



1 VIRGINIA STREET
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA 24201

THE FIRST WORD

April 2021

First Baptist Family,

As we celebrate Easter (in person this year!) and as more and more people get vaccinated, it feels as though we're finally and thankfully turning the page on COVID. To be clear, we're in the red zone and not the end zone so we shouldn't celebrate quite yet, but we are in the place to begin to think about what life and church will be like post-COVID. I want you to know that it's something that I, the church staff, and congregational leaders have spent a lot of time thinking about and discussing. And there are 4 things, at least for me, that keep coming up.

First, we aren't just going to go back to the way things were before. And we aren't going to do this because we can't.

This pandemic experience has changed us as a congregation. It forced us and every other church to adapt, to do things differently. It forced us to use some muscles we didn't know we had and to tap into some wells of creativity that we didn't know existed. And we have learned that such flexibility and creativity are strengths of this congregation! I don't think anyone would have listed flexibility and creativity among the many strengths of this congregation before COVID, but now, I'm hard-pressed to think of anyone who wouldn't. Flexibility and creativity are good things for churches, and consequently, we aren't going to be able to put them back into some sort of closet. Nor should we want to. Now, this doesn't mean that everything is going to be different post-COVID. We will most assuredly go back and pick up some of the things we did pre-pandemic, but one of the silver linings of this whole, awful experience is that churches don't have to keep being weighed down by the baggage that they were previously carrying. We now have the opportunity to sort through what we were forced to put down and discern if that is something we need to continue to carry with us as we move forward. That is exciting and healthy!

Second, even though we'll be able to return to a more "normal" as more people get vaccinated, the process is probably going to be slower than we'd all like.

Two basic facts lead me here. The first is that people aren't light switches. We've been told not to hug one another, to distance from one another, to wear masks around one another, etc., for over a year now. Once we get completely post-COVID (and we finally move past the period of people having to wear masks, even after vaccination), people aren't just going to be able to flip a switch and start hugging one another again, sitting next to one another again, etc. No pun intended, but people are going to need time and space to work things out personally. And we as a church need to give people the space and the grace that they need. This pandemic has not only been a physical trauma for people, but it has done an untold amount of mental and emotional damage as well. That sort of trauma can only be worked through after the physical damage is over. The second basic fact is that churches run on volunteers, which means that we won't be able to do certain things from a physical or logistical standpoint until we have enough volunteers in place to do them well. For example, re-opening the nursery requires having enough volunteers who both have been vaccinated and who feel safe being around other people's children. The same is true for every other ministry that requires volunteers in the church, which is pretty much all of them. Even though you may personally be ready for something to resume, until we have the appropriate number of volunteers in place to do it well we're going to have to go slower than people would like. And that brings me to my third point.

People are going to need the space to vent their frustrations.

By and large, we've all been apart for a year or more. People have been siloed off from one another, and the trauma from the pandemic has made us understandably angry. Anger is often the public face of fear and pain. People are going to come to church angry, not necessarily because of anything the church has or hasn't done, but because they need to vent and express what they're feeling. As excited as everyone is to return to church, we need to acknowledge that the next few months are going to be hard. And we're going to have to give people the space they need to vent their frustrations and express their anger. We're going to have to realize that we can't make everyone happy (that's not the job of the church anyway) and that because this anger probably has little to do with church, we can't take it personally. I know that's easier said than done, but all of this means that we're going to have to continue to give one another the grace we need as we all collectively heal. It also means that we're going to have to accept the grace of others when we inadvertently take our frustrations out on them.

Fourth, every church is trying to figure out a way to connect with and get more involved the people who started following them or worshipping with them online during the pandemic.

Every church is trying to figure out how to get the people online in the doors. During the pandemic, we've attempted to answer the how questions. For example, how do you give when we're physically apart? How can you participate in online worship? How can you still attend Sunday School virtually?

Post-COVID though, we're going to need to answer two other questions – what and why.

Why should I give? Why should I attend in person if I can watch worship online? Why should I get involved with in small groups and things like Sunday School or Wednesday night? And to attempt to answer these why questions, we're going to be starting something new in worship. After the welcome each week, we're going to have a minute where we address these questions. The topics are going to rotate each week, but we're going to have a Stewardship Minute, a Missions Minute, a Ministry Minute, and a Discipleship Minute. These minutes are going to address things we're doing as a church. We're trying to be more intentional about sharing information with people.

And we believe that when people know what their tithes are going towards, what some tangible ways they can serve are, what some easy ways they can get plugged into the life of the church are, and what they can do to grow spiritually, well, we believe that the why questions that people have will be answered.

I have long thought that we had the potential as a church to come out of COVID stronger than we went in, and I still believe that to be the case.

The next few months will be difficult, but if we give people the space and the grace they need, if we accept the challenge before us as an opportunity to use some of our newly discovered strengths, and if we answer the why and what questions people have and give them reasons to come in person and get involved, I believe stronger is exactly what we'll be.

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

Grace and Peace,
Kris

*A Gift Card Shower
In honor of the
Bride-To-Be*

Emma Crussell

*The month of April 2021;
Drop off your gift card in the
basket located in the main
office at First Baptist Bristol.*

*Peyton and Emma are
Registered at
Target & Bed, Bath,
and Beyond,
but all gift cards will be
greatly appreciated.*



Donations of videocassettes for children and families and books for teens and youth were received from Ben and Marilyn Butler and Leigh Clark during the months of February and March. Among these are videos: *Where the Red Fern Grows* (a story for all ages), *The Lion King, Babe,* and *The Last Rainforest.* Books include The Christy Miller Collection by Robin Jones Gunn--bks. 1 - 9: *A Whisper and a Wish, A Heart Full of Hope, True Friends, & Seventeen Wishes.* There is also *Christy & Todd: the College Years;* plus the Sierra Jensen Collection, Vol. 1-4. Non-fiction, "How To," books for teens were placed in the Youth Department. Puzzles suitable for youth and adults, *Welcome to the Lake* and *Garden Friends* are newly available, also.

May Tabor



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This year's theme shares how our church can extend a lasting hope and loving hospitality in very real ways to refugees, people living in poverty, and marginalized families and children around the world through your gifts. The mission Jesus gave us to share the Gospel to all nations has never been more important than it is now. In these days of pandemic, our field personnel are called to minister to and help meet the urgent, critical, and ever-emerging needs in the communities in which our church lives and serves

Contributions can me made to CBF or Annie Armstrong.

2021 FBC Lent Schedule

Maundy Thursday Thursday, April 1	Drop-In Communion Service 6:00-7:00 p.m.
Good Friday Friday, April 2	Tenebrae Service 6:00-7:00 p.m.
Holy Saturday Saturday, April 3	Egg Coloring and Easter Egg Hunt 2:00-4:00 p.m. Toddlers-5th Graders
Easter Sunday Sunday, April 4	Ecumenical Sunrise Service— East Hill Cemetery at 7:30 a.m. Worship Service 11:00 a.m. "Salvific Silence & the Gospel Shout" Mark 16: 1-8



Our **Quarterly Business Meeting** will be held at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 25 via zoom. According to our church's by-laws, chairs of teams and boards are asked to give a quarterly report of the group's activities. The report can be either written or oral. If the report is written, please give a copy to the church office so copies can be made for the membership. Please submit the report no later than April 21. The information you share will be helpful in keeping the membership informed of what is happening in our church.



FBC Youth Ministry

Youth Camp "University" 2021
Maryville College, Maryville TN
July 27-31

Dates are July 27-31! Registration is open now! Cost is \$100 to register (refundable) and \$100 due the week of camp. We are having fundraising opportunities between now and camp that can offset your total cost. We will be observing safe practices during camp to keep our folks safe from Covid risks. Fill out our FBC registration form and medical release to save your spot for "University" 2021!



Getting Together

Youth Wednesdays and Sunday Events!
Our youth are invited to Wednesday evening Bible study and games every Wednesday from 6:00-7:30 p.m. We are working within the latest COVID safety guidelines and spending quality time together!!! On Sunday afternoons, we are either working on a local mission project or having a group building activity. Look for details in our weekly emails!!! See you soon!!!

Sunday, April 11, 2021

SERVICE PROJECT AND LUNCH

The youth will need to meet at the church at 12:30 to leave for our first local service project.

We will have lunch afterwards at FBC.
The Church will provide the meal.



Notes From Leigh

It seems that spring has finally sprung!! Isn't it wonderful to see

It is also wonderful to be back in worship together. I'm certain that our attendance will continue to increase as more people are vaccinated. I am looking forward to hearing all of you "make a joyful noise" during worship soon! The choir has been so faithful through all these months. I am so grateful for each of them.

I would invite you to consider joining the music ministry. If you choose to join the music ministry team, you will be welcomed and included and loved on by a special group of people. I am very interested in knowing of your talents and interests in the areas of music. Do you play an instrument or sing or would you like to learn? Feel free to reach out

Please continue in prayer for our Long Range Planning Teams. If you have not done so already, please take a few minutes to complete the congregational survey – it's never too late to share your ideas!



We wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to Stephanie Elliott. She has been the coordinator of the Meals on Wheels program

for the past 6 years at FBB. Adrienne Osborne has assumed the role as coordinator for the M.O.W. program. Likewise, we are grateful to her for taking on this responsibility to help deliver meals to 50 individuals once a month.

If you are interested in volunteering the 4th Thursday morning of each month, email Adrienne at Adrienne.o@outlook.com or phone her at 423.946.0223.

An update on dad and mom: dad's cancer is being aggressive. When I saw them in March, he was in a lot of pain.

Mom is carrying a pretty heavy burden. The doctor has prescribed 10 radiation treatments in addition to his chemo. They tell me over and over how grateful they are for your cards and prayers. The first trip they plan to take is to Bristol! They want to meet you and thank you in person.

I can't wait for you to meet them.



Blessings, Leigh

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
Mr. Rob Griswell-Lowry.....Organist

Ms. Kaitlyn Courtney.....Sexton
Mr. Dennis Thomas.....Sexton
Ms. Kaitlyn Courtney.....Sexton
Mrs. Marcine Robinette.....Parish Nurse
Ms. Terri Thomas.....Church Administrator
and Financial Secretary
Ms. Niki Judy.....Administrative Assistant



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Hours: info@fbcbristol.org
Website: www.fbcbristol.org



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

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FBC Minister On-Call Schedule

April 3-4: Dr. Kris Aaron (803) 225-0795
April 10-11: Rev. Ben Ondrak (423) 217-8934
April 17-18: Dr. Kris Aaron (803) 225-0795
March 24-25: Rev. Ben Ondrak (423) 217-8934

Deacon of the Week for April:

April 4, 2021	Preston McMurray
April 11, 2021	Jordan Pennington
April 18, 2021	Brad Talbert
April 25, 2021	Roberta Yowell