

APRIL/ MAY 2021

A man with a beard and short dark hair, wearing a blue short-sleeved button-down shirt, is shown from the waist up. He is holding a light-colored acoustic guitar and singing into a black microphone on a stand. The background is a blurred blue stage setting.

# THE MESSENGER

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NORTH PALM BEACH

# OUR WORSHIP LEADER

BY GAYLE COUGHANOUR



While he was still working in the ER, he was presented with an opportunity to become the Director of Music and Community Development at a growing church plant in downtown West Palm Beach, called Truth Point Church. He served there for 7 years, where he grew a music team from 5 people to 35 skilled and diverse volunteers and assembled a gospel choir averaging 20-30 members that performed around 4 times a year. As the Director of Community Development, he created a partnership between Truth Point Church and Bridges Learning Academy, a local ESL school, resulting in a total of 70 regular volunteers and the assistance of many refugee families. He also created an organization called Serve Our City which provided an electronic platform to church members for volunteer opportunities. This resulted in partnerships with 5 different local non-profits, as well as a substantial increase in monthly volunteer hours through Truth Point Church.

Eric can play several musical instruments, but guitar is his favorite. He has a collection of 10 guitars, several which adorn his office at the church. He also loves to write, arrange and retune hymns and contemporary songs. One of his favorite hobbies is spear fishing. He and his wife, Stacie, have two sons, Bear (4) and Finley (6 months) and a daughter Indy (2 ½). Prior to having children, Stacie and Eric spent a lot of time traveling. They have climbed and hiked their way through many places, most notably Patagonia (Argentina and Chile) and New Zealand.

He is a very gregarious, helpful and upbeat person that in his first two months of working at First Pres, has made a wonderful impression with the entire staff and the congregants he has met. When you have a chance to see Eric, introduce yourself. You will be glad you did!



## VOCAL ENSEMBLE

If you have watched our traditional services either in person or via livestream, I am sure that you will agree that we have a very talented vocal ensemble. One of the musicians is Molly Shippy. We asked her to write something for us. Here is her response:

*"I am so grateful to be a part of the First Presbyterian NPB family and vocal ensemble, as you all have welcomed me and my family for many years now! I grew up singing with my mother in church (at The Lost Tree Chapel. One of my most cherished memories involves being encouraged by the church choir to sing with them during Thursday night rehearsals as a tiny four year old in my pajamas! To be able to worship through song and especially through the text of hymns is a gift I will never take for granted. I have had many roles in my life- performer in professional musical theatre productions and cruise ships, elementary music teacher, private voice teacher, daughter, wife to Eric, and most recently, mom to sweet 6 month old Luca (born in the midst of this wild pandemic!), and also my role in this church family/choir, which is one that continually keeps me grounded and inspired."*

# NEW MEMBERS

## IN THE FIRST PRES FAMILY

Here are the people who joined First Pres in February:



Drew & Amanda Binns,  
with daughter, Lila



Nichole Volstad, with husband,  
Kyle & daughter, Blakely



Luke Bartolf



Lindsay Gabler, with daughters,  
Elise and Audrey



Chris Crenshaw



Britton & Sarah Cotton, with  
daughters, Colette and Waverly



Jamie & Kristen Leavitt,  
with son, Tommy Bongiovanni

# First Presbyterian Church

# ADULT MINISTRY

Ages 60 and up

**A**s we begin the month of April, we have passed the one-year mark from when our lives were abruptly changed by the presence of the coronavirus. It has been a difficult year due to many factors, all of which were compounded by the virus which has hindered our ability to support one another in our usual ways. Nonetheless, God has been present with us, nurturing and sustaining us. God is our refuge and our strength!

First Presbyterian Church has been faithful and respectful with regards to the sanctity of life. The church has continued to provide much needed support to the community and beyond with their continued missions, spiritual nurture, and generous giving of resources. We are the hands and feet of Christ as we strive to love God, love all people and live in grace!

Through our worship and continued outreach to each other, we have affirmed that the church is not an entity dependent upon our ability to gather the way we are used to. The church is the body of Christ and all of us are Christ's instruments to proclaim the grace and good news of the gospel through word and deed. A part of that is being patient, guarding the health of one another, staying the course. I am so grateful for us to be able to safely break bread together, worship safely in person and virtually and share in small groups!

During the pandemic, after the loss of over 500,000 American lives and over 2.5 million lives worldwide, we need the message of hope that Easter provides. As the vaccine is more readily available and case counts and deaths decline, we must not forget all those who are left grieving or battling long term effects, both physically and economically.

As we continue the process of regathering, let us remember to respect all the sacrifices others have made to make regathering a possibility. Wearing masks, social distancing and practicing good hygiene are ways we can honor their sacrifices and prepare for the future.

**Have you received your covid vaccines?** If not, do you, a family member or a friend need help scheduling them? If so, please contact me by phone at (561-308-9206) or email ([jhayes@firstpresnpb.org](mailto:jhayes@firstpresnpb.org)). There are members of our church family who will help you schedule your appointment.

## DATES FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

### OUT TO LUNCH BUNCH (OTLB)

DATE: April 9th at First Presbyterian Church

TIME: 12:00 NOON

COST: \$10/person.

- Ken Coleman, our new chef, will be preparing our lunch.
- Special guests will be by Rev Jared & Monica Ayers & Rev Ron & Catherine Hilliard
- We will be practicing the guidelines set by our leaders (i.e. wear masks, socially distanced)
- **Deadline to RSVP for OTLB is Tuesday, April 6th.** Contact JoAnn at [jhayes@firstpresnpb.org](mailto:jhayes@firstpresnpb.org) or 561-308-9206.

### MAY ADULT DINNER

DATE: Friday, May 21st

TIME: 5:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall

COST: \$13.00/person

- Ken Coleman, our new chef, will be preparing our dinner.
- PROGRAM: Bingo with Rev. Ron & lots of prizes
- **Deadline to RSVP for dinner/bingo is Tuesday, May 16th.** Contact JoAnn at [jhayes@firstpresnpb.org](mailto:jhayes@firstpresnpb.org) or 561-308-9206.

*God be in my head, and in my understanding.  
God be in my eyes and in my looking.  
God be in my mouth and in my speaking.  
God be in my heart and in my thinking.  
God be at my end and at my departing. Amen*



# YOU ARE INVITED TO BECOME A GREETER

**A** Church Greeter is one of the simplest yet most important positions in the church. Knowing that you've served on the frontlines of welcoming newcomers and regular attendees to the church is a blessing. You are using your gifts to serve God and others. Serving as a greeter is an excellent way to meet new friends and to set the tone for their worship experience.

**Your goal is to make people feel welcome at our church!**

- Show up on time, 20 to 30 minutes before the service begins
- Share a kind word
- Open a door
- Wear your nametag
- Be friendly to all who enter
- Lend a helping hand to people as they enter the church.
- Pray for new people
- Look for unknown people at church
  - o Be the first to reach out!
  - o Do it with enthusiasm
  - o Listen for their name
  - o Repeat it more than twice in conversation
- Introduce one to another
- If you haven't seen someone at church in a while, tell people they are missed
- Know the campus. Help guests find nurseries, Sunday school classrooms, restrooms, coffee and other refreshments, location of worship services, etc.

## IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A GREETER

at the 9:00 am, 10:30 am or 6:00 pm  
service, contact JoAnn Hayes at  
[jhayes@firstpresnpb.org](mailto:jhayes@firstpresnpb.org)  
or 561-308-9206.

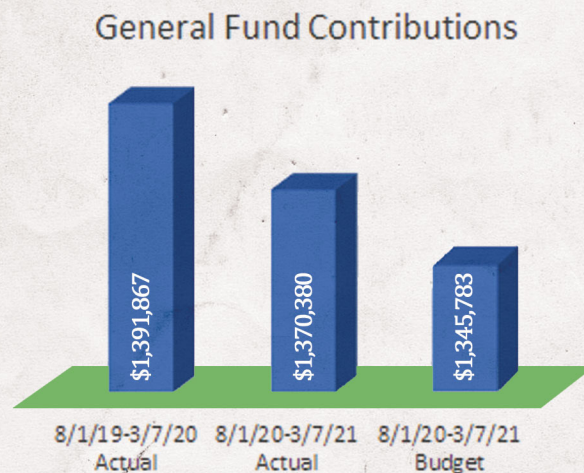


# Financial Focus

One of the responsibilities in my role as the Church Administrator is to encourage our congregation to grow in their faith by challenging them through the articles I write about stewardship, money and giving. I study extensively what the Bible says about these topics. One of the most remarkable stories is found in the book of Exodus, chapters 35 and 36. Israel had been out of slavery for only a few months, but God instructed Moses that he needed to gather all the congregations and asked them to take on the massive task of building the tabernacle. The tabernacle was to be the center of Israel's life because it was there that people would approach God. Exodus 35:4-5 states: "Moses said to all the congregation of the Israelites: This is the thing that the Lord has commanded: Take from among you an offering to the Lord; let whoever is of a generous heart bring the Lord's offering: gold, silver and bronze." Considering the Israelites were just released from slavery, it makes one wonder where they got these precious metals. When Israel left Egypt, they took with them all the gold, jewels and other valuables that they could carry (Exodus 12:35-36) as the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. (This only seems fair since they were slaves for 400 years!)

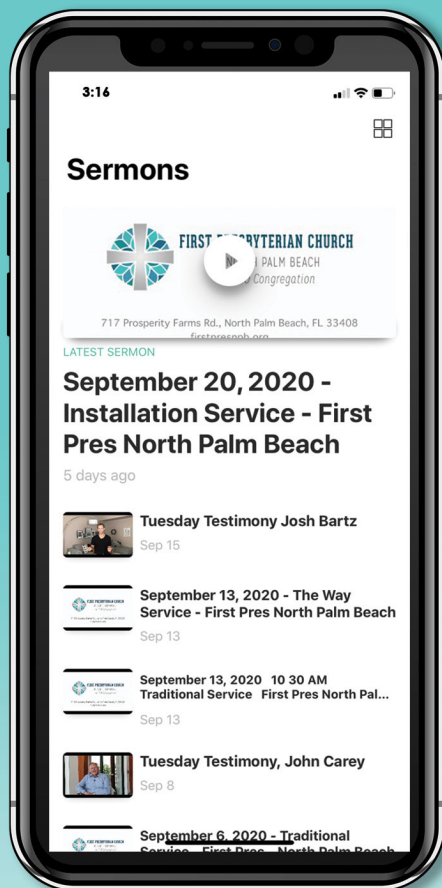
Note that the Lord asked for a freewill offering; this wasn't the required tithe. He appealed to people with generous hearts; only those who were willing to give were allowed to participate. It is a privilege to give to, and be part of, the Lord's work. God loves cheerful givers (2 Cor 9:7). Our giving should be from love and generosity, not a sense of obligation. Those Israelites whose hearts were stirred gave with great enthusiasm because they knew how important their giving was to the completion of God's house, and their enthusiasm spread to others. As everyone got involved in giving, they kept bringing Moses the freewill offerings every morning. Here is the best part of this story, as described in Exodus 36:5-7. It reached the point where the builders and craftsmen said they had more than they needed and told Moses to instruct the people to stop giving! I'm sure a pastor has never said that to his congregation!

The lesson from this story is that if we as a church want to achieve everything God is calling us to do, we need everyone giving, not under compulsion, but with joyful hearts. In the times we are living in now, people need the message of hope that only Jesus brings, and with enough resources, First Pres can make a big impact for Christ in our community and the whole world.



As can be noted in the graph, contributions to the general fund are about \$25,000 above budget year to date, but \$22,000 under the amount given last year for this same time frame. We are very grateful for the tithes and offerings YOU give to the ministries of First Pres.

*"Generous people aren't necessarily faithful to God. But faithful people are always generous." (Author unknown)*



# FIRST PRES CHURCH APP

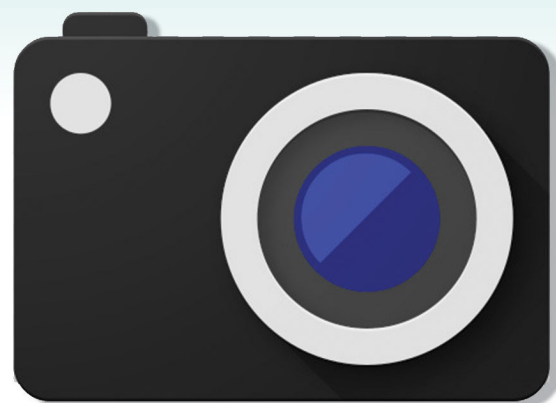


**W**e now have a church app for your smart phone. On it you can listen to the latest sermon, devotional or testimony, see the church directory, give online easily and securely, see your giving history, and contact us with questions or prayer requests.

To obtain the phone app, on your smartphone, go to the App Store. Search for "MinistryOne." The logo is a white cross with a purple background. Install it on your phone. It will then ask you to "Find Your Church." Enter our church's zipcode, 33408, and our church name will display. Click "Select This Church." If you are currently in our church's database, you can click on the Profile box and enter your email and phone number. You will then be given a validation code. Enter it. You will then be able to access the church directory. If you are not in the church's database, you may complete the profile information which will be sent to our membership secretary for approval.

Please note that you cannot use the app to watch our livestream service on Sundays as it is happening. To watch our livestream service, you need to go to the YouTube button on the home screen of our website, [www.firstpresnpb.org](http://www.firstpresnpb.org), or search our church name wherever you watch the YouTube channel. The current day's service shows up on the church app after it is edited and published the following day.

## PHOTOS WANTED!!!



**I**s your picture or the picture of someone you know missing from the First Pres Digital Directory? You can check the First Pres Church App to see if we have that picture. Send a photo to Sara's email [mcdonnell.sara@gmail.com](mailto:mcdonnell.sara@gmail.com) so your smiling face, not a blank silhouette, will be part of your profile.

If you need someone to take a photo, stop by the Welcome Kiosk at church on Sundays. The Fellowship Committee is encouraging everyone to have their picture in the digital directory so we can get to know one another better. If you are already pictured, please feel free to send an updated picture, since many of them were taken in 2016.



# FIRST PRES KIDS

## VBS COVID GUIDELINES:

1. Each person will sanitize prior to entering each station.
2. Limited number in each crew.
3. Spread crews out in the sanctuary for opening and closing.
4. Daily temperature checks.
5. Lunch will not be served, a prepackaged snack and fruit will be served during a scheduled break.
6. Crews will be assigned a designated area for snack outside.
7. Each station will have seating for kids to be spread out.
8. Masks will be required when indoors.

## FIRST PRES & ME

by Miles Furman

My journey at First Presbyterian Church started when I was 3 years old and was a student in the preschool. After preschool I continued to participate in various summer camps as well as Wednesday night clubs, Sunday school and the Christmas programs. When I was six I began participating in the children's choir and I have been in five plays to date. Last year, while I was in fifth grade, I was invited to be an actor in the Grove Sunday school program and I continue to act this year even though I have moved on to middle school.

I feel my time in the Children's Ministry has helped me to better understand the word of God. The plays and skits have helped me better understand the Bible and they make the stories more relatable to today.

Recently I was baptized by Reverend Southard, a decision I made on my own after I experienced a nudge from God during this year's church family camping trip. On the trip I felt feelings of peace, joy and fellowship and left the trip ready to make my commitment to God. I look forward to being a part of First Pres for many more years and growing in my relationship with God.



# FIRST PRES KIDS



## COMMUNION CLASS

This year's milestone class for communion took place over two Sundays in which ten of our children learned the history of the Passover and why we celebrate communion today. They took communion at the end of the class with their parents/grandparents in attendance. This special day culminated with a special presentation at the 10:30 service where they were served communion in front of our church family.

2021 Communion Class included Lucas Biltswitch, Arielle Coine, Evrynn Crisafi, Charlotte Garland, Eliza Haffey, Blakely Hafford, Wyatt Kant, Kai Smith, Callie Strayer and Jackson Wallace.



## UPCOMING MILESTONE CLASSES:

**READING SCRIPTURE CLASS:** APRIL 11 @ 9:00am - Conference Room

**WORSHIP CLASS:** April 18 @ 9:00am - Room C in Fellowship Hall

**SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRITY CLASS:** April 25 for students only @ 9:00am - Conference Room  
May 2 for parents only @ 9:00am - Conference Room

**PRAYER CLASS:** June 6 @ 9:00 Conference Room



# GLOBAL CHURCH PLANTING

by Ron Hilliard

A significant focus of First Pres' Global Mission Team is investing in pastors who are planting churches all around the world. It is no secret that one of the most effective ways to impact people with the Good News of the Gospel is through starting new churches. In this brief article I want to answer several questions about our Global Church Planting emphasis.

## 1. How did First Pres' Mission Committee decide to focus on global church planting?

The context for this answer is related to when First Pres switched to the ECO, or Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians, denomination. This took place in 2012. When we began in our new denomination, we made a decision that we must embrace the values of ECO. One of those values was church planting, or starting new expressions of faith communities. We had very little experience in the way of starting new churches, but we did have a great history of supporting pastors in the global church who are serving around the world. So, it made sense that our first venture in church planting was in the global arena. We made connections with pastors through Redeemer Presbyterian Church's global church planting initiative. These pastors have all been through a rigorous screening process and had been trained by Redeemer.

## 2. Who was our first global church planter?

Our first official global church planter was Alex Deuscher from Berlin. When we met Alex, he was single and serving in the Eastern part of Berlin. Since we began supporting him, he married his wife, Shannan, and they have one child, Ollie, and another on the way.

## 3. How many global church planters do we currently support?

We currently support seven global church plants! They are as follows:

- Alex and Shannan Deuscher in Berlin.
- Hannah and her husband, Valery, in Berlin.
- Alex Pipilios and his wife, Iliana, in Athens, Greece.
- Julio and Olga Chiang in Lima, Peru.
- Cienfuegos, Cuba church plant.
- Trinidad, Cuba church plant.
- Pastor Mauro in Sao Paulo, Brazil.



# GLOBAL CHURCH PLANTING

4. Doesn't First Pres support other global church pastors in addition to the church planters?

Yes, we do support a number of pastors doing ministry around the world. A number of years ago we began a slight shift to support missionaries from a variety of global locations. There has been a shift taking place in what the church calls "missions." This shift recognizes that the best way to reach a nation is for people from that nation to do the work of missions. One of those pastors we support is Antonio and Ruth Reyes in Merida, Mexico. We also support missionaries like John and Lynn Lehn who are partnering with a pastor in Croatia; Steve Johnson who is doing outreach in Budapest, Hungary; and Jordan and Michelle Barry who are serving in North Africa.

5. What is the gathering of church planters that First Pres sponsors every three years?

Three years ago, the Mission Committee invited all of our church planters to come to North Palm for a week. The global planters and their wives were invited. It was an amazing time of building relationships, reconnecting with our partners, and providing some training and encouragement. One of the blessing from this time was that our church planters connected with each other and built good relationships. We learned from this event that church planting is extremely difficult and that First Pres is strategically positioned to provide encouragement and support for our partners in ministry, and with their marriages and families.

This past February we held the Global Church Planter Gathering as a virtual event. We gathered for 2 ½ hours for three days and provided support, training, prayer, and encouragement for our partners in ministry. We invited several of them to lead a training session so they are learning from each other. And it was very timely with each of our planters feeling the effects of the pandemic. We invited not only our planters, but also the global pastors we support.

Thank you for all you are doing to support our global mission initiatives and especially supporting our global church planters.

# STUDENT MINISTRIES

Middle school and High school Sunday school groups have been working through the “I am” series in conjunction with our church sermons. They enjoyed hearing from a guest teacher recently, Thomas Wilson III, who is the youth leader at Bow Down, a neighboring church in West Palm Beach.



## Communicants:

The communicants class spent two sessions diving deep into the Apostle’s Creed. They broke into small groups to research Bible verses that support our collective beliefs and reflected on doctrine questions together. We most recently focused on the sacraments of baptism and communion. The students and mentors are continuing to meet to discuss these important topics and build relationships.

“I thoroughly enjoy my time with [my mentee] Jameson. As I reflect on things, I thought of how I might have reacted at 14 years if placed face-to-face with an unfamiliar gent pushing 80, sitting across from me at a table in a church fellowship hall. Jameson is a mature young man, quietly confident and unintimidated by the situation. I learned about some of his interests, his hero (his dad), and a vision he has for the future. I was also encouraged that when I asked what I might pray for, it was nothing for himself, but for a grandmother facing some health issues.”

-Steve Gilkenson



## Middle School

The middle school girls gathered in January for a craft day. They painted miniature clay pots and planted succulents. It was a unique time to enjoy fellowship in a creative and relaxing space.



Early March brought a lively game night for a large group of middle schoolers and some high-school leaders. Middle School Mayhem was a blast with “minute-to-win-it” games like cookie face, junk in the trunk, cheese ball head, and noodle hoops! Teams also competed in games like jeopardy, musical chairs, frisbee, volleyball, nine square and gaga ball! Congratulations to the pink team who won first place and took the prize!



## High School

The high schoolers had a special retreat in mid-January during the MLK long weekend. They went to Time Travel Escapes in Jupiter and conquered rooms such as the Viking Room, the Dinosaur Room, and more. They cooked out in the parking lot, enjoyed music, marshmallows, and conversation around a campfire, and slept in tents in front of the Way building. After scarfing down a hot and delicious breakfast, they burned some calories kayaking at the Jupiter Outdoor Center. The students wrapped up this weekend to remember with a stop at Chick-Fil-A.



## College Group:

Some thoughts from a couple of our college students:

"My sister and I joined the FPC college Bible study over the summer and this past fall. We went through the book of Philipians. It was a really great experience to read through this book with other college students over Zoom. I was able to meet some other PBA students through this Bible study, and we would get together at the monthly coffee on the green at PBA when FPC was on campus. I invited my roommates and friends to join and they loved it. We will be starting the spring semester [soon], and I'm excited to see what we will be discussing!" -Emily Dennis

"Having a group of regular and familiar believers on my college campus has been such a blessing in my life. It is nice to get together with other students around my age and talk about Christ and about what is going on in our lives. It is really nice to have this group because we all can be supportive of each other and encourage each other on our walk with Christ. A lot of the other students and I are going through some similar challenges in life, especially those related to school. It is nice to hear from one another and support each other through challenges and raise each other up when someone has a victory over one of those challenges." -Jessica Dennis



## Staff

The Student Ministries Wednesday night staff and volunteers enjoyed a well-deserved bonding activity to the Escape Room!

"I really enjoy time spent together with my fellow staff members because I believe it makes the work environment more productive and more fun when friendships are being built! As we get to know each other and become better friends, we can encourage each other and learn how to function as a team! Recently our youth staff got to go do an escape room together, and it was fun getting to see different people's strengths and weaknesses. Hopefully that carries over into our work in youth ministry!" - Aubrielle Kratz





# YOUTH FOR CHRIST®

PALM BEACH COUNTY



Palm Beach Youth for Christ reaches young people everywhere, working together with the local church and other likeminded partners to raise up lifelong followers of Jesus who lead by their godliness in lifestyle, devotion to the Word of God and prayer, passion for sharing the love of Christ and commitment to social involvement. First Pres has supported this local ministry for over 20 years, which is funded through our general fund budget. David Killian is the Executive Director. Here is a picture of David and his family. They adopted their son, Elijah (the blonde boy) a few weeks ago. David has a real servant's heart which First Pres has experienced as he is one of the men who prepares the food weekly for the men's prayer breakfast!

Pre-Covid, Rachel typically hid in the background at Campus Life. When club went virtual, Rachel's friend, Daina, asked her to join a Bible study with her other friends curious about Jesus.

A series called "The Chosen" had just come out detailing the life of Jesus. Chelsea, the YFC leader, and the girls watched it together and read the Scripture that went with it. These girls became so enveloped in the story of Jesus that they asked question after question about Him and the Bible. They read their Bibles on their own, many for the first time, and the conversations from their studies showed a fire in their souls for Scripture. They begged Chelsea to do the phone calls more than once a week! Of course she said "Okay!"

When they finished the series, Chelsea asked if anyone had ever accepted Christ. Rachel quickly responded, "No, not yet." Her leader replied that when she was ready to let her know. As the conversation continued Rachel asked, "Could we do it *right now*?" Her leader couldn't start praying fast enough. It was so exciting to see God's plan for Rachel that no one could have predicted. Since then she has developed a clear understanding of her salvation, how to read the Bible, and talk to God. What a blessing to watch her continue to grow in her faith.





**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
IN NORTH PALM BEACH  
*An ECO Congregation*  
717 Prosperity Farms Road  
North Palm Beach, FL 33408

NON PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
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PERMIT NO. 352

## IN MEMORY OF

JANUARY 24 — DENZIL WILSON

FEBRUARY 19 — TIM CROWLEY

MARCH 3 — JOHN HUGHES

## *Congratulations*

*Congratulations to Billy & Julianne Black,  
parents of Brody Robert Black,  
born on 1/16/21, and to his grandma  
Laura Johnson and great-grandpa Bob Sellers.*

## EASTER SERVICES

JOIN US IN PERSON OR VIA LIVESTREAM

APRIL 3 — EASTER VIGIL SERVICE @ 6 PM

APRIL 4 — EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE @ 7 AM

APRIL 4 — EASTER SERVICES AT 9 AND 10:30 AM

## PLAN TO JOIN US FOR THESE HOLY WEEK EVENTS

APRIL 1 — MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE @ 7 PM

APRIL 2 — GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE @ 7:30 AM

APRIL 3 — EASTER EGG HUNT @ 10 AM