

First Baptist Church of Eatonton Messenger

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



FROM THE PASTOR

Sometimes, because of our stubborn ways, Baptists have failed to lend ourselves to anything different, to lean into something like what is called Lent. But for years I've followed the Christian calendar in addition to the Hallmark calendar. Lent, so close in spelling to the more common word lint with which all people are familiar – if we've ever dug to the bottom of our pockets or inside the cuffs of our pants. And just as common as lint is the season of Lent - rising to prepare, bowing to prepare, for the death and resurrection of Jesus. Unbeknownst to us our revivalist tradition is rooted in Lenten practices – repenting, accepting the Gospel, following Jesus, ...

Lent begins with ash/dust, and reminds us such is the way all things began. With the blessing of divine love upon dust things came to be. But yes, Lent begins with “Words that refuse optimism: *Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.* No pivot. No lesson tied up with a bow. Just an embodied reminder that fragility is our baseline.”

That sounds precarious, even detrimental and downright dangerous.

But it also confronts us with a reality. As someone has recently emphasized, “The ache is not going away.” Some might argue it is integral to being human and humane. “The ache of grief that fades and flares when you least expect it — at the grocery store, in the line at the pharmacy ... the ache of bodies that don't cooperate, that wake us up at 3:00 a.m. with pain or panic ... the ache of loneliness, or regret, or unfinished stories, or prayers that keep circling back unanswered ... the low-grade ache that hums beneath our productivity and self-improvement projects, reminding us that something is still missing, no matter how organized the calendar looks.”

Lenten practices interrupt the vision of life, our more perfect version of the world where all is perfect – where babies are just beautiful but have no needs that provoke cries in the night, of child and parent.

“Lent is the forty-day season that leads us, slowly and deliberately” into days of quiet reflections and intense attempts. Its hopes are for resurrection. But the resurrections may vary greatly. Lent is a small attempt to recreate so many Biblical forty-day experiences, like Moses' forty years and Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. Lent “has been practiced by the church since at least the fourth century. With its beginnings on Ash Wednesday, “the church tells the truth about our limits out loud —using ash because words alone won't do.”

In her gifted honesty, Kate Bowler summarizes, “Lent doesn't promise relief. It doesn't offer a five-step plan for transcendence. It simply invites honesty. Forty days to stop pretending that we are fine, that we are in control, that we can out-run our limits with enough discipline or optimism.”

Lent invites us into the arms of God. Repent into the arms of God!

Grace and Peace,
Craig

WHAT WONDROUS LOVE IS THIS?

Dear Church Family,

As we enter the season of Lent, I find myself drawn again and again to one of our most haunting and powerful hymns. Its ancient melody carries a question that echoes through the centuries: *What wondrous love is this?*

It is indeed a wondrous love — a love that defies comprehension. The hymn reminds us that this love came *to me*, specifically and personally. Not to humanity in some vague, distant sense, but to you and to me. Christ did not die for an abstract idea of sinners; he died for actual sinners. He died for us.

The hymn's language is stark and unflinching. It speaks of "the dreadful curse" and acknowledges the full weight of our sin. Lent is not a season for pretending we are better than we are. It is a season for honesty — for looking squarely at the darkness within us and the brokenness around us. Only when we see the depth of our need can we grasp the magnitude of God's love.

What wondrous love is this, O my soul? The question is worth sitting with. This is not a sentimental love or a casual affection. This is a love willing to bear a cross. A love willing to be despised and rejected. A love willing to descend into death itself.

And here is the mystery: Christ *laid aside his crown* for his soul, for yours, for mine. The King of Glory became the suffering servant. The one who commands legions of angels allowed himself to be nailed to a tree. Why? For love.

During these forty days, I invite you to carry this question with you: *What wondrous love is this?* Let it interrupt your busy days. Let it quiet your anxious thoughts. Let it break through your self-sufficiency.

We will walk this Lenten road together — through confession, through fasting, through prayer, through service. We walk it knowing where it leads: to a cross on a hill outside Jerusalem. But we do not walk it without hope. For the love that carried Christ to that cross was strong enough to break death's power.

What wondrous love is this? It is a love that will not let us go. It is a love that pursues us into our deepest darkness. It is a love that transforms sinners into saints.

May this season draw us deeper into that wondrous, matchless, saving love.

Grace and peace,

Dylan

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNUAL FBC FOOD DRIVE

Please bring non-perishable food items to the Narthex by Sunday, March 29.



Love Divine

A PALM SUNDAY CELEBRATION



Sunday, March 29, 2026

6:00 in the Evening

First Baptist Church of Eatonton

115 North Madison Avenue, Eatonton, Georgia 31024

PERFORMING

Combined Chancel & Bell Choirs

Eatonton First Methodist Church and First Baptist Church of Eatonton

ALL ARE WELCOME

REFLECTIONS ON “BE STILL, MY SOUL”

As I reflect on our month together in our preschool ministry, my heart is so full. In February at Stepping Stones Learning Center, we spent time learning about Jonah and the Whale and were reminded that God’s love follows us wherever we go. It has been such a joy to hear the children talk about being “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14) and to see them begin to understand just how much God loves them (John 3:16). During Valentine’s Day, we focused on Jesus’ command to love one another (John 13:34) and the beautiful truth that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). It is truly a blessing to watch them grow in faith and in love each day.

Blessings,

Denise Carmichael

SSLC Director



SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

WELCOMING FOR FEBRUARY

Mike and Sherry Lyons

WELCOMING FOR MARCH

Mike and Kathy Faulk

USHERS FOR FEBRUARY

Howell Cardwell, Mike Faulk,
Chris Hewette, Mike Lyons

USHERS FOR MARCH

Chad Davis, Edge Farley, Marvin Franklin,
Luke Harvey, Clayton Lancaster

DEACON FOR FEBRUARY 22

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

DEACON FOR MARCH 1

Mollie Harvey

DEACON FAMILIES

Sara Beck, Tara Bushmiaer, Russell Davis Family,
Marvin Franklin Family,
Scott Joris Family, Steve Marshall,
Pat McDade

WORSHIP REPORT

Sunday, February 08 144

Sunday, February 15 79

FINANCIAL REPORT

JANUARY 31, 2026

<u>Budget Needs YTD</u>	\$46,027.50
<u>Total Receipts YTD</u>	\$25,322.00
<u>Budget Expenditures YTD</u>	\$80,949.75

BIRTHDAYS

02/19 - Jessica Davis, Madison Davis, Savannah Davis

02/20 - Ben Leverette, Jerry Williams

02/21 - Charlotte Green

02/22 - Dakota Davis, Rita Masson

02/23 - Russell Davis, Rayna Harper

02/24 - William Davis

02/25 - Sherri Farmer

02/27 - Cherry Leverette

02/28 - David Peebles

03/02 - Donald Baker, Hollis Harrison

03/05 - Helen Benshoof, Charlee Anne Brown,
Ryan Carmichael

ANNIVERSARIES

02/23 - David and Mary Ann Heath

02/24 - Luke and Mollie Harvey

NOTES OF SIGNIFICANCE

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.



CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

Sunday, March 8

5:00 PM

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Easter Lilies

Easter Lilies will be placed in the sanctuary for Easter. If you would like to place a lily in memory or honor of a loved one, please place your check and information in the offering plate or mail it to the church office.

Cost is \$8

Deadline is March 11

