

Signs of Life

a newsletter of First Baptist Church of Bennington

August 2017

The mission of FBC is to grow and make disciples of Jesus Christ in and around Bennington

What's the point of church?

Do you ever find yourself wondering, "What's the point of church, anyway?" If not, please bear with me a moment, because I think it is always a question worth asking.

It is often repeated that church is a people, not a building. This is true. A local church is a family of God's people in a particular time and place, gathered to worship God and follow Jesus together. Yes, we may own property and deal with buildings and institutional matters, but primarily we are a family, with God as our heavenly father, Jesus as our Lord and savior, and the Holy Spirit within us and guiding us. We are called to follow Jesus and through him love and worship God, and love and serve our neighbors.

Thankfully we're not left alone to figure out how to "do church." We have the Bible to show us what it means to be God's people together. After his death and resurrection, and right before his ascension into heaven, Jesus left us with our mission, that still stands today: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:18-20)

So based on Jesus' words, this is our mission: to make disciples of Jesus. This mission will never change, although it may look different in certain times and places. This is why I propose that our mission here and now is this: *to grow and make disciples of Jesus Christ in and around Bennington.*

Many of us have been disciples (or, if you prefer, followers) of Jesus for a long time, so we are here to grow in our faith, and to help others grow and become disciples of Jesus too. Others of us are new or renewed in our faith, so we look to grow all the more. Others may not yet be ready to give ourselves to Jesus. Still others may be at a low point in our faith. The point is we are all called to follow Jesus, and together we are called to help others know and love Jesus too.

As we follow Jesus we will experience the freedom and joy of life as a forgiven and fully-loved child of God, and our lives will be changed. We will share God's heart for the lost and lonely and hurting around us (whether or not they appear to "have their act together"), and reach out to bless others with the love that only God can provide. This can have many aspects, so we gather together to discern how we can serve God and love others here and now in this place, in specific ways. Do you love Jesus? Are you called to follow him? Let's follow him together!

The Free Clinic and Kitchen Cupboard are now in their new home

It has been a wonderful privilege to host and partner with the Bennington Free Clinic and Kitchen Cupboard to serve the needs of our community. They have operated out of our facility here at FBC for many years. After much searching, they found a new home for their services and offices, and have now moved into 121 Depot Street. We wish them all the best and will continue to support their mission to our community.

As of September 1, 2017, the ground floor space at FBC that has been the home of the Bennington Free Clinic and Kitchen Cupboard offices will be available on a cost-sharing basis. There is also space available on the second floor. If you know of a local nonprofit looking for space, please call the church office at 802-442-2105 or send an email to fboffice@sover.net. There are more details on the church website.

Children's Ministry Updates

- We are actively searching for a new Nursery Worker. If you know of a well-qualified, caring person to look after our littlest ones regularly, please contact Pastor Bob
- Our Sunday School teacher Katie Austin will return for the school year next month.
- Pastor Bob and the Church Life Board are working on an updated Child Protection Policy, to be released soon. All parents, guardians and other interested parties are welcome to contribute input and will receive a copy when ready.

Love something? Hate something? Feedback? Ideas? Anything is fair game and conversation is always welcome. Contact Pastor Bob in person, call or text (440-0934), email (pastorbobwiegers@gmail.com), US Mail, carrier pigeon, smoke signals, or whatever.

Baby Dedication Service

Our congregation was recently blessed with TWO new baby girls!
Come celebrate with us as we have a special service of baby dedication.

Sunday, September 3, starting at 9:30am at FBC

Reception to follow in Colgate Hall

Come celebrate God's blessing of new life!

Finding Hope on “Mercy Street”

Ask anyone on the street, in the stores, or around the water cooler what they think Bennington’s biggest problem might be, and you’ll surely hear a lot about addiction. Call it the “drug problem.” Or the “opiate crisis.” Lives are being destroyed and lost, and a host of problems, both personal and public, are directly related to addiction.

There are various services and help for those affected by addiction. 12-step programs are well-attended, and lives are being reclaimed. We are making progress, yet we’re in the middle of our generation’s greatest battle. Professional and volunteer services are growing, addressing medical, psychological, social, vocational, and other needs.

But where do we find hope for our souls? How can we piece back together our shattered spirits? If the disease of addiction attacks our innermost being, how do we find healing? The spiritual needs of those affected by addiction are very great indeed. And when it comes down to it, we’re all affected by addiction in some way, and many of us are affected very, very deeply.

I have spoken directly with many of the leaders of our local churches and faith communities — my friends from all over the social and theological map. I have discovered that our faith communities do not yet have much direct engagement with the spirituality of those affected by addiction. I hope to change that, with a small step of faith.

So we have started a monthly gathering called “Mercy Street.” It is a simple gathering of those affected by addiction: whether in recovery, in active use, family, friends, survivors, supporters, or whoever. Those of all faiths or no faith are welcome to come together for music, story, and prayer. I believe that hope, healing, and wholeness are found as we gather together in community and look to God for grace. So we will gather to sing songs of hope, (*continued...*)

to share our stories of redemption, and to pray with and for one another. As I make more and more friends who are greatly affected by addiction, I'm discovering that we're all in the same boat: we all need hope and healing from above, no matter who we are, where we've been, or what we've done. I've found that gathering around song, story, and prayer ignites something that nothing else can.



You and yours are welcome to join us each month on "Mercy Street" at 601 Main Street in Bennington. You can find more information at www.mercystreetbennington.org or facebook.com/MercyStreetBennington or call 440-0934. If you are unable to join us, please pray for our gatherings and all who attend, that we will find faith, hope, and love in God.

Goodbye Rachel! New Pianist Needed!

Rachel McDill served us at FBC as our pianist for over a year, and as you hopefully know, she sang, played and prayed amazingly well. We will always be thankful. She has gone off to North Carolina to further her musical education, and we pray God will continue to use her to bless many. In related news: we're now accepting applications for a new pianist! Please see Pastor Bob and be in prayer for the music ministry of FBC.

You are invited: Pastor Bob's Ordination Service

September 24, 2017 at 3:00pm

First Baptist Church of Bennington

Dinner to follow in Colgate Hall

Please RSVP: 442-2105 or fboffice@sover.net

Come celebrate God's work in and through us!