



March 15 - April 15, 2023

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*

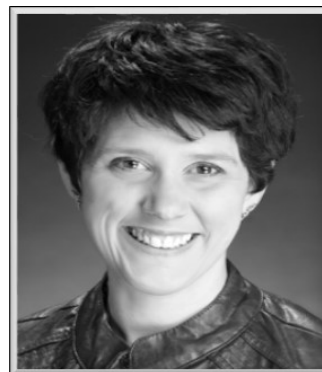


Scrapbooker's

9AM – 5PM

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

March 23 & 24 (Thursday/Friday)



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 has two children: Lola and Devin.

PRAYER PARTNERS

For the needs of friends & family - February & March 2023: Amelia Barden (ER/seizure); Heather's brother John (stage 3 cancer/Williams' extended family); John & Sharon Ingram (John-sick/Sharon-dementia); McCourt Extended Family: Baby Jake-recovery/Gabrielle-cancer/Prayer for family; Dave Mitchell (infection/recovery); Lief (whooping cough/Lacey S. relative); Rick & Robin Nagel (Rick hospitalization/recovery-friend of McCourts); Lacey Wright (knee surgery recovery); John Walter (surgery recovery & wisdom for future treatment)

For those that Grieve: The family of Charles Ritter (Ritter and Vance families)

For those that Praise: Andrew, Lauren and Victoria Neil are delighted to announce the arrival of baby girl Evelyn Elizabeth Neil. She was born on the snowy afternoon of Monday, February 27 weighing 6 pounds, 1 ounce. All are home, happy and adjusting. Barb and Mark are the happy grandparents.

If you know of other folks in our church who need special prayer: Please contact the church office by phone: 989-835-6731 or via email: office@midlandfbc.com

LETTER FROM PASTOR

Lead Pastor Newsletter Article March 2023

Many of us remember a time when businesses were closed on Sunday mornings and schools wouldn't dare schedule an event on a Wednesday night (because those were Church days). But these days it isn't unheard of for a soccer or hockey tournament to take place on a Sunday morning or (as we experienced) schools to plan musical performances for a religious holiday like Ash Wednesday. Our world certainly has changed.

This societal or cultural transformation, whether we like it or not, means that we need to adapt if we are going to be relevant in today's world. This doesn't mean getting rid of the core elements of who we are, the embodiment of God's kingdom in the world, but it DOES mean taking a closer look at HOW we, here at FBC, embody God's kingdom. It means asking "How are we supposed to be the Church in today's world?"

While in the past the Church has looked to "experts" to answer this question, in our current situation these people simply don't exist! Every Church is in the same boat of knowing there is no clear path forward. Every Church is seeking answers.

As the leadership has begun to consider what this will mean for FBC, we have been challenged to consider that in order for you (the congregation) to be comfortable following us in uncharted territory, we have to prove that we are trust worthy. After all, there is risk in going toward an unknown change which may mean a loss of some sort, even if that loss leads to something good.

To ease the discomfort, which usually accompanies change, leadership must realize that they need to stay connected to the congregation. To listen and remain in relationship, during this journey into the unknown, is necessary. Staying connected, our leadership looks to the uncharted territory of this new world where we must face these changes and adapt.

But adaptation is not scrapping everything. It is vital that we not lose who FBC is at our core (our DNA). We must ask what we need to preserve to remain the church we know and love, while also considering what it is that we CAN disregard and what it is that we need to create to be the Church that God is calling us to be in this new day.

I know, as a member, you may fear not know what is going on as these changes are happening. That is why it will be important for us to communicate well, not just through words but (as leaders) to embody the changes we hope will happen. May Team Network not just talk about being more connected, but may we ACTUALLY be connected to other members; to listen to their thoughts about what they are experiencing.

Our intention is to try out new ways of being FBC in these coming days and months; knowing that some of these experiments will be fruitful, while others may simply help us to learn. The point will be to learn and to listen in everything we do, to as many people as possible with the goal of hearing and discerning ways FBC can adapt to this new world. Who knows what we will learn?

Team Network's goal in this season of our life together is to give some of what we have been learning from Canoeing in the Mountains, which I have summarized above, a try. My hope, as your pastor, is that you each will take part and share your feedback in what happens over these coming months. Bolsinger is clear that change requires that we ALL take part. Join us as we look ahead to the journey that God has for FBC.

~Rev. Lara Escoffre

Special Event March 24 3-6pm

Books & Baked Goods

Bring your sweet tooth and a book to swap



**Featuring Storytime and crafting, a
Book Swap and complimentary
Coffee, Tea and Sweets**

**Located at Cultivate
in the Midland Mall.
Hosted in partnership
with MBC**

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
midland



FBC FAMILY FELLOWSHIP MEAL

Monday, March 27 at 5:30 p.m

Join us for a **Family Fellowship Meal** at the church hosted by Barb Neil and Linda Atiemo-Obeng. While this is another great chance for fellowship, let's make it more! Let's make this a true Lenten a challenge for us to invite a friend who doesn't attend church, or is simply a non-believer. This invitation is to build relationships only, so there will be NO ALTER CALLS, only a meal with new friends.

MUSIC & YOUTH

Take Note Current enrollment 17 students, with 6 adult leaders

We are grateful for all the extra volunteers who stepped in to lead devotions, prepare snacks, and support our student participants when our regular volunteers were traveling during February and March.

On **May 21, during the 10am worship service** at First Baptist, we will present a story that includes key moments in the life of Moses, from his birth to the parting of the Red Sea (based in Exodus 2,3, 7-10, and 14-15). Our musical includes a few songs from the 1998 Dreamworks animated film "The Prince of Egypt", as well as some Sunday school favorites and Hebrew folk music. Main characters in order of appearance are:

JACOB	Narrator, witty & wise, extensive speaking part & ensemble singing
PHARAOH	Egyptian King, oppressor of the Hebrew people, speaking part & ensemble singing
PRINCESS	Pharaoh's Daughter, rescues baby Moses from the river, speaking part & ensemble singing
AMA	Moses' Mother, saves baby Moses' life, no spoken lines but sings a solo
MIRIAM	Moses' Sister, interacts with Princess, speaking part & sings a solo
MOSES	Man of God, deliverer of the Hebrew people, speaking & singing parts
HASHEM	Disembodied voice of God, may read spoken lines (instead of memorizing), ensemble singing & possible solo
VARIOUS EGYPTIAN GUARDS, MIDIANITES, AND HEBREW PEOPLE	
brief speaking parts & ensemble singing	

Of course, **costumes, choreography and large set pieces** will help our story come alive. We would certainly welcome your **help with design and construction**, if any of these is an area of giftedness for you. Just call or text Pastor Aleka at 585-721-3637 to let her know you're interested.

It's been a challenge to keep our **Handbell Ensemble** full of ringers, but we continue to develop and hone our ringing skills while practicing new repertoire. We are looking forward to presenting a handbell piece or two during worship on 4/30. All **Junior and Senior High students** are welcome to ring with us (no prior music experience necessary). We **rehearse every Monday 3:15-4:00pm**. Let us know if you need a ride, we may be able to help!

Important Dates:

3/27	All Day	MPS No School, No Take Note Program
4/30	10am	Preview of Musical during Worship
5/19	3-5:30pm	Dress Rehearsal #1
5/20	9-11:30am	Dress Rehearsal #2
5/21	10am	Presentation of Spring Musical
5/22	3-5:30pm	Last Day of Program until Fall 2023

Music & Worship

Many recent technology issues have been resolved with the reconfiguration of wiring, and use of updated software. Thank you: Dave J., Gary G., Anonymous Donor, Shelley P., and Bruce & Val W. for your wisdom and extra time to help our technology work more effectively! Your Youth and Music Minister continues to spend 5-10 hours per week learning about and employing the capabilities of existing technology to further enhance your worship experience.

Special upcoming worship opportunities include:

4/2	10:00am	Palm Sunday Service (with Communion)
4/6	6:30pm	Maundy Thursday Communion Service, presented by Youth Fellowship
4/7	12-1:30pm	Community Good Friday Service, Midland 1 st United Methodist Church
4/9	10:00am	Easter Sunday Service, join us for breakfast prior to the service!

Worship Assistants Needed!

In the American Baptist Churches – USA, we celebrate the fact that we are a “priesthood of believers,” meaning that each member has a right and responsibility to lead the assembly in worship. We believe each of us is a bearer of God’s image, created with Spiritual gifts. As such, we believe that beside Jesus Christ, we require no other intermediary for connecting with God through praise and prayer.

Volunteering as a Worship Assistant is a unique opportunity for members age 14+ to serve your church, and to learn more about the inner workings of how we ‘do’ worship.

Worship Assistants welcome the congregation to Sunday morning service, read announcements, lead the Call to Worship, and make intercessory prayers on behalf of the people during our Sunday services. You will receive a copy of the service script in advance, and Pastor is happy to help you craft prayers as desired. It is best to arrive at church about 20 minutes before the start of service in order to receive any additional information and instructions. This limited time commitment is a huge blessing to your pastoral and worship staff, as well as to your church family. Please contact Pastor Aleka or Pastor Lara for more information, or to sign up to lead worship.

Help is needed on the following dates:

April 30, Take Note Preview

May 7, Communion

May 28, Pentecost (Memorial Day Weekend)

July 30, Regular Worship Service

August 13, Regular Worship Service

Youth Fellowship

In February, the Youth planned a meaningful Ash Wednesday Service. Although we were unable to present this service due to inclement weather, we hope to incorporate some elements from it into our presentation for **Maundy Thursday, April 6 at 6:30pm in the Chapel. Please join us for a very special Communion celebration.**

Eight youth and 3 adults attended the final performance of "Honk!" at Midland Center for the Arts on 2/26. The story of the Ugly Duckling, performed by local youth conveyed a message of hope, determination, and acceptance. Congratulations to cast member and church member Lola H.!

Five youth and 2 adults volunteered at the Humane Society of Midland County on 3/12. We walked dogs, socialized cats, and helped sort donations. Our time was greatly appreciated by the staff, and even resulted in at least one cat finding its fur-ever home!

Plans for a Mission Trip to Kentucky with Appalachian Service Project have been tabled to Summer 2023 in preparation for a Summer 2024 trip. Alternate local/ regional service projects are being organized for Summer 2023.

Upcoming Activities:

4/2	12:15-2:30pm	Lunch and Plan/ Practice Maundy Thursday Service (Youth Room)
4/6	6-8pm	Present Maundy Thursday Communion Service (at 6:30pm in the Chapel)
4/8	10am-12noon	Prep Easter Breakfast (Kitchen & Hearthside Room)
4/9	8:30-10am	Serve and Clean up Easter Breakfast (Hearthside Room)

All children (as young as 4 years old, with an adult) are encouraged to attend camp this summer. Registration materials are available on the Youth Bulletin board in the Narthex.

Easter Caroling

Congregational Care and Missions Teams' Lenten Experiment: Easter Caroling on 3/18. Pizza at 5pm, visit friends & family 5:45-7:45, and return to church for snacks & fellowship until 9pm. All are welcome to join in any or every part of this special ministry of fellowship and care for our shut-ins.

Grace and Peace, Pastor Aleka

STEWARDSHIP & FINANCE - Budget Year to Date February 2023

2023 Budget:	\$ 276,035	
General Fund Receipts	\$ 29,386	9.0 %
General Fund Expenses	\$ 43,356	15.7 %
Receipts over Expenses	\$ -13,973	

As of the end of February we are nearly 30% behind in giving but our bank account remains strong. Mission giving will begin in March.

Bobbie Baker, on behalf of the S&F Team



We'd like to send Warm Birthday & Anniversary Wishes

March BIRTHDAYS

04 Shawna Kobel
 04 Tyler Steib
 23 Ruth O'Dell
 24 Bobbie Baker
 26 Barb Neil
 Preston Streeter
 27 Mark Neil
 29 Sheridan Seamster
 31 David Pellegrom
 31 Emersyn Seamster

April BIRTHDAYS

01 Gregg Clark
 03 Lanny Robbins
 Trevor Snoddy
 06 Devin Heise
 11 Isabelle Mellon
 16 Ada Wong
 19 Adrienne Wiley
 22 Marcellous Rogers
 25 Gary Gibson
 28 Pam Jezowski

March ANNIVERSARIES

23 Jim & Debbie Hitt
 23 Chris & Michell Moe
 30 Roland & Janice Wallace



April ANNIVERSARIES

No Anniversaries on Record



CALENDAR - 2023

Regular Schedule

ABIDING SCRIPTURES

MARCH - LUKE 23:33-43

APRIL - JOHN 19:30

Sundays	10:00 AM 11:30 AM	Worship Service - Communion Service is the 1 st Sunday of each month Sunday School Classes for All
Mondays	3:00-5:30PM 6:30 PM	Take Note! (Grades 1-12) Team Network Mtg - Chapel - 2 nd Monday - All Welcome
Tuesdays	7:30 AM 5:30 PM 6:00 PM 6:30 PM	Men's Prayer Breakfast - M's Café Stewardship & Finance Meeting - 3 rd Tuesday FBC Handbell Practice (Resumes March 21) Property Management Meeting - Media Rm - 2 nd Tuesday
Wednesdays	6:30PM	FBC Vocal Choir Practice
Thursdays	10:00 AM 6:30 PM	Facebook Prayer Time Adult Bible Study - Media Room & Zoom - All Adults Welcome
Saturdays	9AM-2PM	FBC Serves at Open Door - 2 nd Saturday

Date

Time

Special Event

Mar 18 (Sat)	5:00PM-8:30PM	Easter Caroling Event 5pm Pizza, 5:45pm Caroling, 7:45pm Cookies & Games
Mar 23 (Thu)	9:00AM-5:00PM	Scrapbookers in the Hearthside Room
Mar 24 (Fri)	9:00AM-5:00PM	Scrapbookers in the Hearthside Room
Mar 24 (Fri)	3:00-6:00PM	Books & Bakes - Cultivate at the Mall
Mar 27 (Mon)	6:30-8:00PM	FBC Family Fellowship Dinner - Hearthside Room
Apr 2 (Sun)	10:00-10:45AM 11:00-12:15AM 12:15-2:30PM	Palm Sunday Worship Service Sunday School Youth Fellowship
Apr 6 (Thu)	6:30-8:00PM	Maundy Thursday Service
Apr 12 (Sun)	8:30-9:30AM 10:00-11:15AM 11:30AM-12:15PM	Easter Breakfast Easter Sunday Service Sunday School for All

Pastor Lara Out of Office March 28-31 - Pastor Aleka will be On-Call for Pastoral Care

Scholarship Applications

Applications can be submitted to the office or via email (office@midlandfbc.com) between April 1-30. **Application deadline is April 30, 2023.**

FBC Scholarship Applications can be found here: [CLICK HERE](#)



*Draw closer to Me
in 2023*

ONLINE DONATIONS

First Baptist Church is now able to accept online donations!



Online donations are now available on our Website!
(See top right corner: www.midlandfbc.com)

OUR STAFF

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Bruce Woodcraft.....Maintenance Mgr: maintenance@midlandfbc.com
Mike Walker.....Assistant Custodian
Dave JezowskiGroundskeeper
Shannon Reilly.....Housekeeper

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<http://www.midlandfbc.com>