



Cross & Spire

Newsletter of First Baptist Church

P. O. Box 331, 11 School St. Lebanon, NH 03766 Interim Pastor: Rick Pinilla
Phone: 603-448-5618 Email: office@lebfirstbaptist.com www.lebfirstbaptist.com

November 2017 Volume 34, No. 10

"Not a perfect church, not a perfect people, just a simple desire to follow Jesus."

Upcoming Events:

*Women 2 Women,
Wednesday,
November 8 at
4:30pm*

*Men's Breakfast,
Saturday,
November 11 at
7:30am*

*Operation
Christmas Child
Shoebboxes due
back to LMS by
Sunday, November
12*

*Advent begins
Sunday, December
3*

A Word from Pastor Rick

Even the most optimistic among us would find it hard to dismiss the signs of a society in trouble. After decades of decline serious crime is again on the rise. Many on our college campuses are questioning the goodness of basic freedoms like free speech. We have actually seen several protests sponsored by white supremacist organizations with their predictable violent responses. The talk about sexual harassment and sexual assault among celebrities has become so common that we barely notice. The most alarming thing about these is that the political alignment of those accused is more important to news outlets than the crime itself or the trauma to the victims. Our political discourse is more strident and angry than ever. Our political leaders don't seem to be able to cooperate to solve even glaring problems; and any insult no matter how outrageous or even if absolutely made up is used to undercut those we disagree with on issues. Our sporting events -- usually a great escape from life -- have become platforms for political protests. It is as if the whole country is divided into two angry camps and there is no space where we can stand together -- not even the national anthem.

I could lengthen the list for a lot more space, but you no doubt see it too. I have friends who are devout Christians from both extremes of the political spectrum -- liberals and conservatives. They see the trouble and want to see the problems solved and the nation healed; but I have noticed something in conversations about it. We always talk about the right political leaders, more commitment to journalistic integrity, more money spent on this program, better laws here, improvements to education and on and on. I haven't had any particular problem with the suggestions; but I was confronted with a chapter from Isaiah the other day that woke me up.

Isaiah 22 is the Lord's reaction to King Hezekiah's and Judah's response to an imminent invasion from the Assyrians. They saw that the army needed to be equipped for the coming siege, so they distributed better weapons. They saw that the wall was in bad repair so they knocked down some houses in the city and used the material to build a double wall and fill in with rubble -- a very strong option given the shortness of time. They also saw that their water supply was outside the wall, so they accomplished an almost incredible feat of engineering for that day: they dug an underground aqueduct through the rock so that the spring would fill a pool in the city. After they did all this they threw a big party before the Assyrians arrived; because they had done all they could do to prepare and they probably wanted to celebrate their accomplishments before the suffering began.

God told them their sin would never be forgiven them! What sin?! "They did not look to him who did it, or see him who planned it long ago (verse 11)." God is sovereign says Isaiah. He is the one bringing the Assyrians. He is in charge of his world. He planned the invasion long ago. The right response was: "In that day the Lord God almighty called for weeping and mourning, for baldness and wearing sackcloth (verse 12)." In those days, these things were the proper accompaniments of a prayer of repentance and humble requests for forgiveness and help. What I saw was that I was caught up in the same discourse and proposing the same sorts of remedies as the rest of the culture, instead of looking to God for help, and examining my heart for my faults in the matter. I looked to better leaders instead of Gospel preaching and prayer for revival.

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If you read Romans one you get a pretty accurate diagnosis of the ills of the modern world. We are slipping further and further away from the knowledge of and respect for God. The result in our fracturing society is predictable. Practical solutions, better leaders are fine; but what our neighbors and the society at large need is God himself. We of all people should see that and seek him and offer Christ to our world; instead of being distracted by the angry rancorous debates in our world.

Your partner in the Great Work,
Rick Pinilla

GIVING TREE IS COMING

We will need volunteers to help us get the Giving Tree up and running. If you are able to help with this ministry for our community, please contact Rachel in the church office. office@lebfirstbaptist.com or 603-448-5618.

TIME FOR OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD!

Would you like to bring Christmas happiness to a child in need?

Would you like to spread the Good News that Jesus Christ was born?

Do you have an empty shoebox just aching to be filled?

Then you will be glad to know that it is time for Operation Christmas Child! Please take a [How to Pack a Shoebox Gift](#) flyer and follow the directions. Pick an age of a boy or girl and go Christmas shopping. Follow the guidelines of what to purchase adding \$9 shipping if possible. Include a note and pictures if you like, and pray for your child. Please hold on to your shoebox until November 12 - bring it to Lebanon Middle School that day. How exciting it will be to see how many children will be blessed through our church family!

Shipping is quite high this year, so if you can donate to help with that expense please place your check in the offering plate marked OCC. If you are need of a shoebox, see Carol, Tina, or anyone from the CE Board and we will make sure you get one. Happy Shopping!

Carol Rataj

Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2Cor.9:7

Please note: Toothpaste is not being included in the shoeboxes this year. This is a request made by Samaritan's Purse.

What to Pack in your shoebox

Items to include:

Hygiene Items (please make sure to include all these items with your shoebox):

Toothbrush, Toothbrush Holder, Bar of mild soap (in a plastic ziplock bag), Soap Holder, Washcloth, Comb, T-shirt, Hair accessories, Clothing line and clothespins *School supply items:* Pencils, Pencil Sharpeners, Solar Calculators, Writing Pads, Crayons, Coloring Books *Toys:* Little Dolls, Toy cars, Jump ropes, Soccer Ball & pump, Light up toys with extra batteries, Slinky, Etch-a-Sketch, Plastic Dinosaurs, Play Jewelry, Musical Instruments (Harmonica, recorder, mini guitar) *'Other' Items:* An outfit of clothing, Stuffed animal, Plastic bowl & cup (good quality, no designs).

DO NOT INCLUDE:

Candy; toothpaste; used or damaged items; war-related items such as toy guns, knives, or military figures; chocolate or food; seeds; fruit rolls or other fruit snacks; drink mixes (powdered or liquid); liquids or lotions; medications or vitamins; breakable items such as snow globes or glass containers; aerosol cans.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

The next Men's Breakfast will be held on Saturday, November 11 at 7:30am at First Baptist Church. Any questions, feel free to contact Chris Scholtz at 603-242-2323 or Jim Newcomb at 603-448-2782. See you there!

WOMEN 2 WOMEN

Women 2 Women: Calling all ladies!

This month the W2W group will meet on **Wednesday, November 8, at 5 PM**, as we host the **Community Dinner** that night at the Lebanon Senior Center. All are invited - we would LOVE to have a big group out for this - it's not only a great opportunity for fellowship with each other, but also a chance to support another ministry of First Baptist, as well as become better acquainted with and serve our neighbors in the community.

A NOTE OF THANKS

Dear Pastor Rick and Church Family,

I was so overwhelmed with your generous financial gift. Thank you so much!

Rick and Anne, thank you for visiting the hospital.

Thank you for all the prayer, support, and love during this difficult time.

Thank you for loving and supporting Rachel, too.

Blessings and love,

Theresa and all of my family

Dear Church Family,

I would like to extend my gratitude for all of your love, prayers, and support over these last 3 months. It has been very difficult to lose my beloved brother, Josiah.

Having your support has helped me tremendously. I am thankful to be part of such an amazing church family.

With love,

Rachel Lawrence

HURRICANE HARVEY FLOOD RELIEF

On September 22, I flew to Houston Texas to join up with fellow Hope Force International reservists to continue the work they had been doing because of the flooding resulting from the heavy rains (51 inches) of Hurricane Harvey. On Saturday we spent the day finishing up loose ends and packing up the kitchen and supplies because on Sunday we would be headed to the Beaumont area, about an hour and a half north east of Houston, where it was determined that our services were the most needed. Sunday morning, we met with the lady who coordinated the stay at the First United Methodist Church of Houston, thanked her for the hospitality and she prayed for all of us and the work that we were going to be doing. After that we headed north, and after a breakfast stop at a Cracker Barrel, we were headed for our destination, the First Baptist Church of Bridge City.

Upon arriving in Bridge City, stepping out of the car brought back the memories of other flood events that I have participated in. There is a definite smell to a flood area. I always compare it to a gym locker on steroids. I can't say enough about the hospitality of this church family. We had a kitchen to work in, access to any foods that had been donated to the church, and I lucked out because they did 3 of our dinner meals while we were there so I didn't have to. They already had rooms set up with cots and they had borrowed a shower trailer from another church not affected by the storm. They also had 2 "hosts" that stayed overnight each night, just in case we would have any needs. Any questions, anything we needed, we just had to ask. Sometimes when you go into these situations, people seem a little reluctant to open their doors to you or they act like it is a burden. Not so in this case. The First Baptist Church of Bridge City had its own pile of flood stories, including the rescue of a critically ill man from their parking lot with a Blackhawk helicopter.

As the others unpacked, me and one of the other ladies went to scout out the local grocery store. Picked up what we needed for supper and

breakfast in the morning and headed back. After dinner, we sat around and debriefed a bit on what we were to expect and what our different roles might be. The big thing when working these types of situations is to be flexible and maybe, just maybe the most important thing is not getting all the drywall ripped out. Hope Force is very big on what they call ESC-emotional, spiritual care. Many times the need in that area is looked at first. These people that we are working with have been through a trauma, maybe the biggest trauma of their lives, and just need someone to listen to them. On this particular trip, I wore a great many hats, probably much more diversified than I have ever done. During the whole time we are here, our numbers and our teammates change on almost a daily basis. The most amazing thing about a Hope Force team is how each and every one meshes together and moves forward toward our common goals. No one is left out or forgotten.

On Monday, 2 other ladies and myself went with our team leader over to Vidor to another church where they also had been doing some relief work and coordinating work teams that came in. They still had people coming to them looking for help. She told how at the height of the flooding, they even had animals (donkey, goats, dogs, and other pets) in the church. We told her we would stay in contact with her and if she had an urgent need to please contact us. We all prayed for her and her church and then went out to Beaumont to look at a house that hadn't been opened up yet. In this area (Beaumont, Bridge City, Vidor) the flooding was exceptionally bad because as the 51 inches of rain fell, the 2 nearby rivers and bayous became full and water had to be let out of dams on both rivers. Minor flooding of just a few inches, went from that to the rooftop in 30 minutes. Rather hard to wrap your brain around- that much water, that fast.

The house we went to look at was back in a nice little development, but every house had been flooded. It was very eerie driving back in there because of the piles and piles of debris that edged along the road. The earliest the people in this development could get back to their homes was 2 weeks after the flooding because the roads were impassable. To me, there is just something about seeing peoples' lives sitting at the curb that puts things in perspective. There had been a couple of things personally that I had been internally fussing about - know what? - not important.

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In this house the water line was at six and a half feet, so everything but the ceilings were going to have to come out. When you walked in the refrigerator was perched on the edge of the kitchen counter. There was a decoration on the wall that said something about the Holy Spirit flooding this place. In the next couple of days, we mucked out this house and it would be ready for the next step. Whether they would rebuild or sell it as is, they hadn't decided.

The next house that was worked on, only had about a foot of water in it and it had receded quickly, but because of health and emotional reasons, the couple feet of drywall that needed to be taken out hadn't been removed. Dealing with lower kitchen cabinets was also an issue in this house. The lady of the house, was just frozen and couldn't make even the smallest decisions about what to do with her things. They had to put their things in storage and she had to look at things several times before it could go on the truck. I helped with her trying to make practical decisions on what to keep and what to throw. One of the other ladies went to the drugstore and got her a prescription that she needed. I also got to calm down a very distraught Chihuahua. The next day, the other ladies went to a different house, but I came back to this one, just on a hunch. The gentleman of the house the day before was very much the talker and needed to be engaged most of the time or he would follow people around and engage them. After I cleaned up from breakfast, I went over there and sure enough he was totally talking the legs off the guys trying to work there. So, my mission, was to keep him engaged until the guys could get wrapped up. I learned more information about gators, snakes, the neighbors, Walmart, and life in general than I ever needed to know, but that's ok.

Hope Force doesn't try to pass judgement on whether a house is salvageable. We leave that up to the homeowner. One house that was worked on, was definitely questionable. We emptied it and gutted it, but what was left was not in good shape. But when it is all you have, it is all you have. People's stories are so deep and varied and every situation is different. The lady with this house also had a daughter with disabilities that she had to deal with. All of us are seconds away from having our lives changed forever.

As time progressed we worked on several more homes- a home where the lady who lived there was just put into assisted living a few days before the hurricane, a home of a lady who was so busy taking care of the needs of others, (this house was so bad that respirators and suits had to be worn) the home of an elderly lady who had to be rescued by boat. The last house I mentioned was the house where I spent time with another one of our ladies just going through documents and photos. It was an amazing process and it truly felt like God's hands were on the process. You could go along and have one ruined picture after another and all of a sudden have a good one. Some old photos did better than new photos and some newer photos did better than all of them. It just seemed like we were finding the photos that we were supposed to find. Most of the pictures from weddings, 50th anniversary party, special events, seemed to be the ones that made it through. It was a bittersweet experience. It was sad to see the things we couldn't save, but you knew that she was going to be overjoyed at what we saved.

Last, but not least, Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church and Pastor Skipper. This man was Jesus walking. Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church is a small church-35 families, if that-but I think it was the biggest church I have ever been in. There might not have been a place to worship because the sanctuary was FULL of diapers, baby food, and anything baby, but worship was going on. Every room was packed to the rafters with items to distribute and more arriving every day. They were not only doing distributions almost every day in front of the church, they were going out into the bayous to see if people needed things and getting them what they needed. Pastor Skipper is hoping to keep distributions going until the end of the year. This is a poor area and the people have very little. There were 6 campers in the church parking lot with families who couldn't go home yet.

Pastor Skipper himself had not been back to his own house. He knows it has been gutted and that is because 2 guys came and offered to do the work because Pastor Skipper was busy helping other folks. They got the job done and one of the guys was on crutches. He sat in a chair with a scraper and took up the floor. The sense of community in this little church was amazing. I spent my last 3 days helping with the organization of their distribution inventory. I was honored to be the person who straightened out the toothbrush and toothpaste mountain. They had so many toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste donated that it got totally out of hand. Everyone that came through the door commented on the toothbrushes. I knew that it would be the absolute last thing that anyone there was going to tackle and it was the one thing bugging everyone. So, by the time I left on that last day, the toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste were all sorted and in a manageable space. There had to be at least 100,000 toothbrushes. One last thing about Pastor Skipper, he has put out an appeal for hay. I am currently working on getting some hay shipped down from PA. If anyone has any connections to people with hay, something to think about. All of their hay and grain for the animals got ruined and they have none for the winter.

As I left Texas to come back here to resume my life here, I was again amazed that even though I worked hard there, I was revived by the people's hospitality and spirit and how they loved on me. I would definitely like to get back to be able to do more of these deployments. But thanks to a couple of family members and a couple of Facebook friends, the financial burden was a light one. If anyone wishes to see pictures, they can check out my Face Book page. - Janet Hall