

# First Baptist Church of Eatonton Messenger

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



## FROM THE PASTOR

I'm contemplating and preparing to preach a couple of Sundays on the Sermon on the Mount. Actually, it's the Sermon on the Plain, as I'm reading from Luke chapter six. "Blessed are the poor... Blessed are those who weep... Woe to those who are rich... Woe to you who are laughing... Love your enemies... Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." These words lead historian and theologian Justo Gonzalez to call it "the hard-hitting gospel."

It also reminds me of a story from Will Willimon, who shared that one of the most honest public prayers he ever heard came from a pig farmer in his first small congregation, where he served as pastor. It was customary in that congregation for the lay leader to offer a prayer after the preacher's sermon. After Willimon had delivered what he thought was a rather tough sermon on a difficult text, the lay leader stood up and prayed a simple, direct prayer: "Lord, today we've heard your word... and we don't like it. Amen."

The sermon Jesus delivers in Luke, on the plain, is hard-hitting, and it's not one we typically embrace. It's not often quoted by those who use scripture to justify their actions. In fact, it's probably one of the least popular sermons Jesus preached. Some parts, like what we've named the "Golden Rule," (though it's never called that in the Bible) are often quoted. But more often, we live by a rewritten version of the golden rule: "He who has the gold, rules." And sadly, we tend to prefer parts of the Ten Commandments over the more challenging parts of Jesus' sermon on the plain.

We often pray, "Thy kingdom come." But when God's kingdom was present in Jesus, and when Jesus speaks these challenging words in his sermon, we begin to question whether we truly want God's kingdom as much as we think we do. "Thy kingdom come, but let us first determine how much of your kingdom we can take without choking," is how Willimon suggests we often feel.

There is an oddness—or should I say, a sheer Godness—that Jesus embodies, and that he invites us to live out. It includes being thoughtful, caring, and sensitive people, but it also comes with many additional challenges. It's in Jesus' sermon on the plain that we encounter those challenges head-on. We could ignore these tough words and content ourselves with simply being thoughtful, caring people, patting ourselves on the back when we succeed. Or, we could allow ourselves to engage with the deeper challenges Jesus presents—like being merciful, just as our Lord is merciful—and imagine what might happen then!

*Mercy,  
Craig*

# “SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER?”

I wanted to share a special reflection on a hymn that has long held a place in the hearts of many worshippers: “*Shall We Gather at the River?*” Composed by Robert Lowry in 1864, this timeless spiritual invites us to contemplate the beauty of heavenly communion and the hope that sustains us as we journey through life.

The hymn’s message is simple yet profound. It speaks to the promise of peace and rest that awaits believers in the eternal river of life, as referenced in the Book of Revelation. The image of gathering at the river evokes an unmistakable sense of unity, as believers come together in worship, anticipation, and faith. The river symbolizes not only spiritual cleansing but also the ultimate reunion with Christ, where all sorrow and separation are wiped away.

Each verse builds upon this beautiful imagery, urging us to look forward to that great day when we will join the saints of all ages in perfect harmony. The chorus, “Yes, we’ll gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river,” is a reminder that we are all part of something far greater than ourselves – a community bound together by faith, love, and the promise of eternal life.

As we sing and hear this hymn this Sunday, may we not only reflect on the joy of gathering with one another, but also on the hope that sustains us as we move through difficult seasons. The river is both a metaphor for the challenges we face in life and a promise of deliverance from them. There is comfort in knowing that one day, all of our struggles will give way to peace, and we will be gathered together in the presence of our Lord.

This hymn is a perfect example of how music serves as both a tool for reflection and a source of encouragement. Whether sung in times of joy or sorrow, “*Shall We Gather at the River?*” reminds us to keep our eyes fixed on the ultimate promise of Christ’s return and the everlasting hope we have in Him.

As we gather in worship this week, I invite you to reflect on the words of this beautiful hymn and allow its message to fill your heart with peace. May it inspire you as it has inspired countless generations before us, and may we continue to look forward to that glorious day when we will all gather together at the river.

*Blessings,  
Dylan*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

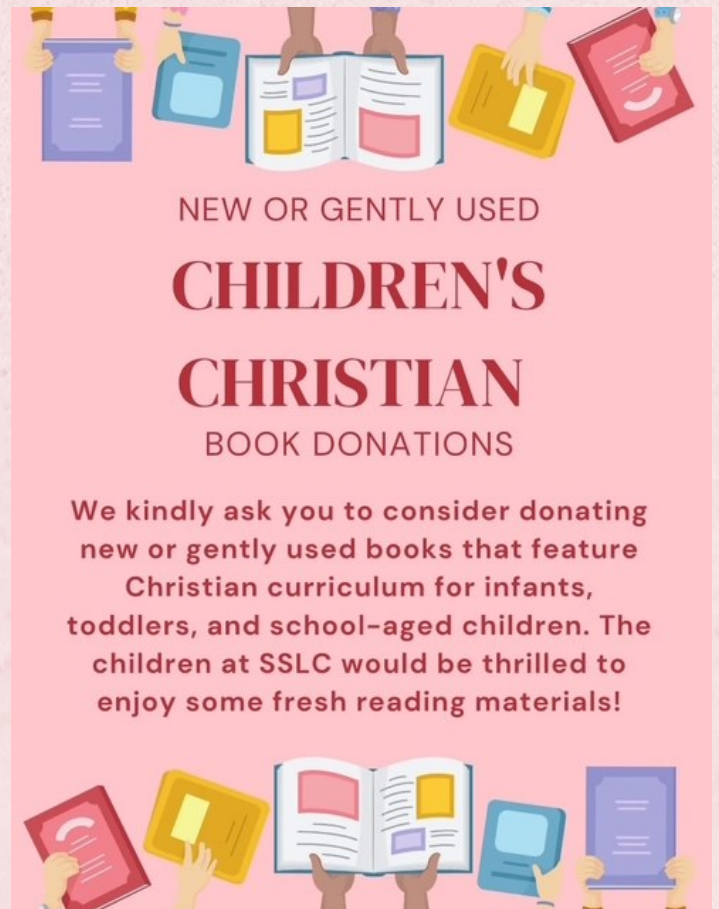


**FOOD DRIVE**  
**March 2-25**



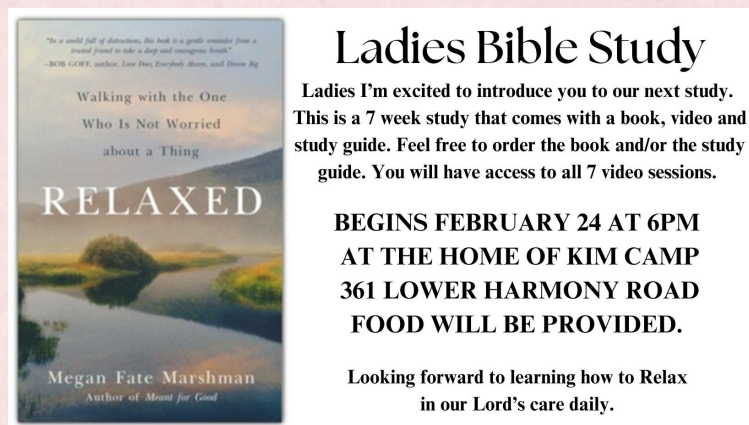
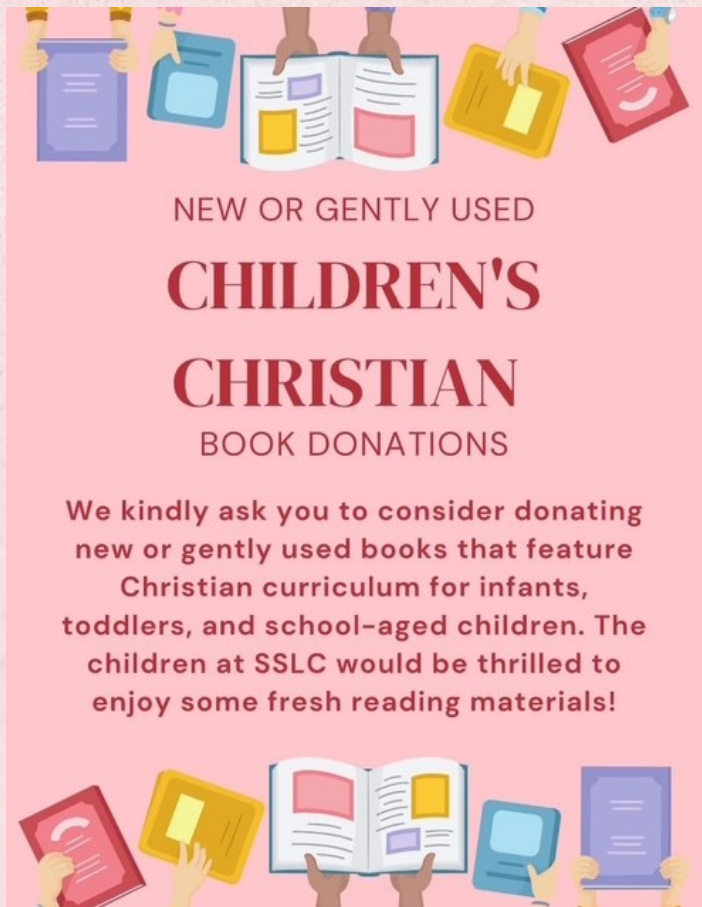
**PLEASE BRING  
NON-PERISHABLE FOOD  
FOR PUTNAM CHRISTIAN  
OUTREACH TO THE  
SANCTUARY BY  
TUESDAY, MARCH 25**

FOOD  
DRIVE



NEW OR GENTLY USED  
**CHILDREN'S  
CHRISTIAN  
BOOK DONATIONS**

We kindly ask you to consider donating new or gently used books that feature Christian curriculum for infants, toddlers, and school-aged children. The children at SSLC would be thrilled to enjoy some fresh reading materials!

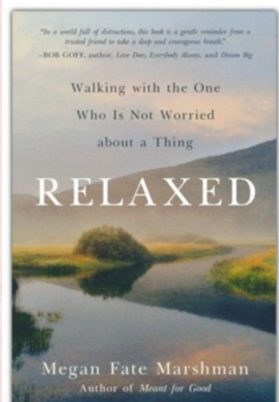


**Ladies Bible Study**

Ladies I'm excited to introduce you to our next study. This is a 7 week study that comes with a book, video and study guide. Feel free to order the book and/or the study guide. You will have access to all 7 video sessions.

**BEGINS FEBRUARY 24 AT 6PM  
AT THE HOME OF KIM CAMP  
361 LOWER HARMONY ROAD  
FOOD WILL BE PROVIDED.**

Looking forward to learning how to Relax in our Lord's care daily.



# SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

## WELCOMING FOR FEBRUARY

Mike and Sherry Lyons

## WELCOMING FOR MARCH

Mike and Kathy Faulk

## USHERS FOR FEBRUARY

Mike Lyons, Brandon Cardwell, Howell Cardwell,  
Mike Faulk, Ed Self, Frank Thompson

## USHERS FOR MARCH

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

## DEACON FOR FEBRUARY 23

Jim Hall

## DEACON FAMILIES

Barry Chambers Family, Jeff Davis Family,  
Bill Kitchen Family, Tommy McElhenney Family,  
Joseph Rainey Family, Kay Stevens Family,  
Jimmy Williams

## DEACON FOR MARCH 2

Mollie Harvey

## DEACON FAMILIES

Tara Bushmiaer, Russell Davis Family,  
Marvin Franklin Family, Sheryl Hall,  
Scott Joris Family, Steve Marshall, Pat McDade

# BIRTHDAYS

02/20 - Ben Leverette, Jerry Williams  
02/21 - Charlotte Green  
02/22 - Rita Masson, Dakota Davis  
02/23 - Rayna Harper, Russell Davis  
02/24 - William Davis  
02/25 - Sherri Farmer  
02/27 - Cherry Leverette  
02/28 - David Peebles  
03/02 - Hollis Harrison, Donald Baker  
03/05 - Ryan Carmichael, Helen Benshoof,  
Charlee Anne Brown  
03/06 - Don Masson, Paula Rossee

## ANNIVERSARY

02/23 - David and Mary Ann Heath  
02/24 - Luke and Mollie Harvey

## WORSHIP REPORT

Sunday, February 09	106
Sunday, February 16	81

## THANK YOU

First Baptist Church of Eatonton,

From our family we want to express our heartfelt gratitude for the beautiful service you provided for our mom. The love, care, and support shown made a difficult time more bearable. We are also deeply thankful for the delicious meal you provided after the Service. It was such a thoughtful gesture, and it meant so much to us to have a place to gather and share a meal together during such an emotional time. Your kindness and generosity will never be forgotten.

Deepest Appreciation,  
The Mitchum Family

To My Church Family,

I cannot express enough thanks to everyone for seeing us through and praying our family through the passing of our sister, Amy Mitchum.

A special thanks to my "pew sisters" who prayed mightily through her brief illness.

Keep us in your thoughts and prayers as we wade through our grief process. I have lost my sister and best friend and I will sorely miss her.

Love,  
Cheryl, Jill and our families

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



# 2025 CHOIR TOUR



**First Baptist Eatonton**  
March 20 | 7PM

