

Allie,

Several years ago, I attended an annual meeting of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). During a lunch break I sat next to a group of pastors.

The conversation turned to discussions about the congregations we were serving.

I recall hearing: I've pastored at my church for almost 20 years. I love my church family, but it does take an emotional toll...I no longer bury acquaintances or relationships that are shallow...I facilitate funerals of congregants who are my dear friends. I've been part of the cycle of life for so many.

Allie, I'm far away from 20 years at Third; however, I'm navigating my 9th year. And I'm beginning to understand this pastor's reflection.

You passed away this evening, December 8th, at 7:40 p.m., and around two hours later, I decided to scrap my January Third Base pastor's article and write a letter to you.

Your last moment was a scene of heartbreaking beauty. You were surrounded by family, both your hands were clasped with love, and your hospital room was very quiet, as you took your final breaths (three hours after the ventilator was removed, you were a fighter to the end). The waiting room was full of friends and family consoling one another with presence and prayers.



Allie, when you passed I placed my hand on your forehead and (this is difficult to explain) I felt a mixture of profound sorrow and joy. The joy was one of thanksgiving, no more doctor visits, no more pain. And an assurance, knowing when taking your final breath, in a moment, the twinkling of an eye—you heard from the Father, *“well done, my good and faithful servant.”*

But Allie, there is profound sorrow in me, and a bit of irritation with God. It was my hope that God would write more chapters into your story, but your book was finished at age 49. Leslie Davis sent the photo above, taken only one month ago at your birthday celebration.

And don't be too upset, this is not blasphemy— the Psalms are full of people crying out to God: *Why? Why? Why?*

Allie, your passing is a reminder of life's brevity. All of us are dew in the morning: when the sun rises—it is gone. And you now join a great cloud of witnesses cheering us on to *run the good race, fight the good fight, keep the faith, and fix our eyes on Jesus.*

I've heard over and over this evening, "it's hard to believe she is gone."

~~

Allie, in some traditions people will gather in churches the day after Easter....and tell jokes. Why?

Because of God's "joke," or "trick" on death: that even while we grieve, because of Christ's death and resurrection you are alive...even more alive now than those who've been left behind. Paul reminds us: *the sting of death is removed.*

Dear one, I will always remember you and smile. And I'm determined to honor your memory by cultivating the fruits of the spirit, particularly toward those who are hungry, powerless, and oppressed.

~~

And as I teach and preach from Hebrews 12:1-3, I will always think of you, in this roll call of faithful servants.

~~

Well, it's about 10:45 p.m. I'm emailing this January article to Deanna, and off to pick up Colton. He has been concerned about you—one of many that you have influenced for good.

And I'll tell him of your passing in a few moments, and he'll react with sadness.

Alexandria Hamilton, I was honored to be written into your story for 8 and a half years, and a better person because you were written into mine.

The Psalms proclaim:

God is near to the broken hearted...

And hearts are broken tonight.

~~

Allie,

On the Wednesday before your passing, Memorial Chapel was full of Third members and guests—offering prayers, hope, and encouragement to families who've experienced loss and are now navigating the Christmas Season.

The hymn chosen to communicate hope was *O, Holy Night.*

As I was driving home after your passing, I thought of how this hymn applied to you:

O Holy Night! The stars are brightly shining, it is the night of our dear Savior's birth.

Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Til he appears and the soul felt its worth.

*A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, **for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!***

~

Tonight, you entered a new and glorious morn.

I do look forward to joyful reunions on that good and glorious day.

I'll miss you...'til we meet again.

Tommy



Family Ministries

Drew Phillips, Minister to Families

Christmas season is full of irony.

We know Advent is a journey. It's also the season where, despite the "hustle and bustle," we are most likely able to find some rest and take a break. We spend Advent waiting for the gift of the Christ Child's birth, but a little like the bike in the garage we know we will get on Christmas Day, we know the gift that we are waiting for.

A season in which so much energy is geared toward joy and celebration can also hold the hardest hitting grief and pain.

A season where we await the prince of peace who taught us sacrificial love is also the one that is our most rampantly materialistic.

And then we come to the new calendar year and Epiphany: another journey as we remember the magi meeting and gifting the Christ Child. Another journey to make.... isn't this life?

We follow a God who is on the move. And here we are hoping to keep up, remember, and ponder.

As we begin the new year, I am hopeful that God will continue to gift us with time with one another when we can encourage and challenge, listen and love, and journey together. Community is a gift, and our shared time together blesses the God we journey with and follow.

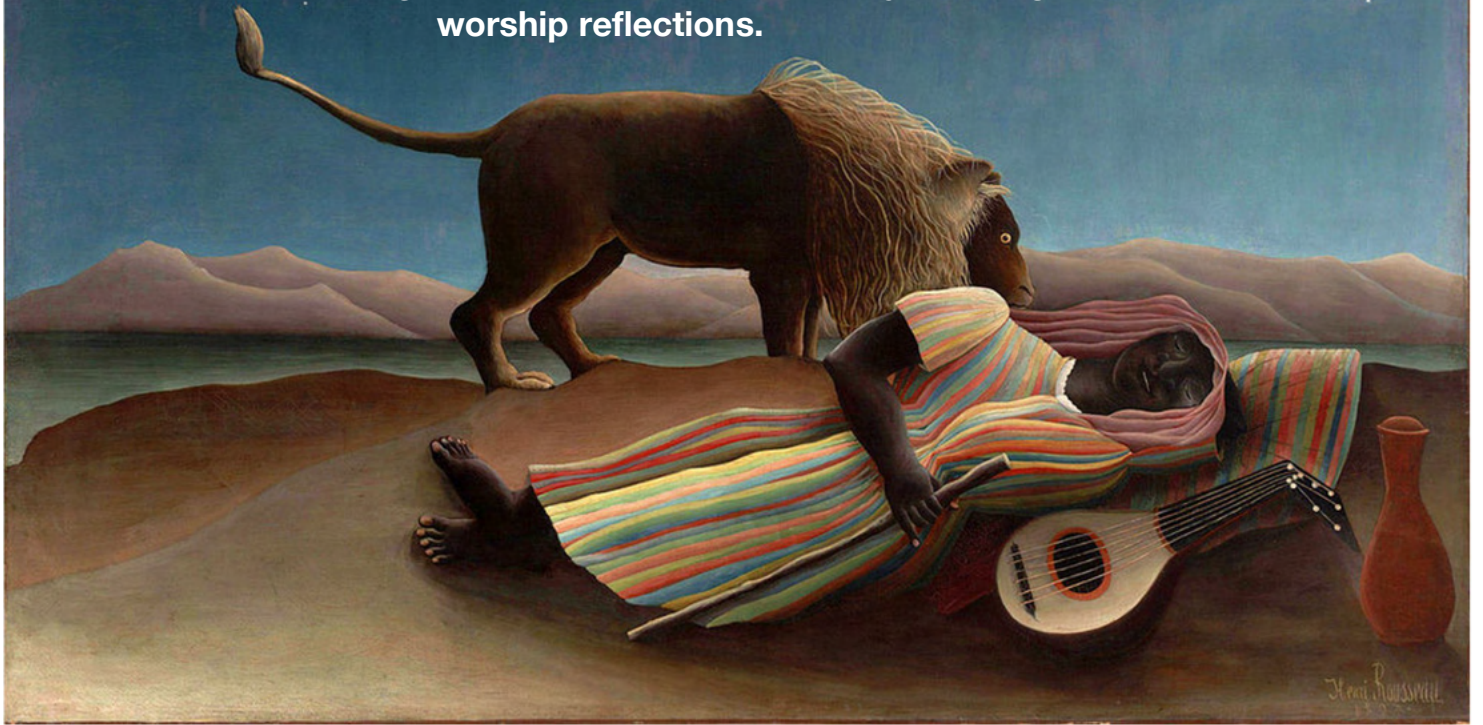
Peace and love,
Drew



The adoration of the Magi,
Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898)

January's podcast is guided by Daniel A. Sidell's
Who's Afraid of Modern Art?

Listen in for a fascinating journey of Christian engagement
through a confusing genre of artistic expression. Podcasts are
available through Third's website and Sunday morning
worship reflections.



Christmas Baskets Event December 2023



FOOD PANTRY

Third Baptist
CHURCH

EVERY THIRD SATURDAY!

JOIN US!

2024 Dates

Jan 20 July 20
Feb 17 Aug 17
Mar 16 Sept 21
Apr 20 Oct 19
May 18 Nov 16
June 15 Dec 21*

**FOOD DISTRIBUTION
BEGINS AT 9:00AM.**

**REGISTRATION
ENDS AT 10:30AM**

*advance registration required

620 N Grand Blvd
St. Louis, MO 63103

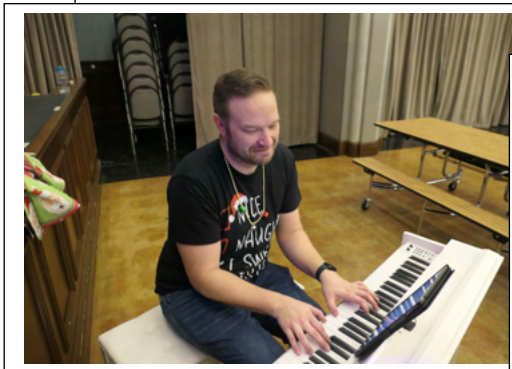
ALL ARE WELCOME!

Items available for selection
based on your household!

Non-perishable food, toiletries,
cleaning supplies, etc.

For Individuals 60 Years
or Older:
State operated program:
Individuals that meet the
age and income criteria
may qualify for
supplemental food items.

Additional Information: THIRD-BAPTIST.ORG/MISSIONS/FOOD-PANTRY/



Adult Discipleship

Wednesday evening dinner and discipleship returns on January 10th.

5:15 p.m. Dinner - email tsimons@third-baptist.org to reserve your meal

5:45 p.m. Discipleship

You will continue study and reflections on spiritual formation; setting you in a directionally accurate manner; cultivating love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness.



Wednesday, December 13th

Dr. Tisha Brooks offered a superb testimony of faith, and a wonderful crowd came out.

Among the stories of wilderness Tisha shared this wisdom, "Wilderness is a place of deep struggle and need but if we surrender a place of possibility and opportunity to experience God as el roi and Immanuel.... we find a place of profound transformation." Thank you, Tisha!



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service December 2023



Photos courtesy Avery Brooks
and Deanna Davis

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to...

- 02 🎁 Clara Jackson
- 05 🎁 Leslie Davis
- 07 🎁 Margaret Warmann &
Steve Campbell
- 12 🎁 Hannah Hitchcock
- 13 🎁 Jordan (JJ) Huddlen
- 20 🎁 Matthew Watson &
Isaac Brett
- 26 🎁 Lansin Lin Kimler
- 27 🎁 Charlotte Wilkerson
- 29 🎁 Robert Hoffman
- 30 🎁 Mike Thiems &
Gabe Thiems



Deacon ordination service for
Chidi Okafor
Morning Worship
January 21st



In the city for good!

620 North Grand Blvd

St. Louis, MO 63103

Office 314.533.7340

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