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The Pinnacle

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FBC Celebrates New Life

"The Pinnacle" is the monthly publication of the First Baptist Church of Middlesboro, Ky.



Rev. Zachary L. Bay

“I’m Building a Deck”

I'm building a covered deck. I told one church member this about a month or so ago, and they said, "Oh great! Who's your contractor?" I replied, "Suzanne Lee and Zach Bay." I'm a good handyman. Thanks, Dad. Suzanne has lots of good construction experience. Together, we complement one another at the worksite. A few church folks have quipped--my wife among them--that it will only be a matter of time before I fill my sermons with construction metaphors. It's true, you know, that preaching has a human component to it and that whatever the preacher is reading or doing in any given season often gets reflected somehow in their sermons. It's only natural, and I'm going to begin here. Perhaps by writing about what I'm learning from building a deck here in The Pinnacle, I will spare you a few sermon allusions.

First, there's purity and there's reality. I've been to 84 Lumber several times now, bought multiple trailer loads of lumber, and I've learned that math is pure, but wood is real. I've drawn the deck out with paper and pen several times. Two-by-tens here. Six-by-sixes there. On paper, it all lines up perfectly. On paper, it's pure. But 2x10s are really 1.5x9.5. And 6x6s are actually 5.5x5.5. And that's just two of the dimensions. A ten-foot board might be 10 feet, 1 inch. Or it might be 9 feet, 11 7/8. On paper, the math is pure, but in life, loggers hew wood from trees that are anything but Pythagorean. Purity, long an obsession of the Christian church, is a rare element in the world. You don't let go of the ideal, but you work with what you have. screw down one end of a deck board and then pull the other end into line because the wood is curved. And even then, it's not purely straight—one-by-six on paper, but all kinds of variations on the finished deck surface. And you know what? It's the variations that make the deck beautiful.

Second, perfect can get in the way of good. Americans and Christians have long been obsessed with "perfect"--perfectly square, perfectly balanced, perfectly said. In the Bible, God never called anyone

to be perfect; God called people to be good. Yes, the King James Version records Jesus preaching, "Be ye perfect" in the Sermon on the Mount. But "perfect" here means "complete," not "flawless." It means whole. The wood on my new deck is not flawless, but it is complete in the sense that you can walk from one end to the other and not fall through it. It is good, but it is not perfect. Neither are we human beings perfect, but we can do good. No matter how large, complex, or anxiety-inducing the issue is, don't let perfect get in the way of good.

Third, context matters. You know where I live. Behind my house, a large hill goes up to the cul-de-sac where Representative Adam Bowling lives. That hill comes fairly close to the back of my house. Further, my house is a cottage-style place, with relatively low and narrow eaves. The height, width, and length of the deck and roof over it are negotiable but only within the boundaries of that hill and roofline. Whether you're building a deck, paying a neighborly visit, having a meeting, or reading the Bible--context matters. And you, with your unique set of strengths and weaknesses, are part of that context the minute you enter into it. You have to work with what you have, where you are. In life, we do as much good as we possibly can where we are with what we have.

My new deck is coming together beautifully. It's going to be such an asset both to my family and to my ministry here. And because I'm paying attention as I cut boards and run screws, it's an asset before it's even finished. I'm learning about life and faith from God's words written on every leaf and branch and blade in the world.

Oh, and one last thing I'm learning. Despite what you might see in an old Clint Eastwood western, life is not a solo venture. Whether you're sitting in a classroom or a board room, whether you're building a deck or resting at the lake, life is an experience best shared. Even God--Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer--doesn't go it alone.

I look forward to having you over when Suzanne and I finish having fun building this deck. And I promise: we'll talk about something other than 2x10s.

"Disciples are watched, especially by those in need. Disciples must be seen, especially by those in need." In these two simple sentences, Willie Jennings flips like tables in the Temple, our usual *modus operandi*. So often, we disciples believe we are the ones doing the watching.

You wouldn't believe how many times a week I come across this belief. I seldom lead with "I'm the Pastor of First Baptist Church,"--but whether I am picking up a load of mulch or buying a bucket of hydraulic cement--if I stand around and talk long enough, it comes up. "What do you do for a living?" "Oh, I'm Pastor of First Baptist Church." I seldom lead with it because it nearly always shifts the timbre of the conversation. One minute, we're just two men standing talking about mulch and duck hunting and life; the next, my conversation partner, who I have never met before this day, feels beholden to talk religion. And the conversation usually goes in the same general direction: "Boy, the world is in bad shape, isn't it?" "We're in a real mess with all these [fill in the blank] doing [fill in the blank again]." The more churchy my conversation partner is, the more divine judgment he seems to heap. "God's angry! God will not be mocked! This world is going to feel the wrath of God." You wouldn't believe how often this happens to me. I'd rather have a casual conversation, buy my hydraulic cement, and move on with my day. I'd rather that than hear such lousy theology and poor Christian witnessing ladled up in heaping helpings.

"Disciples are watched, especially by those in need. Disciples must be seen, especially by those in need." In these two simple sentences, Willie Jennings subverts that. He moves Christian people from watching and judging to being watched and being judged. Jennings is not just a Yale Divinity School theologian; he's also a Baptist minister. He knows a little something about evangelism, about witnessing. He knows that the person who takes the witness stand in a courtroom is watched, especially by those in need. Too often, however, we Christians called to be witnesses slide one seat to the right and make ourselves the judge instead. As a theologian, as a Baptist minister, Jennings knows this. He knows that Acts 3:1-11 calls us to be witnesses, not judges.

"Disciples are watched, especially by those in need. Disciples must be seen, especially by those in need." That's what happens with Peter and John. They are headed up to the Temple at the appointed hour of prayer, at 3 PM. They are on their way to church. And when they get to the door, they rest their eyes on a usual sight: The man born unable to walk is again today being carried in and set up near the door at church time. He will ask for money. Some will give, more will scoff, and the man in need will watch the alleged witnesses of God's grace in the world. Peter, John, and all those going to church with them are on the witness stand; the man unable to walk from birth sits robed on the bench. And thanks be to God, the Bible gets right what we Christians have so often--just this week--gotten wrong. Peter realizes that he is not the judge, but the witness, and when that happens, the man born unable to walk jumps up, leaps up, and dances on the steps of the church house. "Disciples are watched, especially by those in need. Disciples must be seen, especially by those in need." Acts 3:1-11 says that's when the Gospel is loosed upon the world.

And the book of Acts--I like the book of Acts. Just in case we missed it the first time in verses 1-8, Luke shows us again in verses 9 and 10. "All the people saw him walking and praising God. They recognized him as the same one who used to sit at the temple's Beautiful Gate asking for money. They were filled with amazement and surprise at what had happened to him." They are witnesses, not judges. They are our archetypes, church. Look to your sacred story here. Recognize your place in it. It will change your way of being in the world.

I mentioned earlier that I seldom lead with "I'm the Pastor of First Baptist Church." No sooner than those words leave my lips, the conversation changes. I get pushed into the seat with the gavel, and it's often a less enjoyable experience from then on out. Believe it or not, I enjoyed hearing about your business, your family, your place in the world, much more than I did your theologizing about the "state of the world." I don't belong on the bench. The robe there doesn't fit. The gavel feels all wrong. I belong on the witness stand, just as you do. Peter and John get that. "I don't have any [of Caesar's] money, but what I will give you what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, rise up and walk!" We so often miss it, saying instead, "If you'd follow Caesar's rules better, you wouldn't be in this shape, and I'm not enabling you. Good day." Notice how clear our ancestors in the faith are about what the moment calls for: not Caesar's means, but God's means. Not Caesar's values, but God's values. Not Caesar's judgment, but God's grace.

Acts 3 refers to the place where all this happens most delightfully. The Beautiful Gate. I have little doubt that the gate on the Temple in Jerusalem was ornate. Perhaps there was a gate on the Temple that was indeed called that. But as a Bible reader, I find myself wondering what Luke is getting at here by using this name. I wonder what Luke is getting at in the third chapter of his second volume. Is it merely commentary on a particular gate, or is it something more?

This past week, I had a most magical experience with my daughter, Eleanor. She asked me to go upstairs and play with her in her room. As my toes sunk into the carpet in the second-floor room that overlooks the church parking lot, Eleanor said, "Let's lay down here, Dad."

"Okay. What now?"

"It's snowing!"

"Oh," I replied, looking up at the light fixture and the air conditioning register, "So it is. What's the snow look like?"

"A field of flowers."

"Oh, I like that. Is it snowing hard or soft?"

"Soft. Very soft."

"You know, one of the things I like about the snow is how quiet it is."

Until this past week, I had no idea that it snows in Eleanor's room. She was a witness, and through her witness, I saw it. I could have so easily slipped one seat to the right and said, "All I see is an air conditioning register." But by the grace of God in the moment, I didn't, and because of that, I saw a Beautiful Gate open up in my 3-year-old daughter's room.

Peter and John could have so easily slipped into Caesar's way of thinking. Could have judged. Could have wondered who in the family sinned so that this man was born this way. Had they done that, no matter how ornate the gate, it wouldn't have been Beautiful. But by the grace of God in the moment, they didn't, and because of that, they and the man no longer lame saw a Beautiful Gate open up at the Temple.

You and you and you, Disciples of Jesus Christ, can also so easily slip into Caesar's way of thinking. The legalistic tit-for-tat way of the world in which we live. We can stand and believe we are the watchers and set ourselves up as the courtroom judge. If we do that, no matter how ornate those doors and this room, it won't be Beautiful.

I have seen a Beautiful Gate in my daughter's room. I have seen a Beautiful Gate here in this room. Right there in that pew, talking with someone about the pain of divorce. None of Caesar's gold, just God's grace. I saw it streaming in through those windows.

I have seen the Beautiful Gate here in this room. Right there in that pew, talking with someone about friction in a relationship. None of Caesar's rations, just God's hope. I saw it in the pew that held so many before us and held us.

I have seen the Beautiful Gate here in this room. Right down here around this table, prayers for a friend battling cancer. None of Caesar's tit-for-tat values, just God's faithfulness. I saw it in the flicker of those two altar candles.

I am about to see the Beautiful Gate here in this room. Right down there, where a family will make vows to "raise up a child in the way he should go." You know them. I know them. You love them. I love them. And for guidance, they will look not to Caesar's ways but to God's love. We'll see it in the promises made by them and by us.

"It" is the Beautiful Gate. It appears each and every time, whenever and wherever, the people of God remember they are witnesses to God's grace and share the love they have been given by Jesus Christ.

Today's story in Luke is a disturbing passage. To being with, it looks cruel. Two people who want to follow Jesus are forbidden to deal with important matters before they follow. One wishes to say goodbye to his relatives, and another wants to have a funeral for a family member.

It helps to know that Luke is fond of using hyperbole, exaggerated speech, in his gospel and in the Book of Acts to make his point. And his point in this case is to teach us that nothing is as important as our relationship with God. Not even family. Not even country. Nothing is more important, no matter how good it is or how much it means to you.

It may be hard to choose between good and bad in some gray areas, but Luke is telling us that it's even harder to choose between good and best. And that is what a disciple of Jesus has to do.

But what's even more disturbing about this little passage is how Jesus even discourages the first would be disciple, who says, "I will follow you wherever you go." I love the Shakespearean way that the old King James version translates this. It says, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

That's an interesting word. Whithersoever. WHITHERsoever. WithersoEVER. Where is.....whithersoever? I've looked on a map, even tried an Atlas, but I can't find it anywhere. So, I decided to try the gospels, and I think I have located withersoever.

It's important to locate it because you don't want to go anywhere if you don't know where it is. It might be somewhere you don't want to go!

But as you examine the gospels you are made aware right away that whithersoever includes places of extreme poverty.

Because Jesus went there frequently. In fact, most of the people who heard him preach or witnessed his caring and healing were poor people.....in places of very little food and clean water, inadequate sanitation and shelter.

You don't have to go to a third world country or an inner-city ghetto to find such places. They exist right where we live.

I remember the day when I was your pastor and Tim Limburg came to my office to see me. Tim was a home missionary from the Christian Reform Church, who came to Middlesboro. He went on to become an outstanding Presbyterian minister in Washington D.C.

But on this particular day, Tim came to share his dream with me. He dreamed of starting a church ministry that he wanted to call Cooperative Christian Ministries, or CCM as he referred to it. He said it would be a way to help the poor of our area with food and clothing, medicine, housing and utilities.

He said, "We could do so much more together than we can do separately. We could pool our resources and even be eligible for some government assistance and accomplish far more than the downtown churches could ever do separately."

Then he said, "But we could never get this off the ground without the backing and cooperation of First Baptist Church." I said, "Well, I can't speak for the church, but I know them quite well, and I think they would be pleased to a part of your dream." I took it to the deacons, and they supported it unanimously. CCM is a part of withersoever, and it's right here in Middlesboro. Were you aware of that?

Another place you will find whithersoever is hospitals, nursing homes, and sick rooms everywhere.

Places where people are hooked up to IV's and undergoing fearful and painful procedures. I've spent my life visiting those places, and I can assure that Jesus is there. And people going through the suffering and loneliness of such places need his presence desperately.

Duke Hospital is such a place. I remember the day a little 13 year old girl called me at my home in Tennessee from Duke Hospital. She was dying from cystic fibrosis, and she had her mother to call me so she could ask me, "Jack, what is it like to die?"

I told her, "Do you remember going to sleep in your car, and your daddy carried you into your room, and the next morning you woke up in your own bed?" She said yes. I said, "It will be like that, honey. Jesus is with you, and he will carry you. Don't be afraid. You are surrounded by angels."

I remember being in Children's Hospital in Knoxville one morning at 3 a.m. when a little five year old girl passed away from cancer. Her mother was holding her in her arms when she took her last breath. And he was there. He's always there. Otherwise, we couldn't survive. Sick rooms, and hospitals are a part of whithersoever.

And nursing homes. In some cases, I was the only one who visited some of the patients there. They had no living relatives and there were ample empty spaces in the parking lots, let me tell you. But he was there in their rooms when I visited.

One lady had fallen in the outer lobby of a nursing home, and I told the nurse, but she said, "Oh, she does that all the time, just lies down when she feels like it." I said, "But she's in pain. Better call an ambulance." Reluctantly, she did, but twenty minutes passed and still no ambulance.

I went back to her and said, "The haven't come. What's the hold up?" She said, "I told them there was no hurry, and they said they would be here as soon as they finished washing the ambulance." So, I opened my cellphone and called again and said, "Come to the nursing home immediately." They came, took her to the nearby hospital, where they found she had a broken hip. She had been in the floor for half an hour before I arrived. But he was there. He is always there. Because it's a part of whithersoever.

Another place of whithersoever I have discovered is where people are being mistreated. Paul and Susannah Mitcham were a couple from the 1800s before the civil war. They owned 450 acres of land and sold it so they could buy 49 slaves. Can you believe that? They moved from Virginia to Kentucky where they bought another 21 slaves. And when Paul died, Susannah bought even more slaves. Altogether, they bought 107 slaves with their money.

Do you know what they wanted with all those slaves? Every time they bought each one of those slaves, they set them free. Do you think Jesus had anything to do with that? There is no question. Where people are mistreated, he is there. It's a part of whithersoever.

And whithersoever includes places where people are grieving. Oh yes. Grieving is the most difficult place in anyone's life. Sometimes we think we can't even catch our breath. We even lose touch with God at times like that. But God doesn't lose touch with us. How else do we survive? How did the parents of that little girl in Duke Hospital, Susie Powell, survive her funeral? How did the parents of little five year old Maddie Harrill in Childrens Hospital survive her funeral?

When I served this church, I was called and told that 16 year old Rene Johnson was killed in a traffic accident.

They asked if I would inform her parents. Ten years prior to that, they had been told their 16 year old son had been killed in a traffic accident. How do you go through something like that? He was there.....He was there to raise a leader of the synagogue's daughter who had died, to raise a widow's son, and to raise two sister's brother. Why them? He didn't raise everyone. He raised them to show us God's power to give us all life after death, and to show us God's care when we're grieving.

And finally, places of regret and remorse, where forgiveness is desperately needed, they are a part of the whithersoever of Jesus. Most of us have met him there.

A friend of mine came to my office once with such a need. I knew Jesus would be there. He's been there for me and countless others. But my friend said, "I know God forgives me, but I don't feel forgiven." I said, "That's because you won't forgive yourself. Let me help you." And I asked him to read the story of the prodigal son to me. I looked it up and handed him the Bible, and said, "Read it aloud."

He read the story, and when he got to the place where the father runs to greet his boy, I said, "You can stop there. Now, close your eyes and I want you to picture that story. Can you see that boy leaving home? Yes. Can you picture the boy with tears in his eyes for what he has done? Can you see how sorry he is? Yes. Can you see the boy trembling as he makes his way to his father? Yes. Can you see the father running to greet that boy? Can you see it? Can you see how happy he is to see his son and how anxious he is to forgive him? Yes. Well, that boy is you. He's running to you. Right now. You are the one God is running to forgive. Can you see it?"

Sometimes we have to see ourselves in the Bible to understand where whithersover is. I don't know whether the man in our story today had thought this thing through or not.

I'm not sure he knew where he was volunteering to go. But I know this. After you have thought about it, if you still want to follow Jesus to help the poor, the sick, the dying, the grieving, the lonely, and those who need forgiveness.....I think Jesus will say to you, "I'm so very proud of you. I could use your help. Sometimes people need to see my love in flesh and blood to know I'm there. That's why I called you to follow me. Come.....let's you and I go whithersoever."

Amen.

A Sermon by Rev. John E. Pennington

"The Criminal-Disciple Emerges." That's how Yale Divinity School theologian Willie Jennings describes this scene in Acts 4. Jennings' point: sometimes, being a disciple of Jesus puts you crossways with the rules, the regulations, and, occasionally, the law.

In 1981 and 1986, the First Baptist Church of Middlesboro, KY, following the lead of Jesus and trying to do the loving thing, ran afoul of the unwritten rules of the local Baptist association. You said Christians are Christians no matter who baptized them, and they said, "You're out."

In the 2010s, again following the lead of Jesus, you ran afoul of the written regulations of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. They said you couldn't affiliate with both the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and them. "The CBF might allow an LGBT person to work in the denomination," they said, and you said, "We're just trying to do the loving thing," and they said, "You're out."

Rules. Regulations. And sometimes, the law. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., out of allegiance to Jesus and his fellow Americans, broke the law more than once, was threatened more than once, sat in jail more than once, because he insisted on doing the loving thing for all human beings when the law said it was illegal to do so. So did Rosa Parks. So did Ralph Abernathy. So do many still to this day. Most say, "You're out," but I have to believe that just as he did with you in 1981 and 1986, Jesus said, "That's my guy! That's my gal! Those are my people!"

"The Criminal-Disciple Emerges." That's how Yale Divinity School theologian Willie Jennings describes this scene in Acts 4. Jennings' point: sometimes, being a disciple of Jesus puts you crossways with the rules, the regulations, and, occasionally, the law. All three--the rules, the regulations, the law--are woven together in the world from which Acts 4 comes. Rome occupies the territory of ancient Palestine and rules over the people of ancient Israel with their mighty Legions. Rome was different than those who came before them. Instead of wiping out or exiling local leaders people, Rome gave them jobs. Rome assimilated the local kings--people like Herod and Pilate--and called them governors. Rome identified the local religious institutions like the Temple and its leaders like the Sadducees and made them hubs of tax collection and Caesar worship. Or at least, deep reverence for Caesar. Same thing in the end. And Rome then said oh-so-graciously, "Live as you like. You're free to worship and to follow your own ways." So long as you don't run afoul of the Roman rules, regulations, and laws. That's what happened to Jesus, you know.

The context for what's happening to Peter and John in Acts 4 comes from Acts 3 and what they did at the Temple's Beautiful Gate with the man born unable to walk. Do you remember that story from a couple of weeks ago? Every day at the regular three o'clock prayer time, people would carry the man up and place him at the Beautiful Gate. Peter and John head up for worship, he asks them for money, and they heal him in Jesus' name. Then, Acts 3:8 says, "He entered the temple with them."

That. That right there is what gets Peter and John hauled up in front of this crowd in Acts 4. There are Jews like them there. There are Romans there. There are always Romans there, watching, listening, reporting. Peter and John ran afoul of Israel's rules and regulations--this man was fine outside the gate, but not inside the Temple. Peter and John ran afoul of Roman law by disturbing the peace in the name of Jesus; Caesar will have order. Peter grasped the man's right hand and lifted him from the ground, and then Peter and John walked with him into the Temple. How dare they!

You see, since the very beginnings of the church, there have been followers of Jesus who see it as their job to mind the gates, to keep certain people out. It's not a coincidence that the people who carried the man unable to walk to the Temple each day at the regular time of worship left him at the gate. They were obeying the rules, regulations, and laws. He wasn't permitted in because some believed that sin caused his condition, and those in charge saw it as their job to mind the gates and keep certain people out.

Like the First Baptist Church of Middlesboro, KY, in 1981 and 1986; like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks, and Ralph Abernathy, and Will Campbell, and Deitrich Bonhoeffer, and the Apostle Paul after them, Peter and John break the rules, regulations, and laws in the name of Jesus and side with the one excluded. They include him. They break the rules, regulations, and laws to do the loving thing.

There have from the beginning been among the faithful those who see it as their job to mind the gates and keep certain people out. They are, still today, "Legion." I run afoul of these folks regularly--on social media, on the sidewalks of Middlesboro. Most of you have a story or two of your own. It begins with someone asking you where you go to church and your reply, "First Baptist." "Oh. That church." "You know they believe...right?" "You know they welcome...right?" This kind of religion is so pervasive in our area and throughout the country that it can make you second-guess yourself, but don't fall for that. Acts 3 and 4 are on your side. Peter and John clearly break the rules, regulations, and laws. Peter and John clearly grasp the man's hand, pull him up, and walk him past the threshold of the gate into the Temple. Peter and John get hauled into court for it, but make no mistake: the way Luke tells the story in Acts, these two dissenters are filled with the Holy Spirit and thus the protagonists.

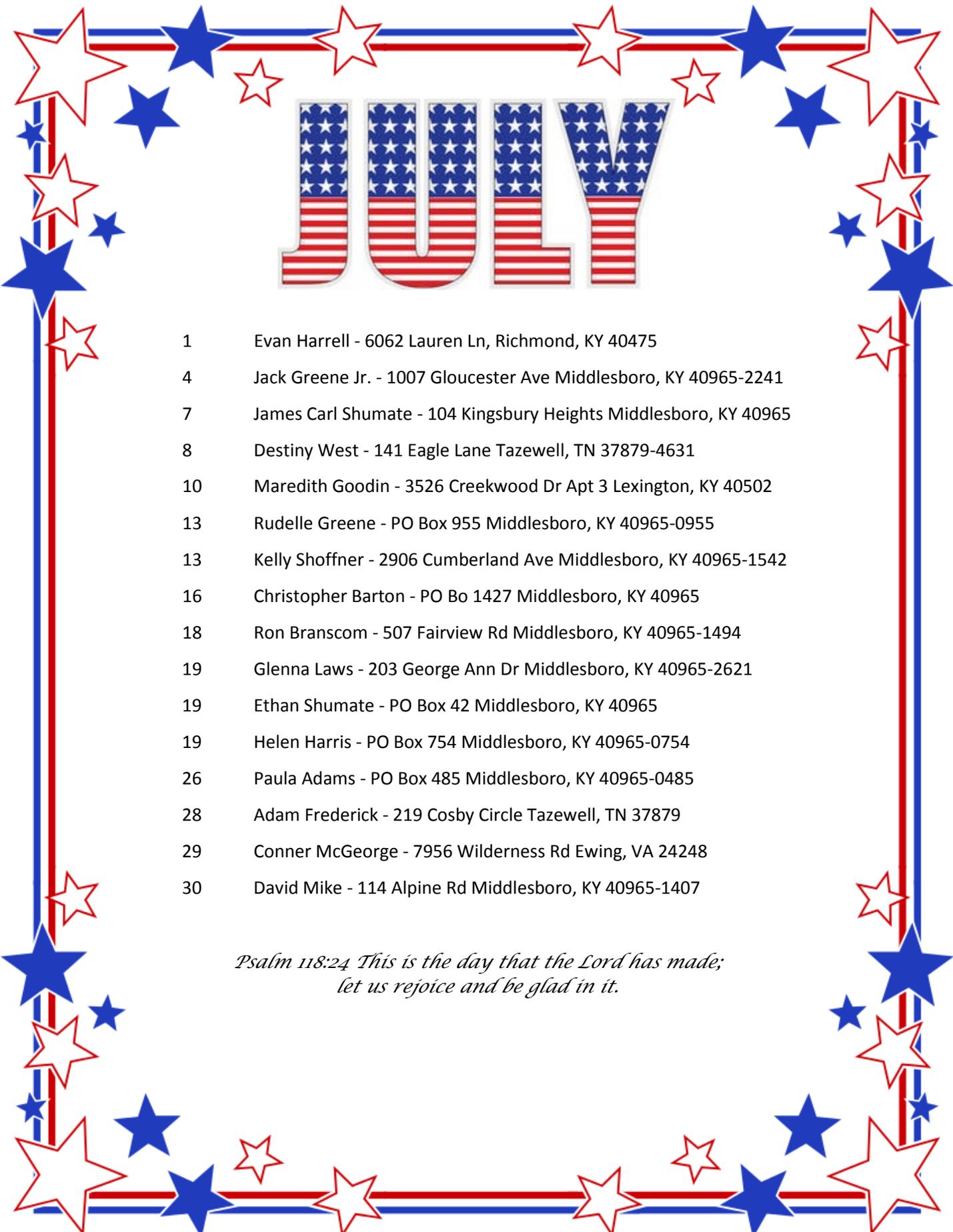
"They, [the people, the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees--those among the faithful who saw it as their job to mind the gates and keep certain people out], they were incensed that the apostles were teaching the people. They were incensed Acts 4:2 says, because they were teaching the people to bring someone into the church house! They were incensed that Peter and John had no respect for the place, that they'd let any riff-raff at all into the community. Riff-raff like this guy who was the object of debate about sins--his sins or his daddy's sins--but never the object of their love and embrace. They were incensed because they had been walking past this guy for years, flipping him a few coins with Caesar's likeness on them, and going

on inside. They were incensed because Peter and John didn't give him Caesar; they gave him Jesus. The people, the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees were incensed because Peter and John were, as Acts 4:3 says, "teaching the people and announcing that the resurrection of the dead was happening because of Jesus." They did it by grabbing that man's hand and walking with him across the threshold he was forbidden by the rules, regulations, and laws to cross. The man born unable to walk incarnated the resurrected. Peter and John inaugurate what Willie Jennings calls the criminal-disciple.

Beloved, since the very beginnings of the church, there have been followers of Jesus who see it as their job to mind the gates, to keep certain people out. Out of the church house. Out of the schoolhouse. Out of the neighborhood. Out of government office. Outside the gates. The thing is: they're wrong. They've got it all backward. They're in league with the movement in Acts 4. Theirs is the regressive, legalistic, and self-aggrandizing faith of Empire. And, still today, they are "Legion." Jesus had little for that. He crossed thresholds breaking rules, regulations, and laws to include a Canaanite woman, a woman caught in adultery, a woman sitting in the noontday heat at a well, several men possessed and crippled, and droves and droves and droves of so-called "sinners." And Peter and John? They're just doing what Jesus taught them to do.

Sometimes, that runs afoul of the rules, regulations, and laws. But that doesn't make it wrong. When two significant values collide, and you find yourself wondering what to do next, remember the answer offered by Peter, John, and Jesus: the loving thing. Always the loving thing. No matter the risk. No matter the cost. The Holy Spirit will be with you.

A Sermon by Rev. Zachary L. Bay



JULY

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- 29 Conner McGeorge - 7956 Wilderness Rd Ewing, VA 24248
- 30 David Mike - 114 Alpine Rd Middlesboro, KY 40965-1407

*Psalm 118:24 This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

I have recently read about Harriet Powers in the book "In the Sanctuary of Women" by Jan L. Richardson. She was born into slavery and spent most of her life near Athens, Georgia. After being emancipated, she and her husband bought a farm and she became a seamstress. We know much of her story because two of her quilts have been preserved.



Beth C. Parker

They are known as "bible quilts" and they tell stories. She used beautiful colors and traditional African applique. She quilted bible stories like Jonah and the whale, pictures of celestial events, and also stories about local legends like "the independent hog that ran 500 miles from Georgia to Virginia." Her first quilt is in the Smithsonian. Her gifts from God were shown through the work of her hands.



During the pandemic one of my ways to cope was making quilts. I think most of mine tell stories. After quarantining, my sister-in-law and I each made a quilt at her home. Our story was of our family being together after we had been separated.



During the pandemic one of my ways to cope was making quilts. I think most of mine tell stories. After quarantining, my sister-in-law and I each made a quilt at her home. Our story was of our family being together after we had been separated.

I made several quilts for people I love. One friend sews birds to give for gifts. I made her quilt with birds. One friend loves all things flowers! I made her a quilt with all kinds of flowers and birds.



Another quilt I made tells my family story. It's the story of women in my family. I made it from the linens used in their homes over the years. I look at it and I am grateful for good times eating around their tables and sharing love through family stories.

We each have gifts from God. During the pandemic we have discovered how important those gifts can be. Two gifts that often go unnoticed are the gifts of listening and of hospitality. You might notice them in phone calls and visits or, perhaps, delivering a loaf of bread or a pie. The recipient of your gift is grateful. I hope you will find your gift and use what you have been given. Look for ways God can use you. When you share with others you are sharing God's love.



Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above. These gifts come down from the Father, the creator of the heavenly lights, in whose character there is no change at all. James 1:17



Quilt made with linens from the hands and homes of Julia Williams Sanders, Carrie Hull Waller, Nancy Waller Sanders, Sarah Sanders Cox, Cosette Carter Parker, Margaret Odom Dambrino and Beth Cox Parker
constructed by Beth Parker
August 2020

Important Dates in July

Deacons Meeting
July 11th at 7:00 p.m.

Finance Committee Meeting
July 13 at 5:00 p.m.

Business Meeting
July 14 at 6:30 p.m.

Zoom links for each meeting will be sent via email closer to the meeting date.



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
P.O. BOX 839
MIDDLESBOROUGH, KY 40965

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Staff

- Rev. Zachary L. Bay
Pastor
- Beth C. Parker
Minister of Music
- Elizabeth Lowden
Office Administrator
- Billy Hunter
Facilities Manager
- Cherry Stamper
Child Care Coordinator
- Phillip Akers
Media Coordinator
- Janet Matthews
Organist
- Teresa Brown
Organist/Pianist
- Bonnie Daniels
Pianist
- Rev. John E. Pennington, Jr.
Pastor Emeritus

Church Announcements



first baptist church
middlesboro.ky

Doing Church Live Online

Worship

Sundays at 11:00 a.m. on
YouTube or local cable



Join us live on YouTube by searching for Middlesboro's First Baptist Church or by following this link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UcaUciDulz6qCRnbl2n0sU1w>

Midweek Prayer and Study

Wednesdays at 12:00
p.m. on **Facebook**



Join us live on Facebook! Like the First Baptist Church of Middlesboro, KY Facebook page to receive a notification whenever we go live. Click the Facebook logo or follow this link: <https://www.facebook.com/First-Baptist-Church-of-Middlesboro-KY-359715124102896/>

In a manner of speaking, the church can never close, for the church is the people of God doing the work of Christ in the world. Even now, we are called by Jesus to live and act as his disciples. In extraordinary times, however, the church building can and should be closed. In accord with recent CDC recommendations, the church building will be closed to all in-person activities until further notice.

Please join us as we continue to do church online in the meantime. If you need technical support, email Elizabeth at elizabeth@fbcmiddlesboro.org between 9 AM and 1 PM.