

VOLUME 28 ISSUE 4

VHBC
Connections

FEBRUARY 16, 2021

VESTAVIA HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH



CELEBRATING THE FURRS IN FEBRUARY

Dear Congregation,

There is no doubt that each of us wants to extend our deepest thanks to Gary and Vickie Furr during this last month of Gary's 27 years and 7-month tenure. Please join us in the activities below for February and know that we look forward to a wonderful celebration together as a full congregation in the future when it is safe to do so.

Sunday Worship in February - We will hear from individuals expressing gratitude for Gary's years of service on All Four Sundays of worship! Each family is welcome to make a reservation for **one** of the four Sundays by registering at the link **here**.

Notes of Thanks - Cards will be collected in the church foyer beginning next Sunday to be bundled together and presented to the Furrs at the end of the service on Sunday, February 28th. Children are welcome to send notes or drawings. Please mail cards to Gary's Retirement Celebration, VHBC, 2600 Vestavia Drive, Vestavia Hills, AL 35216, or bring your card to the church on a Sunday you have a reservation or anytime during the week.

Love Offering - For those who wish to contribute to a love offering, you may do so through Friday, 2/26 by check with Love Offering written in the memo line or online through the website and ShelbyNext app--please select the Love Offering designation.

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Video Hug - For those who may enjoy submitting a brief 10-20 second video of you or your family expressing congratulations on Gary's retirement, please click the link [HERE](#). All videos will be private and shared only with Gary and Vickie as a video memory album. Due Wednesday, 2/24.

Wednesday, February 24th, 6 pm - Don't miss "**A Gary Home Companion: Thoughts and Songs from a Retiring Pastor**" a casual interview-style program hosted by Brent Warren. Register online [HERE](#) to attend the event held in the sanctuary or join us live on [vhbc.com](#) or social media. Enjoy hearing stories from Gary's ministry with a few tunes mixed in. If you have a question you'd like for Brent to ask our pastor, feel free to submit them for consideration to rbrentwarren@gmail.com. Questions will also be received on Facebook during the event.

We look forward to celebrating the Furrs with you all,
The Retirement Celebration Committee
Merryl and Jason Cooper, chairs
Jennifer Carter, Rachel and Brad Farley, Becky Griffith,
Libby Pittman, and Brent Warren



SHEPHERD'S ENCOURAGER

DR. GARY FURR

My Final Column

This is my final column as the pastor of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church. We were musing together during yesterday's staff meeting about how many of these little columns I have written. We switched to "bi-monthly" years ago, but for years I cranked out one of these pieces every week. I have somewhere north of 800 columns filed in this folder on my computer just in my time here.

These little writings occasionally were good enough to turn into a sermon later, or at least a desperate Wednesday night devotional, or a meditation for the Thursday communion in the chapel for so many years. It was a "what's on my mind, and I hope yours, too." I began writing a column the way I do during my years in South Georgia. In my early years as a pastor, I read the book *The Tender Shepherd* by John Killinger. He said too many pastors squander the opportunity to communicate with their congregation on a substantive level by simply writing promotional blather in their newsletter. Killinger made it his practice for much of his ministry to try to write something significant, helpful, and spiritually encouraging. It gave me the image of talking to one person when you write as though we were sitting across the kitchen table from one another drinking coffee and having an unhurried conversation.

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I would write about what was on my mind even as I always managed to work in whatever I was supposed to promote-- the budget, the next big program, or why you needed to get back into regular church attendance after being at the beach and the lake all summer. But it was also a dialogue. I would share what I had been reading or thinking about. Often, I was responding to conversations still on my mind with members.

In these pages, I celebrated with you, tried to speak of our common griefs, confessed when we were undone together by the world around us, and rejoiced in our victories and accomplishments together. And I realize that I was sharing bits and pieces of our family with you as we parented with you, then launched our children and entered grand-parenting. When I went to see older members in assisted care or their homes, I discovered that they read this faithfully, and it was a way to be in touch with their church and pastor.

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I wrote about what was present and ongoing with our life together. And always, I wrote in response to you. I had faces and situations in my heart. I would think about what you were going through. And sometimes, as in 9-11 and other events, we were all wounded. It has been a true joy and privilege to serve here and to do this work. Sometimes people will say sympathetic things to preachers like, "I don't know how pastors do what they do." My reply is, "Oh, it is the greatest job in the world. I enjoy almost every aspect of it. The problem is there's just so much of it." That's why you can't do it forever.

One of the pleasures I have permitted myself lately is to look back, to sift and savor. And because there is so much to remember, these columns are my markers. When I re-read them, or a sermon, or an email I saved, I pull up people's faces, and stories and laughter, and tears.

It's been a great ride with you. I have the records saved for reflection—sermons, eulogies, journal entries, columns, emails. I have been privileged to walk it along with my wife, Vickie, whose own ministry is lived out in deeds and caring, and encouragement is one of my great inspirations in life. She is an extraordinary wife, mother, teacher, grandmother, and fellow minister. Her impact on my life and others is enormous. I am grateful for her, as you are. Thank you for loving me, letting me lead, following, praying for us, caring for our children and grandchildren, and being with us. I am hopeful about the future of our church and the church. This last year has created a heartache of longing for being together again. It is probably just what we all needed, virus aside, to remember how meaningful human fellowship is.

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I know and like Bill Owen a lot. As he comes, you will like him too. Make a little room for him as he helps you. He brings a lifetime of experience and knowledge about church and transitions. And start praying for your next pastor now, even before anyone has a clue who it will be. Let go of what you think the church ought to do and start asking God to guide you together.

Most of all, I am grateful to God, about Whom I have thought about every day throughout the day as long as I have known about the Lord. God's mysterious and gentle and faithful Presence has given us grace, persevered with our failings, and blessed our feeblest effort. God bless you all.

Gary

Ash Wednesday

FEBRUARY 17

A special service will be available to view tomorrow morning to prepare us for Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Please visit vhbc.com, our Facebook page, or YouTube channel to watch and participate with your family.

LENT at VMBC

For Adults

Jesus's Guide for 2021 Disciples

Join LaRue Speights each Monday for a new Lenten study in the Sanctuary at 10:30 am. You may sign up to attend in person or join virtually. Sessions will be recorded and available on vhbc.com.

- **Feb 22:** Trust & Don't Be Afraid (Luke 12:1-12)
- **Mar 1:** Emphasize the Important (Luke 13:10-17)
- **Mar 8:** Celebrate God's Grace to All (Luke 15:11-32)
- **Mar 15:** Find the True Treasure (Luke 18:18-30)
- **Mar 22:** Live Out Repentance (Luke 19:1-10)
- **Mar 29:** Finish Well (Luke 23:32-46)

For Families of children and youth

Journey to Easter

Journey to Easter, a special Lenten box, is available to families of preschool, children, and youth. You are welcome to pick up your family's box on Sunday mornings and during the week, starting February 7th.

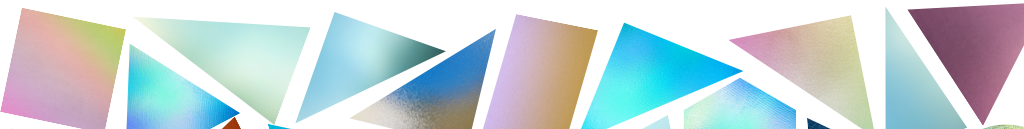
Journey to Easter begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17.



For All

Lenten Prayer Walk

Our **FIRST EVER** Lenten Prayer Walk starts on Ash Wednesday, February 17, and continues until Holy Week. The walk begins outside to the left of the main entrance and continues through the prayer garden. **For all ages!**





vhbc kids

WINTER 2021

Sunday School

- 9AM**
- Kindergarten with Gilda Coker and James Carr
 - 3rd Grade Class with Marie & Leigh Gwathney
 - 4th/5th Grade Class with Liz David and Jenny Henry
 - Sixers with Lucas Dorion and Mindy Bodenhamer

- 9:30AM**
- 1st/2nd Grades with Sandra Bates and Gay Caldwell

GA & RAs Wednesday Schedule

- 5PM**
- 1st - 2nd Grade GA

- 5:30PM**
- 3rd - 6th Grade GA

- 6PM**
- 1st - 3rd Grade RAs

- 6:30PM**
- 4th - 6th Grade RAs



vhbc youth

CIVIL RIGHTS SATURDAY

FEBRUARY 20 • 10 AM - 12:30 PM
MEET AT PIZITZ FOOD HALL

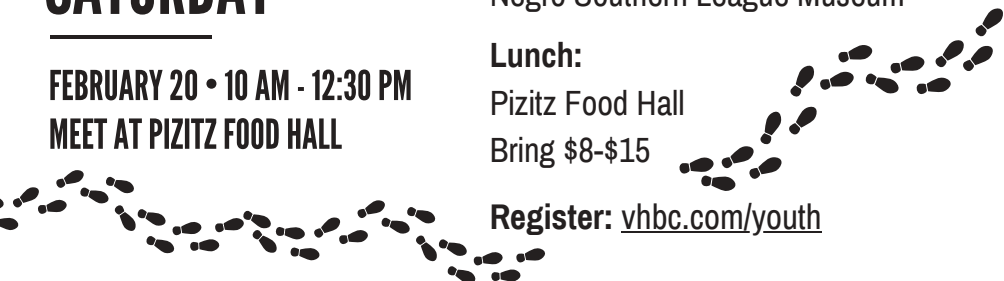
Tour options:

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute
Negro Southern League Museum

Lunch:

Pizitz Food Hall
Bring \$8-\$15

Register: vhbc.com/youth



MEMBERS IN THE HOSPITAL

Paul Edfeldt Brookwood Rehab
Jim Garland Madison Hospital of Huntsville

MEMBERS AT HOME

Maxine Ammons	Sarah Moreland
Dave Bamberg	Leon Nix
Libby Brown	Margaret Northrup
Zelle Buckner	June Ousley
Carolyn Cain	Jaime Payton
Mike Chandler	Gaynell Pinson
Geri Dodson	Susanne Shepherd
Esther Evans	Faye Spear
Milton Fullman	Alicia Stigler
Natalie Garland	Hazel Turner
Mavis Hardy	Stan & Sue Virciglio
Richard Horn	Margaret Walker
Charlotte Kyser	Bobbie Weaver
Al Lowery	Doris Wilson
Samson Mathangani	

CONGRATULATIONS

Mindy & Dick Bodenhamer welcomed a new granddaughter, Willa Reid Daneri on Tuesday, February 16th. Mother and baby are doing great! Proud parents are Stefano & Anna Bodenhamer Daneri.

Volunteer List



STAY CONNECTED



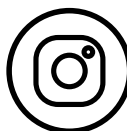
FIND US ONLINE AT VHBC.COM



WATCH RECENT SERVICES &
MESSAGES ON YOUTUBE



STAY UPDATED ON OUR
FACEBOOK PAGE



CONNECT WITH US ON INSTAGRAM



LISTEN TO OUR PODCAST



GIVE ONLINE AT SHELBYNEXT



WORSHIP & PRAY WITH US

Our services have resumed in-person with limited capacity registration. You can also join us every Sunday at 10 am on YouTube, Facebook, or the VHBC.com Live Stream!

If you'd like to see the prayer list, please visit www.vhbc.com/prayer-list to view and contact us for updates.

STAY UPDATED

CHANGE OF PLANS FOR SENIOR ADULT TRIP!

Please note that the Senior Adult Trip scheduled for May 3-7, 2021 has been changed to September 20-24, 2021. If you have not yet registered, there is still time! This will be an exciting trip to Savannah, Jekyll Island, and Beaufort, SC. Please contact Martha Neill at martha@vhbc.com or call 205-979-5920, if you are interested in attending.

VHBC GIVING

YTD OFFERING: \$170,447.00

YTD NEEDS: \$235,837.00

VHBC ministry team

GARY FURR, SENIOR PASTOR

NANCY AKINS, MINISTER TO PRESCHOOL & CHILDREN

TYLER JOHNSON, MINISTER TO STUDENTS

MIKE MCBRAYER, ADMINISTRATIVE PASTOR

MARTY WATTS, MINISTER OF MUSIC & WORSHIP

VESTAVIA HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH