

JANUARY 6, 2021



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# Happy New Year

from the staff at FBCNN to you!

## Change in Worship Services!

Worship services will be online only through January 31.

The church office will also be closed January 6-8. Staff members may be available by email, and you may contact the church office by email at [nikki@fbcnn.org](mailto:nikki@fbcnn.org).

## 2021: Perseverance, Promise, and Possibility

Happy 2021, FBCNN family! As I reflect and pray over this new year, I keep coming back to three words: Perseverance, Promise, and Possibility. Maybe I will call these our FBCNN PPP plan as opposed to the Paycheck Protection Program rolled out by congress in late March as part of its COVID 19 relief package.

I want to challenge you to begin 2021 with a **spirit of perseverance**. When I think of the word "perseverance," my mind conjures up a fusion of patience and endurance. Perseverance means we endure our circumstances with a loving patience that portrays the character of Christ. We have seen this week in our church the need for ongoing perseverance in the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic. We have staff members that have been exposed, church members who have family members, friends, and neighbors who tested positive, and we have teachers, first responders, and medical responders in our church who are on

the front lines of serving and caring for persons affected by this virus. All of this impacts how we gather, worship and serve as a church. So, friends, let's commit right now, at the beginning of 2021, that we will be patient with one another, that we will persevere in enduring this pandemic together as one church family. After all Paul tells us in his poem of love in 1 Corinthians: "*Love is patient...It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*"

I want to challenge you to begin 2021 **remembering the promises of God**. In the earliest edition of the New International Version of the Bible, we read this translation of Psalm 145:13b:

*The Lord is faithful to all His promises  
And loving toward all He has made.*

God's promises for humankind and creation have not changed due to COVID 19, the outcome of an election, or the current state of your life. True, all of us need to get back to the Bible and truly read, in context, God's promises and purpose for our world. After all, we are prone to substituting our preferences for God's promises. So, let's challenge one another to read and hold on to the promises of God we find in scripture, promises like "*I will never leave you or forsake you, See, I am making all things new, and Call to Me and I will answer you and I will tell you great and mighty things that you do not know.*"

The promises of God for you and all creation fill the pages of the Bible. Live in God's promises in 2021. Rest in them. Memorize them. Pray them. Then, spend your energy making God's promises into reality.

Finally, I challenge you to **embrace 2021 as the year of possibility**. Perhaps, like me, you have noticed that everywhere you turn, people are telling you how bad things are right now. Whether it is the news, social media, or conversations with neighbors, church members, family, and friends, we struggle to avoid complaint, finger-pointing, and fear of the future. How many moments of God-given possibility do we miss because we focus on failures, negativity, complaint, bad news, and fear? What if we just stopped? What if we started each morning with this promise from God: "*This is the day the Lord has made...*" What if we responded to the gift of each new day from God with the desire to see the day and every person in it through the eyes of God. Yes, 2021 will have its days of

hardship that require Holy Spirit-fueled perseverance, but even in the midst of days and weeks of hardship, we find possibilities for transformation.

Decades ago during his presidential campaign, John Kennedy often noted that the Chinese word for crisis actually contained two characters. The first character meant "threat," while the second character denoted "opportunity." While the etymological grounding of Kennedy's assertion was exaggerated, his illustration caught the public's attention. In fact, it is often used by consultants in a variety of industries. The reason? Our experience has taught us its truth: in the midst of our greatest times of crisis and change is where we discover our deepest possibilities and opportunities. So, friends, in 2021, let's embrace the possibilities for our church family as we live into God's mission. After all, we have just celebrated Advent, the season of God bringing ultimate possibility out of the impossible:

*"For nothing is impossible with God."*

It is a privilege to be your pastor in this year of Perseverance, Promise, and Possibility!

Randy

## **PORT**

Thank you to those who volunteered and those who prayed as FBCNN hosted PORT December 30-January 6. A special thank you goes to our coordinators, Linsey Wyne and Crystal Howser!

If you missed out on this opportunity to serve, there are still opportunities to prepare and serve dinner and provide breakfast in a bag. Meals will be prepared and served at Temple Baptist on Harpersville Road. You or your group can sign up by using one of the links below.

[January 14-31, 2021](#)

[February 2021](#)

[March 2021](#)

## **Mary Merritt Announces Retirement**

Mary Merritt, the Director of Children's Music at FBCNN, has announced her retirement, effective January 1, 2021. Mary has served as our Director of Children's Music for over 37 years. During this time, Mary has shaped the lives of countless children and their families. She awakened a love for music and spurred on children and adults in learning to follow Jesus. Not only did Mary teach music to children, her enthusiasm and energy made music and praising the Lord fun!

Countless individuals have been influenced by Mary's selfless work through the Children's Music program at FBCNN, her time as a music teacher in the Newport News public schools, and through leading conferences across the United States that trained hundreds of music leaders. Lesley Spitzer, our FBCNN Worship Coordinator, is one of many music educators that benefited from Mary's wealth of knowledge she shared freely as an elementary music teacher. In addition, two other ministers on our church staff, Michael Adams and Susie Webb, participated in the FBCNN Children's Music program under Mary's leadership. Furthermore, Susie represents the trend of multi-generational Mary Merritt influence, since Susie's children also sang in the FBCNN Children's Music program under Mary's tutelage. For over 37 years, Mary has loved the children and families of our church with unselfish service and boundless passion while also inspiring scores of musicians and music educators throughout our region.

All of you who know Mary know that retirement will not slow her down! She will continue her faithful service as a leader in our Compassion Ministry, serving, teaching, and loving our older adults, and investing herself in caring for her family and anyone the Lord sends her way.

Our Personnel Committee, Music Ministry, and Children's Ministry are looking forward to an appropriate way to honor Mary and celebrate her retirement. We want church members, friends, and especially the children and families Mary's life and ministry has touched to have the opportunity to thank her in person. The middle of a pandemic, especially in the winter, however, is not the best or safest time for this celebration so we will look forward to hosting a commemoration for Mary, depending on the pandemic, later in 2021. For now, please join our church staff and Personnel Committee in extending Mary a huge thank you and best wishes in her retirement: "Well done, good and faithful servant of the Lord!"

## Weekly Worship Opportunities

Join us for **worship online** January 10 at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.! Randy Shepley will be preaching. We will be observing the Lord's Supper, so have your communion elements ready. If you have any technical difficulties watching the services on Facebook Live, please send us a direct message on Facebook so we can help troubleshoot the issue.

The following is a list of weekly events that can be accessed on the First Baptist Church of Newport News Facebook page, youth events that can be accessed on their Instagram page-@fbcnnyouth, and young adult events that meet using Microsoft Teams. (The 10:30 Sunday worship service will also be uploaded to the website, [fbcnn.org](http://fbcnn.org), each Monday, and can be accessed by clicking on the Resources tab.)

- **Sundays:** 8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship Service  
9:30 a.m. Youth Sunday Bible Study  
9:30 a.m. Children's Sunday School Grades 1-5  
10:00 a.m. Preschool & Kindergarten  
Sunday School
- 10:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship Service
- 12:30 p.m. Hispanic Worship
- **Mondays:** 7:30 p.m. The Bridge Young Adults
- **Tuesdays:** 8:00 p.m. Young Adult Couples

### [FBCNN Facebook Live Videos](#)

If you missed Sunday's service and do not have a Facebook account, you can click [here for 8:30](#) or [here for 10:30](#) to watch it on our Vimeo page.

## Staff Contact Info

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