



March 15 - April 15, 2019

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 Freeburg 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 has two children: Lola and Devin.



Scrapbooker's

9AM – 5PM

Ladies: Bring your craft project, knitting, etc., and join us!

Invite your friends & neighbors!!!

**Thursday & Friday
March 21 & 22**

LEAD PASTOR

“But, I’ve already given up so much!” The thought kept repeating in my mind and it was beginning to distract me from listening to the others in the class. Finally, it was my turn. “I have to confess,” I started, “I am really struggling with the spiritual discipline of fasting.” I stopped for a moment to try and calm my thoughts, but it didn’t seem to work, so I continued, “I gave up sweets over a decade ago. What else does God want me to give up?” The question came out with the intensity that I felt but had been trying to hide.

I looked around, and to my horror, noticed that my fellow students seemed a bit shocked at my question. My teacher, on the other hand, seemed unsurprised by my query. Instead, he responded to my question with another question, “What makes you think that you aren’t already living a lifestyle of fasting?” In that moment the voice that had been screaming “Don’t take anything else away!” was silenced. Could it be, that while everyone else was searching for how they could draw closer to God by giving something else, this was a life lesson that I already practiced?

This experience came to mind this past week as I prepared for the beginning of the Lenten season (Ash Wednesday was March 6.) For weeks I had been struggling with what it was that I would “give up” for the forty days of Lent, a traditional Christian practice which I have adopted since seminary. As I went through the list of possibilities something just didn’t feel right. It was through this memory that I wondered if I, again, had missed the point. Spiritual disciplines are created to help us grow in our relationship with God, they are meant to challenge us. But they are not supposed to create expectations that cause guilt when they can’t be met. Suddenly, I found myself asking a different question: what would help me grow this Lenten season?

The sermon series for Lent, called “Thy Kingdom Come,” is a look at Jesus’ challenge through the “Sermon on the Mount” to live the lives that God intended His people to live; or as I am calling them “kingdom lives.” In my life, there are practices that I can easily push aside, in my busy-ness, which help me be present to God in order to live that kingdom life. What if, I wondered, instead of giving something up this season, I decided to put effort into making the time for these practices?

Perhaps you haven’t given much thought to the Lenten season. (In the Protestant church, you wouldn’t be alone.) But if you are willing, I would invite you to consider what practices in your life give you “life” and draw you closer to the life that God calls you to live. What if you made a commitment for these short few weeks, just until Easter, to either remove something that stands in the way of these practices or to add something to your life which draws you closer to God and to the life He called you to live?

~Rev. Lara Freeburg

A NOTE FROM OUR EDUCATION DIRECTOR

My last article shared of my excitement on the “places we will go” here at FBC. Well, I’m happy to share that although we haven’t physically gone anywhere, we are indeed moving ahead in seeking God’s purpose with regards to the educational aspect here at First Baptist. "What’s in the works at this time?"

I’m beginning to finalize the steps involved in a training program in “Preventing Child Abuse in a Ministry Environment.” This training will also include a background check for all volunteers in order to keep our children and youth safe, and comply with insurance needs.

Our youth have enjoyed a wonderful “Great Escape” with the Jim and Deb Hitt in January. In February, between all those snow days, the middlers and children are having a great time participating in Take Note. They come in with all their energy, honestly running to rehearsal and devotion time. A HUGE thank you to the many volunteers who makes this a wonderful Godly experience. If you’re not sure who they are; Louise and Roger Bergman, Bobbie Baker, Cindy Wong, Barb Neil, Sharon Houghton-Ross, Karen Walker Freeburg, Ceonni Williams, and John and Vicki Walter. I know I have enjoyed helping with the youth devotions these past weeks.

The Middler’s Youth have a tentative schedule of activities through August. Some of the activities include:

- Take Note children and youth to participate in worship on March 10
- Game night is also scheduled for March
- Annie – the play as our very own Tyler Steib has a role
- A biking – with ice cream
- Two days on the lake
- And several youth attending camp Lake Louise

The next step is to find several volunteers who are willing to use their home to host a movie night. The room will need to accommodate at least 6 people where we will be able to gather together, watch a movie and then follow it with discussion. Please call or send a note if you are open to sharing your home.

After Easter my hope will be to begin our Book Club, where we will gather monthly to review and discuss a chosen book.

And we are just getting started!

In Service together,

Karen Boucher

150th ANNIVERSARY CLEAN UP

The 150th Anniversary Planning Team in conjunction with the Property Management Team, have scheduled "Clean Up" days in preparation of this Anniversary! Join us on April 7 and May 19!

The next scheduled 150th Anniversary after Sunday School clean up date is April 7. Everyone, please bring your cleaning supplies and, again, as you did before, bring your organizational skills.

There will be a light lunch provided. A donation is suggested for the lunch as this is one of the ways the committee is raising some funds for the anniversary celebration.

~Lois Crosby, on behalf of the 150th Anniversary Planning Committee: Kathy Williams Pellegrom, Linda A-O, Sharon Bussell-Cooper, Lois Crosby, Lara Freeburg, Pat McCourt, Sue McCallum Funk, Jan Martz, Barb Neil, Shelley Page, Sharon Houghton-Ross, Leona Seamster, Cindy Wong

PRAYER PARTNERS

For those that grieve: The families of Wilbur Seamster and Nate Bacon, and the Richard Family (loss of Nicole's aunt).

For the health needs of many of our church family: Thayer Bradish (recovery), Sharon Cooper-Bussell (surgery recovery), Bob Hodges (tests), Ruthie O'Dell, Joyce Phillips, Anne Poindexter, Lorraine Raetz (wrist infection), Andrea Ross (numbness), Shirley Sevener (heart failure), Lou Stickney (hospice), Rena Walker (recovery), Marcia Williams, Bob Winchester (recovery)

And the needs of loved ones: Acacia (Walter's granddaughter), Tyler Jenkins (Raetz' great-grandson-epilepsy), Lewis King (cancer), Mel Lewis (Poindexter grand-niece), Rick Raetz (cancer/surgery), Tim Richard (leukemia), Lanny Robbins' granddaughter's family & foster child, Ben Schultz' mom (cancer), Lee Sperry (surgery recovery), Sue Trombley (S. Page's mom - cancer), John Yuill (Acoustic Neuroma brain tumor)

And the needs of Friends: Mike Dahley (recovery), Pat Hintz's friend (cancer), Peter Mortensen (cancer), Patty Zurba (cancer - friend of Kathy Burch)

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.



In Preparation of FBC's 150th Anniversary, Kathy Williams Pellegrom thought to share this with us:

A MUSTARD SEED STORY

by Joseph I. Mortensen

in 1976, members of First Baptist Church of Midland decided to sponsor a refugee family from Laos for resettlement in the United States. Little did the church realize what impact their reaching out in Christ's name would have. Now, twenty-five years later,¹ a truly amazing story can be told.

Once the congregation had committed to sponsorship things unfolded quickly. Very late on a cold, rainy April night in 1976 church member Larry Williams and I, at that time pastor of First Baptist Church, drove to Tri-City Airport (now MBS) to welcome a family of five to the United States. Here they were, husband, wife, a two-year-old son, a baby daughter, and the husband's mother. Everything in the world they could call their own was in a suitcase and three enormous bags piled on the floor of the terminal. Clothed for living in the warm clime of a Thailand refugee camp, the new arrivals shivered in Michigan's early spring weather. We greeted them awkwardly, immediately relieved to find that Kao Chiem Chao spoke English fluently. He and his family, having come straight from Bangkok via Seattle,² were very tired and hungry. We stuffed them and their belongings into Larry's big van, drove into Midland, and stopped at the 24 hour Lil' Chef restaurant for hamburgers. By 1:30 or 2:00 am. we settled them into temporary quarters in one room of -- appropriately enough -- the Gateway Motel on North Saginaw Road (long since torn down).

Within a short time church members located an apartment on Carpenter St. The Chao family moved in and began something approaching normal life. Church members provided assistance of all kinds: transportation, shopping, friendship, household goods, and funds to get them started. A little later on the family moved to a more suitable apartment at Tek Circle.

Kao joined the church staff as a custodian. The job provided both an income and health insurance. He quickly proved a good worker. His wife Chua began to learn how

to shop and started English lessons. Kao's mother Koy had the hardest time of any of the family adjusting to life in Midland. She bore the marks of tribal life with her filed teeth and traditional garb. Outside her family she had no one to talk to. It was a very strange, lonely existence for her.

About fifteen months after coming to Midland Kao told me that members of his clan (the Mien or lu-Mien people) had settled in Portland, OR, and wondered if he could drive to Portland for the weekend to check on this. He was not the first to underestimate distances in the US. I offered to help him and his mother fly to Portland so they could see for themselves. They made the trip, but for his mother it was one-way. She never returned to Midland. Kao, of course, did and began to plan to move his family.

During this period a member of the church had died. His widow did not drive and wondered what to do with the Chevy Nova she had on her hands. It became the answer to transporting the Chaos to Portland. She donated the car to the church, and the church gave it to Kao and Chua. So in September, 1977, they set out for the five plus day trip to Portland, full of regret at leaving good friends but looking forward to being with a community of Mien people. On their way west they stayed overnight with my parents in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

After that we heard from Kao from time to time. He wrote or called to tell us how things were for them. We were delighted to hear that he and Chua had become Christians, been baptized, and joined a church.³ They let us know that they had good jobs and were doing well. As the months and years passed, contact became less and less frequent, although we always received a Christmas card.

Then in January of 2001, I received an email from Kao, inviting my wife Kathy and me to Portland at the end of April to help celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of their coming to the United States. He had also invited former Midlanders Jim and Marcia Pierce, members of First Baptist Church, and dear friends. It didn't take long for us to decide to go. In his email Kao said he had invited three to five hundred people, including some of the US military people he had worked with in Laos during the Viet Nam war.

Even before we left for Portland the surprises in this story would begin. We were to be lodged there in a motel owned by Kao and Chua. I thought to myself, "Well, I guess they've done pretty well." Little did I know. When we arrived in Portland Kao greeted us at the airport. Although it was very late he took us to a Chinese restaurant where others waited for us, including Chua, no longer the girl in her early twenties (at most) we had scarcely known, but a confident woman speaking English like a native-born American.

In bits and pieces we began to learn the astounding story of Kao and Chua's journey from refugee camp to the United States. The Mien people viewed the United States as a dangerous, even deadly place where they dare not go. Americans, they believed, were hairy giants, cannibals, who would pickle the Mien and eat them. Kao, however, had known some Americans, CIA and USAID advisers he had worked with in the

battle against the Communist Pathet Lao. One of these Americans, by then working at the US. Embassy in Thailand, urged Kao to move to the States. Life in Thailand held little promise for the Mien. They were outsiders and always would be. They could hope for nothing more than the hardest and most menial work with little reward. They dare not return to Laos because of Kao's work for the US. Jack Huxtable, one of the Americans (whom we met), told Kao that even starting at the bottom, sweeping floors, he could make far more than ever he could dream. Kao was fluent in English.⁴ He did the math and awaited word that there was a place for him and his family in the United States.

The word came. They could go, but they had to do it immediately. Chua had gone off for the day to do some sewing work, so Kao tried without success to borrow a car or a bike to find her and tell her the news. When she returned he told her to pack. They had to leave -- now -- no questions, no discussion, no waiting.

Kao said, as he bid goodbye to his people in Thailand, "If you don't hear from me, you'll know we are dead." Six months after arriving in Midland he sent a cassette tape to his friends back in the refugee camp in Thailand. He told them how he and Chua and their family had been welcomed, how people had been so good to them, "treated like family."

Until we went to Portland, we did not know the singular importance of their move to the US. Kao and Chua were the very first Mien to leave everything and everybody to come to the U.S., the first of some forty-thousand Mien to immigrate.⁵ We also learned that there was no "community" of Mien people in Portland when the Chaos moved there. There was one other family, the second to come to the U.S. All of the Mien people here came because of the Chaos' faith and courage. No wonder the Mien community in the United States likens Kao and Chua to Christopher Columbus and holds them in such high regard. As one of those who followed them put it to us, "Kao is king." At the big celebration in Portland -- there were indeed 500 there, including a half dozen former CIA and USAID men who had worked with the Mien -- Kao and Chua were repeatedly honored for having taken the risk and showing the Way.

Like many other immigrants who've come to the United States, the Mien have worked hard and prospered. Five days after arriving in Portland Kao had two job offers. He took one at Tektronix. Chua later found work there. They also supplemented their income by doing landscaping. Their hard work paid off. We went to the Chaos' lovely spacious suburban home for a dinner. They have truly realized the American Dream.

Many Mien have furthered their education and entered the professions. Children of the immigrants are thoroughly Americanized. Pao-choy Chao, the two-year-old who arrived in Midland in 1976, is now David, a tall, handsome web page designer and graduate student married to a Japanese girl. Nging-choy, the babe in arms we greeted that night at the airport, is now Wendy, a tall, lovely young woman studying communications. Two younger daughters, Angela and Pham, both born in Portland, round out the family. Kao's mother, now in her seventies, greeted us profusely and

poured over copies of snapshots I had taken in 1976.

The lay pastor of the church where Kao is a deacon told us that, of the 2,000 Mien people in Oregon, about half are Christians, distributed among five congregations in several cities. Kathy and I both made the connection to Jesus' parable of the mustard seed, God's way of getting God's work done in the world: from a small, almost unnoticed beginning, an outcome beyond our wildest imagination.

The big celebration party -- it began at 3:00 pm. and went on well past midnight -- featured many speeches, interspersed with music and cultural presentations, mostly dances. Most of the Mien women wore traditional dress. The tribal chief spoke in Mien, especially warning the youth about the importance of hard work and staying away from drugs, Kathy and I, representing First Baptist Church as refugee sponsors, received one undeserved accolade after another. We felt quite overwhelmed and humbled when the man (first to follow Kao) said to us, "if it had not been for you, I would be plowing behind a buffalo in Thailand." Kao presented us with a plaque, signed by him and Chua, acknowledging the role of the Midland congregation: "in recognition of your deep commitment and generosity in sponsoring our first lu-Mien, the Chao family, from Laos to the USA in 1976. Because of your sponsorship, today we can all enjoy our freedom and opportunity. We thank you very much for all your help and support. May God bless you." Many people came to us individually to thank us for what we had done. "We" had not done much. People of the congregation did far more than they knew. And Kao and Chua's daring and determination mattered most.

1. The first draft of this story was written in 2001. Edited and updated Thursday, December 18, 2008.
2. The representative from Lutheran Refugee Services, who called me from Seattle to let me know the family was coming, said, "These folks are gems." We soon came to realize that.
3. Early on Larry Williams asked Kao about God. Kao said, "We left God in the mountains."
4. As I recall, the tribal chief had encouraged him to learn. This made him valuable to the U.S. during the war.
5. Some present sources put the figure much higher, as much as 60,000. Most are on the West Coast.

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.awincom.com/church-movies/>

April-May Newsletter deadline is April 9.



CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Serving with Love



SHUT-INS

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

(Another list will be printed in next month's Newsletter)

Joyce Phillips

40 Rosemary Court, Midland, MI 48640

Verda Rider

1400 Eastlawn, Midland, MI 48642

Shirley Sevener

4815 Russell St, Midland, MI 48640

Dorothy Trask

800 W Meadowbrook, Midland, MI 48640

Nate Poland

2737 W Wilder Road, Midland, MI 48642



To Congregational Care Members,

Thinking of you and all the wonderful things you do. The Lord gives strength to His people and blesses them with peace. Psalm 29:11

~Carrolyn Green



We'd like to send Warm Birthday & Anniversary Wishes

March BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Carolyn Cary
- 2 Elaine Poindexter
- 4 Shawna Elmore, Tyler Steib
- 5 Stephanie Bergman
- 7 Marc Dean Jr.
- 12 James Li
- 22 Robert Clarke
- 23 Ruth O'Dell
- 24 Bobbie Baker
- 26 Barb Neil, Preston Streeter
- 27 Nadine Collins
- 27 Bing Fu
- 27 Mark Neil
- 28 Isaiah Williams
- 29 Sheridan Seamster
- 31 David Pellegrom, Emersyn Seamster

April BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Gregg Clark
- 2 Kelly Zhang
- 3 Lanny Robbins
- 5 Shirley Sevener
- 6 Devin Heise
- 10 Nolan Hitt
- 11 Isabelle Mellon
- 12 Hillary Hitt
- 14 Nathan Poland
- 16 Ada Wong
- 21 Margie Seamster
- 22 Marcellous Rogers, Lou Stickney
- 24 Andrea Ross, Evelyn Wang
- 25 Gary Gibson, Cheri King, Richard Li
- 28 Pam Jezowski, Alex Sutherland

March ANNIVERSARIES

- 7 Wayne & Karen Crosby
- 23 Jim & Debbie Hitt
- 30 Roland & Janice Wallace

April ANNIVERSARIES

- 4 Ron & Joyce Trouten



March 2019



CALENDAR - 2019

Regular Schedule

Sundays	8:30 AM 9:30 AM 11:00 AM 6:00 PM
Mondays	10:30-11AM 3-5:30PM 6:30 PM 6:30 PM
Tuesdays	7:30 AM 5:30 PM
Wednesdays	6:15 PM 7:00 PM
Saturdays	9AM-2PM

ABIDING SCRIPTURES

MARCH - MATTHEW 5:3-16, 21-32
APRIL - MATTHEW 5:38-48 6:9-13

Chancel Choir Practice
 Worship Service - Communion Service is the 1st Sunday of each month
 Sunday School
Chancel Bells Rehearsal
 Staff Meeting (2nd Monday staff meeting is on Wednesday @ 10:30PM)
Take-Note Children's Choir & Chimes Mar 18, Apr 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Team Network Mtg-Media Rm - ~~2nd Tuesday~~ - Apr 1 instead - all church invited
Bible Study - Media Room - Mar 18, 25, Apr 1, 15, 22, 29
 Men's Breakfast at M's Café at 5103 Eastman Rd.
Stewardship & Finance Meeting - 3rd Tuesday - Apr 16
Property Management Meeting - Media Rm - Apr 3
Stephen Ministry - Media Rm - 3rd Wednesday - Mar 20 / Apr 17
FBC Serves at Open Door - 2nd Saturday - Apr 13

Date

Time

Special Event

Mar 29	2:00 PM	150 th Anniversary Planning Meeting - Harmony Room
Apr 1	1:00 PM	Mission & Ministry Team
Apr 9	-	Newsletter Deadline
Apr 12	7:00 PM	Boy Scout Spaghetti Dinner
Apr 14	9:30 AM	Palm Sunday Service
Apr 18	7:00 PM	Maundy Service
Apr 21	8:00 AM 9:30 AM	Easter Breakfast Easter Sunday Service
Apr 27	12 NOON?	Amish Luncheon (See Jenn Hitchcock for details)

USHERS

Mar David Bussell
 Mike Walker
 Kathy Pellegrom
Apr Dave Hitchcock
 Jenn Hitchcock

SAVE-THE-DATES

May 5 - Take-Note Spring Musical
 May 19 - Luncheon/Church Clean-Up
 May 31, June 1 & 2
 150th Anniversary Celebration

CHURCH GREETERS

Mar 17 Janice Wallace
Mar 24 Sharon Winchester
Mar 1 Leona Seamster
Apr 7 Mike Walker
Apr 14/21/28 - TBD

Date: March 15, 2019

Newsletter for Friends and Members
First Baptist Church
915 E. Sugnet Road
Midland MI 48642-3772

Sunday Schedule

9:30AM Worship Service
11:00AM Sunday School



First Baptist Church
915 E. Sugnet Rd.
Midland, MI 48642
Phone: (989) 835-6731
Email: office@midlandfbc.com
Website: www.midlandfbc.com

Communion served 1st Sunday of the Month

In the spirit of our compassionate Christ, we are a family of growing believers serving all of God's people in an ever-changing world!

If you do not wish to receive this mailing, please contact us to remove your name: 989-835-6731 or Email: office@midlandfbc.com

Website: <http://www.midlandfbc.com>

Lara Heise: Lead Pastor (Cell: 815-690-8476)

Jan Sutherland: Music Minister

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