

“Growing Spiritually as Individuals and as a Church”

Today’s religious beliefs and worship practices have become a buffet, with believers picking and choosing from a rich variety of choices. Some choices aren’t as filling and healthy as others. On more than one occasion I’ve heard Christians extolling the virtues of crystal therapy, horoscopes and other things I consider to be oddities. Folk beliefs and new age ideas combine in a dubiously healthy stew on their plates. And some do continue to come to church on Sundays. I wonder how they mentally survive the maze of cobbled beliefs to find clarity, and yet there are the “healing” crystals on either side of the cross on their necklace.

As annoying as it is, so it has always been. Israelite leaders constantly complain in the Old Testament text of “foreign” worship practices seeping into Israel’s worship life. They were not exaggerating. The archeological evidence is abundant. Golden calves, Ashera pole holes, and a host of other non-orthodox evidence turns up constantly in modern diggings. *Acts 8: 26-40* is the story of a foreigner trying to make sense of Isaiah’s writings. Philip stops to explain the prophecies of Jesus and before you know it, this foreigner is getting baptized in some nearby water, probably a ditch by the side of the road! This annoys me more than a little. How did Philip do that? One minute he is explaining the text and the next minute he’s baptizing a guy he just met. Conversions take me a lot longer. But I think I know his secret.

1 John 4:7-21, beginning and ending with love, tells believers how to live. It also tells us how to make believers of non-believers. On the good side, it can be easier than you think. On the bad side, it requires us to set our ego aside and love others before they love us first. That’s a hard one. We all want to be loved and love others, but we all want to be loved first. Hardest of all, we need to love others more than we love ourselves and our possessions, and our agendas. Come to church on Sunday and find out how God makes all this easier than it looks. *Blessings Pastor Walt*

P.S. Before I go, I want to tell you about some of the big things coming up.

1. We send any child to camp for free. You read that right. We pay for everything. (Remember what I said about loving others before they love us back?)
2. The Memorial Day Parade is coming, and you will want to see the church’s float. Bring a lawn chair and cheer on the home team.

Circle of Caring

Kathryn Wall, Tommy Van Metere, Lois Strothman, Vic Schoonover, Toni Neitzel, Marilyn Massa, Matt Lundblade, Robin Huffman, Emily Herrman, Eric Gill Sr., Connie Gleasman, Jay Brown & Devon

(Names will remain on the prayer list for four weeks unless the office is notified.)

Heart of Gold Raffle: Ed Hansen is raffling tickets for \$5 each or 5 for \$20. There will be 10 chances to win raffle baskets that contain donated gift cards from local businesses. Gift cards range in value from \$10 to \$380! The winner will be drawn on July 1st!

2024 America for Christ Offering: the total raised this year was \$940. Thank you to all who were able to give to this important mission.

Need Furniture? contact Pastor Walt for details.

Video: if we are to continue broadcasting, we need someone shadowing Dave Parr as soon as possible. Otherwise, our Sunday morning services will not go out to shut-ins & members watching from home. Please contact Dave Parr to help out.

Spring Clean-Up: will be on April 27th starting at 8:00 am. *Rain date May 4th.*

Foundation Meeting & Annual Baird Update: will be May 2nd at 6:30 pm at the church.

Donuts: Do you enjoy donuts at Coffee Hour? Please consider sponsoring a Sunday for \$40.

Caritas: Caritas Needs: 4, 5, & 6 diapers, unscented baby wipes, & canned fruit.

Worship Leaders: We are looking for more volunteers to be Worship leaders. These are people who lead others in worshipping God and aim to glorify God. Let Diaconate know if you're interested in helping.

New Ways to Give: please read the Baird flyers in the Narthex. Questions, see Ed Hansen.

Facebook: please remember to like and share First Baptist posts to friends and family!

Prayer Requests: please fill out the green card in the narthex and put them in the offering plate or give them directly to Pastor Walt.

Board & Committee Chairs: please remember to turn in a copy of your minutes to the church office.

Caritas Needs: Diaper sizes 4, 5, & 6, unscented baby wipes, & Cereal (No oatmeal).

2024 Worship Bulletin Recognition: Please sponsor a Sunday bulletin in memory or honor of a loved one or a special occasion. Fill out the white form in the narthex & drop it to off in the office. Include a check for \$20. You will be notified if the date is not available.

Feeling Ill: you have the option to watch our Sunday service from home at www.facebook.com/firstbaptistbeloit

Need to stop by the church office? We'd love to see you, just give us a call 365-8455

Calendar

Thursday	April 25	6:00 pm	Bible Study
		7:00 pm	Choir Practice
Saturday	April 27	8:00 am	Spring Clean-Up
Sunday	April 28	9:30 am	Fifth Sunday After Easter Sunday
		10:45 am	Coffee Hour