

# The Bright and Morning Star

Volume XXXI

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, TARRYTOWN, NY

Spring 2023

## Writing the Next Chapter

by Pastor Nathan J. Norman

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I wrote my first novel in my bedroom at my parent’s house in Wallkill, NY when I was 16. A story was inside of me, and I needed to get it out. So, I committed to write at least a page a day. Initially, the hardest part of writing is starting. I would procrastinate and fill my time with chores. But once I started writing, I usually wrote far beyond my one-page goal.

The next chapter in First Baptist Church of Tarrytown is about to begin, but putting the pen to paper is similarly hard. What kind of outreach will be effective? What kind of evangelism methods will the congregation be willing to do? What are the gifts and talents of the church? Who needs to be using their talents in the church? What can we improve in the church? How can we best fulfill the Great Commission? How do my talents, and my family’s talents, fit into the congregation?

My wife Kristin and I have been married for fifteen years. We met back in 2003 at SUNY New Paltz and were married in 2007 in Staten Island. Right after the wedding, we moved to Southern California where I was working on my Masters of Divinity at Talbot School of Theology (Biola) and served as a youth pastor in a large church. Kristin has been an elementary school teacher for most of our time together, earning her master’s degree while simultaneously teaching first grade.

We moved to Northern Michigan in 2011 to accept a calling to be the Senior Pastor at The

Orchard Church. We loved that church. There, we got to see God spiritually and numerically grow the congregation as we served the community around us. Our family grew in Michigan and God blessed us with our children, Marlee (5th grade), Matthew (3rd grade), and Samuel (still learning how to sleep through the night).



Despite our love for our church in Michigan, Kristin and I had an overwhelming sense of God calling us in another direction. I became aware of FBC Tarrytown because of my involvement with CrossTalk Global. I am an instructor with the organization and also host a

podcast with Vicki Hitzges, Pastor Torrey Robinson’s sister.

After a robust, thorough, and lengthy candidating process, our family made the move to New York (land of great pizza, bagels, and Chinese food)!

I’m six weeks into the position and we’re getting ready to put pen to paper. But we’re not doing it alone. As I’ve written stories over the years I’ve learned that oftentimes the best stories are ones told in collaboration with others: editors, narrators, beta readers, co-authors, friends, and family.

The story of First Baptist Church of Tarrytown is already a long book. And as our history has shown, almost everything worthwhile in this life is done in collaboration with others.

We are writing the next chapter together. Let’s begin.★

## Our Trip to Guatemala

By Lynn Lange

I don't know about you, but I am quite accustomed to my creature comforts. I don't take them for granted but I do love them: a hot shower, a comfy bed, air conditioning in the summer & heat in the winter, a refrigerator full of food and plenty of appliances and gadgets to simplify my life. Without them, I'd be pretty cranky, but I don't think it would rob me of my contentment or joy.

However, what if I lived in a makeshift shelter without furniture, running water, heat, plumbing, a refrigerator or even a door to lock for safety? What if I wasn't sure if I would have enough food to feed my children? What if I tried my hardest to find work but, because I was unable to get a sufficient education as a child, my job prospects were slim? What if the odds in life were clearly stacked against me? Would I still be content? Would I still experience joy? I haven't been in that position, so I can't say for sure. But I have a strong suspicion that the answer would be a resounding "no".

During our time volunteering at El Amor de Patricia in Guatemala, we met many people who live in extreme poverty. For the residents of the Mayan village of Yalu, the conditions described above are their reality. Yet, we saw a contentment and joy in them that clearly wasn't dependent on their circumstances. When I discussed this with El Amor's director, she told me that for many Yalu residents, their Christian faith sustains them and lifts them up. They find joy in God for who He is and for the gift of Christ.

Many of us are familiar with Paul learning to be content

in all circumstances. In his letter to the Philippians he states, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4: 12-13, NIV)

I've always been able to shrug these verses off a bit because Paul's experiences never resonated with me. He had an extraordinary conversion, he lived in a different time under different circumstances. I'm just not a "Paul". So, sure...I read the verses but didn't really feel encouraged or convicted by them. However, meeting these wonderful people in Yalu was different. We met moms and dads who love their children fiercely and work tirelessly to provide for them. Families who enjoy being together. Friends and neighbors who take care of each other and work for the betterment of their community. Real, relatable people.

The challenges they face are ones most of us likely never will. Yet they have joy and contentment that belies their circumstances. That resonated with me and challenged me. I have so much more than them, yet am I always content? Does my faith always sustain me in times of trial because Christ alone is sufficient?

My prayer for each of us is that we may follow the example of our Christian brothers and sisters in Yalu; resting and rejoicing in Him in a way that enables us to experience joy and contentment in all circumstances.★

They find joy in God for who He is and for the gift of Christ.

### A Transition Success

by Olga Seda

We welcome the Normans to the family  
Of First Baptist Church of Tarrytown  
Pastor Nathan, his wife Kristin and children  
From Michigan to New York they came down.

We gladly join them with open arms  
To work in unison according to God's plan  
Each using our given talent to do the task  
Which God had prepared for us in advance.

As ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ  
We all have a crucial role to play  
Let us say to Him, "Here am I Lord"  
With an earnest desire to serve and obey.

Though we must anticipate challenges ahead  
There is nothing that we need to fear  
For God goes ahead of us leading the way  
Because He is in control we can persevere.

We acknowledge the Morton family  
And all who collaborated with dedication  
Working hard to make the transition a success  
We give them a big standing ovation.★

### Spring Seniors Luncheon

by Christina

Long-time friends and new friendships in the making were abundant at the return of the FBC Tarrytown Seniors Luncheon this May 22, 2023. The first Seniors Luncheon to be held at FBC since the COVID-19 pandemic, the event attracted a full parking lot of attendees. Even by 11:30 AM, half an hour before the luncheon was scheduled to start, there was already a crowd.

Barbara Morton and her dedicated crew of helpers were prepared, cooking and serving up a delicious meal of shepherd's pie, salad, and carrot cake for the seniors. Pastor Nathan Norman was also in attendance, introducing himself to each table, and sharing an inspiring devotional with the group after dessert.

For more information about the Seniors Luncheon ministry at FBC, contact [Barbara@fbctarrytown.org](mailto:Barbara@fbctarrytown.org).



## Our Future is Still As Bright As The Promises of God

This is a reprint of an article written by our former Pastor Bruce Boria, published in *The Tarrytown*, Spring 1990, Vol. 3, No. 1

**M**erry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Would it be? It certainly was going to take some doing, for after spending an afternoon shopping, choosing the right presents, enjoying the sounds and energy of the holidays, I came home to a disaster. Our church, my church, was burning. The flames had already consumed the interior of the First Baptist Church and it would continue to burn and smolder for the next few days. The darkness hid the damage but it was apparent that the building was lost.

I had left for the mall around 1 p.m. My wife, Cindy, was busy preparing her part for our traditional family Christmas dinner. This year it was her responsibility to bake the desserts! With a counter top full of recipes, ingredients, pots and pans and three sets of little hands helping (?) as well as a wife engrossed in her work, I thought it was time to leave and finish my Christmas shopping. As I was leaving, suddenly a wave of compassion, mixed with a twinge of guilt, came over me. So I decided to stop and rent enough children's videos to cover a full afternoon. This way my wife could work undisturbed, guaranteeing a delicious finished product as well as her sanity. Driving back from the mall it was 5:15 pm. I couldn't wait to see her reaction to what I bought. However, as I traveled down Benedict Avenue I began to smell smoke. It grew more and more potent as I approached South Broadway. Suddenly I saw a police barricade. I had no idea what had taken place.

"What's going on!"

"The Church is on fire!"

"What Church?"

"The Baptist Church."

"The Baptist Church?!"

"Yeah, it's gone, been burning for hours!"

I thought of my wife and children as I ran up the block from Benedict Avenue. My home is next to the church. Everything was a blur as I made my way through the maze of hoses, firemen and neighbors. I found Cindy, overwhelmed, but alright. Her main concern, she said, was for me. She didn't know how I would react coming home and seeing the church destroyed. I embraced and quieted her. It was then that I felt a sense of peace. My family was safe, no one was injured. Now I could deal with the present tragedy.

The fire chiefs, Mr. Tucci, Mr. Garrison and Mr. Brown, proved themselves to be professional in the discharging of their duties and concerned and compassionate in their demeanor. They apprised me of the damage and promised to keep me informed. I wandered through the crowd, numb, only to be encouraged by the support and tenderness from the people of the Tarrytowns. This would continue throughout the night and into the week. From Mayor Pilla, the building inspector Richard Stein, our neighbors at Christ Church to my friends at Bella's and my neighbors, I was amazed by the outpouring of support. In one week we received over \$7,000 from new found friends in the Tarrytowns, not to mention volunteers such as Mr. John Walsh, a resident of Tarrytown and a respected structural engineer, who has volunteered his services to help us build the future. Already much as been accomplished.

Everyone has indeed helped us to remember that our future is as bright as the promises of God. I believe it is going to be a very Happy New Year.★

## The Womens Fall Retreat at Camp of the Woods

by Barbara Morton

**O**n a beautiful Fall day in October 2022 six women from FBC set off on an adventure

to Speculator, NY. Our destination was Camp of the Woods in upstate New York. It was clear from the beginning that God was with us, and we were doing just what He wanted us to do. We had fellowship with each other, walked around the grounds, enjoyed the beauty of the Adirondack Mountains,

delicious food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and went deep into God's word with Lysa TerKeurst.

We will be planning another trip this Fall, September 15, 16 and 17. There will be more information to follow soon.

Please consider coming along – the accommodations were clean and comfortable and the company was terrific.★



## # Twenty Eight

by Doug Morton

Pastor Torrey announced his retirement on November 7th of 2021. As FBC's 27th pastor, he served for 25 years and retired on June 12th of the following year. Just nine and a half months later, we welcome pastor Nathan to the pulpit. It is unusual for churches our size to find a new pastor so quickly. But, looking back, we see how God was directing our steps to bring us to where we are now.

So how did it happen? Well, it started with prayer, continued with prayer, and goes forward with prayer. I firmly believe God was at work to bring the Normans to us even before our prayers began. It was our prayers that brought us in line with God's pre-determined plan. Yes, we met with our association's regional Director for guidance and formed a Search Committee. We read how to books and online articles about conducting pastoral searches. We gathered data on our community and surveyed the church family. We formulated a profile of our church and constructed a job description. We posted the position on line and reviewed scores of resumes and applications. Dozens of online sermons were viewed. But when we got to the point of interviewing Nathan for the first time, it was becoming clear that God was moving to bring us together.

It is interesting to note that Nathan submitted his application just 12 days after Torrey's last day in his position. God was at work very early in this whole process. But we weren't ready. We had no way of knowing for sure at that time that Nathan was the candidate for us. But it became very clear at our February 5th special business meeting that this was God's plan. A week after the candidate weekend, a unanimous vote was cast to call Nathan Norman to be the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in Tarrytown. He humbly accepted the call.

Prayer is a mysterious thing. You see, God has His plan for our church. Prayer aligns us with that plan (Matthew 6:10). And when a church is aligned with God's plan, exciting things happen.

Let's continue to pray for God's direction as the 28th pastor in the 180-year history of this church joins us to carry out God's plan to share God's Love and Hope to transform Hearts, Homes, Westchester and the World with the gospel message of Christ. And may we continue to strive to be a community where God is at work, lives are changed, broken hearts are healed, hope becomes real and people are on fire for God and His Word.★

...it started with prayer, continued with prayer, and goes forward with prayer.

## Before He Formed Us In The Womb

by Olga Seda

When God sent Moses to speak to Pharaoh  
To free the Hebrew people from His hand  
He said to Him, "I'm not eloquent to speak"  
For he didn't feel fit for His demand.

Like Moses, we often tend to feel inadequate  
When God calls us to serve in His commission  
As if anything was too hard for Him to do  
He promised to help us on our mission.

God uses ordinary people like you and me  
To get His extraordinary work done  
He guides us by His Holy Spirit and His word  
When we have faith in Jesus Christ His Son.

Before He formed us in the womb He knew us  
He had planned what we were to do beforehand  
It was not by chance for it was predestined  
So we can build up His church hand in hand.

Be strong and courageous to do the work of God  
Without any fear for He will be with you  
Turn to Him any concern that you may have  
And by all means He will see you through.★



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Nathan J. Norman, Pastor

56 South Broadway, Tarrytown, NY 10591 • 914-631-6372

Worship Service: Sunday 10:30 am

Weekly Prayer Wednesdays @ 6:00 pm

*The Bright and Morning Star* is seeking contributions for the next issue on any topics of interest which glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please send articles to: *The Bright and Morning Star* newsletter at the address above.

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