

February 24, 2021

the SPIRE



First Baptist Church
columbia



Stations of the Cross Experience March 1-17

This Stations of the Cross experience honors the ancient story of Jesus' death while recognizing the ways this narrative repeats itself again and again throughout the past and present. It provides multi-sensory ways to engage, confess, and lament, creating a profound and prophetic worship experience. Designed by Rev. T. Denise Anderson, and implemented by our own Brenda Rice, the stations feature Anderson's original artwork and artist statement, *Pietà: "Woman, Behold Your Son; Behold Your Mother"*—a sermon project exploring the story of Mamie Till-Mobley (the mother of Emmett Till) and the grief of Mary, mother of Jesus, beholding her son on the cross.

The stations experience is designed for an in-person, self-paced pilgrimage in which participants physically travel from one station to another throughout the sanctuary. At each station, participants will have the opportunity to read scripture and then reflect on how this narrative repeats in our time.

For example, when reading about Jesus' time in the garden of Gethsemane, pilgrims will be invited to consider people in their lives who are having a difficult time at the moment and drop a marble into a basin of water symbolizing tears. At another station, when reflecting on Jesus speaking to his mother, participants will gaze at Rev. T. Denise Anderson's art and contemplate the paintings depicting Emmitt Till's mother, and then ponder who God is calling us to behold today.

Upon arriving, pilgrims will receive guided instructions to assist with the worship experience, complete with scripture, prayers, and instructions for interactive elements. Hand sanitizer stations will be available throughout the stations. To reserve a timeslot, sign up on our website. Alternatively, contact the church office with any questions or assistance signing up.



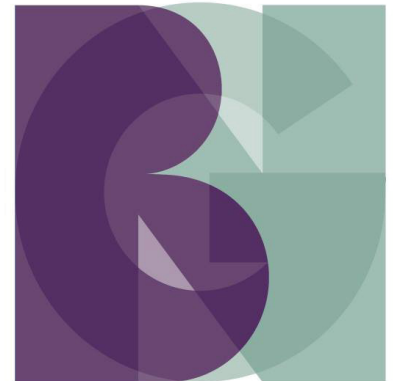
STATIONS OF THE CROSS EXPERIENCE



Word from the Pastor

First Baptist,

Last week, Baptist News Global published an article I wrote about my Dad's death and the suffering we have created by not taking better care of one another during the pandemic. The article was shared on social media and many of you many have read it on Facebook or other platforms, but for those of you who are not on social media I wanted to share the article with you.



Baptist News Global
CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Raging at God after my 67-year-old father died of COVID

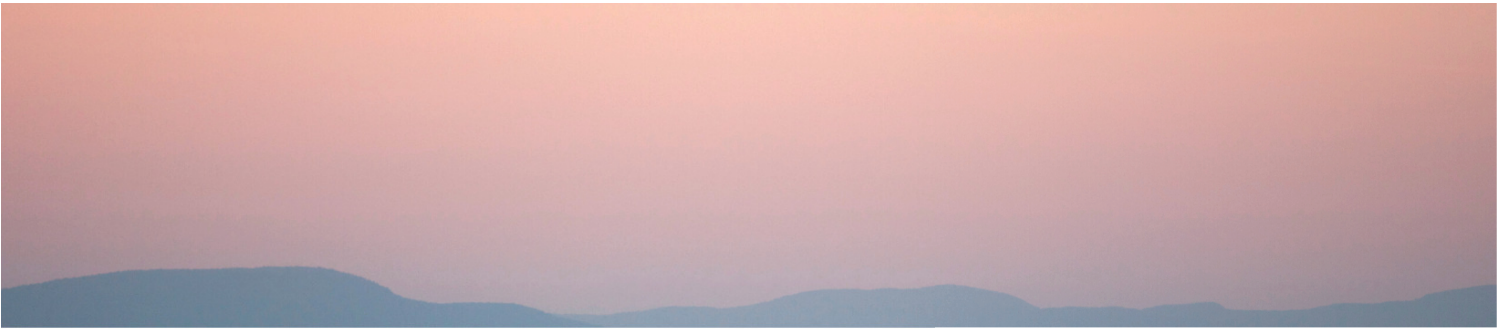
My dad was a vibrant and healthy 67-year-old when he caught COVID-19 and died a few weeks before Christmas. It was an abrupt and jarring experience for my family. I was left heartbroken and enraged. I was angry at this seemingly never-ending pandemic and honestly, at God for creating such a broken world.

For days after my Dad died, as a way of praying my pain, I imagined myself standing outside the gates of heaven hurling insults and rocks at the Divine. I kept thinking of the story of Job and how he refused to curse God. In this moment, I fully realized I am not Job.

Day after day, I kept showing up at the gates, heaving accusations and a flood of obscenities at God. Perhaps I was trying to provoke God; I wanted the gates to open and for the Divine to step out and give me some explanation.

I will be clear that my theology does not embrace the idea that God caused my father to die for God's glory. Yet, I am hard pressed to understand why God would allow a world where a virus can, within months, destroy the lives of so many people – 468,000 deaths in America at the moment I write these words. More than 2.3 million deaths worldwide.

What the hell, God? Do you not care for us? So many tears and so much grief. Tears for breakfast, lunch and dinner. What is wrong with you, God? Do you delight in seeing us suffer?



One day, when my grief was particularly heavy, I brought a battering ram along on my trip to heaven's gates and attempted to break them down and hold God to account. (I fully understand the absurdity of this statement, but I have always believed God can handle our emotions, including our rage and soul-crushing grief. Plus, where else could I go?) As I pounded away at the pearly gates, unexpectedly, an image of God heartbroken and enraged came to mind.

Then, this uneasy truth washed over me: It is easier to blame God than to admit we have failed one another. The thought came: What if God's rage and sorrow matches my own? After all, more than 2 million of God's beloved children have died. Their lives cut short. They did not have to die; so many lives could have been saved.

Then, I envisioned God with clenched fists and tears streaming down, red, blocky cheeks stomping around earth demanding we give an account for our behavior. "Why didn't you listen?" God demands of us. "Why didn't you care?" The thought came that maybe it was God speaking through scientists and medical experts and warning us this could happen. God pleading with us to take this seriously, to don our masks, wash our hands and keep our distance. But too many of us refused to believe or listen.

Maybe it was God begging us not to throw Fourth of July and Halloween parties and to forgo holiday celebrations with our families just this one year. But too many of us rebuffed the warnings, preferring personal pleasure and touting individual freedom over concern for the common good.

Our treasured rugged individualism has cost us so many lives. When will we learn that interdependence, neighborliness and community are the real virtues? The problem was exasperated by our leaders, who stuck their heads in the sand and underestimated the threat for months. Preferring profits to people. Even when it became clear how deadly the virus was, they failed to lead by example. Allowing some false sense of bravado or machismo, to create a culture of "I ain't scairt of no virus."

While they swaggered, the bodies piled up. In this nation, which loves to claim to be "Christian," we were so cavalier with our siblings lives. When will we learn that we belong to one another? I thought even now, we do not feel the full weight of our decisions. But God does. For the last year, God has sat by every bedside where beloved children took their last breaths. God held their hands, including my Dad's, when their loved ones could not. God heard every wail of devastated families, witnessed dreams shattering and counted their tears. God watched as nurses and doctors collapsed under the weight of it all.

God also has borne the brunt of our failure. God has suffered.

Carl McIntyre



Churches that THRIVE for Racial Justice

We are thrilled to announce First Baptist has been selected into the Alliance of Baptists' THRIVE for Racial Justice cohort! The Alliance received a Lilly Endowment grant to form a cohort of churches who will participate in a five-year project dedicated to the work of racial justice. Last fall we applied, and a few weeks ago we learned First Baptist is among the 25 churches across 18 states chosen for the project.

Both the leaders of the Alliance and the scholars partnering with them in the Churches that THRIVE for Racial Justice project agree that the definition of a thriving church cannot be assessed solely in terms of larger attendance or growing budgets. Rather, thriving congregations recognize their changing social and cultural contexts, exhibit clarity of values and mission, and cultivate Christian practices in line with those values as they address and seek to overcome racial injustice.

We believe being part of the THRIVE for Racial Justice cohort will provide us with accountability and structure for our racial justice work as a church. To help lead our efforts we are reforming our Racial Justice Team. The Racial Justice Team will hold its first organizational Zoom meeting Sunday, March 14, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The purpose and function of this group is to grow in our individual and collective understandings, and to advocate for racial justice in partnership with an alliance of 24 other Thriving Baptist Church congregations who will be taking this journey with us.

If you think you might like to become a part of this team or have any questions, please email Julie Walker at jbethwalker58@gmail.com.



At First Baptist,
we're committed
to not just *talk about*
the evils of racism
but to *do something*
about it!



Lenten Series

AGAIN & AGAIN

Lent, the six-week period leading up to Easter began February 17 with Ash Wednesday. Our Lenten Theme this year is Again & Again. In Lent, we're reminded that, again and again, suffering and brokenness find us. We doubt again, we lament again, we mess up again.

Again and again, the story of Jesus on the cross repeats—every time lives are taken unjustly, every time the powerful choose corruption and violence, every time individuals forget how to love. With exacerbation we exclaim, "Again?! How long, O God?" And yet, in the midst of the motion blur chaos of our lives, God offers a sacred refrain: "I choose you, I love you, I will lead you to repair." Again and again, God breaks the cycle and offers us a new way forward.

Lenten Devotionals Still Available

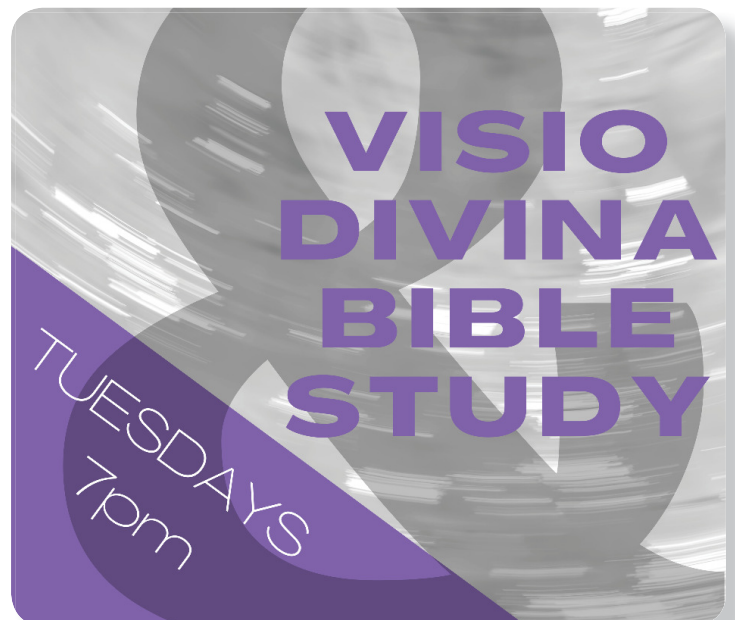
We are offering a Lenten Devotional put together by Sanctified Art. This weekly devotional follows the Revised Common Lectionary through Easter Sunday. Each week offers: scripture readings, biblical commentary, poetry, visual art, written reflections and coloring pages.

If you did not receive a Lenten devotional and would like to receive one, you can contact the church office.



Tuesday Evening Visio Divina Bible Study

Visio Divina, latin for "divine seeing," is a method of meditation, reflection, and prayer through a process of intentional seeing. Visio Divina extends the 6th century Benedictine practice of Lectio Divina by the use of visual imagery. Traditionally, Visio Divina was accompanied by Benedictine iconography and illuminations; however, different faith traditions have adapted the process over time, utilizing both secular and non-secular images. During Lent, Pastor Brittany will be leading a Visio Divina Bible Study via Zoom at 7 pm. The meeting will be a blend of visual meditation with group discussion and Bible study.





FIRST BAPTIST
 book club

Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times

BY MICHAEL CURRY

First Baptist Book Club

The First Baptist Book Club is excited to announce their next read: *Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times* by Michael Curry. As the descendant of slaves and the son of a civil rights activist, Bishop Michael Curry's life illustrates massive changes in our times. Much of the world met Bishop Curry when he delivered his sermon on the redemptive power of love at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle at Windsor Castle. Here, he expands on his message of hope in an inspirational road map for living the way of love, illuminated with moving lessons from his own life. Through the prism of his faith, ancestry, and personal journey, *Love Is the Way* shows us how America came this far and, more importantly, how to go a whole lot further. You can purchase the book on your own to read before our next discussion on April 13.

Special Zoom at Noon with Brian Kaylor Wednesday, March 24

On Wednesday, March 24, Brian Kaylor will be our special guest for Zoom at Noon. Last August, Brian who is editor & president of Word&Way, associate director of Churchnet, and author of four books on religion, politics, and communication, joined us for a conversation about Christian Nationalism. As a reminder, Christian Nationalism is an ideology, which seeks to merge Christian and American identities and in doing so, distorts both the Christian faith and America's constitutional democracy. On January 6, when the assault on the capitol happened our conversation with Brian felt prophetic. Join us for Zoom at Noon as we discuss the assault on the Capitol and how it intersects with the disturbing movement known as Christian Nationalism.



Brian Kaylor is the editor & president of Word&Way, associate director of Churchnet, and author of four books on religion, politics, and communication. He graduated with an M.A. and Ph.D. in political communication from the University of Missouri. He serves the Baptist World Alliance as Vice-Chair of the Communication Advisory Committee, and as a member Commission on Christian Ethics. Previously, Brian was an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at James Madison University and Brian served as pastor of Union Mound Baptist Church.



MIRA AND SASHA ZIVANOV'S

CBF FIELD PERSONNEL
ST. LOUIS, MO



February 2021



OFFERING FOR
GLOBAL MISSIONS

When you give to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship offering for Global Missions, you help support the work of Mira and Sasha Zivanovs, field personnel serving among the immigrant community in and around St. Louis, Missouri, predominantly working with refugees from the former Yugoslavia, which includes the countries of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia.

Originally from Yugoslavia, Mira and Sasha are able to uniquely minister to this population that comes to St. Louis with next to nothing. The Zivanovs seek to provide outreach ministries that meet the needs of refugee families that have lost much to years of violence, conflict and hardship, but have arrived in the United States with hope.

The Zivanovs cultivate beloved community through a weekly food pantry. They bear witness to Jesus Christ through friendship and an enduring pastoral presence among Roma and other immigrant families. And, they seek transformational development through a tutoring program that leads to changes in the lives of young Roma, other students and their families.

During the month of February, First Baptist members will have the opportunity to support the work of Cooperative Baptist Field Personnel around the world by giving to the CBF Offering for Global Missions.

Your support of the Offering for Global Missions will share the Gospel message and provide tangible gifts of God's grace and mercy.

100% of your gifts to the CBF offering goes to funding the ministry of field personnel.

You can send in your offering by check (made out to First Baptist Church with CBF missions in the memo line) or you can choose the missions offering link on our website to give electronically.

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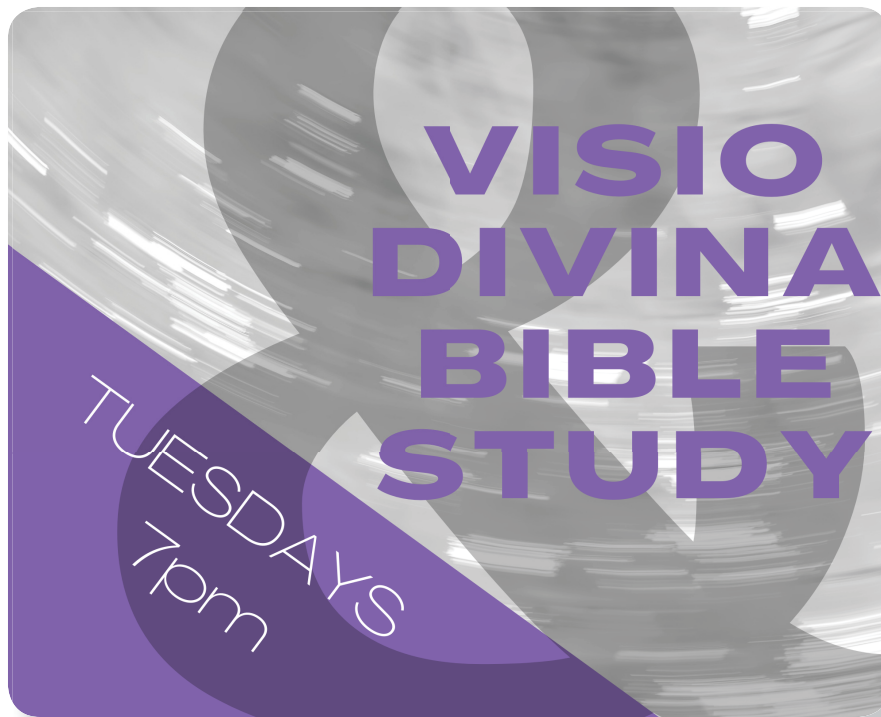
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Mike Ide, Custodian

"Return Service Requested"



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Tuesday Evening Visio Divina Bible Study
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the **SPIRE**

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