

# First Baptist Church of Eatonton Messenger

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST SHARING GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE WITH ALL



## FROM THE PASTOR

Kate Bowler wrote this week that many of us might have preferred to be doing almost anything these past few weeks rather than being pulled into tragic news, both within our nation and beyond it. Truthfully, we may feel that way most weeks. More often than not, the news leaves us “slightly terrified. Slightly glazed. Deeply alarmed. It’s a strange thing to carry so much grief and ... still make dinner. Still laugh. Still love people fiercely.”

For some, this feeling is rooted in what they see unfolding politically. And if that is what lies behind your grief or anxiety, that is understandable. Every age brings its own political disturbances, and no generation can be denied its fears, griefs, or struggles. It is never helpful to simply tell people, “Don’t worry, be happy.”

In conversation with an article by C. S. Lewis written in 1948, “*On Living in an Atomic Age*,” Bowler asks a haunting question: “What does it look like to maintain hope and kindness in a world that keeps daring us not to?”

Bowler notes that Lewis was writing at a time “when the world was learning to live with the knowledge that it could end itself at any moment. People were afraid, overwhelmed, and tempted toward either frantic distraction or total despair. Lewis did not minimize the danger. Instead, he named the temptation that came with it.” Perhaps the most significant temptation Lewis addresses is “the belief that normal life must stop until fear is resolved.” That is always a thorny issue.

It is so easy to be immobilized by very real dangers. Yet Lewis famously wrote, “If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things — praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends.”

Bowler reminds us that such logic is both possible and necessary, “not because danger isn’t real—but because fear does not get to decide what makes us human.”

Lewis understood something every generation must relearn. “Waiting for safety before we live is a losing strategy.” As we wait and work for as much safety as possible, we must also live.

Bowler gives us a word for this tension: *breautiful* — a world that is brutal and beautiful at the same time. “The world has always been fragile. The illusion was that it wasn’t. Though we are experiencing moral erosion and our awareness is growing with it, this awareness is not meant to paralyze us. Lewis insisted that it is meant to wake us up—to call us back to lives rooted in love, responsibility, and truth, even when outcomes are uncertain. ... we must refuse both hysteria and numbness. He believed that the task of faith in frightening times was not to escape the ache, but to find our own way of living with it.”

So I pray with others, in these *breautiful* days: God, help us “to keep making dinner. To keep loving people fiercely. To keep telling the truth about what hurts without surrendering our capacity for joy.” May we still choose human things.

*Grace and Peace,*  
*Craig*

# REFLECTIONS ON “BE STILL, MY SOUL”

In recent weeks, I've found myself returning again and again to Katharina von Schlegel's beautiful hymn “Be Still, My Soul.” Written in 1752 and set to Jean Sibelius's stirring melody “Finlandia,” this hymn speaks with remarkable clarity to our present moment.

Turn on the news for even a few minutes and you'll find yourself swept up in a torrent of anxiety-inducing headlines, political divisions, global uncertainties, and countless crises demanding our immediate attention and emotional energy. Our phones buzz with notifications, our minds race with worries about the future, and the pace of modern life leaves little room for the quiet confidence this hymn so beautifully expresses.

“Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.” What a radical statement in our age of constant noise and activity. The hymn doesn't ask us to ignore the troubles around us or pretend everything is fine. Rather, it invites us to ground ourselves in something deeper than the chaos of the moment. It reminds us that beneath the churning surface of current events, there is a steady, unchanging presence we can rely on.

I think about the context in which Katharina von Schlegel wrote these words. The mid-18th century had its own share of turmoil—wars, disease, political upheaval. Yet she penned a hymn that transcends her specific circumstances and speaks to the universal human need for peace amid uncertainty. That's the mark of truly timeless sacred music: it acknowledges our struggles while pointing us toward hope.

The second stanza particularly moves me: “Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake to guide the future as He has the past.” When the world feels unpredictable and beyond our control, these words offer a gentle reminder that we are not navigating these troubled waters alone. The same God who has sustained His people through every age remains faithful still. History becomes not just a record of what was, but a testimony to what continues to be true.

The hymn also acknowledges our grief and sorrow: “Be still, my soul: when dearest friends depart, and all is darkened in the vale of tears.” It doesn't offer cheap comfort or deny the reality of pain. Instead, it sits with us in our sadness while gently reminding us that “Jesus can repay from His own fullness all He takes away.” In a world that often tells us to move on quickly from our grief or to simply think positive thoughts, this hymn offers something far more substantial—the promise of a divine presence that both understands our pain and sustains us through it.

The final stanza looks toward that great hope we share: “Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on when we shall be forever with the Lord.” This isn't escapism, but rather the long view of faith that helps us endure present difficulties. When we remember that our current struggles are not the final word, we find strength to face them with grace and courage.

This Sunday, we'll be singing “Be Still, My Soul” during our service. I encourage you to arrive a few minutes early to quiet your heart before worship begins. Let the words sink deep, allow the familiar melody to quiet the anxious voices in your mind, and remember that in the midst of whatever craziness surrounds us, we are held by a love that will not let us go. Perhaps you might even take the hymn text home with you and use it as a prayer throughout the week whenever you feel overwhelmed by the news or circumstances beyond your control.

*May we find in this ancient hymn a timely word for our souls.*

*Dylan*

## YOUTH GROUP THIS SEMESTER

I am so excited to be back with our youth group this semester and wanted to share a few important details with you! Youth group will meet in the youth room from **6:15–7:00 PM**. Dinner will be provided at the church each week, typically Chick-fil-A or Zaxby's. After dinner, we will spend time together in a devotional and lesson. This semester, I am especially excited to walk through **the Fruit of the Spirit**, taking time to dive deeply into each “fruit” and how it applies to our students' daily lives.

In addition, we will continue to have our regular **Sunday School at 9:45 AM**, prior to the Sunday service. Thank you so much for your continued support and for allowing me the opportunity to walk alongside your students this semester. I am truly looking forward to all that God has planned!

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

*Thank you!*

*Madison Stoudenmire*

## STEPPING STONES MINISTRY

February is full of fun and learning in Preschool! Our classes will enjoy celebrating Valentine's Day with sweet parties and reminders of God's love for each of us. This month we are also diving into the story of *Jonah and the Whale*, learning about obedience, forgiveness, and God's never-ending grace.

We are currently looking for **Wee Worship volunteers** to help on the **2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month**. If you enjoy working with young children and would like to serve in this meaningful way, we would love to have you join us. Please contact the office for more information. Thank you for your continued support and prayers for our Stepping Stones ministry!

*Denise Carmichael*

*Director*

# SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

## WELCOMING FOR FEBRUARY

Mike and Sherry Lyons

## USHERS FOR FEBRUARY

Howell Cardwell, Mike Faulk,  
Chris Hewette, Mike Lyons

## DEACON FOR FEBRUARY 8

Barry Chambers

## DEACON FAMILIES

Dylan Bowden, Lisa Herndon,  
Anne Marie Horton Family, Leslie Peebles Family,  
Jean Rich, Ronnie Williams Family,  
Sara Williams Family

## DEACON FOR FEBRUARY 15

Pam Douglas

## DEACON FAMILIES

Barry Chambers Family, Jeff Davis Family,  
Lee Dupree Family, Bill Kitchen Family,  
Tommy McElhenney Family, Joseph Rainey Family,  
Kay Stevens Family

## WORSHIP REPORT

Sunday, January 25 Canceled  
Sunday, February 1 Canceled

## BIRTHDAYS

02/09 - Charlotte Williamson  
02/10 - Julia Davis  
02/11 - Charles Winslette  
02/12 - Will Rainey  
02/13 - Penney Cardwell, Cindy Duffey  
02/17 - Baker Stickley  
02/19 - Jessica Davis, Madison Davis, Savannah Davis

## ANNIVERSARIES

02/05 - Daryl and Connie Covington  
02/15 - Cary and Beth Walton

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

GUEST MISSIONARIES  
TREY AND KAITLYN LANCASTER  
WILL BE SPEAKING



FEBRUARY 8TH AT 10:50AM  
DURING MORNING WORSHIP

## CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, February 10  
5:00 PM

## CALLED CHURCH CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22  
AT 10:50 AM  
DURING THE WORSHIP SERVICE

Purpose: To hear a report from the Finance Committee, Personnel Committee and the Children's Committee to amend the church budget to accommodate the potential hiring of a full-time Children's Minister.



## 2nd -5th Grade Sunday School Teacher Needed

We are currently looking for volunteers to help lead our Sunday School class for 2nd-5th grade students.

If you're interested or would like more information, please contact a minister.



## WE ARE HIRING

JOB POSITIONS:  
• CHILDREN'S MINISTER



EMAIL US

craigwmsn@gmail.com or  
revbowden@gmail.com

First Baptist Church  
P.O. Box 3400  
Eatonton, GA 31024  
Return Service Requested

## VALENTINE BANQUET

ALL ARE WELCOME TO OUR

# *Valentine's Banquet*

FEBRUARY 11 AT 6:00PM

NO COST

MENU: LASAGNA FROM RICARDO'S,  
SALAD, ROLLS, AND DESSERT &  
SPAGHETTI FOR THE CHILDREN  
RSVP TO THE CHURCH OFFICE