

# Growing the Family of God

Telling the Story

Serving the Community

Nurturing Believers

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First Baptist Church was organized May 24, 1857 with eight members under the pastoral leadership of the Rev. W. Branch. Initially services were held in private homes, and later in the Methodist Church for afternoon services. In 1866 our first building was completed on the corner of Oak and Water Streets.

Sunday school was first held on May 19, 1867. On August 10, 1893, the cornerstone was laid for a building at the corner of Livingston and Mill Streets. The building was dedicated in March 1894.

Daily Vacation Bible School was first conducted in 1921. Another significant event occurred in the Pontiac Church on July 17, 1921, when Miss Lennie Rhodes became the first woman in Illinois to be ordained to the Gospel Ministry.

As growth continued larger facilities were needed and a Christian Education building was dedicated on April 20, 1952. On October 3, 1983, the present property was purchased. The first service was conducted in the gymnasium December 2, 1984.

May 19, 1993 saw the groundbreaking ceremony for our present sanctuary. The first service in the new sanctuary was held on Christmas Eve 1993. The building was dedicated on February 6, 1994.

The past fourteen months of the global pandemic have been challenging for the church. Our doors were closed to in person worship for much longer than anticipated. However, during that extended time we acknowledged that worship is much more than a building. We also affirmed that externals such as masks and social distancing cannot destroy spirit-led worship.

We experienced powerful worship in the parking lot, giving witness to our faith to everyone who passed by. Some of you will recall cars stopping on the street to watch and listen. We learned how to use Zoom and livestream our services. It was challenging, but for those with eyes to see, it was a time of spiritual hope.

Now we're back in the building. Masks and social distancing are no longer mandated, and it is time to assess and move forward. As we stand on the cusp of our 165th year of ministry it is time to take a challenging look at where we are and where we believe God wants us to be.

We have a long and powerful history of ministry in Pontiac. We are blessed with a beautiful facility and a great location. While those things are helpful, ministry is not defined by history or geography. Christian ministry is successful only to the point that people are disciplined to Jesus Christ. Discipleship is not about history or location. We recently adopted the tagline, For such a time as this . . . The words come from the book of Esther and remind us that it is a critical time in the history of the church. Society has been fractured by political unrest and a global pandemic. The church has been

## From the Pastor (cont.)

hard hit by disappointment and frustration. The body of Christ has been fractured by ugly words and unloving attitudes.

Paul's words to the Christians at Corinth give us hope, We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). We will continue to be strong in ministry. We will tell the story of what Christ has done in our lives, nurture disciples, serve the community, and persevere in prayer.

In the book, *For, a New Generation*, Pastor, and author Lee Kricher, offers practical guidance for church revitalization and renewal. Kricher defines a new generation church as A church with attendees whose average age is at least as young as the average of the community in which the church exists.

The median age in Livingston County is 42 years. If we take Kricher's definition to heart we must candidly confess that FBC Pontiac is not a new generation church. We must honestly admit that we are aging and graying. History is no guarantee of the future. If we fail to reach the next generation of young people and young families, our future is bleak.

As a first step we are organizing a task force consisting of persons in the congregation who fit the age demographic to help us strategize methods of inviting and encouraging the next generation to become part of this community of faith. Our vision is ten new families in the 42-year-old demographic by the end of 2021. That is a significant goal. We believe that it is a doable goal. We are committed to being the people of God in this place.

We ask for open-mindedness to change and new venues for ministry. We ask for patience and commitment. We have already traversed a difficult moment of ministry and we are moving forward.

Each one of us has a vital role to play as we move forward. In the introduction to his book, Kricher makes this statement: *If you do everything suggested in this book and fail to pray, your church will not succeed in reaching the next generation. All lasting change and revitalization begin as we acknowledge our dependence on God and ask him to what only he can do.*

The doors are now open without the heavy restrictions imposed over the last fourteen months. On June 20 we will resume our Sunday Morning Connection Groups. We are not looking backward, bemoaning what wasn't, but looking forward to what God is doing, For such a time as this . . .

*Jim*

# BACKYARD BIBLE CLUB

## VBS Save the Date!

July 26th - July 30th • 10:00 am - 12:00 noon



We're already excited and making plans for our 2021 Vacation Bible School program! This year, we'll be using the Backyard Bible Club program. The program utilizes a 'wordless book' that uses color coded pages to help children walk through the plan of salvation with Jesus. Children ages five years through fifth grade are welcome to attend! So, watch for upcoming announcements on how you can register your children for this fun event!

### VBS Donations Needed

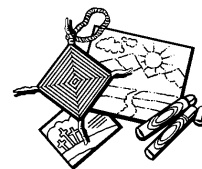
Meanwhile, we are asking our church family to help us make this year's VBS a resounding success. To fully prepare, we will need donations of the following items:

#### SNACKS

Black Oreos  
Red Jell-O cups  
White popcorn  
Goldfish crackers  
Plastic utensils  
Napkins

Red foam sheets  
Washable markers  
White and black card stock  
Chenille stems  
Pompoms  
Tacky glue  
Jumbo craft sticks  
1.5in masking tape  
1/4" adhesive wiggle eyes  
Gold sticker paper

Jewel stickers  
Pony beads: black, red,  
white, gold, green  
Suede leather lace



If you can donate any of these items or need more information, please contact Barb Tholen.

## Visit Us on the Web!

As we slowly transition back into a more normal schedule of activities, please remember to visit our website ([fbcpontiac.org](http://fbcpontiac.org)) and social media pages for the latest scheduling and covid related information. While there, you also have the opportunity to watch recent worship services, check the church activity calendar, or browse our picture gallery and see just what we've been up to lately here at FBC!

# BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- 4 Rose Geraldts
- 6 Gary and Jaime Wykes ♥
- 7 Jim and Janet Wolfe ♥
- 8 Cindy Knight
- 10 Steve and Debbie Carroll ♥
- 10 Brinda Henson
- 11 Megan Amdor
- 12 Mike and Jill Cole ♥
- 12 Chuck Peck
- 13 Katie Borders
- 14 Kaity Carroll
- 14 Marian Dixon
- 14 Brandi Miller
- 16 Barry Highland
- 16 Landon Borders ♥
- 17 Gerald and Judy Shepherd
- 19 Linda Gruen
- 19 Diana Rich
- 20 Don Schiff
- 20 Patti Butcher
- 22 Scott Knight
- 23 Robert Wing
- 25 Les and Julie Amdor ♥
- 26 Harlin Dean
- 26 Missy Hoover
- 28 Bob Dowdy ♥
- 29 Nickey and Linda Gruen ♥



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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
		1
6 10:00 am Worship	7	8 6:00 pm Healing Hearts
13 10:00 am Worship	14	15
20 <b>Father's Day</b> 9:00 am Sunday School 10:00 am Worship 	21	22
27 9:00 am Sunday School 10:00 am Worship	28	29



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Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

2

9:00 am ROMEO Club  
9:00 am Ruth Circle  
5:30 - 6:30 pm WYRED



3

4

5



9

9:00 am ROMEO Club  
5:30 - 6:30 pm WYRED

10

7:00 pm Board of Ministries

11

12

16

9:00 am ROMEO Club  
5:30 - 6:30 pm WYRED

17

18 Newsletter Deadline

19

Don't Miss the  
**DEADLINE!**

23

9:00 am ROMEO Club  
5:30 - 6:30 pm WYRED

24

25

26

30

9:00 am ROMEO Club  
5:30 - 6:30 pm WYRED



# One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

In Isaiah, God says “I’ll make all my mountains into roads, turn them into a superhighway.” How does the mission stream that flows from your congregation shape the landscape as it makes its path through the world?

The people of Israel found themselves exiles in a strange land when Jerusalem was conquered by Babylon. Now, the Babylonians themselves have been conquered by Persia and Cyrus the Great. The prophet speaks to the people after Babylon has fallen (sometime around 586-539 BCE). On the surface, it is a heavy time of war, poverty, and devastation.

But in spite of that devastation, it is also a time of restoration. This new generation of wanderers might be allowed, finally, to return home; to reclaim their land, rebuild their homes, even restore their Temple. All the while, the prophet assures Israel that their covenant with God has never been broken—even as their structures and institutions crumbled, God remained with the people.

One critical part of that covenant is that Israel’s responsibilities extend beyond its own people—God has called them to care more widely for the nations of the earth; to show compassion and mercy as an expression of covenant living. This was part of their identity as God’s people before the exile and remains true at their core as they move into a season of renewal. Even—maybe especially—in a time of upheaval, they are called to be people who live outside of themselves. Isaiah 49:10 conveys a powerful vision for creation; it is a vision that will be brought to life by these people of covenant and restoration. To be in covenant means to be “a powerful agent and partner in the practice of loyal solidarity that makes a

new future possible.”<sup>3</sup> In this moment, God is inviting them to step into their role as a community that will let love flow in new and innovative ways.

Covenant people are those who recognize that love is what we reap—but only if we first sow it. Only if we release it from our grasp, sending it out to transform the world around us. When you give generously through One Great Hour of Sharing, you let love flow. You empower families and communities around the world to live healthier, safer, more hope-filled lives. And ultimately, you build a world that honors the interconnectedness of all God’s people.

In this time when all of life has been touched by the effects of the pandemic, we are called to be people of restoration; releasing love into the world in new and innovative ways that answer the unique needs of this season. As the body of Christ in the world, the Church of today puts flesh on this vision: a world shaped by love’s movement from one place to another.

The Body of Christ today transforms everything it touches—much like the body of water at the heart of Isaiah’s vision for humankind. And, like water, the good works from your donations to global missions and ministries stream all the way to Nicaragua; to Kenya; to Vietnam, and all the other places where your One Great Hour of Sharing gifts are at work.

We will receive the One Great Hour of Sharing offering throughout the month of June.

**One Great**  
**HOUR**  
OF SHARING



Psalm 68:6 says, "God sets the lonely in families." I'm so very grateful that God set Mike and I in *this* family. You're outpouring of love and support is what's getting us through this difficult time. Thank you so much for your hugs, cards, gifts, calls, text messages, and most of all, your prayers. God is loving us through you and we are so very blessed to be family with you.

In Christ,  
Mike and Carol Toon



**Prayer Chain  
Number**  
**815.419.4454**

If you wish to receive prayer chain calls, please contact the church office at 815.842.4321 and request that your name and number be added to the list.

## Office Notes

### *Back Into the Swing of Things*



As we transition back into a more regular schedule, don't forget to let the church office know if your small group has begun meeting again. This will help us ensure that all activities are listed properly on our calendar!



## On-Line Giving



With on-line giving, it's easier than ever to tithe or make donations to special fundraising campaigns like this month's One Great Hour of Sharing offering! .

To make an on-line donation, simply visit our website [www.fbcpontiac.org](http://www.fbcpontiac.org) and follow the donation link near the top of the page. Our on-line giving is powered through PayPal and allows you to use an existing PayPal account or any debit or credit card you'd like. You'll have the opportunity to leave specific notes about your donation and you'll receive a donation receipt in your e-mail!

## Newsletter Deadline

All articles for inclusion the July edition of our church newsletter must be submitted to the church office no later than Friday, June 18th. You may submit your articles by phone (842.4321), fax (844.6943), by e-mail ([Rhonda@fbcpontiac.org](mailto:Rhonda@fbcpontiac.org)) or by leaving them in the black box outside the church office door.



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