



# THE MESSENGER

February 2026



*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.*

Hebrews 12:1

*From dust we came, to dust we return—yet grace meets us here.*

## ASH WEDNESDAY HAS ARRIVED

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a season of reflection and preparation that has been observed by Christians for over a thousand years. Since the early Middle Ages, believers have gathered on this day to receive ashes on their foreheads, in the shape of a cross, while hearing the words from Genesis: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you will return."

This practice draws from biblical examples of repentance, such as Job sitting in ashes, the people of Nineveh wearing sackcloth, and Daniel's heartfelt confession. It serves as a reminder of human fragility, sinfulness, and mortality, inviting us to approach God with humility and openness to His mercy.

Yet the ashes carry a deeper message of hope. They are not merely a symbol of judgment or despair but a sign of God's grace entering our brokenness. Placed in the form of a cross, they point to Jesus, who meets us in our dust and begins the work of restoration. On Ash Wednesday, we acknowledge our need for Him—not to earn His favor through displays of sorrow, but to create space for the transformation only He can bring.

This year, our **Ash Wednesday service on Wednesday, February 18, at 6:30 p.m.** will launch the Lenten series "Ashes to Ashes." Drawing from Hebrews 12 and other Scriptures, the series traces a journey from God's refining discipline and

*(continued on next page)*

### Upcoming Schedule

#### Sundays

- 9:30 a.m. Sunday School
- 10:30 a.m. Worship
- 3:00 p.m. Graceful Praise Rehearsal\*
- 3:30 p.m. Girl Scouts\*
- 4:00 p.m. Handbell Rehearsal
- 5:00 p.m. Illumination Student Ministry

\* Does not meet each week; see leaders for details

#### Wednesdays

- 2:30 p.m. Afterschool Program\*
- 5:15 p.m. Wednesday Night Supper\*
- Children's Choirs\*
- 6:15 p.m. Prayer/Bible Study\*
- 7:00 p.m. Adult Choir Rehearsal

\* Full midweek schedule resumes January 14

#### Special Events

- Feb. 8, 10:30 a.m. Baptism
- 11:30 a.m. SOUPer Bowl Lunch
- Feb. 12, 11:30 a.m. FBCJST Luncheon
- Feb. 18, 6:30 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service



# A VIEW FROM MAIN STREET

by Jeff Allen  
Pastor  
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The lady staring at the Lowe's battery display leaned over to Hannah and me to say, "They are out of 'D' batteries at the Walmart, too." She noticed we were looking under every shelf and display, trying to find extra batteries for our flashlights. We just knew that the power was going to be out for days, so we were back at the store along with everybody else.

There is a specific kind of "low battery" anxiety that grips us during a storm. We become obsessed with our own capacity to stay powered, frantic to find some source of energy to keep the dark at bay.

**“ There is a specific kind of "low battery" anxiety that grips us during a storm. ”**

I'm struck by how often we live like rechargeable batteries, assuming we can power on our own through any storm. But a battery is simply a case of chemicals, high-tech dust, which will eventually drain on its own.



In our series, "Ashes to Ashes," we're leaning into a different reality. We weren't designed to be batteries; we were designed to be "wall plugs." We aren't the source of power; we are conduits for it.

Lent is our collective "powering down." It's a 40-day season to stop the exhausted scramble for self-sufficiency. By admitting our limits, we stop looking under empty shelves for a temporary fix and reconnect to the only source that never fails. Let's stop trying to carry the charge ourselves and rest in Christ, the One who is our true power.

from the Front Page

honest confession (Daniel 9), through remembrance in dark times, (Psalm 77) and trust in God's care (Psalm 121), to restoration (Joel 2), new life (Ephesians 2), and the triumph of the wounded King on Palm Sunday (John 12). Each week builds toward celebrating Christ's sacrifice and victory.

You are invited to join us for a service of worship, Scripture, prayer, and the imposition of ashes for those who wish to receive it. Whether you feel close to God or distant, confident or weary, this evening offers a gentle starting point for the Lenten journey. Bring a friend, come as you are, and let us begin together, trusting the God who knows our dust and calls us to new life.

## Ministry Spotlight

### Baptismal Ministry Team

The mission of the **Baptismal Ministry Team** is to facilitate a meaningful and seamless experience for all who participate in this holy sacrament.

Preparation is already underway for this month's service. Whether it's ensuring the facilities are pristine or providing comfort and encouragement to those being baptized, this team serves with excellence.

To **Denise Hawkins, Roger Hawkins, Leah Allen, and Josh Allen**: Thank you for your tireless efforts in preparing our services and for your commitment to honoring this vital expression of our faith.





# TELLING STORIES

by Tori Freeman  
Minister of Youth and Children  
[tori@fbcmontholly.org](mailto:tori@fbcmontholly.org)

Over the last decade my life has changed between marriage, careers, and two little boys. One thing that has not changed is God's constant presence in my life.

A few years ago, shortly after Gray was born, I felt spiritually broken. I was in the heart of postpartum depression and anxiety. I was angry, confused, I felt like a shell of myself and I didn't know what to do.

As a pastor, I felt like I had to have it all together even though I felt distanced from God. I was lonely even though I was normally surrounded by people. I was not sure what to do.

I have always been a firm believer that God uses us as his vessels. He used several people in my life to speak his words over me. He surrounded me with a support system that helped me find my way. I eventually began to fill my cup both spiritually and personally.

My prayer this Lenten season is that if you need restoration, that God would provide that for you. No matter where we are in life, he meets us there. We are never too broken, too sinful, too needy, or too anything for God to bring us back to him.

**// My prayer this Lenten season is that if you need restoration, that God would provide that for you. //**

## SOUPER Bowl Lunch



Illumination Youth Group is hosting a SOUPER bowl lunch on Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, following worship.

Lunch is free. All donations benefit the youth summer trip.

*"What thou, my Lord, hast suffered  
Was all for sinners' gain  
Oh mine was the transgression  
But thine the deadly pain  
Lo, here I fall, my Savior  
'Tis I deserve thy place  
Look on me with thy favor  
Vouchsafe to me thy grace."*

*-Bernard of Clairvaux*



## MUSIC NOTES

by Cole Freeman  
Minister of Music  
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In music, minor keys are often characterized as dark, sad, or even foreboding. In classical music, think of the opening of Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony, or from our hymnal, *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*. Despite this common attribution, many people, myself included, find minor music introspective, meditative, even relaxing.

During this Lenten season, we are reminded of Christ's journey to the cross. Like most everything in life, the light of the resurrection and everlasting life is preceded darkness and suffering. As we meditate on Genesis 3:19, let us never forget the ultimate sacrifice that allows us to bow freely before God and confess our sins.



**// Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise. //**

- Victor Hugo

# NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS



## COMMUNITY WIDE LUNCH

**FEBRUARY 12**  
11:30 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

### February OCC Item



### LARGE Serving Forks

Perfect for serving dishes!  
(under 10", designed for serving rather than standard dinner forks)  
Goal: 300

Looking for an easy option? Visit Amazon and type *Operation Christmas Child LARGE Serving Forks* in the search bar—you'll find great choices!

Drop in OCC bin at The Gathering Place  
Kay MacIntosh: 980-253-7180  
KayMacIntosh@hotmail.com

### Feb Basketball Schedule

Thursday, February 5 @ 7:30 P.M.  
Monday, February 9 @ 7:30 P.M.  
Thursday, February 19 @ 7:30 P.M.  
Monday, February 23 @ 6:30 P.M.

(All games played at FBC Stanley)

All Mount Holly area Senior Adults are invited to a community-wide lunch!

We will enjoy soup and sandwiches together. We'll be joined by a representative from the Tuck Park Soul Patrol and hear a testimony from Mount Holly resident Justin Holland.

Registering by February 5 is appreciated. It is free and helps make sure there is enough food. A donation basket will be available.

To register, email Randy McLean at [isaiah41@duck.com](mailto:isaiah41@duck.com)

### Donations

The following book has been placed in the library by Madeline Savannah Crawford, in memory of Jerry Wilson Surratt: "Brutus and Red the Rooster", by Samantha Hill.

In Memory of John Elting by Aubrey & Brenda Horton to the Bible Fund.

In Memory of Martha Jean McFarland by Verna Jo Ellis to the Library Fund.

In Memory of Lib Wiles by Verna Jo Ellis to the Landscaping Fund.

In Memory of Lib Wiles by Aubrey & Brenda Horton to the Bible Fund.

### In Sympathy

Our deepest condolences to the family of Mary Elizabeth "Lib" Wiles.

### December Finances Update

Thank you for your gracious support of our church's mission and ministry. The end of year finances are still being finalized. We will share them when completed. Thanks for your patience and faithfulness.



## First Baptist Church of Mount Holly



### Contact Information

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Instagram [fbcmontholly](https://www.instagram.com/fbcmontholly)

### Office Hours

Monday-Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Friday 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

### Follow Us!

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