

# Falls Fellowship



## The Pandemic and Falls

**T**o talk about the pandemic changing our lives and altering our patterns of behavior sounds like the proverbial “broken record.” Nevertheless, it needs to be repeated that we are dealing with a new reality. For example, the pandemic has altered the way we do church. We, for a while, did not meet at the church and recorded a service each week and posted it to social media. I remember Kevin, Frank, and Daniel getting together with me each week to record the service. Now we are back in the building on a limited basis for abbreviated Sunday School and worship. We continue to be the church in our community even under difficult circumstances. Let me share with you the evidence for that.

One, we continue to do missions. Missions is still active at our

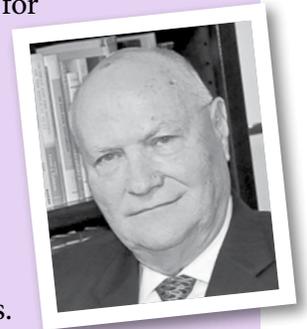
church. Consider our giving to missions as an example. We supported missions in 2020 through money sent to the Baptist State Convention, the Raleigh Baptist Association, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, North Carolina Baptist Men, the Lottie Moon offering for foreign missions, the Annie Armstrong offering for missions in North America, the North Carolina Missions offering, the Wycliffe Ministry, the Heck Jones Offering (WMU) the work of the Gideons, and the Baptist Children’s Home. In addition to sending money to the Children’s Homes, we had a very successful food drive for the Children’s homes. We did not forget local missions, either. We provided gifts for a family at Christmas. We assisted several families with food

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## Forsaking Your First Love

**T**he Apostle John opens the Book of Revelation in the New Testament with personal letters from Christ for

the seven churches of Asia. He had a special word of warning for most of the churches.



For example, Christ told the church at Ephesus, “Remember the height from which you have fallen.” He introduced that thought by saying, “You have forsaken your first love” (Rev. 2:4).

Forsaking your first love. That happens in marriages. A couple is in the pastor’s office seeking his counsel. Their marriage is fading away; even now it is only a shadow of what it once was. When asked by the pastor to tell him about their marriage, one speaks up and says, “I don’t love him/her like I once did.” Forsaking the first love.

*See First Love on page 4*



*Our own River Strings performing When We All Get To Heaven.*

When trouble comes to our church families, we are there.

To paraphrase Paul's word to the Philippians, "I thank God for you." The pandemic has changed the way we do church, but it has not closed our doors or diminished our missions focus and ministries. The year 2021 will continue to challenge us to be the church of Jesus Christ. We will continue as the church; we will move forward in missions and ministry; we will find new and different ways to be the church; we will continue to struggle with the meaning of finding Christ in each other and loving each other as Christ loves us.

— Tom Jenkins

## ***Pandemic cont' ...***

cards. Our Proverbs 17:22 mission ministry continued in the midst of the pandemic.

Two, our people were faithful with their tithes and offerings in 2020. Our income for the year was \$132,226.65 (the 2020 budget was \$133,050.00). I am humbled by your continued support for our church.

Three, we continue to expand our ministries. The River Strings sang *When We All Get to Heaven* Sunday morning. Sunday afternoon I thought about the blessing they brought to the service Sunday and remember the group has been together for hardly more than a year and in that time, they have become a vibrant part of our music ministry.

Four, we continue to care for each other. When church members need us, we are there. When troubles come to church members, we gather around them with help and prayers. We have received special offerings for church members who faced crises in their lives.

## **Please pick up 2021 Offering Envelopes**

Members should pick up their offering envelope boxes in the vestibule if you have not already done so. Please see Kevin Barham if you have any questions.

### **February Birthdays**

- |    |                   |
|----|-------------------|
| 13 | Francine Leclercq |
| 23 | Joan Barham       |
| 24 | Woody Leonard     |
| 25 | Zoe Davis         |
| 27 | Mike Leclercq     |
| 27 | Pat Nowak         |





## Worship Precautions During February

The church is taking several precautions to make attendance as safe as possible during this Covid-19 pandemic. Even though we are not aware of anyone in our congregation who has the virus, we are aware you could have the virus and be without symptoms. Therefore, we are requesting that all follow these guidelines:

1. If you are ill, please do not attend until all your symptoms have disappeared.
2. Maintain six-foot social distance except for family members living in the same household.
3. Use furnished hand sanitizer or wipes as you enter the church.
4. Pew Bibles and hymnals have been removed. Order of service and hymns will appear in your individual program bulletin.
5. Use your own face mask if you desire or disposal masks will be available for those wishing to use them.
6. Pews will be cleaned before and after each service.
7. Boxes to receive tithes and offerings are placed at the doors so we do not have to handle offering plates.

Some members fall into the category of having underlying conditions which make them uncomfortable to be in groups. We understand they may not be willing to attend now. Hopefully, this pandemic will soon pass and we can truly get back to normal worship services. During the month of February Wednesday Bible study will continue on Zoom.

— Linwood Barham

## Sunday School Resumes!

Sunday School at Falls Baptist Church resumed on Sunday, December 6 at 10:15 AM. We have two classes, Senior Adults will meet in the sanctuary, and Middle and Older Adults will meet jointly downstairs in the fellowship hall.

Social distancing will be practiced with the classes lasting about 20-25 minutes.

We are still looking for volunteers to lead children's programs so we can reach out and have some attendance by children.



## Newsletter articles needed

We have had a newsletter each month for the past three years.

But, we need news and articles from all of our committees to let everyone know what you are doing and when you are doing it.

Communication is very important, so send your news and articles to Frank at [fbpowell@mac.com](mailto:fbpowell@mac.com)

Thanks!

## Deacons

Linwood Barham, Chairman	919-418-1162
Frank Powell, Vice Chairman	919-604-1285
Kevin Barham, Secretary	919-618-4214
Hubert Jenks	919-270-8765
Alan Watkins	919-793-5548
Mike Harris	919-746-5697

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## *First Love continued ...*

Forsaking your first love. That happens in churches. A church member stops attending church. The pastor visits and after the absent church member gives a long litany of why he/she no longer attends church — people are no longer friendly there, someone hurt his feelings, the church voted against what he wanted — the truth finally comes out: “I just don’t love the church like I once did.”

Now here is the thing: not loving the church like you once did is not deadly. But one thing leads to another and not loving the church like you once did can lead to not loving Christ like you once did.

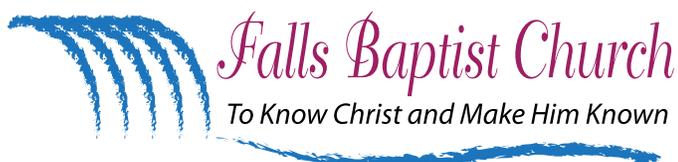
When I was a child, guest preachers would come to various churches in our small town for revivals. A favorite sermon topic was what they called “backsliding”. I did not know what that meant but they made it sound like a terrible thing. The backslider was pictured forsaking church and Christ. I saw an illustration on the *Saturday Evening Post* which was painted by Norman Rockwell. It showed a man sitting in his easy chair in his pajamas and robe with the Sunday newspaper in his hands. Parading to his side in a straight line were his wife and children all dressed in their Sunday best on their way to church, each of them looking at him

as though he were contemptible. I decided, “That man must be a backslider.” I would pray God would keep me from being a backslider even though I did not know exactly what it meant.

As I grew older, I began to think what the preachers were talking about with their horrible description of the backslider was the person who had lost his first love for the Lord, like the church members in the church at Ephesus Christ were talking about. It did not happen all at once but over time. Gradually they slipped away from Christ and his church. There is a Greek word used for sin which comes from the nautical world. It describes a boat tied up but not securely. As the tide recedes, gently but ever so surely it pulls the boat out to sea. Suddenly it is free and gradually slips out to sea. I think that is what happens in losing our first love; we do not intentionally decide to lose our first love; it gradually happens. We wake one Sunday morning and what we have been feeling is planted in our minds: “What is the use of going to church? I will just miss today.” And one Sunday becomes two, three ... and surprise, surprise, God does not strike us down with a bolt of lightning. So, we think, “Maybe all of that stuff I’ve been taught is questionable.” Attending church slips out of our consciousness and soon we do not feel a shred of guilt about the whole matter.

**Have you lost your first love?**

— Tom Jenkins



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