



July 15 - August 15, 2020

First Things

A Monthly Newsletter for Members and Friends

Who We Are: FBC: Where every person matters and relationships with God and neighbors grow.

What We Do: We are learning to live the life that Jesus would live if Jesus were living our life through:

- *meaningful worship and study*
- *valuing and loving others through service*
- *embracing God's created diversity*
- *intentional connections to our community*
- *caring for one another through all of life*



Rev. Lara Escoffre joined our pastoral staff, in December 2012, as the Pastor of Preaching and Teaching; in June 2015, Lara transitioned into the role of **Lead Pastor**. Lara has a passion for preaching and teaching God's word and for walking with people as they discover who God has created them to be. Lara is active in the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, Mid-Michigan Health Advisory Council, and Faithwalking. She and her husband, Laurent, have three children: Lola, Chloe and Devin.

PRAYER PARTNERS

Nate Poland's granddaughter has been experiencing some symptoms of the coronavirus. Please pray for Nate and his granddaughter.

If you know of other folks in our church who need special prayer, please contact the church office by phone: 835-6731 or by email: office@midlandfbc.com.

LEAD PASTOR

When we took on the task last fall of living into this year's theme of "Living our Christ-formed lives within our community," we had no idea what was ahead of us. Little did we know, as we began to ask how we could be transformed by the Community Story study, that what it meant to be "community" was about to change. While "being in community" has long meant being accessible to one another face to face, face to face interaction has not been possible these past few months. Yet, I am proud to see the ways we have continued to be the FBC we were called to be even in these uncertain times. The FBC where "Every person matters and relationships with God and neighbors grow."

While we have been separated from one another physically, members of our Congregational Care team (Lois Crosby, Roger and Louise Bergmann, Dave Hitchcock, Mark Neil, Victor Atiemo-Obeng, Lanny Robbins, and Don Raetz) reached out via the telephone to check and see if anyone had needs and to let people know they were not alone. Thank you so much to this group for the hours you spent making those calls and caring for one another. One of those callers was told by one church member that, they "hadn't felt so connected to the church in a long time." After the flood, dozens of church members responded to the needs identified through these phone calls (and requests for assistance that came into the church office). Countless hours have been spent assisting neighbors and friends of the church in the clean up and recovery work following the flood. All of this work reminds me of what a blessing FBC is as the body of Christ in this community.

In addition to the Congregational Care team, a worship team was formulated to bring us together for meaningful worship on Sunday mornings. This team had a steep learning curve having to quickly learn the "ins and outs" of new computer programs, with little training. Thank you to the other team members: Allen Ross, Ceonni Williams, and Karen Boucher.

FBC is fortunate to have so many dedicated and amazing leaders, which is why (with the blessing of Team Network) I will begin Sabbatical on Monday, July 20th. I am greatly looking forward to this period of renewal and growth as I engage in several retreats, work with a coach, and worship at other community churches. In addition, I am excited to begin researching and developing a resource to assist our church leader's growth as we seek to affirm our church's "Who We Are" and "What We Do" statements, and the learning of the Community story Study. I will develop a resource which will become part of my Doctor of Ministry degree project.

As I shared at the Annual meeting, during my sabbatical many of the tasks associated with my role as pastor will be assumed by our church staff and church leaders, including : Shelley Page, Lois Crosby, Jo Clarke, Jenn Hitchcock, Barb Neil, Karen Walker-Freeburg, Karen Boucher, Allen Ross, Dave Pellegrom, and Mark Neil. If you have questions about the specific roles, please feel free to email Shelley at office@midlandfbc.com she will send you a copy of the sabbatical proposal which was distributed during the Annual meeting.

You may recall my asking, in the early Spring, for everyone to consider taking the opportunity to share their own story of faith during Sunday morning worship during my absence. Understanding that this can feel a bit overwhelming, I have set aside some time over these next few weeks to meet with individuals and walk with them in developing a message: their story. So many of you have amazing stories of faith and relationship with God. I know that the privilege of hearing your stories has the potential to be an amazing and transformative time for our entire congregation. Rather than think of this as being invited to preach, think of the opportunity as a moment in time to simply share what God has meant and done in your life.

With all that said, I want to thank First Baptist for this opportunity. I have seen God do amazing things at FBC over the last few years. We have witnessed Take Note grow as an outreach tool in this community. We have taken the time to discern who God is calling us to be and we have engaged our community through research and relationship. We have had difficult discussions and learned that we love and respect one another and our diversity as a church community.

It has been quite a ride, especially this past year with the pandemic and historic flood... yet: God has blessed us!

It is my prayer that this season of rest and growth will offer me new insights into who I am as a leader and who God is calling our congregation to be. God has been with us and clearly guiding us these last few years. I am confident that He will continue to do so, and we will experience joy in seeing how He has been building us, all along, for the next leg of the journey.

I look forward to the opportunities ahead to build into our leadership and develop even more relationships and partnerships with our community. God bless and keep you.

~Rev. Lara Escoffre

SABBATICAL CONTACTS

Pastor Lara will be on Sabbatical
July 20 - October 25, 2020

The following is the list of who to contact during Pastor Lara's sabbatical:

- **Worship Planning** will be done by **Ceonni Williams** along with the week's "preacher"
- **Care visits** to elderly/shut-ins, regular members, visitors and members in hospital will be coordinated by:
 - Hospital and Shut-In visits: **Lois Crosby**
 - Celebration Receptions: **Jo Clarke and Jenn Hitchcock**
 - Funeral meals and meals for the sick: **Barb Neil**
 - Connection with Visitors: **Karen Walker-Freeburg**
- Any funerals which happen during this time will be planned and officiated by **Rev. Dr. Karen Walker-Freeburg** or **Rev. Dr. Karen Boucher**. If the deceased person's family wishes to request that Rev. David Brown do the funeral, they will be asked to use the regular protocol of asking Rev. Dr. Karen Walker Freeburg or Rev. Dr. Karen Boucher's blessing to do so.
- The **sermon** series during the sabbatical will be individuals sharing their stories of faith.
- **Sunday School Teaching** will be developed by **CE Team**
- **Enhanced Spiritual Care team** will continue to be directed by **Mark Neil and Lois Crosby**
- **Shelley** will be the contact person for the **Christian Care Fund**. She will then direct the individual to Cheri King.
- **Rev. Dr. Karen Boucher and Rev. Dr. Karen Walker Freeburg will be available for one to two meetings with individuals who feel they need pastoral care**. If more care is needed or if they feel that they are not equipped to deal with the situation, they will refer the person(s) to Fresh Aire Samaritan Counseling Center.
- **Concerns about the life of the congregation** will be referred to **Dave Pellegrom** and addressed by the appropriate Team Network chair and team

In addition, if during Pastor Lara's sabbatical, the governor of Michigan reinstates a "**stay at home**" order for this region of the state, the following plan go into effect:

- 1) **Team Network will initiate weekly Zoom meetings** in order to manage and lead the ministries of the congregation;
 - 2) the **Corona Virus Transition Team will continue in their current monitoring of the Corona Virus**, and research in regard to best practices for church communities, and provide recommendations to Team Network;
- and
- 3) the **church office manager, Shelley, and Allen Ross will coach staff and speakers in the use of Zoom and Facebook Live**, as needed, and manage technology use for worship.

FROM THE DESK OF KAREN BOUCHER

Today I had the opportunity to drive to Clare to visit a Hospice patient. This was my last visit of the day and I was hot and tired. During the drive I was praying for the energy to be present for this family. It didn't take long for the Holy Spirit to remind me to look at the view. I was quite a few miles off US10 and riding through farm country, fruit stands, maple syrup stands, Amish buggy's, and lots and lots of yards with clothes on lines blowing in the wind. I just love to see clothes blowing on the line because it brings me back to a time when my grandmother and I would hang-out the laundry in the morning, then begin running errands for the day. Many hours later we would take it off the lines smelling of salt air (we lived on the river open to the bay), folded, then making the bed quickly so we had that wonderful smell when we went to bed. All these memories occurred because of a simple prayer of "prepare me Lord to be present." When I arrived at the home I was relaxed and ready for this visit, and made sure I thanked God for this time.

Being present isn't always easy as it takes work. Listening takes work. Not interrupting takes work. Understanding another's opinion, vision, and purpose takes work. I say this because the same prayer I said in the car today is what I also pray prior to being with the youth. The youth have started the summer series of "Tuesday's Together" where we meet from 6:00–8:00 p.m. for food and fellowship. We had previously met on Tuesday's via Zoom, but since many restrictions have been lifted, we now gather for outside activities. Being present for youth isn't always easy but oh so worth the work.

It amazes me what interests them, the questions they ask, the pure joy they have in being together, and hearing them support and teach one another. They too want to be present in their understanding of what is going on in the world, country, and community. They want to know when they can go back to school. They want to know how faith works. And they are sad because there's no Camp Lake Louise this summer. My hope is in these gatherings to be present and give each youth the time needed to share, to truly listen and give each one time to share. I want them to know that I am not only present but also respect them as well. I believe by doing this I can show, by example, what it means to be a young Christian in this ever-changing world. My goal is for them to always be learning, learning about themselves, learning about others and how their views and faith effect their lives, and learning what it truly means to be a follower of Christ.

If you would like to be a host (having the youth at your home) or host a meeting at my home, please don't hesitate to call or e-mail. The host can offer a meal, games, and devotions – which ever you are comfortable. It's an opportunity to be present for these wonderful youth who could see other adults live out their faith.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Christian Education Team continues to work on the training and safe church program, with hopes of offering this in late August. We will be meeting in a couple of weeks to determine the next step as we so want to offer this but want people to be safe.

The Team also decided that since worship is now at 10:00 a.m., Sunday School will be offered from 11:15–12:15. It's just 15 minutes later than the usual time we end, although some classes just go to 12:15 anyway, and I'm not naming and names.....Mark and Karen WF.

Working together to build God's Kingdom,
Karen

FBC Church Services and Functions may be Videotaped for Shut-in distribution and broadcast on MCTV.
If you are interested in viewing our services, they will be broadcast on Charter Cable MCTV digital box
Channel 191 on Wednesdays at 5:30PM and on Thursdays at 2:00PM.
Church services in video format may also be viewed at <http://www.awincm.com/church-movies/>

August-Septemer Newsletter deadline is August 10.

YOUTH NEWS

We have two more dates scheduled this summer to meet at the park:

Emerson Park - Sunday, July 19. (Karen Boucher is Hosting) We will gather from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. If your youth needs a ride please let me know by noon time on Sunday so I can coordinate as needed. (Karen Boucher will be hosting this event.)

Plymouth Park – Sunday, August 16. (OPEN FOR HOST!) We will gather from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. If your youth needs a ride please let me know by noon time on Sunday so I can coordinate as needed. (If your yard is too small, this is a great way to host a youth fellowship gathering.)

We are also offering **Tuesday's Together** once again this summer. However, due to my working full-time and the virus we will need to become very creative. My hope is that we could meet at someone's home for cookout, campfire, bike ride, hikes, kites, whatever your home has room for or your favorite activity to share with our youth. Heck, if you have a trampoline they are good 😊. We did this last year and the kids had a great time. Again, it doesn't need to be fancy, the time together is what's important. I also know that many parents work so we will keep the time to 6–8:00 p.m.

Scheduled Tuesday's Together from 6-8:00:

- July 14 - Youth @ Karen Walker-Freeburg's
- July 21 - Youth @ Steib's Home in Freeland
- July 28 - Youth with Ross' Family at Plymouth Park
- August 4 - Youth @ OPEN FOR HOST!!!
- August 11 - Youth @ OPEN FOR HOST!!!
- August 18 - Youth @ Barden's
- August 25 - Youth @ Karen Boucher's

WE HAVE GREAT YOUTH – PLEASE HOST AND GET TO KNOW THEM!

Please contact me or the Office if you are able to be a host!!!

Karen Boucher



CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Serving with Love



ENHANCED SPIRITUAL CARE

Do you know someone that needs one-on-one care? FBC has a group who is committed to calling on members on a regular basis. That group is known as **Enhanced Spiritual Care (ESC)**, a dedicated and caring group of folks who provide care with a high level of confidentiality. Members of the ESC are assigned to one member of the church who would benefit from regular visitors. This ministry is available for anyone who would like an assigned person to call on them; they do not have to be a shut-in, just someone who needs a listening ear. So, do you know someone or are someone who would like to avail yourself of someone from this group? If so, please advise Pastor Lara Escoffre, and she will match this person with one of the ESC members.

SHUT-INS

Have an hour free this month? Consider visiting one of our Shut-Ins!

Marjory Freeburg 989-687-4568
Meridian Acres, 2905 N. Meridian Rd, Sanford, MI 48657

Joyce Phillips 989-832-2940
40 Rosemary Court, Midland, MI 48640

Nate Poland 989-941-9800
c/o 1200 Adams St - Apt 1, Saginaw, MI 48602

Ruthie O'Dell 989-259-7303
Brookdale Assisted Living, 4004 Waldo Ave, Midland 48642

Bruce Rogers 989-878-1844
Colonial Villa, 5007 Universal Dr, Midland, MI 48640

Shirley Sevener 989-832-3010
4815 Russell St, Midland, MI 48640



We'd like to send Warm Birthday & Anniversary Wishes

July BIRTHDAYS

- 6 Lola Heise
Jake Wang
- 9 Ed Clark
- 9 Catherine Wang
- 10 Krista Moe
- 11 Ron Cary
- 13 Ken Shillair
- 18 Cameron Lippoldt
- 19 Colleen Ross
- 20 Jenn Hitchcock
Diana Holmes
- 22 Charles McCourt
- 24 Andrew Neil
- 25 Amy Barden
- 28 Lois Crosby
Andrew Wong
- 30 Briella Oelberg
- 31 Pat McCourt

August BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Tesla Oelberg
- 2 Ellason Barden
- 5 Su-Ching Lee
- 17 Jeffrey Phillips
- 19 Olivia Clark
- 20 Victoria Neil
- 22 Becky Hodges
- 23 Brad Barden
- 23 Gale Bradish
- 23 Gloria Decker
- 23 Vicki Walter
- 28 Ying Sun
- 29 Chris Moe
- 31 Donna McKinnon



July ANNIVERSARIES

- 5 True & Marci Rogers
- 13 Preston & Karolea Streeter
- 14 Jake & Catherine Wang
- 23 Mark & Barb Neil
- 26 Gary & Christina Gibson
- 28 Brendon & Kerry Smith

August ANNIVERSARIES

- 4 Harry & Cathy Steib
- 5 Jeff & Joyce Phillips
- 24 Ben & Lacey Schultz
- 27 John & Vicki Walter



CALENDAR - 2020

Regular Schedule

ABIDING SCRIPTURES

JULY - HEBREWS 11:23-28
AUGUST - HEBREWS 11:29-40

Sundays	9:30 AM	Worship Service - Communion Service is the 1 st Sunday of each month
Mondays	6:30 PM	Team Network Mtg-Media Rm - 2nd Monday
Tuesdays	7:30 AM	Men's Breakfast at M's Café at 5103 Eastman Rd.
	5:30 PM	Stewardship & Finance Meeting - 3rd Tuesday
Wednesdays	6:15 PM	Property Management Meeting - Media Rm - 1st Wednesday
	7:00 PM	Enhanced Spiritual Care (Stephen Min.) - Media Rm - 3rd Wednesday
Saturdays	9AM-2PM	FBC Serves at Open Door - 2nd Saturday

Date Time Special Event

Sometime in the coming months, our services will switch from Zoom & Facebook to YouTube Live. YouTube does not require a membership account, like Facebook, and it will allow for better audio/video quality than Zoom Live does.

Jul 19	10:00 AM	Worship Service @ FBC / via ZOOM & Facebook Live
Jul 21	6-8:00 PM	Youth - Tuesday's Together @ Steib's in Freeland
Jul 26	10:00 AM	Worship Service @ FBC / via ZOOM & Facebook Live
Jul 28	6-8:00 PM	Youth - Tuesday's Together w/Ross Family @ Plymouth Park
Aug 2	10:00 AM	Worship Service @ FBC / via ZOOM & Facebook Live
Aug 4	6-8:00 PM	Youth - Tuesday's Together - OPEN FOR HOST!
Aug 9	10:00 AM	Worship Service @ FBC / via ZOOM & Facebook Live
Aug 11	6-8:00 PM	Youth - Tuesday's Together - OPEN FOR HOST!
Aug 16	10:00 AM	Worship Service @ FBC / via ZOOM & Facebook Live
	6-8:00 PM	Youth Activity at Plymouth Park - OPEN FOR HOST!
Aug 18	6-8:00 PM	Youth - Tuesday's Together @ Barden's
Aug 23	10:00 AM	Worship Service @ FBC / via ZOOM & Facebook Live
Aug 25	6-8:00 PM	Youth - Tuesday's Together @ Karen Boucher's
Aug 30	10:00 AM	Worship Service @ FBC / via ZOOM & Facebook Live

Chaz and Helga Mortensen

Our biggest news for this month is the upcoming marriage of our youngest daughter Laura to Matt Perrin. The big day is July 11 in Kalamazoo, with a greatly reduced guest list. The Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc with carefully laid-out plans, but Laura and Matt decided to stick with the date and adjust. We will be celebrating at a local church with a lovely outdoor space and air-conditioning when needed. Weather forecast is looking HOT. We appreciate your prayers as all the last-minute details come together. We have enjoyed getting acquainted with Matt over the past few years and we look forward to welcoming him to the family.



In Colombia

Chaz currently has no active consulting work with Bible translation teams. His role in the translation projects is either completed or delayed by Covid-related issues. One thing he has been doing in the mean time is to record psalms he previously translated into the Embera language and post them for a Facebook group.

As he was looking through Facebook for Emberas to invite to the group, he found an Embera from Colombia and invited him. This man sent a message back **asking for prayer** because his 12-year-old daughter was hospitalized with leukemia and they had to leave their home because two subversive groups had a firefight in their village. He also said that he and another Embera we know had preached the Gospel in all of the villages in their river system. **Please pray** that the Lord would honor his faithfulness with healing and peace.

Dear Friends at First Baptist:

It's so good to see that you are all continuing in ministry and fellowship through technology. This has been a time of serious challenges, hasn't it? We are able to continue our work in Bible translation remotely, as it has been mostly remote for a number of years. Chaz's travel plans are on hold, of course, but he's able to keep in regular touch with translators and colleagues. Our local church ministries look very different as well. Thank you for your annual partnership with us in this ministry. You encourage and bless us with your support and prayers. May we all keep on the path, following God's leading in these strange times!

In Christ's love, Helga & Chaz Mortensen



- Pray that the 8 translation projects in Guatemala can move forward despite restrictions.
- Pray for two Colombian missionaries to learn as much about the Embera language as they can while in lockdown.
- Pray for the Lord's help in Chaz's intensive Hebrew course in August.
- Pray for comfort for a Translator's Notes team member in a difficult family situation
- Praise for the upcoming wedding
- Pray for a joyful day for Laura and Matt
- Praise for good reception of the Psalms in Embera
- Praise for progress in the Translator's Notes team decisions and training in Paratext.
- Praise for progress in virtual skills and application

MIDLAND COUNTY EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY NETWORK MOBILE PANTRY

and receive free food to help supplement your family's pantry.

Date: **Thursday – July 23rd, 2020**

Registration Time: 9:00 a.m.

Distribution Time: 11:30 a.m.

Location: **Assumption of the Blessed
Virgin Mary Church
3516 E Monroe Rd – Midland**

**Please stay in your car. Registration and the Distribution of food will be done in your car
Please be patient as we use this procedure in order to keep everyone safe.**