



LOAVES & FISHES

Loaves & Fishes

The Newsletter of the First Baptist Church of South Plainfield

April 2018

The Great Surprise

Rev. Jesse Nietzer

Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

This is how the story seemed to end on Friday. Jesus - healer, teacher, rabbi - hung on a cross and died. He bore the sins of the world on his shoulders and gave his life. The story was finished, what more would come out of it? There is a finality in death that Jesus’ disciples could not take back – for after three days there was no possibility of life. Jesus’ followers were lost, their teacher had died, their leader had died, their rabbi had died, their friend had died – Good Friday was anything but ‘good’, for everything good had died on that day. They must have felt that they would be stuck in that Friday for the rest of their lives.

It wasn’t over though – for the women who visited Jesus, the disciples, the world was in for a great surprise. At the beginning of the new week, on Sunday, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb only to find the stone has been moved and Jesus’ body removed. Who could have done this? Who would have taken her Lord away? Upon summoning Peter and John, they too witness the empty tomb and are left with doubt and faith intermingled in their minds. They too did not know what to make of the sight.

Mary was then left alone, alone in the garden. In the early morning, she hears a voice, “Woman, why are you crying?” She attempts to see who is calling after her. Maybe the fog was too thick that morning, maybe tears blurred her eyes, or maybe Jesus is the last person she expected to see – she did not recognize him. That is, until – “Mary.” She can hardly believe her eyes, it was her Lord, it was Jesus – Alive! And calling her!

She stood by him in his darkest hour – and now he is standing by her in her own. He is here to wipe away her tears. The greatest surprise is that Jesus is alive – but then Jesus gives her a great commission – to tell the disciples the good news.

“He is risen. I have seen him. I have touched him. He is alive.” And so too is Mary’s hope. In his triumph over death, Jesus could have paraded again through the city as he did on Palm Sunday. He could have knocked on Pilate’s door. He could have confronted the high priest. But the first person Jesus confronted was a woman without hope – and his first words spoken are, “Why are you crying?”

This is the Savior we serve – or rather, who serves us. For in this moment of great surprise, of great triumph, he doesn’t shout his victory from the mountaintop. He comes quietly to a woman who grieves, a woman who needs to hear his voice, see his face and feel his embrace. Nothing is finished with Jesus, he has offered us hope, he has offered us forgiveness – and he shows us God’s love each and every day when we need him the most.

Communion Sunday Food Donation

On Communion Sunday this month the church will be collecting some canned proteins like tuna, chicken, salmon or other non-perishable items and for May perhaps packaged dinner meals requiring the addition of ground beef, chicken or seafood.

We continue to have great participation in this current food donation plan. As always, thank you all in advance for your caring and generosity.

Formation of an "Usher Committee"

At the last Diaconate meeting held on March 18, 2018, the Deacons along with Pastor Jesse, discussed and voted on forming an "Usher Committee" which is provided for in the by-laws of the First Baptist Church of South Plainfield and was approved.

The Diaconate sometimes is short handed and needs help with their Sunday duties which include greeting at the door, collecting the offering and the preparation and serving of Communion on the first Sunday of the month. We also felt other congregants would welcome a chance to fill in.

These congregants would not attend Diaconate meetings and could sign up when we have a vacancy. (The Deacons will fully explain what to do.)

Currently, one person is needed for the month of May and the month of November is in need of two people per week. Soon a sign up sheet will be placed in the vestibule. Please prayerfully consider helping out.

Sincerely,
Linda Sticco

Bible Study on Isaiah

There is an amazing narrative of Israel described in the book of Isaiah. A narrative that leads to God's redemptive story. It is a story that shows how sin and judgment are defeated through the grace of our Savior. But Isaiah was written before Jesus walked this Earth. You are invited to join us on Wednesday evenings starting April 18 at 6:45 p.m. for a study of Isaiah.

Sunday Soup and Study – we will resume our weekly study on Sundays after church at the end of April. Tentatively, we will begin on April 29. If there is a topic that would interest you for this short 6-week study, please let Pastor Jesse know. Additional information will be available mid-April.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: May is Older Americans Month. On Monday, May 7th, Brittany Rivera from the Middlesex County Office on Aging will conduct a presentation on the services that are available to older adults through their office. She will also provide a high level overview of Medicare. Nancy Field, from the Division of Aging Services, will present an overview of Medicaid. More details to follow.

TRUSTEE'S CORNER: APRIL 2018

2018 Church Financials as of March 26th:

Income: \$18,513.76

Expenses: \$19,569.11

We encourage members to prayerfully consider increasing weekly giving and try to support the church on a consistent basis, meaning each week. Our budget this year is only 1% higher than last year.

The sales of gift cards are another way to support the Church and cover expenses. We all, at some point, purchase groceries. Income from this fundraiser to date is \$250. Remember, we get \$50 for each \$1,000 sold in Shop Rite and Stop and Shop gift cards.

REMINDER: Please remember to return your ABC Mission Boxes to support the American Baptist Home Mission Societies. Every penny counts!

Clean up Dates: Saturday, April 14th - Cemetery Clean Up Day from 9-12. We will meet at the cemetery.

Saturday, April 21st, 9-12 (tentative) - Church Work Day

Ladies on a Mission – Garage Sale April 27th and 28th!

Ladies on a Mission will be holding a Garage Sale fundraiser on Friday and Saturday, April 27th – 28th (rain date of May 4th and 5th) at 3001 Norwood Ave in South Plainfield. We are requesting donations of gently used items (no clothing please) to sell at the Garage Sale. Donations can be placed on the stage in Henderson Hall marked 'Garage Sale'. A limited number of tables will be available to anyone interested in selling their own items at the sale. Cost of a table is \$15. Please speak with Doris Doll or Janis Nietzer if you wish to reserve a table. On Thursday, April 26th help is needed anytime during the day or evening to transport items for the Garage Sale from the church to the Nietzer home where the Garage Sale will be held and to price items.

Everyone is invited to come shop at the Garage Sale on the 27th and 28th from 9 AM to 4 PM at 3001 Norwood Ave in South Plainfield (near Kennedy School.) We always have some great items for sale! In case of inclement weather, please call Janis at 908-510-0313 to determine if the Garage Sale has been postponed. We plan to postpone only in the case of severe weather, as we have the garage and awnings for weather protection.

Ladies on a Mission Meeting Friday, April 20

Ladies on a Mission will be meeting Friday, April 20th at the church to finalize plans for the Garage Sale and to address birthday cards for the coming year. All women of the church are invited to attend.

Camp Lebanon Summer Camp!

The schedule is out for this year's camping season at Camp Lebanon, the American Baptist Camp and Conference Center located in Lebanon, NJ. Since 1949, Camp Lebanon has been a favorite spot for campers. Offering various recreational, social and faith based activities, a week at camp will offer your child memories that last a lifetime.

There are various discounts available and our church offers partial camper scholarships if you register **before May 1**. Check out their schedule at camplebanon.com. Brochures are available at church. See Pastor Jesse for registration assistance and to have your form and deposit brought to camp.

Not sure if you want to send your child away to camp? Would you like to have your own week at camp? Pastor Jesse runs Family Camp – a time to relax with your family, enjoy the great outdoors, participate in various camping activities and events and worship God. This camp runs the week of July 1-7, with options to come a day, half week (3 nights) or full week (6 nights). Prices include all meals and on-site activities with options for either cabin or tent/RV (bring your own) accommodations. Again, ***sign up before May 1 for amazing discounts!***



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