



*Bronze Age well outside the gates of ancient Beesheba, in today's Negev*

## From the Pastor

Tisha Brooks' *Spirit Deep: Recovering the Sacred in Black Women's Travels* recalls Hagar's transformative encounter with God—after running away into the desert and collapsing next to an oasis.

Hagar names God *El-roi* (God of seeing or God who sees) and the place of their encounter *Beer-lahai-roi* (the Well of the Living One who sees me).

Tisha offers wise insight:

- Hagar is the only woman in the Bible to name God
- Hagar understands that God **sees** her
- God seeing Hagar challenges her marginalized status as an enslaved woman from Africa—*alternative chapters* are written into her story.

The status of Hagar has changed; God knows her name. Others may call out “slave-woman,” but in the eyes of the Divine, Hagar is known.

Hagar believes God is a God of seeing...who looks after me—in the midst of exploitation—an African slave owned by another family.

The encounter is so personal, Hagar ponders:

“Have I really remained alive after seeing him?”

After reading Tisha's chapter on Hagar, I recalled Henri Nouwen's *Life of the Beloved*.

Nouwen encourages followers of Jesus to claim for yourself—**I am known.**

*From all eternity, long before you were born and became a part of history, you existed in God's heart. Long before your parents admired you or your friends acknowledged your gifts or your teachers, colleagues and employers encouraged you, you were already "chosen". The eyes of love had seen you as precious, as of infinite beauty, as of eternal value.*

Are you worn out—collapsed next to an oasis?

Beloved, *El-roi*—God Sees You.

And alternative chapters are written into your story.

Remember lessons from Hagar—You are not an "alien". You are not "out of place" and *chained to the destructive words and actions of others.*

Each person entering our building for worship, bible study, and discipleship are longing to be known. Some folks who grace us with their presence travel roads which end in isolation and loneliness.

Discipline yourself to become a messenger of grace each time you mingle with our beloved community. Keep an eye out for people who need a word of grace and encouragement.

You can remind another—I know your name—and most importantly—*El Roi*—God **sees** you!

Grace and Peace,  
Tommy

## Easter Celebrations in the Children's Department



# Family Ministries

Rev. Drew Phillips  
Minister to Families

Youth and Kids! We have 20 tickets for Monday, May 15th Cardinals vs. Brewers at 6:45 p.m. Contact Drew for a ticket!



**Youth: Laser Tag at the Edge in Belleville**  
Friday, April 28, 2023 - meet at church at 5:00 p.m. Contact Drew to go!



Camp Sign ups!

## Lake Springfield Baptist Camp

### Choose your own Adventure Camp

**June 14-17** (Grades 6-12)

Directed by Natalie Thiems

<https://hipaa.jotform.com/230447859388169>

### Junior High Camp - July 9-15

(Completed 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades)

<https://hipaa.jotform.com/230448001432139>

### Senior High Camp - July 16-22

(Completed 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grades)

<https://hipaa.jotform.com/230447973666165>



On the first and third Sundays of the month during worship children will come to the children's department for Godly Play. This month we'll hear some of Jesus' parables, treasured stories that we open again and again to play with.



In Youth at 5:45 in May, on Wednesdays and in Sunday School, we will be talking forgiveness: what we do after Easter.

# Carol Pillsbury Memorial Tea, April 1, 2023



# Missions Moment

Imagine going hungry in a desert while surrounded by a tropical garden.

That's Ellen and Rick Burnette's ministry paradox. They serve migrant farmworkers in Immokalee, Fla., where industrial farms yield 14 million pounds of fruit and vegetables per day during harvest season. But the people who pick that produce can't afford it themselves.

CBF's Offering for Global Missions makes possible the Burnettes' presence in Immokalee farmworkers' lives, Rick added.

"We are so grateful the CBF world understands the situation with farmworkers and allows us to be the representatives working through Cultivate Abundance. By supporting me as field personnel, it frees up Cultivate Abundance to ... actually put food on tables."

He explained why he feels a deep commitment to Immokalee's farmworkers:



Third used half of our end of year (2022) missions offering to support Rick and Ellen Burnette, who founded Cultivate Abundance in 2017 to feed the stomachs, hearts, and souls of farmworkers in Immokalee, Fla.

"I'm just a gardener. My family for as far back as you can go, they were digging in the dirt. I'm just grateful to be able to be in league with gardeners, whether it's Immokalee gardeners or Naples gardeners or Atlanta gardeners.

We come together, and we do what we do so others have more. That's the abundance. That's God's economy."



Cultivate Abundance's ongoing ministries include doorstep gardens or container gardens grown in five-gallon buckets so farmworkers in cramped living spaces can grow greens, community gardens in neighborhoods growing fruits and vegetables, and donations of produce from area gardeners at churches and institutions. Through these resources, the food bank in Immokalee is stocked each Friday. Misión Peniel serves about 250 to 500 people on distribution day.

## Take Two Productions Continues to Support Third's Food Pantry!

This local theater group has been sharing Third's space, and also providing willing and able bodies to assist at several of the last Food Pantry events, including the special annual Christmas Baskets giveaway in December. At the April Food Pantry, group members presented a \$2,000 check to the Pantry, and gave a wonderful prayer offering.



## The Road to Freedom

May 12, 7:30 PM at Third Baptist Church  
Free - general Admission



<https://opera-stl.org/whats-on/road-to-freedom/>

In May 1961, seven Black and six white Americans made a courageous journey into the Deep South to protest segregation on public transportation. Their actions inspired other "riders" to join the movement and led to the legal outlawing of segregation on interstate buses.

Join Opera Theatre for a special concert that celebrates Black excellence, the 61st anniversary of the Freedom Riders, and all that is possible when people from different backgrounds stand together. This free concert is curated by musician, composer, and producer Damien Sneed, who has worked with such luminaries as Aretha Franklin, Jessye Norman, Wynton Marsalis, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, and many more.

# Adult Discipleship

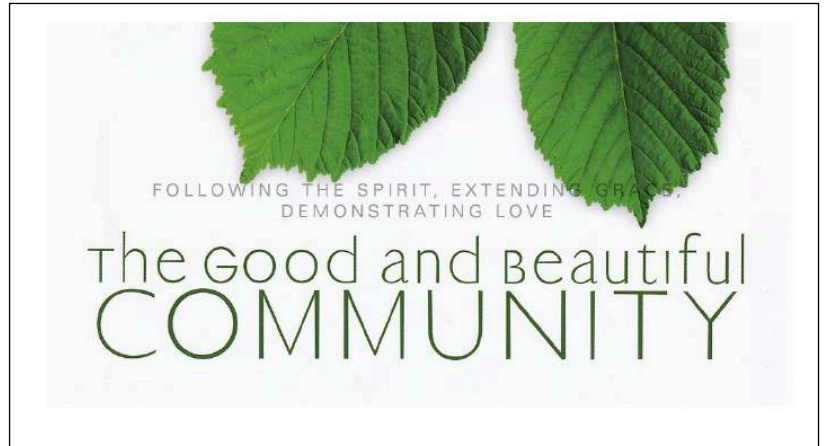
**Wednesday Nights: May 3, 10 and 17 at 5:45 p.m.**

All are invited to a fellowship meal and discussion of James Bryan Smith's *The Good and Beautiful Community*

**Dinner is served at 5:15 p.m.**

Please RSVP to Tommy by the Tuesday before, to reserve your spot.

Our group will explore following the spirit, extending grace and demonstrating love.



## MAY BIRTHDAYS

*Happy Birthday to...*

- 03 🎁 Jonathan Watson
- 05 🎁 Tammy Harrison
- 06 🎁 Gary Thompson
- 15 🎁 Stephen Gray  
& Craig Robinson
- 18 🎁 Berneice Donnelly  
& Sally Stevenson
- 19 🎁 Gloria Gordon
- 27 🎁 Julie Bruenger



**In the city for good!**

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## Third Baptist Church Staff

**Dr. Tommy Simons**  
PASTOR

**Rev. Drew Phillips**  
MINISTER TO FAMILIES

**Dr. Philip Barnes**  
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

**Ella Banks**  
RECEPTIONIST/OFFICE  
ASSISTANT

**Robert Hubbard**  
FACILITIES MANAGER

**Timothy Harrison**  
CUSTODIAN

**Brent Johnson**  
ORGANIST

**Tom Kurtz**  
BUSINESS MANAGER

**Dr. Garik Pederson**  
PIANIST

**Christine McCarthy**  
FINANCE

**Sally Stevenson**  
PARISH NURSE