

## First Baptist Regina Weekly News

*For the Week of April 11th, 2021*

### Stories from the realm of the dead

I'm sure I've only read a tiny fraction of what has been said about life after death. Throughout history, there have been great adventure stories of lovers and heroes escaping the realm of the dead. In other stories, courageous and virtuous heroes are snatched up to feast in heavenly halls. In still others, the dead live on around us, benevolent or malevolent, in nature, in memories or hearts, or in reincarnation.

In Hebrew poetry, throughout the scriptures, there are also descriptions of people escaping death. To some, it was simply metaphor, a poetic cry for help in a life-threatening situation. Others believe it was a "poet-prophet" giving their people hope that better times were coming.

To pick one example from many, Ezekiel 37:12-14 says, "Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord."

Is it metaphor, or something more? Is Ezekiel simply trying to encourage Jewish exiles that one day, Jerusalem and Judah would be rebuilt? Or was he also describing a literal resurrection? This is an old debate. We have to choose what we will believe.

Since the resurrection of Jesus, orthodox Christianity has confessed that the Hebrew poet-prophets dreamed that, one day, God would restore the dead to life in a new transformed body – first Jesus, and then one day, the rest of humanity. Now, as then, resurrection is hard to believe. People today, including believers, are just as skeptical about resurrection as the Sadducees or the Greeks of Athens



were in the time of the Apostles. The words Christians often use for comfort at funerals suggest that resurrection continues to be strange and hard to believe: "They are in a better place now... they'll live on in our memories..." Not entirely false, but still short of the wild and stunning claim that one day, the dead will rise to life, and that all that was lost will one day be restored.

With love,



Pastor Joel

## Annual Missions Virtual Luncheon and Fundraiser – April 18th

Join us next Sunday, April 18th, for our annual missions fundraiser in support of our partnership with Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM), the Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development, and the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS). Our CBM global field worker, Dr. Emad Botros, will be speaking in the morning service and answering your questions afterwards, at our virtual luncheon.



Emad is an assistant professor at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS). He and his family are our missions partners in Lebanon. The family hosted members of First Baptist Regina during the [SENT team's visit to Lebanon](#) in June, 2019.

Find out more about how COVID-19 has affected the work happening in Lebanon, the shift to distance education at the ABTS, as well as the ongoing impact of the Beirut explosion (August, 2020) on the city and country. Please send your questions for Dr. Botros to [Pastor Joel](#) by Thursday, April 15th. We will also be showing some pictures from the SENT team's trip to Lebanon. Find out more on [our website](#).

You will also find some Lebanese recipes on our website to help celebrate our luncheon!

### New Learning for Life Series

On Sunday, April 11th, Eric Warren began leading a new series: "The Mysterious Plan for Everything." Within the first few verses of Ephesians, Paul shares God's grand plan for everything: *"God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ...And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth."* Ephesians 1:9-10 (NLT2). Frank E. Gaebelein comments: "Rather than a doctrinal lecture...the letter reads as an inspirational sermon and prayer."

This five week series samples Ephesian's "drone's eye" view of the plan by addressing three questions:

1. What is God's ultimate plan for Humanity and the Cosmos?
2. What is His universal plan for the Church?
3. What is His unique plan for individual Christians?

Paul assures us this plan will be accomplished by the same power that raised Christ from the dead. In the midst of the uncertainty fostered by the Pandemic, this timeless letter reassuringly reveals and reminds us of our inclusion in this unfolding cosmic plan. See [our website](#) for more information. [Join Learning for Life](#).

## Website Update

Our church website will be going through a makeover near the end of April. The current website no longer supports updates to the underlying platform, which leaves us vulnerable to security issues and unable to implement certain updates.

The website will remain at the same address ([firstbaptistregina.ca](http://firstbaptistregina.ca)), but will look somewhat different. We have attempted to maintain an appearance that reflects the traditional aspects of our church, while at the same time, simplifying pages and improving site navigation.

We ask for your patience as the change takes place and all the bugs are worked out.

## Achievers' Virtual Luncheon

The April Achievers' Luncheon will be Thursday, April 22nd, at 12:00 noon, over Zoom. If you are 55 years or older, you are warmly invited to join us. Our guest speaker will be Jeff Sotropa, who will share both his music and reflections on his life journey.

Jeff is the son of Vic and Irene Sotropa, and grew up in Regina. Having moved out to BC, he has spent most of the past 20 years living near Kimberley. Jeff has worked in communications, marketing, graphic design and writing for most of his career. He is currently expanding his vocational pursuits more deeply into music, and is studying composition and film scoring. He will talk about the twists and turns of his life and how these have shaped who he is and how he approaches each day.

For full details, visit the [church website](#). Please RSVP as soon as possible by emailing [the church](#) or calling (306) 359-1450, ext. 223 or ext. 221. Questions? Please contact [Pastor John](#). To join the luncheon, click here: [Join Achievers' Luncheon](#). Following this luncheon, the Achievers' Luncheon will take a break over the summer.



*It's been awhile since we've had a good pun or two...or should I say "bad?"*

Dad #1: I caught my son chewing on electrical cords, so I had to ground him.

He's currently doing better.

And conducting himself properly.

Dad #2: That's shocking! I like how you handled the negative situation positively—I probably would have bolted him into his room. Make sure he's shielded and move those wires to a secure place. He could have tripped!

## AGM Report

Our congregation met for its Annual General Meeting on Sunday, March 21, 2021, following the morning worship service. This was the second consecutive year in which we met largely via Zoom, with only a few people present in the sanctuary. As is our custom, we began by reading our church Covenant, reminding us afresh, and committing us afresh, to being a particular kind of people under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Board chair Ron Phillips advised the congregation that a “Music Futures” committee is being formed, with a two-fold task: To oversee an intentional interim period beginning this fall, and to lead the congregation in forming a vision for music ministry in the coming new chapter in the church’s life, following Pastor John’s retirement.

Our treasurer, Kevin Rich, reported on our 2020 finances, and moved the acceptance of the auditor’s report. We are grateful to God for the resources to do ministry and to maintain our beautiful building. We have received a rich heritage of being Jesus’ people in the heart of Regina, and we wish to be faithful in our day, and to pass on this heritage to future generations.

Bryan Orthner, our new Missions Commission chair, gave a brief overview of the commission’s work, including our ongoing commitment to our partnership with the work in Lebanon. This was followed by brief reports from three associate pastors: Richard, Kayely, and Chris. For more details, please see our Annual Report, which is available on the church website. Copies are also available in the sanctuary. If you would like to receive a paper copy, please call the church at (306) 359-1450, or send an [email to the church](#).

Pastor Joel concluded the meeting with some reflections on the need for patience in the life of faith and ministry. Fruit will come, as we tend the garden of our lives and our life together as a church, for God is faithful.

We’re getting better at meeting together via Zoom, and there was considerable participation and interaction in the meeting. But how we long for the day when we can all be together in one place! Yet we trust the sovereignty and the providence of God, in Covid-19 and in all things. May we be faithful in the times and the place in which God has placed us. To God be the glory.

—Ron Phillips, Chair of the Diaconate

## What's happening at First?

### Morning Prayer

Join us each morning, Monday to Thursday at 7:15 am to begin your day with scripture and prayer, via Zoom. Visit our [website](#) for the link.

### Children

Our children's program is online at this time. For more information, contact [Pastor Kayely](#).

### Youth (In case you missed it last week)

Pastor Chris: "At our March 26th meeting, we played a game called, "Would You Rather," Easter edition. In this game, the youth are presented with two options. First they need to explain which option they would choose, and then justify that choice. An example is "Would you rather have a bunny tail for a month, or rabbit ears for a week?"

For our devotional time, we watched a video by Brad Jersak that focused on Easter and the cross. In the video, Brad discusses two different metaphors of the Gospel; one where God rejects us because of our sin, and the other where God always pursues us in spite of our sin. While both versions of the Gospel focus on the centrality of Christ and his sacrifice on the cross, the second version reminds us that we can always turn towards our loving Father, no matter what. We will take a break for Easter, but are hopeful that as the spring weather turns warmer we might be able to get outside and see one another face to face. For more information, contact [Pastor Chris](#).

### Adults

**Learning for Life:** A new series began on April 11th. See page 2 for details.

**Voice:** A small group for women who like to read and enjoy lively conversation. The group meets every second Wednesday from 7 to 9 pm, using Zoom. For more information, visit [our website](#), email [the church](#), or contact Lauren S or Bonnie AW.

**Reading through the Old Testament:** In this online reading group, participants are reading through the Old Testament chronologically. The group meets every Thursday at 10:30 am, via Zoom. For more information, please visit [our website](#) or contact [Pastor Joel](#).

**Gospel of John small group study:** There are two groups meeting online, via Zoom. The first group meets on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 7 pm, and the second, on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month at 10 am. For more information, please visit [our website](#) or contact [Pastor Joel](#).

## The Resurrection from the Dead

Pastor Joel's sermon from Sunday, April 4th, 2021 (A summary—to hear the whole sermon, dial (306) 992-1912.)

Scripture: Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118; Mark 16:1-8

What is the greatest comfort we can receive when someone is taken from us or something that we care about is ruined?

Is the best comfort a promise that one day, we will be compensated with pleasures that will help us to forget the pain we feel at this moment?

Is it better to be told that we shouldn't have cared so much about anything in this world?

Or is the better promise that what was lost will be restored and transformed?

This is the resurrection of Jesus.

Instead of raising Jesus from the dead, God could have said to Jesus' friends: "Don't be sad about Jesus dying. Jesus is in a better place. There is no more suffering. Be happy for him. He is living in paradise."

God could have said: "Don't be sad about Jesus' death. Life on earth doesn't really matter, your body doesn't really matter. In fact, people are too attached to this world and to physical things. Physical life just gets in the way of what really matters."

But God didn't say anything like that.

God gave Jesus his body back, brand new, transformed. God gave Jesus back, alive, to his friends. God gave Jesus back, alive, to this world.

What does a Christian say about losing a year to Covid-19, to the pandemic, to the restrictions? We could say: "It doesn't matter because this world doesn't matter, this physical world isn't really all that important. What really matters is the spiritual world and going to heaven when we die." In fact, some might say, "If I'm upset now, it shows that I care too much about this world and not enough about God."

Or we could say that this suffering doesn't matter because heaven is going to be full of so much pleasure that we'll forget how bad things were sometimes in this life.

No. Neither of these comforts convey the fullness of the power of the resurrection. The Christian can say: "I have lost a year of my life, but I believe in the resurrection, a great day of restoration of all that has been lost. I don't have to dismiss the value of my life, or my body, or this world. I don't have to long to escape to some other place. I can love this world and seek to serve God within it."

Even if all my efforts come to nothing, even if I lose everything that I've gained or accomplished, I persevere because of the resurrection. I grieve in this world because the loss is real, and matters. I grieve, but not without hope.

The resurrection is God's promise of a coming day of restoration to those who have died young, those who have been murdered, those who have spent decades locked away in prison on false charges, all those who have lost years to grief, illness, famine, or war, all who've lost their mobility, those with chronic pain, or those struggling with depression, PTSD, or anxiety.

The resurrection is why I know I ought to choose to pick up the garbage in my neighbourhood, even though someone's going to dump more garbage on the streets again that night. The resurrection is why I know I ought to choose to plant flowers and trees, even though someone might come and rip them up or destroy them. The resurrection is why I know I ought to give without being sure it will be recognized or successful.

In this world, every deed, every word given in Jesus' name is a seed that we plant in the ground. In this world, it is planted a perishable seed, and it dies. In the resurrection, it emerges imperishable.

In this world, we sow our love and our labour with tears. But in the resurrection, we will reap with joy. The resurrection is the restoration of life when God gathers all times together.

The end of Mark's gospel stands out, it is abrupt and strange: The women said nothing because they were afraid. (See Mark 16:8.) Some versions have more verses added here, but as far as we know, Mark's gospel originally ended with the women in terror and silence. I think the silence of the women is powerful and appropriate.

When you read Mark all the way through to the resurrection, when you get to those final eight verses, it is shocking. Nothing prepares you for what happens. It makes no sense. Resurrections do not happen in the normal course of life. In the faithful women who came to the tomb, we see the most honest, human reaction: Stunned silence. Awe. Confusion. Bewilderment. Stupefaction. Terror.

When it comes to the resurrection, we leave behind all human reasoning, all human wisdom, all cause and effect. This is a unique moment in history, a true first. What can be said about it except that it happened?

Some human religions teach that we go to a paradise when we die. Some teach that we are spirits in a material world. But God raised Jesus bodily from the dead: Jesus first and then, one day, everyone else will rise.

It is as Isaiah wrote:

“The Lord will swallow up death forever.  
Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
It will be said on that day,  
‘Lo, this is our God; we have waited for God, so that God might save us.  
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.’”

And in Revelation, John says:

“I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven  
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,  
‘See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them;  
God will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more’”

And the prophet, Joel says:

“O children of Zion, be glad  
and rejoice in the Lord your God;  
The threshing floors shall be full of grain,  
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.  
I will repay you for all the years you lost.”

Therefore, with the Psalmist we say, “My heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”

Thanks be to our God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.



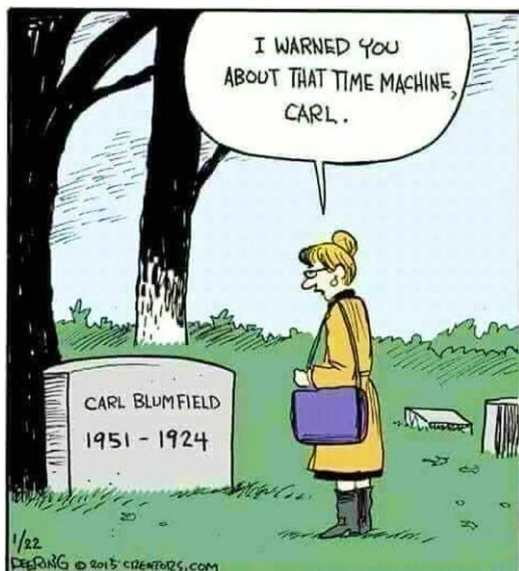
## Tithing during the pandemic

With the COVID-19 crisis limiting contact with others and restricting meetings of groups, please do not neglect the financial needs of our church.

We have several ways to provide your regular tithes and donations to the church:

1. Mail your gifts to the church or call and leave a message at (306) 359-1450 to arrange for an in-person pick-up. Please place your cheque in your regular offering envelope (or any envelope marked "Offering"), and seal that inside another envelope addressed to: First Baptist Church, 2241 Victoria Ave, Regina, SK S4P 0S4.
2. Establish a **Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR) Plan**. This will automatically transfer funds from your account into the FBC Regina account on a regular basis. Please email the church or contact the Treasurer if you would like to set up PAR, or change your commitment.
3. Make an online donation:
  - Use **Interac e-Transfer** to donate from your phone or computer to [FBCRegina@gmail.com](mailto:FBCRegina@gmail.com) (*no fee or cost to the church*)
  - Use a credit card with a PayPal account via the **PayPal Giving Fund** (*no fee or cost to the church... 100% of your donation reaches us and contributes to our mission*)
  - Use a credit card or PayPal via **CanadaHelps** (*a fee of 4% is deducted from the donation*)
  - Use a credit or debit card via **FBC ChurchTrac** (*the church is charged a fee of approximately 3% for each donation*)

**PLEASE** refer to our website at [firstbaptistregina.ca](http://firstbaptistregina.ca) for more specific information on these contribution methods. You may also contact the treasurer at (306) 775-1497 or email the church at [main\\_fbcregina@sasktel.net](mailto:main_fbcregina@sasktel.net) for further details.



When my wife told me to stop impersonating a flamingo...I had to put my foot down.

A man walked into a hardware store and picked up a can of fly spray.

"Is this good for wasps," he asked the assistant. To this she replied, "No, it kills them."

An officer pulled me over and said, "Papers." I yelled "Scissors" and drove off.

Q. Why don't dinosaurs make good pets?

A. Because they're dead.