

January 2024

Baptist Notes

A Publication of the First Baptist Church in Framingham
PO Box 2415 ~ Framingham, MA 01703-2415

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From the Pastor



Soon before Christmas of 1995, I asked some friends who were musicians to sing a short concert at the Kosair Children's Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. They did a great job with the kids and seemed to experience genuine affirmation in being there. Following that concert held in a community room off the lobby of the hospital, the band went upstairs and played a couple of songs for patients who could not leave their rooms. At this time, I heard one of the men in the band say (almost under his breath), "**This is real.**" I will never forget that moment. I am not aware that anyone else heard him, and I never discussed it with him, but I believe he had an experience while interacting and singing with the kids that touched him very deeply.

When I remember that moment — which is crystal clear in my memory — I think to myself, "What is real?" Philosophers have debated the question for centuries; the church attempts to address the question through good deeds, mission work, and worship; and we as individuals strive to find it through our passions, influence, and contributions to family and community. **But still, thoughts of what is real, deep, and lasting do surface in our thoughts and ambitions when we allow for time to think deeply.** What, then, is real? Concrete is real. The air we breathe is real. But is there more? Is there something beyond the concrete that factors into our existence — a reality I cannot quite explain, but rather experience when my heart and soul are in a receptive place? As people of faith, we believe that Holy Spirit is real. God spirit is transformative in us. Transcendence (something more than the material) is real.

Preparing for what is real means that the condition of our hearts is open and willing to put God before any other allegiances, and our prayerful response to the spirit of God is, "Yes, Lord." A simple prayer, free of any qualifying measures or conditions, can bring us into close communion with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Also, honesty with ourselves, others, and God about our own spirit, personal struggles, and celebrations brings us closer and deeper in our relationship to our God. **I was recently challenged in a worship service to think of my life as a spirit on a human journey rather than a human on a spirit journey.** Some things will pass away, but what a powerful moment when we come to terms with what will not. Attentiveness to the spiritual deepens our ways and motivations as well as our thoughts and speech. It is a deception to believe that we can hide our spiritual struggles and doubts and that they therefore will go undetected. Eventually, we all find that a time of confession and renewal can heal and deepen our souls.

This new year, I extend the invitation to open our minds and hearts to what is real — Godly real. Doing so may, however, mean a pass through darkness; we all have some of that in our lives. Resurrection is coming, but we may have spiritual preparation left to do so that we can embrace all of the reality of God's blessing.

My friend who had a "real" moment in that hospital all those years ago likely experienced something divine, even eternal, as he blessed the patient and consequently touched the heart of God. This can be our moment as well, and a change that will move us into the heavenly realm of God, even while we minister on earth.

Jason

Church Notes

We congratulate **Marge and Lew Oxford**, who celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on December 19!

Annual Reports are due to Linda Devine by Sunday, January 14.

January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 <i>Happy 2024</i>	2 <i>7:00 pm</i> <i>Deacons</i>	3	4 <i>7:00 pm</i> <i>Choir Practice</i>	5	5
7 <i>10:30 am Worship</i> <i>11:30 am Potluck</i>	8	9 <i>7:00 pm Exec.</i> <i>Council</i>	10	11 <i>7:00 pm</i> <i>Choir Practice</i>	12	13
14 <i>10:30 am Worship/RMMO</i>	15	16 <i>7:00 pm</i> <i>A&F</i>	17	18 <i>7:00 pm</i> <i>Choir Practice</i>	19	20
21 <i>10:30 am Worship/RMMO</i>	22	23	24	25 <i>7:00 pm</i> <i>Choir Practice</i>	26	27
28 <i>10:30 am Worship/RMMO</i> <i>11:30 am Annual Meeting</i>	29	30 <i>7:00 pm</i> <i>Deacons</i>	31			

Notes: AA meets Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday at noon in Reilly Hall.

Hope Bible Baptist Church rents space Sundays, 3–7 p.m.

All calendar entries are subject to change.

January Birthdays



1	Annette Stefanini	22	Phyllis Devine
6	Linda Devine	24	Patrick Gogan
9	Jacob Gogan	25	Naomi Stanley
10	JG Omans	25	Emmit Tucker
11	Jubilee Rutherford	27	Andrew Brown
11	Charlie Poole	29	Nelson Samuel
15	Walter Ross	29	Mayda Velazco
15	Jason Rutherford	31	Lew Oxford
16	D. Paul Moore		

Update on 2024 Pledges and Budget

Many thanks to everyone who made a pledge to FBC for 2024! The Board of Administration and Finance will complete the church budget in the next couple of weeks and is grateful that we can continue to support our mission and facility in the new year. If you haven't yet submitted your pledge card with an estimate of your giving, you may contact financial secretary Neil Halbert at n.halbert@verizon.net. We at First Baptist are exemplifying the themes of showing empathy, becoming community, and walking a mile in someone else's shoes.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. – Galatians 6:2

Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering

In January, we will collect the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) during worship. Since 1935, American Baptists have taken up this offering for retired ABC ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses. This long tradition is a tangible way to show appreciation for their commitment, service, and spiritual guidance. The offering supports those who have devoted their lives to God's service by providing emergency assistance in times of need and a thank you check at the end of each year. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Executive Council News

Executive Council met via Zoom on Wednesday, December 20, 2023. Here are highlights of the meeting:

- Church signs on both Route 9 and Pleasant Street came down during the recent storm. A&F will look at replacing them (will not reuse old signs) and will be asking for a new quote with granite posts.
- Stewardship Campaign: General fund pledges are down; we have only 21 pledging units so far. Mission pledges are on track.
- Deacons fund is providing gift cards and Christmas gifts.
- Mission funds that were not distributed in 2023 (because organizations are no longer operating) are being converted into gift cards for Pastor Jason to distribute to partner ministries (Pathways, Clinton Street, Family Promise).
- Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) will be taken from January 14 to January 28.
- Streaming camera is not working. We are using the web camera so that there is Zoom on Sunday mornings. We are investigating and trying to correct the problem.
- Annual Meeting will be Sunday, January 28, 2024. Those responsible for reports should have them to Linda Devine by January 14.
- Next Executive Council meeting is January 9, 2024. Council will now meet on the second Tuesday of the month.

Members of Executive Council are Linda Devine, Kathie Zeman, Jay Reilly, Al Harrington, Lecia Shronce, Francesca Cerutti-Harris, Naomi Stanley, Lorna Mailhoit, Diane Halbert, and Pastor Jason.

Christmas Spirit at First Baptist Church

The Sunday School classes did an impressive job answering the question “Who Is Jesus to Me?” during a presentation at the service on December 10. Their teachers recorded their thoughtful, individual responses, as shown below. Following worship time, they enjoyed a delicious lunch and Christmas gifts.

Many thanks to **Ed Zeman, Naomi Stanley, Sarah Russo and the choir, and CK and Cayden Azurin** for their beautiful musical offerings during the Christmas season. Additional thanks to those who purchased poinsettias to beautify the sanctuary.



Online Worship

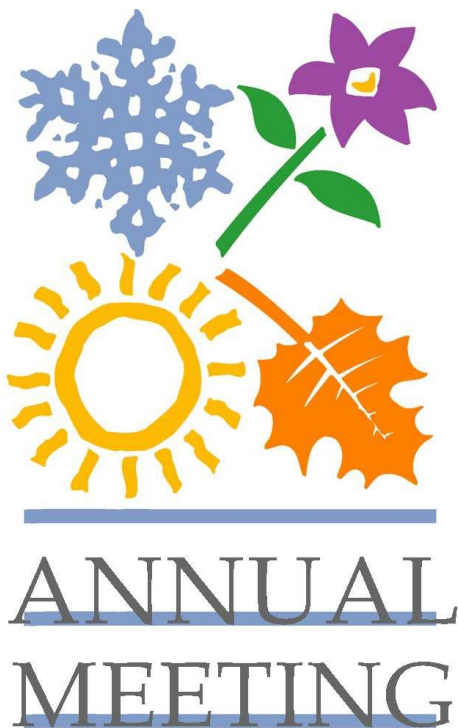
If you cannot attend worship in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings, you can always join online by going to the church website (<http://www.firstbaptistframingham.org>) and clicking the ONLINE WORSHIP button. Enter the password shown under that button, and you can be part of the service every week. Also, if the weather is severe (blizzards, hurricanes, etc.), the Pastor and the Deacons may cancel a service. Check the church website or Channel 5 TV for an announcement.

Have you moved or changed your email address?

If so, please send updates to firstbaptistframingham@gmail.com or leave word at 508-872-1176. Also, please let us know if you receive your newsletter in the mail now and would like to get it via email instead.

First Baptist Church in Framingham

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POSTING

Annual Meeting, Sunday, January 28, 2024

This is the posting for The First Baptist Church in Framingham Annual Meeting, Sunday, January 28, 2024, following the morning worship service.

The meeting will be a hybrid model with in-person and online participation. The purpose of this meeting is to receive the annual report, to elect officers and members of the Executive Council and boards to replace those whose terms have expired, to take action on the budget, and to transact such other business that may come before it.

Kathie C. Zeman, Clerk