

The Tall Spire

MARCH/APRIL 2019

Senior Pastor's Report



Greetings church family! It hardly seems possible that another year has passed and we carry on into the 148th year as a congregation! A new year provides us with an opportunity to listen and pay attention, to become mindful of God in our midst. There is a prayer in Deuteronomy that the Hebrew people were instructed to daily pray. It is called the Shema, which means: to listen.

⁴ Hear (Shema), O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶ Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷ Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸ Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, ⁹ and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NRSV)

The question becomes: What is it that they/we need be listening to? Verse 4 provides us with the core message: Shema! (Listen up) Israel! Yahweh (the Lord) is our God, Yahweh (the Lord) is alone/one. This is basically talking about loyalty to God. Does being loyal to God mean that you are paying attention or does

God not have your undivided attention? Does God get our attention when things are going bad or good? As a parent, who hasn't taken their child's face in their hands and looked eyeball to eyeball with them and wanted to scream, "Listen to me!" Does God have your attention? Are you listening? What would happen if we individually and as a church started to proactively put ourselves in the location of Shema? To begin each day making a conscious, prayerful choice to pay attention to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives, what would change for us and our church?

2019 brings opportunities for us to "pay attention" to. Last year we stepped out in faith and partnered with three other congregations (Misión Bautista, Trinity Lutheran, and the Salvation Army of White Plains) to host a Vacation Bible School for 80 children in our community. It was a wonderful experience of holy collaboration and teaching about God's love for these children. We learned about God's love through showing God's love. We will continue to do this VBS event with excellence and devotion. Please join us for one or more days for the opportunity to demonstrate God's love!

Our Putting Families First Food Co-op con-

*First Baptist Church
of White Plains*

456 North Street
White Plains, NY 10605
phone: 914.949.5207
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Sunday Worship @ 10:30am

Misión Bautista Worship @ 12:30pm

Adult Forum @ 9:30am

Church Office Hours
Monday – Thursday 9am to 2:30pm
Friday 9am to 1pm

Rev. Tim Dalton, Senior Pastor
Matthew Perez, Minister of Music
Lucia Gold, Office Manager
*George McCullough, Maintenance
Supervisor*

Affiliated with American Baptist
Churches of Metropolitan NY
The American Baptist Churches USA
www.abc-usa.org

LOOK FOR THE TALL SPIRE
at Bryant Avenue and North Street
adjacent to White Plains High School

tinues to grow and be a blessing for the families we serve. We have paid attention to their needs through our relationships and now offer children's clothing. Please continue to donate food items weekly as well as clothing for children, if you have them. Along with this, we started an orchard of various native fruit trees, are making plans to host a farmers market on our campus in the Spring!

Over the past two years, we have raised over \$12,000 for the David Manierre Scholarship fund, which we had seven deserving young people from our congregations as recipients and look forward to continuing that ministry well into the future. We also continue to support the Center of Hope, Haiti. Preliminary discussions for a 2020 mission trip between our congregation and Misión Bautista has been introduced and the needs of the COHH are being assessed and forwarded to me.

A wonderful partnership with El Centro Hispano has developed in the Fall of 2018. We now host English as a Second Language classes in the Wilson House basement Monday through Thursday mornings each week. This is a wonderful ministry to host as they provide language skills for immigrants which enables them to get jobs. We have also partnered with Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth to provide meeting space for their social workers and trainings for potential foster parents. These are all wonderful uses of our spaces. Additionally, I am moving into the second year of a grant by the Lilly Foundation and the Ministers and Missionaries Benefits Board (MMBB) called the Strategic Pastoral Excellence Program. This is working with pastors across our denomination on financial literacy as congregations.

The Sounds of Easter

Since the close of the Christmas season, Pastor Tim and I have been working on some very exciting plans for Easter Sunday. Indeed, I can hardly wait until we experience the results together! Our worship on that morning will be amplified by a professional string ensemble, a chorus of talented vocalists, and an experienced trumpeter. What a joy it will be to praise the name of Jesus in the midst of God's people!

As we approach this service, we will reflect on the depth of Christ's sacrifice through Lenten hymns and a beautiful choral anthem to be performed on April 7th. Look-

ing ahead, I'm excited about adding more and more new songs to our regular lineup for the purpose of diversifying the worship experience offered to members and guests alike. Our lead singer, Kate Wiswell, has been instrumental in introducing a number of fresh tunes and beautiful solos to the FBC congregation, so be sure to thank her for her diligent efforts!

In closing, I am so happy to be here and am looking forward to a wonderful spring season as your friend and servant in Christ.

Matt Perez, Minister of Music

Vacation Bible Camp

First Baptist Church of White Plains and Misión Bautista will be sponsoring a joint Vacation Bible School this June from the 27th to the 29th. It will include children in grades 1-6 and run from 9am to 1pm each day. Children can be dropped off as early as 8am and picked up between 1 and 3pm. The theme for this year's VBS hasn't been announced just yet, but the program will consist of a professionally developed Bible School curriculum which will have rotating stations of activities and instruction for all age groups. More details to come!

I have been taking classes at Yale Divinity School toward a Sacred Theology Masters. I am writing a thesis that looks at the time of Babylonian Exile and compares the theological responses to those difficult times (as recounted in the Bible) to our current times of sensed exile and displacement. It has been a rewarding and enlightening experience and I want to thank the Church Board for their blessing upon this endeavor. In some ways, I have had to pull somethings and initiatives back in order to accomplish this, but after May, we will have many efforts to explore as a authentic and relevant congregation of the twenty-first century. I am excited to share this future with you as the time approaches. As I proceed toward this goal, I will be taking a couple of weeks of Sabbatical leave in late February and early March to finalize my thesis and focus on my course work. Again, thank you all for allowing me this time and understand that this is done in a effort to further our creative ministry life and purpose as a congregation.

So, our call for 2019 is to pay attention to God and God alone. God may be saying to you to: "stop putting things in my place!" Only "One" can hold a unique location in our hearts, we can try to fill it with other things, those things we can control, but God remains and demands our full attention. Let's pay attention this year on how to be a better church that demonstrates the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven!

Paying Attention (Shema),

Pastor Tim

Children's Corner

As the weather begins to warm up, I am reminded of God's grace and redemptive powers. This makes me think of the object lessons found in nature which even a child can understand. Our children have recently painted images they thought up based on this year's theme, *prayer*. We have also resumed our regular Bible storytelling time during Sunday School. Indeed, I've had several conversations with the children which have encouraged them to take interest in learning more about Jesus. I hope that they aren't only attending because of their parents, but that they clearly understand why we have to know Jesus in this life. Pastor Tim, other pastors, and I met regarding this summer's VBS program. We will have follow-up meetings until plans become more concrete. For now, we have decided to host the Bible Camp sometime in late June. Please keep this event in your prayers, that God would be honored by having many children learn about Jesus. Thank you for your support and prayers!

Katelyn Perez, Youth and Children Intern



Like a River Glorious

I grew up on a 350 acre dairy farm in Upstate NY. My great-grandfather chose to purchase our farm specifically for its many wooded areas, knowing that if our family ever experienced a tough year financially, we could always sell lumber to make ends meet. This meant that I was lucky enough to have a literal forest as my playground throughout my childhood.

I always think of those rural hills and woods in the Spring. Year after year, the streams fill up, bringing water to all of the vegetation that has been asleep during the Winter. The days grow longer, the buds peep out slowly, a pink flush covering my family's farmland and slowly flourishing out into a bright, lush green. Life and beauty pouring out to the faithful trees that stand, decade after decade, experiencing their season of renewal. What has always struck me, deep in these woodland pockets, is how faithfully and consistently this miracle takes place.

In the quiet of the forest, deeply hidden from any motorist or passerby, life is annually revived and silently flourishing – without notice or applause from any outside person. This example of faithful renewal is a reminder to me of God's presence in our lives. Sometimes His most beautiful work comes softly, silently, perhaps imperceptibly to us or those watching us.

This would be my word of contemplation in this season of Spring's renewal all around us. Trust that God is doing his faithful work in our souls and lives, just as He tends to His natural world year after year, silently and steadily bringing beauty to formerly barren spots, so is He faithful to bring our lives into a place of flourishing abundance. It may be done without noise and fanfare, but we can trust it nonetheless.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.

- Jeremiah 17:7-8 (ESV)

Kate Wiswell, Lead Singer

Easter Egg Hunt!

Come join us on Friday, April 12th for an Egg-Stuffing Party in preparation for the 7th Annual Easter Egg Hunt which will be held at noon on Sunday, April 21st. The fun begins at 6:30pm in Wilson House with pizza and refreshments provided along with prizes given out for the most proficient egg-stuffing teams.

We are always in need of volunteers for the Easter Egg Hunt who are willing to greet and direct people to the correct egg hunt areas, hand out flyers, and help man refreshment stands, so please contact Carl Hamby or the church office if you like to help out in this way. Thank you!



Upcoming Events

Friday, April 12th – 6:30pm

- Easter Egg Stuffing Party

Sunday, April 21st – Easter Sunday

- 6:30am Sunrise Service
- 7:15am Breakfast
- 10:30am Worship
- 12:00pm Community Easter Egg Hunt

June 27-29th – Vacation Bible Camp

- Activities for all age groups
- More details to come

