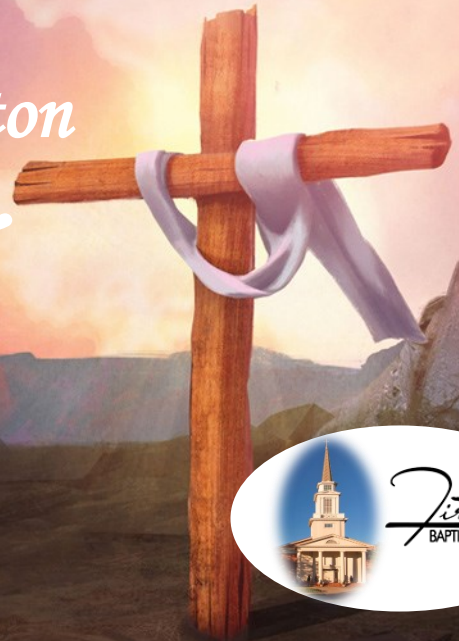


MARCH 21, 2024

First Baptist Church of Eatonton Messenger



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

FROM THE PASTOR

As I write Easter is on the horizon. Yet there is a long week of Holy Week services, a Maundy Thursday service and Good Friday before we get to Easter. While a good week, it's a tiring week for those of us who gather at all of these gatherings. However, it is the way of Easter known as Holy Week. And it is actually nothing as tiring and stressful as the week was for our Lord.

At the beginning of the week, he assumed the posture of a humble King riding on a donkey into the capitol city Jerusalem. His humble march was countered on the other side of Jerusalem by a parade of military force, staged by the Romans. Rome's march was about the power that existed to keep the crowd under control. It was meant to prevent any attempt to use the fervor of the Passover celebration as an opportunity to rebel, to start another Jewish revolt.

The contrast between the two parades was drastic. One is quiet except for the sound of Hosannas from the crowd and the clip clop of a slow, plodding donkey. Palm branches and cloaks were the only exhibition. Followers were hopeful, but uncertain of the outcome.

The other parade was noisy. Armor hanging from feisty soldiers and horses clanged together. The large beasts and their entourage of soldiers invaded the narrow streets. The power was evident. The danger obvious.

Jesus would present himself in the temple the first of the week. He would spend intimate table time with the disciples as he celebrated Passover on Thursday. He would issue his mandate to do as he has done when he washes the disciples' feet. Thus, the Maundy Thursday name, meaning the mandate from Jesus.

Then the night continues as Jesus suffers betrayal, arrest and trials. Then the next day he suffers the ultimate humiliation of the cruelest form of death – crucifixion! Friday is a horrid day. Saturday is often remembered as dark Saturday. The disciples lost all hope. Hope was crucified by the parade of power with which the week had begun on the other side of town from Jesus' parade. We have little ability to really know what hopelessness existed that Saturday.

Sunday was greeted with the same darkness. Daybreak meant only another reminder of the cruel events that had transpired. However, a trip to the tomb, by some of the women who had been following Jesus, met an unprecedented announcement – “He is not here. He is risen.” It only confused and frightened them further. But they tell the others. Together, they hash it out until finally they dare to believe, “He is risen.”

And thus began a new beginning that people have been living into ever since. There is such profound meaning in all of these events. No matter how often we repeat the announcement, “He is risen,” we yet find additional direction, nurture and hope from such words. Hope yet leads us in the midst of brutalities to love as Christ has loved – to yet nurture life in loving directions. It is a true testimony of Kate Bowler's term – how ‘breaautiful’ (beautiful and brutal) life really is all at once.

Join us as we worship over the next week and into the time after Easter, to be moved once again in the way of resurrection. God help us to practice resurrection!

*Grace and Peace,
Craig*

P.O. Box 3400

115 N. Madison Ave

706-485-3331

firstbaptisteatonton.org

Office Hours: Monday – Thursday: 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Friday: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

PALM SUNDAY

Christian churches all around the world will begin our holiest week of the year on what is popularly known as Palm Sunday. It remembers one of the few events in the life of Jesus recorded in all four gospel stories: his entry into Jerusalem, followed by a loud and warm welcome and a lot of waving branches. Interestingly, only John 12:13 mentions they were palms.

As a kid at Gray United Methodist, I remember receiving my palm branch and marching into the sanctuary with a palm in each hand to the music of *Hosanna Loud Hosanna!* Now on Palm Sunday, I am the adult trying to make sure the children don't use the palms as weapons to tickle and annoy their siblings. As I study this story in Scripture, I'm intrigued by the fact that the primary symbol for this day—a palm—was not chosen by Jesus.

John writes, "They took palm branches and went out to meet him" (John 12:13). Why did the crowd choose palm branches? It could simply have been that palms were nearby. But history tells us there might have been a deeper reason: Those plants, palm branches, were symbolically linked to military victories. We see in additional texts, that a generation before Jesus, when Simon Maccabee drove Israel's enemies out of Jerusalem, people celebrated by waving palm branches. The ancient text says; "*On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one hundred seventy-first year, the Jews entered it with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel.*"

All the Gospels are clear that Jesus chose a symbol, a way for his people to make sense of his kingship. But it was the young donkey, not the palm branch (John 12:14). John sees the donkey as Jesus intended. It was the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, which says, "*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*" Jesus picked a symbol that emphasized humility and lowliness instead of military strength. That fact should inform how we celebrate and remember his entry into Jerusalem. Of course, it would be a little crazy for every church around the world to find a donkey to drag into its sanctuary. But, we can spend Palm Sunday and Holy Week reflecting on what it means to follow a king who did not choose the way of violence. I have no desire to snatch the palm branches out of the hands of happy children or to end the long tradition of processions and hymns that mark this day. Instead, I hope that during Holy Week celebrations, we can slow down enough to think about the conflicting messages of Palm Sunday.

Jesus' claim to be the Messiah was not simply about a goal—God's rule over all things. He and the crowd agreed on that point. His earthly life and ministry were also about the *means* of accomplishing that goal: namely, sacrificial love. Jesus gave us not only the gift of forgiveness, flowing through his Passion and resurrection, but also a *way* to follow. God chose meekness, integrity, and love to gather his people. That is the message of Palm Sunday. For all the shouts of acclamation and waving of palm branches, Jesus never lost sight of the cross.

This Holy Week, then, let's focus on and follow the one who sits on the donkey, so that he can remind us again of the way to life eternal.

Dylan

YOUTH AND CHILDREN NEWS

NO CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Tuesday, March 26



WE ARE COLLECTING
EASTER CANDY
PLEASE BRING CANDY TO THE
NARTHEX BY MARCH 27

A poster for an Easter Egg Hunt. It features a white rabbit with pink ears peeking from behind a yellow basket filled with colorful Easter eggs. The background is dark blue with several colorful Easter eggs hanging from the top. A small logo for the church is in the top right corner.

**EASTER
EGG HUNT**
Sunday, March 31
at 9:45AM
First Baptist Church
Bring Your Basket!

THE MUSIC OF HOLY WEEK

The week between Palm Sunday and Easter can be especially holy if we participate in the nine worship services our church offers. Not only will we worship at noon on Monday through Friday, we also worship at 6:00 pm on Maundy Thursday and 7:00 am on Easter on the steps of the Plaza Arts Center.

We can hardly escape living a holier life, abiding in Him and praying without ceasing when we worship our Lord that many times in the span of one week, remembering what He did and said in His final week. But it's not just showing up. It's what we do in worship and why. Here's what we can expect in these services. (We appreciate Connie Covington playing for five of these added services.)

Palm Sunday – We'll sing *"With Waving Palms and Shouts of Praise," "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," "Go to Dark Gethsemane," "Were You There,"* and *"What Wondrous Love Is This."* Our JuBELLation handbell choir will ring *"Before the Throne of God Above,"* and Dylan Bowden will solo *"Let This Mind Be in You,"* accompanied by Catherine Williamson on the piano. Craig Williamson's sermon is in three separate sections, based on "The Passion of the Christ" as found in Mark 14:1-15:47.

Monday – Our guest speaker is David Wofford, Pastor of First Methodist Church, Eatonton. His sermon is on John 12:1-11, titled "A New Faithfulness." We will sing *"In the Bulb,"* which includes "unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see." John Cotten will play the prayer of a faithful father for all of us prodigal sons and daughters, using his electronic wind instrument. The song is a bit unusual in worship, but perfectly appropriate. It's the prayer of Valjeans in Act 2 of *Les Miserables*, as he stands over the sleeping, likely doomed Marius, *"Bring Him Home."*

Tuesday – Our guest speaker is Brandon Walton of Fellowship Church in Eatonton. We will sing *"I Am Thine, O Lord (Draw Me Nearer)."* Dr. Randy Brittain of First Methodist Church will sing a beautiful arrangement of *"Lord, I Want to Be a Christian,"* accompanied by Janice Turner on piano.

Wednesday – Our guest speaker is Karen Mitchem, Pastor of Wayside Presbyterian Church in Gray. We will sing *"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded,"* and our Men's Quartet will remind us, *"It's Still the Cross."*

Thursday Noon – Our beloved Bill Kitchen, long time Pastor here and now serving Macedonia Baptist Church in McIntyre, is our guest speaker. We will sing *"In the Garden,"* and Gary McElhenney will solo *"The Power of the Cross."*

Thursday Evening, 6:00 pm – Our Maundy Thursday service will reflect the rather somber atmosphere of the night when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, prayed in the Olive Garden, and was arrested and tried. We will sing *"When I Survey," "Here At Your Table, Lord,"* and *"My Jesus, I Love Thee."* JuBELLation will ring *"What Wondrous Love Is This."* We will share a time of Confession, of Assurance, of Thanksgiving, and share Communion by Intinction.

Friday – Our guest speaker is Katherine Ware, Associate Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Eatonton. She hopes to have her Choir sing. Our hymn will be the powerful spiritual *"Were You There."*

Community Easter Sunrise Service, 7:00 am on the steps of the Plaza Arts Center – Amelia Cotten, Organist of First Baptist Church, Milledgeville, has prerecorded all our music for us. Her prelude is a big, festive *"He Arose/Christ the Lord Is Risen Today,"* and the postlude follows suit, with *"He Is Exalted."* Our Pastor brings Greetings and later pronounces the Benediction. We will sing *"In Christ Alone My Hope Is Found"* and *"He Lives."* John Cotten sings *"He's Alive!"* The Easter Collect and Scripture Reading will be led by Rev. Jacob Douylliez of Eatonton Presbyterian Church. The Homily will be by Rev. Loree Reed of the Episcopal Church in Eatonton. First Methodist's David Wofford will serve Communion.

Easter Morning, 10:50 am – Be ready to join our Choir in singing the *"Hallelujah" Chorus* from Handel's Messiah! (You can practice your part with tutorials on YouTube.)

Seem like a lot? It is! Gloriously so!

John



ANNOUNCEMENTS

FOOD DRIVE



PLEASE BRING
NON-PERISHABLE FOOD
FOR PUTNAM CHRISTIAN
OUTREACH TO THE
SANCTUARY BY
SUNDAY, MARCH 24

JOIN US FOR

Palm Sunday Service



First Baptist Church
Sunday, March 24
10:50AM

NO SERVICES OR
ACTIVITIES ON
WEDNESDAY,
MARCH 27, 2024



MAUNDY THURSDAY EVENING SERVICE

MARCH 28

6:00 PM



COMMUNITY EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2024

7:00 AM

THE PLAZA ARTS CENTER



easter SUNDAY

Christ Is Risen!

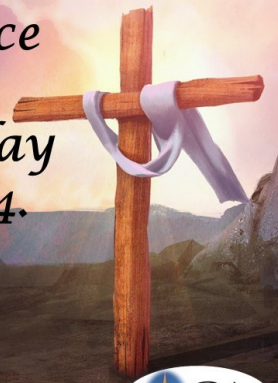
First Baptist Church, Eatonton
March 31, 2024 at 10:50 AM



Living Cross

We will be decorating
a living cross
on Easter Sunday.
Please bring flowers
to place on the cross,
Sunday March 31.

The Church Office
will be closed
for Easter Monday
on April 1, 2024.



SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

WELCOMING FOR MARCH

Mike and Kathy Faulk

USHERS FOR MARCH

Marvin Franklin, Head Usher

Gene Adams

Chad Davis

Edge Farley

Clayton Lancaster

CHILDREN'S CHURCH LEADERS

March 24 - Jessica Davis

DEACON FOR MARCH 24

Jesse McMillen

DEACON FAMILIES

Helen Benshoof

Kent Duffey Family

Mike Faulk Family

Hollis Harrison Family

David Heath Family

Bill Kitchen Family

Scott Sharp

Patrice Underkofler

DEACON FOR MARCH 31

Steven Prance

DEACON FAMILIES

Howell Cardwell Family

Sherri Farmer Family

David Giddens Family

Luke Harvey Family

Harris McCollum Family

Gary McElhenney

Ed Ricketson Family

BIRTHDAYS

03/21 - Jesse Covington

03/25 - David Stickley

03/26 - Felice Dissmeyer

03/27 - Marvin Franklin

03/28 - Janice Knowles

ANNIVERSARIES

03/24 - Steve and Robin Benton

03/26 - Chad and Jessica Davis

03/31 - Walt and Tara Rocker

WELCOME

We welcome Emma Willis, Karen Willis, Hayden Harper, and Rayna Harper to First Baptist Church by profession of faith.

WORSHIP REPORT

Sunday, March 10 120

Sunday, March 17 126

FINANCIAL REPORT

MARCH 3, 2024

Budget Needs \$10,200.56

Budget Receipts \$19,184.00

Budget Needs YTD \$91,805.04

Budget Receipts YTD \$110,595.19

MARCH 10, 2024

Budget Needs \$10,200.56

Budget Receipts \$8,145.00

Budget Needs YTD 102,005.60

Budget Receipts YTD \$118,740.19

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

JOIN US AS WE EXPERIENCE EASTER

MARCH 24 - MARCH 31, 2024

Holy Week Services

March 24 - March 31, 2024

Palm Sunday	10:50 AM
Holy Monday	12:00 NOON
Holy Tuesday	12:00 NOON
Holy Wednesday	12:00 NOON
Maundy Thursday	12:00 NOON & 6:00 PM
Good Friday	12:00 NOON
Easter Sunrise	7:00 AM AT THE PLAZA
Easter	10:50 AM

Lunch Provided During
Our Noon Services
Monday - Friday

Speakers include:
Dr. Craig Williamson, Rev. Dylan Bowden,
Rev. John Cotten, Rev. Bill Kitchen,
Rev. David Wofford, Rev. Karen Mitcham,
Rev. Brandon Walton, and Rev. Katherine Ware

Join Us As We
Experience Easter
At First Baptist Church



115 N. Madison Ave, Eatonton, GA 31024
706-485-3331
www.firstbaptisteatonton.org

PALM SUNDAY SERVICE

Sunday, March 24 at 10:50am

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Monday, March 25 – Friday, March 29
at 12:00noon (Lunch Provided)

EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

Sunday, March 31 at 7:00am at the Plaza

CHILDREN'S EASTER EGG HUNT

at 9:45am (Bring your Easter Baskets)

EASTER SERVICE

Sunday, March 31 at 10:50am