



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

November

Growing the Family of God

Telling the Story

Serving the Community

Nurturing Believers



With great joy we celebrate our brother John Rodino's successful heart transplant! It is an amazing blessing and a new life opens up to him. God wants to give each of us a new heart and when we accept that gift it will be obvious to all who see us that we are a child of God.

Receiving a new heart has some significant theological implications. To receive a new heart, someone first has to die. That's rather blunt, but it is also true. A person makes a choice to be an organ donor and, at the time of death, organs are harvested so that they may be used to provide a new life for someone else.

There is the expectation that when we receive a new heart, we will experience a new life. In the case of those who receive a heart transplant, the doctors literally remove the old, diseased heart and replace it with a new, properly functioning organ. An organ that, if all goes well, will allow the recipient to engage in activities often impossible prior to the transplant and provides a sense of renewed hope for the future as an almost certain death gives way to endless possibilities.

We have all been faced with that certain death. (The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23). A new heart in Christ delivers us from death and offers us life in the presence of God, motivated and empowered by the indwelling of God's spirit. Theologically we examine the reality that this is precisely what Jesus did for us. Jesus died so that we may have a new life. Just as signing an organ donor card is a choice, Jesus offered his life freely so that each of us could have eternal life.

The prophet Ezekiel uses the metaphor of a new heart to describe God's work of renewal in the life of the nation of Israel. "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances" (Ezekiel 36: 26-27).

Ezekiel was a priest who was tasked with the overwhelming job of being God's spokesperson to the exiles in Babylon. He was called to announce an end to Israel's cherished institutions of Temple and Kingship, to proclaim the destruction of Jerusalem, and to declare the end of Israel's relationship with the Lord's land. Although Ezekiel's judgment oracles intimate an end to Israel's covenant relationship with the Lord, God's intention to renew Israel prevails.

It is on this point of renewal that I think we should focus. The time in which Ezekiel lived and worked was tumultuous to say the least. The treasured institutions on which people relied were brutally ripped away. Professor Gordon Matties writing in the New Interpreter's Study Bible

From the Pastor (cont.)

describes the situation this way: “In Ezekiel’s world, superpower politics and small-scale ethnic nationalism were buttressed by idolatrous practices that legitimated military alliances, violent crimes, and oppressive economic policies.”

If that description sounds a little too familiar, it is because many of these are the same issues and concerns we face in society today. We live at a time when nation, community, family, and church are bitterly torn by partisan politics, idolatrous practices that legitimize racism, violence, and economic disparity.

Although called to announce God’s judgment on the nation, Ezekiel is also tasked with proclaiming God’s intention to renew the nation. Renewal always begins with reflection and repentance. The ancient peoples had allowed themselves to follow idolatrous practices. This means more than just worshipping false idols. We practice idolatry when we demand our rights at the expense of another’s freedom or safety. Idolatry is allowing a person or an attitude to assume the place of God in our thinking and practices.

The first commandment is “you shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). But the reality is that I am human and I do allow other gods to supplant the place that God is to have in my life. However unintentionally, I make daily choices to exercise my freedoms at the expense of others. However unintentionally, I participate in systems that practice economic and social injustice. When I am brutally honest with myself, I must acknowledge racism and the practice of white superiority which is subtle in my attitudes towards persons different than myself.

My attitude is rarely the attitude that Paul describes as being the attitude of Christ: “Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6-8)

The first step in renewal is repentance. Repentance requires not only an honest introspection of my life and attitudes but also requires a change in those attitudes, beliefs, and actions which are not compatible with my new life in Christ. Therefore, I am called to change the trajectory of my life. The commitments that pull my loyalties away from the Christ I profess to serve must be removed. These conflicting loyalties are the “heart of stone” that must be removed to make a place for the new heart implanted by the hand of God.

Repentance is an act of the will in combination with the Holy Spirit. I can make all kinds of promises, but I need the Spirit of God to encourage, strengthen, and enable me to keep the commitments I have made. There are too many spirits of Anti-Christ in the world that pull me in a multitude of directions. I require the discernment that comes only through listening to God’s

Daylight Saving Time



Daylight saving time begins at 2:00 am on Sunday, November 1st so don't forget to set your clocks ahead by one hour before going to bed on Saturday night!

Newsletter Deadline

All articles for inclusion the December edition of our church newsletter must be submitted to the church office no later than Monday, November 16th. You may submit your articles by phone (842.4321), fax (844.6943), by e-mail (Rhonda@fbcpontiac.org) or by leaving them in the black box outside the church office door



**Prayer Chain
Number
815.419.4454**

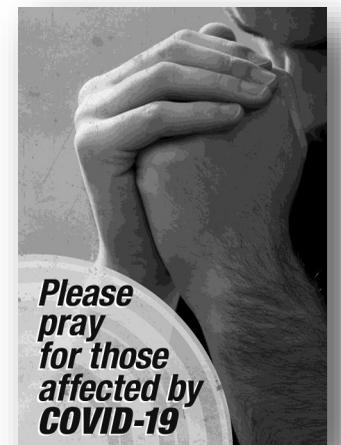
If you wish to receive prayer chain calls, please contact the church office at 815.842.4321 and request that your name and number be added to the list.

ABK News!

Now that school is back in session, ABK is once again meeting on Wednesday nights at 6:00 pm! And, just like school, things will look a little different for your little ones when they come to join us for some fun at ABK.

For the safety of both the children and our volunteers each child will undergo a brief COVID screening at drop off. This will involve some quick and simple questions about any exposure/symptoms and a touchless forehead temperature scan. For this reason, parents must accompany their children up to the door for pick-up and drop-off. We will also be conducting as many of our activities outdoors as we are able, volunteers will be wearing masks and social distancing will be practiced.

If you aren't comfortable sending your children for in-person activities, please note that we plan to make an on-line option available for our littlest learners at home! We hope to have this available by the first Wednesday in October so please be sure to check back with our website for more information as we unfold new facets of our children's programs!



Thank You

Dear Church Family,



Thank you so much for your thoughts, prayers, lovely cards and messages of encouragement. I have finished 18 weeks of chemotherapy and now beginning 18 weeks of maintenance chemotherapy along with meds to run until February 2021. God has blessed me with friends like you all.

Thanks again sincerely with love.

A sister in Christ,
Maxine Zytrowski

Office Notes

In honor of the Thanksgiving Day holiday our church office will be closed on Thursday, November 26th and Friday, November 27th.

We wish our entire church family a happy and healthy holiday weekend!



Attention Ladies

Would anyone be interested in a Ladies Day Out at noon on Monday, December 14th? If there is enough interest, a fun gathering will be planned. Social distancing will be practiced and masks will be worn to provide a safer environment for event.

If you are interested in such a gathering, please call or text Jan Jolynn Staley (815.210.3721) to let her know and watch future newsletters for more information!

Jubilee Christmas - Save the Date



Jubilee Christmas will be hosted this year by First Christian Church and has been scheduled for Saturday, December 12th. As with most events, this year's Jubilee Christmas will look a bit different but the joy of the season will still be with us so please mark your calendars and watch upcoming announcements for more information and opportunities to volunteer!

spirit. This requires a commitment to prayer. More than table grace or bedtime prayers, transformation demands a firm resolve to place myself in God's presence each and every day. We never arrive at spiritual completeness. The journey to be like Christ is a forever voyage.

The good news is that regardless of how far we wander, God wants to bring renewal and restoration. If the first step to renewal is repentance then the second step is reconciliation. There can be no reconciliation without humility. I need to be humble with God and with you. To dethrone the principalities and powers that vie for control of my life I must be forgiven and forgiving. Until I forgive you, God cannot forgive me. Therefore, the sin of unforgiveness is on the throne of my life. I am an idolater. I cannot be both idolater and disciple of Jesus the Christ.

On 3 December 1967, Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the world's first human to human heart transplant in Cape Town, South Africa. The first heart transplant recipient, Louis Washkansky, lived only 18 days following the surgery before succumbing to pneumonia.

That is the date of the first human to human heart transplant, but God is in the business of changing hearts each day. Each new day is an opportunity for the people of God to demonstrate that we are people who have received a new heart. We put aside the practices of jealousy, hatred, enmity, and give ourselves freely in loving service to our sisters and brothers.

Jim



We ask for your continued patience as we move forward into a "new normal" and remind you that our scheduling plans are subject to change at any point in light of new information or state/federal health guidelines. Your pastors and church leadership continue to carefully monitor this situation as it progresses and are in prayer for wisdom and guidance moving forward.

Reservations Required

Don't forget that you will need to make reservations if you plan to attend worship on Sunday mornings. *You will need to register for each week that you plan to attend and reservations must be submitted to the church office no later than noon on the Wednesday prior to the worship service you wish to attend.*

You may submit your reservations by visiting the church website at www.fbcpontiac.org or by calling the church office at 815.842.4321



November

- 1 Tara Crawford
- 1 Ken and Sheila Ferguson ♥
- 2 Taylor Lind
- 2 Ed Rich
- 2 Nancy Waschle
- 3 Sarah Matheisen
- 5 Sandy Bailey
- 5 Emma Chehak
- 5 Jim Dixon
- 6 Mel and Christina Beck ♥
- 7 Leon and Louise Gray ♥
- 8 Daniel and Lindsey Flessner ♥
- 10 Lynn Battice
- 11 Delores Burton
- 12 Natalie Taylor
- 13 Kassondra Poshard
- 15 Gayle McBeath
- 19 Rhonda Cowser
- 20 Charoletta Bergin
- 21 Barbara Highland
- 22 Mary Frobish
- 23 Bill Stith
- 27 Andrea Newsome
- 29 Mark Levin
- 30 Chery Spires

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 DST Ends	2	3	4 9:00 am ROMEO Club 5:30 - 6:30 pm WYRED 6:00 pm ABK	5	6	7 7:30 am PK Fellowship at FBC 8:00 am PK Study at FBC
8 10:00 am Worship	9	10	11 Veteran's Day 9:00 am ROMEO Club 5:30 - 6:30 pm WYRED 6:00 pm ABK	12	13	14 7:30 am PK Fellowship at FBC 8:00 am PK Study at FBC
15 ABW Sunday 10:00 am Worship	16 Newsletter Deadline	17	18 9:00 am ROMEO Club 5:30 - 6:30 pm WYRED 6:00 pm ABK	19 7:00 pm Board of Ministries	20	21 7:30 am PK Fellowship at FBC 8:00 am PK Study at FBC
22 10:00 am Worship	23	24	25 9:00 am ROMEO Club 5:30 - 6:30 pm WYRED 6:00 pm ABK	26 Thanksgiving Church Office Closed	27 Church Office Closed	28 7:30 am PK Fellowship at FBC 8:00 am PK Study at FBC
29 First Sunday in Advent 10:00 am Worship	30					

