

First Baptist Church
17 South Street Cuba, New York 14727
585-968-1531



Good News Letter

Rev. Lynn A. Sullivan, Sr. Pastor
rev.lynn.sullivan@gmail.com

Rev. Alexandra Freer, Associate Pastor
Revfreer@cupafirstbaptist.org

Maghen Beck, Secretary
sec@wny.twcbc.com

<http://cupafirstbaptist.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/cupafirstbaptist/>

<https://faithlife.com/cupafirstbaptistchurch/activity>

“ . . . If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” Luke 9:23 NRSV

Did you know that in the Christian year Easter is the most important holiday? For years I had thought that Christmas was, but truly it is not. Oh, don't get me wrong; Christmas IS important as we honor our Savior's birth. But really, when we think about it, we realize that at the center of our Christian lives is the cross. On the cross, Jesus willingly gave up his own life that we may have eternal and abundant life. And so, at the center of the church year is the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is at this time of year that we honor this most important event in human history. We, in a very real sense, join Jesus in his journey to the cross. We call this journey Lent.

Our journey this year begins on Ash Wednesday, March 6. I hope you will join me at noon that day in our Fellowship Hall for a half hour of contemplative (silent) prayer followed by a light lunch at 12:30. We will also have a quiet place prepared in the Lounge for prayer from 1 – 3pm for those who may not be able to make the noon time or who wish to extend their time for prayer.

As we observe Lent, meaning as we take on a discipline of denying ourselves, of looking inward and confessing our sin, of reaching out with love and care to friends, neighbors, and even strangers, we realize that we are not alone. We are making this journey together.

Jesus invites us to take up our cross daily and follow him. As we do, may we ever more realize that this is the cross of love and discipleship, devotion and faithfulness, repentance and renewal.

In closing I share a poem by Ann Weems. Be blessed through your Lenten journey!

LENT

Lent is a time to take the time
to let the power of our faith story take hold of us,
A time to let the events
get up and walk around in us,
A time to intensify
our living unto Christ,
A time to hover over
the thoughts of our hearts,
a time to place our feet in the streets of Jerusalem
or to walk along the sea and listen to his word,
a time to touch his robe
and feel the healing surge through us,
a time to ponder and a time to wonder . . .
Lent is a time to allow a fresh new taste of God!

- Ann Weems, *Kneeling in Jerusalem*

In Christ's love,

Pastor Lynn

Grief Support Group

The March meeting of the group will be held on **Tuesday, March 5 at 1 p.m.** in the church lounge. Of course we're hoping for good weather, but should the day present itself with bad conditions, please contact Claudia Little before heading to church.

There are times in everyone's life when an event or loss begins to impact their lives. It may be a recent happening, or one from months or years ago. Grief is the reaction your body, heart and mind experience when things change, and it becomes tough to function, as you want. This group is an excellent source of support and offers an opportunity to share (or not). Many times, knowing that others are experiencing similar feelings and symptoms is a comfort and the first step back to the new you. Confidentiality is a high priority, and attendees are encouraged to relax in the comfort of others who may be able to relate to your situation.

Gatherings last about an hour and all are welcome (from within the church AND the community). Should you have an interest in attending, but not available during the day...an evening group will be considered.



Attention all Choir members - Choir Rehearsals will resume on

Thursday, March 7 at 7:00 p.m.



Don't forget to "Spring Ahead" (turn your clocks forward one hour) on Saturday, March 9 before going to bed as Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 10.

Bible Study Group

Please note that the Bible Study Group that meets on Wednesday's at 10:30 a.m. in the Lounge will not meet on Wednesday, March 6 due to the Ash Wednesday Prayer Vigil and simple lunch. The Group will resume on March 13, weather permitting.

American Red Cross

Bi-monthly blood drive at First Baptist Church Cuba, 17 South Street, Cuba, NY 14727 on Thursday, March 14, from 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm. We have an emergency need! To schedule an appointment, call 1 800-REDCROSS, email holly.miller2@redcross.org, or go to redcrossblood.org and use keyword: cubacommunity. Thank you!

Give so others might live.

Kids in the Kitchen

The kids are having a great time in the kitchen. The February gathering hosted 17 kids and 7 adults. Although we missed some of our "regulars", we were so excited to welcome 6 first timers. They made cheeseburger pie, blueberry muffins (some for the Table Ministry too), and Berry Yogurt Salad. New this month was some "tastings". We sampled 8 kinds of cheeses (blue cheese was NOT the favorite) and we also tried kiwi, Sumo citrus and papaya. Lots of new things for the kids to try!

The next Kids in the Kitchen will be on Friday, March 29, from 3 - 5 p.m. The group is open to kids in grades 3 - 12, but younger ones are welcome when accompanied by an adult. A sign-up sheet is in the Court for both the kids and adult helpers. Adults are asked to arrive at 2:30 p.m. for information. Any adult is welcome to join us – men or women. It's a great chance to get to know these wonderful young people.

From the Sunday School Superintendent and Youth Leader - Bill Beck

We are excited to share some great opportunities for your young people to fellowship and grow in their faith. Please mark your calendars for these exciting events. As the events get closer check your bulletin and online for more details.

- Saturday, March 30: Houghton college will host a one day conference, **E416**, for teens and college age students. This is a free event and will feature worship, speaking, and the opportunity to visit the campus. Students will be equipped to grow and share their faith. The event is from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., lunch and transportation will be provided.
- Saturday and Sunday, April 13 - 14: **Bunk with Beasts** is back! Our friends at Seneca Park Zoo in Rochester will be welcoming us back to spend an overnight at the zoo. With a chance to get a behind the scenes look after hours you can have an experience that you won't forget. We will visit new exhibits and old friends, remember that the zoo completed a major expansion last summer. This event is open to all children ready for an overnight and additional adult chaperones are always welcome.
- Friday through Sunday, May 16 -18: We will be hitting the river once again with Bryan Schoeffler of Christian Camping services. Pack your bags for a return to Bryan's cabin and we will spend the **weekend camping and canoeing**. This is a great opportunity for a family weekend with your teens, building memories that last a lifetime. Due to safety concerns, we are only able to offer this event to youth that are in 6th grade or above.
- Friday through Sunday, August 2 - 4: **Camp JYC** will celebrate 36 years of ministry with our annual camping retreat. Open for any youth completing grades 2-6 and limited opportunities for teen leaders this weekend retreat has become a foundation of the children's ministry at First Baptist. We look forward to another great year of camping, songs, games, food, and growing in our faith. This year's theme will be "Under Construction" as we learn about how Jesus is building us up to do great things.

For all trips and events, please contact me, 585-307-4792 or zarofnascar@yahoo.com, with any questions or concerns about eligibility and funding. Thank you and we look forward to seeing you soon!

ABWM SPRING MARKET

SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Plans are in full swing for the Spring Market, Craft and Vendor show. Again this year there will be a full gambit of crafts and distributors. Each year, we add a new vendor who offers something new and this year will be no exception.

We will also be having the Soup and Side Luncheon from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Take-outs will be available.

The Not Your Everyday Bake Sale will run from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., offering all kinds of baked goods, candies, heat and eat entrees, preserves and more. Be sure to save some time to visit before you leave! (Great way to take home dinner or a treat)

Anyone interested in furnishing items for the lunch or the bake sale should see Claudia Little. All donations are gratefully appreciated. Monies earned from this event go towards allowing women to attend the NYS convention, and towards the support of the church.

If you are interested in having a booth, or know of someone who might be... please contact Lori Little. As of March 1st, there were still a few openings.



Believe it or not, the season will be changing soon, which means that the Rummage Rooms will be in need of items for infants, children, men and women. They also have requests for household items. Due to health department rules, we cannot accept any upholstered items. We also cannot accept any electronics.

Drop off can be made any time at the South Street door, or during hours of operations (Friday and Saturday – 9 a.m. - 12 noon). Looking for an opportunity to help? Please contact Melody Hayward. She is always looking for an extra pair of hands.

The Table Ministry is expanding the ministry to a group of youth from our community. Currently, there are kids that take home a bag of “week-end” food each week from an existing program. This program does not cover breaks. These kids get 2 meals a day at school when it is in session, and the extras help out on the weekend. When there’s no school - it is very possible that these youth get enough to eat. The Table Ministry is taking on the breaks. A list of items that can be contributed may be found in the court, or financial donations are being gratefully accepted. The February break was well funded, so the next step will be to set up an ongoing program to cover Spring break, Thanksgiving break and the Christmas break. This program is for Cuba Rushford students who are chosen by the school using income and need criteria, and applies to kids in pre-k thru grade 5. Our hope is that we can provide enough for these kids, plus maybe some extra for siblings in the higher grades. Distribution is accomplished by the CRCS staff who dispenses the weekend packs. Financial support can be given to LaVerna Stohr, our treasurer.

In addition to the new outreach, the Table Ministry continues to provide a meal or 2 to those experiencing a tough time in their lives. Grief, illness or just a “rough patch”: Sometimes a homemade meal makes a difference. Any homemade items that can be frozen are appreciated. Containers are available in the kitchen. Why not share some of that soup or casserole. Financial support can be given to treasurer, LaVerna Stohr. Checks should be made payable to Cuba First Baptist with Table Ministry in the memo line.

The ABWM continues to support White Cross. If you are interested in helping, please contact Ann Gross who can update you on the needs.

Other opportunities to help – sign up for “flowers” in the sanctuary. (Sheet in the court). This doesn’t even need to be flowers. Anything that would brighten up the front of the church is wonderful. This is a great way to use that creative talent that God gave you! Enjoy working with kids? The Kids in the Kitchen is always looking for more “grown-ups”. There are countless ways that everyone; regardless of age, experience or life walk, can help. Check us out!

Each spring, the ABWM of NYS hold their annual convention. This year’s event will be in Syracuse on April 26, 27, and 28. Information can be found in the court, and financial assistance is available from the ABWM of Cuba. This is a great opportunity for a “break” from everyday life, and an excellent source of renewal with your sisters from across NYS.

The Spring Market is right around the corner. Check out the information above!

Our next ABWM meeting will be Sunday, May 5 at 12:15 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.



Have any of you noticed that as you get older, time goes faster? Now, I'm not an OLD mouse per say, but in mouse years, I'm getting there. It seems like it was only last week that we were celebrating Christmas, and now it's March and it's time to be thinking about spring. As I write this, it's snowing...so I know it's not here yet, but at least the nice weather is getting closer.

The cold, cold winter hasn't slowed my church up much. I was surprised when no one came to church one Sunday...then I stuck my head out and WOW – I surely didn't want any of my family out in that cold.

Even with the winter weather, the church remains busy. Those rummage rooms are “hopping” on every Friday and Saturday. It's so nice that we can serve the community and gain some resources to help our own church expenses. I try not to go there very often, I would hate to have an “accident”.

The whole church was invited to the annual meeting. There were about 60 people who heard a report about the past year, then, of course, everyone ate well with homemade soups, muffins and desserts. After that, the people were encouraged to remember things about our past and post them on a time line. I have to admit that I was a little disappointed that I didn't see anything about my arrival at CFB; but then I decided that probably it was good that I didn't make a big splash. It was a fun Sunday.

Sadly we lost a good friend. Diane Sheldon has gone to be with her Savior. She and Bruce often came to church early, so I got to know them pretty well. The ladies of the church had a really nice lunch for the family. I am really hoping to see Bruce again soon. I know he must be lonely, and maybe I can help.

One of our own, Claudia Little passed a milestone in her life in late January. She finally (after 6 years of classes) obtained 2 certifications from the American Baptist of NYS organization. She has been studying, reading and writing in order to complete the Local Church Leadership Studies and the Advanced Church Leadership Studies for the lay pastor study program. She will continue to work with her mentor (I don't know her, but I hear she's nice) and find a place to use her talents to serve the Lord. There was lots of celebrating that day!

The Kids were in the Kitchen again! This is one of those times that I really want to join in, but so far have held back. There were 17 kids and 7 adults! Wow – what an exciting time. They made some great recipes, and then (this is my favorite part)...they did a CHEESE tasting. It took every ounce of strength to not join in. I counted 9 different cheeses. I bet I would have loved them all! I did manage to find a tiny piece before they got everything cleaned up. It was delicious. ☺ Some of these kids cook at home too, but some never get a chance; so it's extra fun for them. I'm so glad they can come here.

I almost forgot... there was a Thursday night when I HEAR, that many went out to dinner (without me.....) over 25 people from the family enjoyed a meal together at Moonwinks. I'm sure it was nice. “Sniff, sniff.....” Well, glad they had a great time anyhow.

I'm looking forward to the coming months. I know there will be special things for the Lenten season, along with lots of opportunities for our people to reach out to others. Wish I could do more, but I do what I can.

As always, I am so grateful to my family.

Your humble and loving, Church Mouse

Betty Francis Memorial Scholarship

The family of Elizabeth (Betty) Edwards Francis established a scholarship in her memory to continue Betty's passion for teaching and her involvement in the church.

Priority will be given to a **high school senior** who is an active, baptized member of Cuba First Baptist Church planning to pursue a career in teaching or ministry and has at least a "C" average or 2.0 GPA.



The Poelma Service Scholarship

(Established by Delores and Jim Cross in honor of Larry and Linda Poelma)

- a graduating Cuba-Rushford Central School Senior from First Baptist Church who has provided Service to our Church and Congregation.
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- An individual, regardless of age, from the First Baptist Church family studying at a college, taking an on-line course or beginning the educational process by attending G.E.D. classes.
- The Scholarship Committee may recommend someone in the community who has provided service to First Baptist Church, Cuba Library, Cuba Memorial Hospital or the Village of Cuba, providing all Scholarship Committee members agree.

All applications will be available from the Office in March and are due May 1st.



Easter Flower Order Form

If you would like to provide a flower in honor or in memory of a loved one, please complete this form and either give to Ann Gross or Janet Hadden or mail it to the First Baptist Church by **Sunday, March 24**. Make checks payable to First Baptist Church and note "Flowers" in the memo. Thank you.

Name _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Easter Lily 6" _____ \$10 each

Yellow Daffodil 6" _____ \$10 each

Mum (will come in assorted colors) 6" _____ \$10 each

Hyacinth (will come in assorted colors) 6" _____ \$10 each

Mini Yellow Daffodil 4" _____ \$6 each

Single Hyacinth (will come in assorted colors) 4" _____ \$6 each

In Memory of _____ By _____

In Honor of _____ By _____

_____ I will pick up after Easter Service _____ Please deliver to a shut-in

Please see Ann Gross or Janet Hadden with any questions or to submit this form and payment in person. Thank you.

Loving Our Neighbor and Neuroscience

By Rev. Dr. James Kelsey

Our neurology predisposes us to love our neighbor. When Jesus commands us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, he is challenging us to nurture our innate, neurological capacity for empathy.

Our brains are wired for empathy argues David Eagleman in his book *The Brain-The Story of You*. Our neural circuitry connects with that of others and monitors their pain, judges their intentions, and reads their emotions (p. 151). An experiment showed that babies less than a year old intuitively show empathy and prefer a kind puppet over a mean puppet, in this case a helpful bear and an unhelpful bear of a different color.

Empathy is the capacity to have your brain stimulated by the experiences of others. Another person's pain or grief or fear matrix activates a parallel matrix in your brain. Jeremy Rifkin describes empathy in this way:

To empathize is to cross over and experience, in the most profound way, the very being of another—especially the other's struggle to endure and prevail in his or her own life journey...Empathy is the ultimate expression of communication between beings (Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream—How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, p. 271).

Empathy is a survival instinct. Although natural selection or "survival of the fittest" plays a role in our survival, there is more to the story. Without an intuitive empathic connection with others, humans would not have been able to live together in peace, cooperate, and flourish—given that we are slow and weak compared to other creatures closest to us in the food chain. We help one another be safe, productive, and overcome challenges (Eagleman, pp. 163-164).

Additional research shows, however, that we are prone--unconsciously and unintentionally--to experience greater empathy toward people who are like us and less empathy toward people who are different (Eagleman, pp. 169-170). It is not a choice we make. Herein lies our struggle: our brain chemistry does not recognize all of those around us as equal. As one of the pigs says in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.

Human empathy is an imperfect survival mechanism. It helps us to survive, but gives preference to people of our own tribe.

This defect operates most clearly through the process of dehumanization. If we can shut down the empathic link between us and the homeless person, for example, we avoid feeling bad about not being charitable (Eagleman, p. 171). We experience them as less human than we are.

Language is a common stratagem humans employ to dehumanize others and dull our intuitive sense of connection. By weaponizing language through derisive and demeaning terms, we can dehumanize others and give free reign to egocentricity. Insult is the refuge of those who cannot tolerate the common humanity of others.

So when Jesus commands us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, he is challenging us to nurture our innate, neurological capacity for empathy (Matt. 22:37-40). More stunningly, he commands us to love our enemies as well (Matt. 5:43-44). There is a part of us that battles against this innate capacity for loving connection, particularly with those who are not like us, those who are not members of our political, social, ethnic, religious, national, or cultural tribe.

We live in a balkanized country, where demeaning and dismissing those who are not a member of our "tribe" has become almost a patriotic duty. This is a denial of who God created us to be. This is not an option for followers of Jesus; it just isn't.

God instilled within us an instinct for empathy. Somehow—ask Augustine I guess—that got perverted into a preference for our "own people." Jesus challenges us to nurture a purer, Godlier, form of empathy: the capacity to love our neighbor and our enemy simply because they, like us, are made in the image of God.

Jim Kelsey
Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of
New York State

The Rummage Rooms are in need of spring and summer clothing for all sizes and ages but they especially need men's clothing (all kinds and sizes) and women's pants. If you have any clean, gently used clothing; please drop them off any day at the south street entrance. The Rummage Rooms are always in need of household items (no electronics or upholstered items, please), too. Please consider sharing those unused clothing and household items in your house. You will not only be cleaning out those shelves and closets, but you will be helping others as they go about their lives, attend school, go to work or seek employment. We ARE the Hands and Feet of Jesus. **The Rummage Rooms are open every Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. - 12 noon.**

Our **Food Pantry** is low and needs to be restocked so please keep the Food Pantry in mind as you shop. Don't know what to get? Here is a list of what we need; peanut butter, jelly/ jam, instant potatoes, pasta, pasta sauce, ramen noodles, macaroni & cheese, cereal, hamburger helper, canned soup, canned pasta, canned fruit, canned chicken, tuna fish, canned vegetables, rice, paper products, toiletries (shampoo, bath soap, toothpaste, deodorant), and laundry detergent.

If you would like to give a monetary donation, please make checks payable to "Cuba Food Pantry" and mail to North Park Wesleyan Church Attn: Pastor Megan Cusumano 32 Spring St. Cuba, NY 14727. Thank you!

Prayer Requests:

Prayer Requests Minnie Case, Esther Knapp, John Pockey (Kim Gleason's co-workers husband), Anna Green, Char (Joan Hayes's mother), Betty Parker (Luanne Perry's mother), Mike Edwards (Marie Lewandowski's nephew), Colin Robinson (Nancy Robinson's Grandson) **Continuing Prayers** Bruce Sheldon, Colston & Hannah Hillman's baby, Amelia (Sue & Kim Hillman's son, daughter-in-law and new granddaughter) Sheila & Duke Burnett, Rod Cady, Rick Kelly, Alberta Seaver (Larry Lathrop's sister), Luke Fries, Mary Searle, Bert & Mickie Tidlund, Betsy Hubbard, Linda Goldthwait, Martha Miller, Candy Parish (Nettie's sister-in-law), Sandy Lathrop, Sandy Beard, Keith and Vyrna Brown (Kim Gleason's parents), Susan Stoddard (Sallie Miller's sister)

Remember in Care Facilities

Cuba Memorial Hospital - Gene Case
Batavia VA - Dennis Chamberlain
Eden Heights - Helen Swift, Betty Parker
Highland Healthcare (Wellsville) - John Hoagland
Livingston Cty. Center for Nursing & Rehab. - Katie Hamilton
Manor Hills (Wellsville) - Elva Gross, JoAnne Hoagland
Pines (Olean) - Connie Battistoni
Wellsville Manor - Flora Prentice
Brompton Heights (Williamsville) - David Halstead

Special Interest Missionaries

David and Joyce Reed, IberoAmerica and Caribbean
Dan and Sarah Chetti, Lebanon

***All those serving in the military, police, and firemen.**

***All those in and outside of our congregation who may not be listed but need the healing power of the Spirit.**



March Birthday's

8 - Bill Beck, 12 - Jonah Williamson, 16 - Ian Snopkowski, 19 - Kirby Pierce, 21 - Ida Hibbard,
24 - Kelsey Pierce, 26 - Melissa Karst, 27 - Katie Hamilton

Happy birthday to you all! May God's blessings be yours this year and always.

** There are no listed anniversaries in March*

How do you receive your Newsletter? Online? Post? It contains important information and articles every month and we want to make sure it is convenient for you to obtain and read. If you wish to change how you receive your Good Newsletter, please contact the church secretary in person, at 585-968-1531, or at sec@wny.twcbc.com. Thank you!