom),
FBC Prayer Meeting—7:00 pm (Zoom)
- 7 Apr (Wed) Bible Study—7:00 p.m. (Zoom)
- 11 Apr (Sun) Worship—11:00 am —on Zoom and videoed
- 13 Apr (Tue) Young Adults Group—7 :00 p.m (Zoom)
FBC Prayer Meeting—7:00 p.m. (Zoom)
- Trustee Meeting—7:30 pm
- 14 Apr (Wed) Bible Study—7:00 p.m. (Zoom)
- 16 Apr (Fri) Men’s Fellowship — 7:00 p.m. at church and on Zoom
- 17 Apr (Sat) Marys and Marthas at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom
- 18 Apr (Sun) Worship—11:00 am - Zoom and videoed
- 20 Apr (Tue) Young Adults Group—7 :00 p.m (Zoom)
FBC Prayer Meeting—7:00 p.m. (Zoom)
- 21 Apr (Wed) Bible Study —7:00 p.m. (Zoom)
- 24 Apr (Sat) Church Spring Retreat - 10:00 am—2:00 p.m.
- 25 Apr (Sun) Graduation Sunday—11:00 am — on Zoom and videoed
- 27 Apr (Tue) Young Adults Group—7:00 pm at church and Zoom
FBC Prayer Meeting—7:00 pm (Zoom)
- 28 Apr (Wed) Bible Study—7:00 p.m. (Zoom)
- 30 Apr (Fri) Contemporary Christian Concert—7:30 p.m.

First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh
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