

# The Carillon



First Baptist Church of Penfield

2020

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## **Pastor's Meditation**

### **“Their Night of Fun and Laughter”**

No doubt we are entering one of the strangest Christmas seasons ever. What I am about to say, you already know, too well: Last month's presidential election is still kicking up dust. A global pandemic has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. The majority of our church attends worship online. Those who attend in person wear masks, socially distance and sanitize their hands upon entering the building. Holiday celebrations will be sharply and necessarily curtailed this year. It's weird. But we are not the first generation to experience a weird Christmas. This week, I re-read In the Dark Streets Shineth, a short book by historian David McCullough, which is mostly composed of the Christmas 1941 radio speeches delivered by President Franklin

Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. These speeches were made in the context of about two years and three months of declared war for Great Britain, and almost two weeks and three days of declared war for the United States. Churchill traveled to the U.S. seeking Congressional support for his nation's war effort. Given the frightening context, both speeches were an amazing blend of realism and comfort. I include a section of Churchill's speech here:

*“This is a strange Christmas Eve. Almost the whole world is locked in deadly struggle, and, with the most terrible weapons which science can devise, the nations advance upon each other. Ill would it be for us this Christmastide if we were not sure that no greed for the land or wealth of any other people, no vulgar ambition, no morbid lust for material gain at the expense of others, had led us to the field. Here, in the midst of war, raging and roaring over all the lands and seas, creeping nearer to our hearts and homes, here, amid all the tumult, we have tonight the peace of the spirit in each cottage home and in every generous heart. Therefore, we may cast aside for this night at least the cares and dangers which beset us and make for the children an evening of happiness in a world of storm. Here, then, for one night only, each home throughout the English-speaking world should be a brightly-lighted island of happiness and peace. Let the children have their night of fun and laughter. Let the gifts of Father Christmas*

*delight their play. Let us grown-ups share to the full in their unstinted pleasures before we turn again to the stern task and the formidable years that lie before us, resolved that, by our sacrifice and daring, these same children shall not be robbed of their inheritance or denied their right to live in a free and decent world. And so, in God's mercy, a happy Christmas to you all."*

My short pastoral response is: If the perilous world of 1941 can take a break, you can, too. Jesus, who conducted his earthly ministry under threats by those in power, would remove himself from the surrounding danger and go somewhere alone with his Father to pray. Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, 6:46, Luke 5:16, 6:12, 9:18 describe moments where Jesus briefly withdrew. His self-isolation didn't stop the struggle. It didn't stop the danger. It just equipped him to be stronger, so that when he came back, he could stay faithful. We can do the same, when faced with our troubled world. Take a "media fast" and spend one day without TV, phone, tablet or radio. Go away somewhere or stay home and withdraw to the mountains of your imagination to pray. Take a day and enjoy Christmas, the day we celebrate God becoming human and entering this suffering world. Jesus did this so that one day he could deliver this world from itself. As Churchill suggests, give a gift to a neighbor kid or grandchild. (They feel the tumult just as keenly as we do.) Lighten your own burden as you watch the happiness on their faces. If Winston Churchill, who carried the weight of his nation on his back, could call for a break,

we can too. If Jesus Christ could take a break with his Father, knowing he would soon bear the sins of the world, we should too. Make this strange Christmas a merry one!

In Christ,  
Pastor Steve



### **Moderator's Musing**

Dear Church,

When I was very young, I used to sneak downstairs late on Christmas Eve to look at the presents under the tree. As I made my way down the stairs, I noticed that a Christmas Eve snowfall was happening outside. I was so entranced by the snow falling past the window, with the backdrop of the evergreens outside, that I just stopped and sat on the stair watching the snow fall. It was so peaceful.

Eventually, of course, I finished my descent to view the shadowed outline of the Christmas tree and the packages underneath; then, shivering, back up to my warm bed to await the dawn. This ritual, as it turns out, lasted well into my adulthood- even when I was "Santa" and knew full well what the tree and packages underneath looked like, I was drawn to stand in a dark, chill, evergreen fragrant room, on an early Christmas morning, and just be.

There's nothing like the quiet calm of a late Christmas Eve.

As we move into the holiday season this year, you, like me, may be anticipating big changes in how you celebrate, how you keep true your yearly traditions, and how you are able to adjust to the circumstances that 2020 has laid upon your doorstep. To say, "it has not been easy", is the understatement of a lifetime. It's been really, really hard.

This week is Thanksgiving and it may be hard to be thankful for what God has given you; it's easier to be sad and frustrated about what has been taken. It may be easier, in the stillness of your prayers, to ask "why"- why COVID, why the strife, why the loss of family, why, why, why. It is unlikely that you will get the answer you are looking for if you get an answer at all.

I'd ask you to consider asking a different question, "what strength has God given you that has long laid dormant in a life where such strength may not have been needed?". "How can that strength see you through all this and, is it possible, grow to help others find their strength?"

Excerpts from a poem by Marianne Williamson go as follows: ..... "*you are a child of God. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let*

*our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.*"

In closing, there is something you should know about my Christmas Eve story. I started sneaking down to look at the packages because I wasn't sure there would be any. I stopped on the stair and watched the snow because it was a quiet time in an otherwise chaotic household, and I continued the tradition to remind myself just how blessed I'd become in my later years.

So things do get better!

As 2020 comes to a close, I'd ask you to find your light. I'd ask you to stand in a dark room on Christmas Eve and shine.

Peace and Understanding,  
Michael Pray



**December Birthdays**

- 8 - Thomas Keenan
- 10 - Laura Swail
- 20 - Lois Neely
- 20 - Sandra Pray
- 22 - Ginna Bergonzi-Blackman
- 22 - Marian Lee Kuykendall
- 23 - Darwin Pray
- 25 - John Holderbaum
- 28 - Betty Hartman
- 29 - Alexandra Collison
- 29 - Sue Sparnecht
- 31 - Michael Kimball



**Note from the Trustees**

The budget process for 2021 will begin in December. We ask that all committees submit their budget proposals to Jeff Bertrand by the end of December. The proposed church budget will be presented to the congregation for review and comments on the Sunday prior to the Annual Meeting.

Thanks to all of you who have returned your pledge cards for the 2021 church year. If you haven't returned your pledge form, please do so. Preparing the 2021 budget depends on the dollars you commit to the church.

Our trash dumpster is for the church and PVNS use only. Recently, people have placed

furniture, tires, construction materials and other inappropriate items in the dumpster. The Trustees are asking for help in managing the dumpster usage. Our contract with the dumpster company doesn't include those kinds of item, especially tires and construction materials. The trustees ask that if you see anyone placing items in the trash dumpster, please say something to them. The paper dumpster is only for paper or cardboard. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Bruce Blackman, Don Fox, Fritz May, Jack O'Brien, Sarah Phillips, David Trump

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## Pledges and Donations

Just a reminder that all pledges and donations can be mailed into the church office and will be deposited, or you can also use the Donate button on the church website (for a small fee).

Thank you!

Jeff Bertrand



## Pledge Envelopes

If you requested envelopes for next year, they will be available between Christmas and New Year's. I can not assign envelope numbers until the year end figures are completed and recorded. Envelopes will be available in the sanctuary for those who attend in person and David Trump will be leading a team of delivery people for the balance.

Bill Werther  
Financial Secretary



## The Missions Committee

To Our Church Family:

The Missions Committee thanks everyone for the abundant donations--food for the Penfield Ecumenical Food Shelf and clothing for the Coldwater Road Women and Children's Residential Home. With generous hearts you came to our drive-thru collection event and answered the call to be merciful and to share the burdens of the vulnerable. We appreciate the help of Pastor Steve, Annette, Bruce Neely, and the support of Mike Pray and Debbie Lochner for spreading the word about our "Ring in the Holidays" event. Our goal was to make the 2020 holidays brighter for those among us who could benefit from a little help, and we feel confident that it will be so--thanks to you.

This year the American Baptist **Retired Ministers and Missionaries and their widowed spouses offering** will be collected throughout the month of December. The theme is "Hope for Today, Hope for Tomorrow." Checks can be mailed to the church office or put into the in-person collection at church. Please designate **RMMO** on your check.

Happy Holidays from Sue, Ellen, Janette



**A Note from the  
Pastoral Relations Team**

Last month, Pastor Steve attended a series of continuing education webinars through the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, his alma mater. The Lecture series highlighted sin through the eyes of race. He also participated in a session titled "Preaching for New Believers, Old Believers, and Non- Believers During Advent ." Each year, Pastor Steve can participate in two weeks of continuing education for personal and professional development.

Advent season is upon us, and like any other year, we are preparing our hearts for the light of God coming into the world through the birth of Jesus Christ. While this year will feel different, the Pastoral Relations Team is here to support you, the congregation, and Pastor Steve whenever you need us. You are invited to share your praises and concerns with any member of the Pastoral Relations team.

Have a joyous season,

Libby Bertrand, Alexandra Collison,  
Penny Goodman, Judy McNeil, Pat Casey



**Garden Space is Available!**

SPACE IS AVAILABLE for you to have a garden plot at the church!

The ground has already been well prepared this fall. Join the fun and the bounty of gardening.

Please call Ginny Wilterdink at 585-385-3531 for more information.



## Cameron Meal

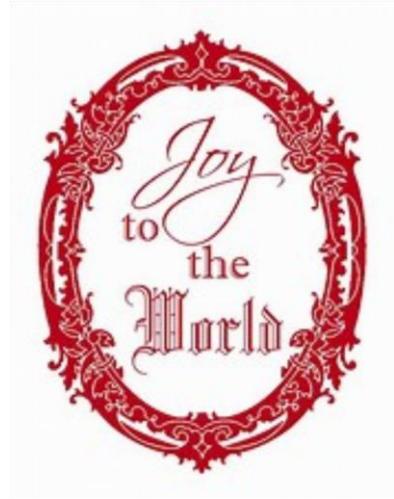
Given the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been unable to serve Sunday meals. I reached out to Rebecca Liken at Cameron, and she said they would be grateful for any food we can provide so they can deliver to people in need. They are doing this weekdays only.

So the plan is to have the congregation bring pots of chili to the church parking lot so we can put it in disposable pans to take to Cameron. We also need Corn Bread and cookies in disposable containers. Pat Casey has graciously accepted the task of taking the food down to Cameron.

This drop off will take place on December 3<sup>rd</sup> from 10:30-11:00 am in the church parking lot. If you would like to contribute a pot of chili, Corn Bread, or cookies that day, please let me know what you are bringing either by phone or email before December 3<sup>rd</sup>. I look forward to hearing from as many of you who are willing to provide this much needed food.

Sincerely,

Ginna Bergonzi-Blackman, Coordinator  
Cameron Community Ministries



**Have a Blessed Christmas**

## **The Carillon**

First Baptist Church of Penfield  
1862 Penfield Road  
Penfield, NY 14526



### **We have 2 methods of receiving the monthly newsletter.**

**Method 1—Open the link on our web page at [www.fbpenfield.org](http://www.fbpenfield.org)**

**Method 2—Receive a printed copy via US Postal Mail**

Please help us to obtain a cost savings! Open the link or pick up!

If you wish to change your method, please e-mail us at

[fbpenfield.@toast.net](mailto:fbpenfield.@toast.net) or call the Church Office at (585) 586-2876.

### **Our Church Staff**

Rev. Steven D. Brotzman ~ Pastor

Dr. Naomi Gregory ~ Organist, Music Director

Saundra Augustus ~ Office Assistant

Laura Swail ~ Nursery Care

Meho & Hava Kapidzic ~ Church Custodians

### **Contact Information**

(585) 586-2876

E-mail ~ [fbpenfield@toast.net](mailto:fbpenfield@toast.net)

Website ~ [www.fbpenfield.org](http://www.fbpenfield.org)

Find us on Facebook

### **Church Office Hours**

Monday thru Friday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Wednesdays may vary

### **OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT**

*We welcome to our worship all who desire to know God through Jesus Christ.*

*We encourage each other to develop a relationship with God and to live as Christ taught us.*

*We covenant together to seek out and minister to those in spiritual, emotional or physical need.*