



# FOCUS

JANUARY 2023 - MMXXIII ISSUE I

735 RIDGE LAKE BOULEVARD | MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38120

## Giving People a Glimpse of God by Pastor Jim Fleming

*Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord; and when the Lord heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp (Num. 11:1).*

I find it more challenging to figure out WHAT to pray for than it is to actually pray. Romans 8:26 declares: “For we do not know how to pray as we should.” We do not have “omniscience” like God, so we can never see the big picture. When someone asks me to pray for him because he has just encountered adversity, what I can say with **certainty** is that God has allowed this encounter. Here’s what I am **uncertain** about. Am I supposed to pray that God will take away something that He, in His perfect wisdom, saw fit to allow? Or, am I supposed to ask for something else on the assumption that the presence or absence of adversity is not on the table?

When we get all worked up because we want adversity to be removed, we betray two holes in our understanding. First, we need to know that hardship can be helpful. David gets this: “*It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Thy statutes*” (Ps. 119:71). One of the great benefits of going through hard times is that the Word of God comes alive. Adversity is no fun, but that doesn’t mean it’s no good.

Second, when we complain about adversity, we betray the idea that God is accountable to **US!** Job had it rough, to be sure. And, yes, he didn’t deserve what he received. But he ran amuck when he thought God owed him some-



thing. A young man named Elihu gave counsel that cut through Job’s messed up logic. He asked, “*Why do you complain against Him, that He does not give an account of all His doings?*” (Job 33:13). Elihu discerned that Job’s complaining was a form of calling God on the carpet. Even when times are tough, we have no excuse to trade places with God and demand that He answer to us.

This backdrop helps to explain Numbers 11:1. Israel had quite a reputation for complaining in the wilderness, and Numbers 11 describes a day at a place called Taberah that became a grumblers convention. When the whining was in full swing, a fire broke out. This was no ordinary fire, but the anger of God. Israel’s grumbling made it clear that they didn’t get it. They didn’t understand that their adversity was

designed to be beneficial (it was God’s 40 year fitness program for those who would someday conquer Canaan). They also made the mistake of thinking God was answerable to them for being a disappointment.

God is no man’s lackey and anyone who thinks so is toast! So learn a lesson from Israel and apply Philippians 2:14: *Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be ...children of God.* Grumbling, griping, and blame-casting doesn’t belong in our vocabulary. When we respond to all things (even the bad stuff) with grace and gratefulness, trusting that God is in charge and knows what He is doing, that’s when the world sees in us a glimpse of God. That’s when we act like who we are, children of God.

# SHEPHERD'S STAFF

## Remembering the Path for the Future

by Ken Eriksen, Vice Chairman of the Session and Chairman of the Transition Committee

When I lived in Scotland in the early 1990s, I met a land developer who was building a golf course near St. Andrews, the home of golf. That developer said the name of the course was going to be Drumoig, “a name of the past for the future.” I had no idea then, nor do I today know the significance of Drumoig in history, but it became a place for the future, at least for golf! Despite not understanding Drumoig, the developer’s line “a name of the past for the future” has stuck with me all these years.

That phrase comes to mind from time to time, especially at the end of a calendar year, when I am thinking of what transpired the past year that portends the New Year. In other words, what happened in history (the past year), that will guide and lead me in the future (next year)?

And so, here we are, entering a New Year, and perhaps you too take inventory of what took place in your life

during the past year, looking back at what the Lord did in your life, what challenges were overcome, what joys were encountered, etc. It is a time to remember the Lord’s provision and work in our lives.

There are many instances of remembrance from the Bible, a recounting of God’s protection and provision, and rebuke and restoration. From the ninth chapter in the book of Nehemiah we see such a remembrance when the leaders and the people of Jerusalem renewed their covenant with God following the great work rebuilding Jerusalem’s walls and gates. This chapter is a prayer and a reading from the Book of the Law of the Lord, recalling God’s protection and provision, and rebuke and restoration, that led the people to confession, repentance, and praise as they renewed themselves in the Lord.

Over the past year we as a church finished our efforts to take a look at ourselves, assessing the health and

current condition of First Evan while setting in motion action steps for the future in our [On Mission](#) document. We have outlined six vital challenges where we believe God is leading us to work through: *Give Grace, Preserve Unity, Stand Strong, Impart a Godly Legacy, Seek the Lost, and Work Smart.*

From those six vital challenges the Session put *Work Smart* into practice with two standing committees, the Polity and Doctrine Committee and the Shepherding Council. We culminated the *Give Grace* challenge at our Celebration of Grace service on October 23. And we are working through Pastor Jim to launch the *Impart a Godly Legacy* challenge in the new calendar year. The other vital challenges, *Preserve Unity, Stand Strong, and Seek the Lost* are being addressed and worked through the two new committees. We will be discussing these at our next “In The Know” meeting during the Sunday School hour on January 22.

## CHURCH-WIDE

### “In the Know” Meeting

Sunday, January 22  
9:30–10:30 a.m., Fellowship Hall

God has been at work in our midst and we want to celebrate what He has done. But there are some challenges before us, too, and we want you to know what lies ahead so you can sharpen your prayer life accordingly.

#### Here are some highlights:

- We will give you an update on where we are in our efforts to address our six challenges. We can celebrate the completion of two initiatives and the progress being made on the remaining four fronts.
- Get excited about what God has been doing in Student Ministries!
- Tune in for an end-of-calendar-year update on church finances.
- Hear how our shepherds will be using 2023 to take our “flock life” to another level.
- Get a full report of what has happened and what lies ahead in our search for Pastor Next.



### Going Deeper

Wednesdays, January 11–March 8  
6:15–8:00 p.m., A111

Come to this Wednesday night elective to better understand the depths of Daniel 7–12 and more. Bonus: You will also have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss implications of what is taught. Want to translate the Book of Daniel into dynamic life change? Pastor Jim Fleming will shed some light on what God says we need to know about our future. No pre-registration required—these are all open sessions. Come to one or come to all.



Don’t wonder what’s happening—hear it all first hand. You will be encouraged and armed with what you need to pray informed prayers.

# CHURCH-WIDE (CONTINUED)

## Elder/Deacon Nominations

Please begin praying about upcoming nominations for the offices of elder and deacon. Because leadership is so vital, our Lord Himself prompts and places men in areas of service within our fellowship. True elders and deacons will be found already doing the work. It is our task to discern who those individuals may be. Please give prayerful consideration to any nominations you would like to make. A biblical description of the kind of men we should identify is available on the First Evan [website](#). The [nomination forms](#) will be available on Sundays, January 8, 15, 22 and 29, on tables outside the Sanctuary. **The submission of nominations is limited to First Evan members and due Sunday, January 29.** [www.firstevan.org/nominations](http://www.firstevan.org/nominations)

## Global Missions Team Recommendations

The Global Missions Team is seeking recommendations for new members to serve a three-year term. They must be committed members of First Evan with a deep interest in missions and have sufficient time and concern for worldwide missions to make a meaningful commitment to the GMT. First Evan members may send recommendations to [missions@firstevan.org](mailto:missions@firstevan.org) or speak to any current GMT member.



## Discover First Evan Sunday, January 29

4:00-6:00 p.m., Chapel

This class is offered to those interested in learning more about First Evan or desiring membership. Attending the class in no way obligates you to join, but it is the first step toward membership. Questions can be directed to Jacki Stieferman at [jstieferman@firstevan.org](mailto:jstieferman@firstevan.org). Register at [www.firstevan.org/dfc](http://www.firstevan.org/dfc).



## Midweek at First Evan Wednesdays, January 11-April 26 (No meeting on March 15)

There's something for everyone on Wednesday nights. It starts with dinner at 5:00 p.m., then we have activities for all ages. The food is prepared by John Dawson and Jimmy Garrison and is served by faithful volunteers. Each individual has a choice between an entree and side item or the weekly soup and salad bar. A dessert is served with every meal. Visitors and guests are always welcome and reservations are not necessary. Find details and our weekly menu at [www.firstevan.org/midweek](http://www.firstevan.org/midweek).

Attending or volunteering and need childcare? [www.firstevan.org/midweek-childcare](http://www.firstevan.org/midweek-childcare) (For ages 2 and under. Subject to availability.)

## WORSHIP

### PULPIT PREVIEW

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| JAN 8  | Jeri Little   |
| JAN 15 | Jamie Trussell  |
| JAN 22 | "Spotter's Guide"<br>Daniel 7:15-28<br>Pastor Jim Fleming |
| JAN 29 | "A Perfect Puzzle"<br>Daniel 8:1-14<br>Pastor Jim Fleming |

## Worship Team

Auditions for the Sunday morning worship team are available on a rolling basis. Let us hear your gifts! Contact Katelynn Bernardini at [kbernardini@firstevan.org](mailto:kbernardini@firstevan.org).

## Worship Choir Rehearsals Wednesdays, 6:15-8:00 p.m., Sanctuary

Come be a part of this intergenerational group that loves to lift praises to the Lord in song and to support the congregation in its worship. We will also prepare for our Palm Sunday service with symphony orchestra.

## Worship and Prayer Meeting

Sunday, January 22

6:00-7:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Join us as we seek the Lord together through prayer and worship in song. We'll intercede for our church and our world through prayer individually, in small groups, and corporately.

## Baptism

Sunday, January 29 & Ongoing

We offer two different methods for baptism scheduling. January 29 is our next pre-scheduled baptism in the service. We also hold baptisms on an as-needed basis in the Chapel, so that those who have been recently converted and want to be baptized quickly may do so, patterned after the immediacy found in the New Testament (Acts 2:41; 8:12,36-38; 16:33). Please contact Katelynn Bernardini ([kbernardini@firstevan.org](mailto:kbernardini@firstevan.org)) for more information. You can watch the baptism videos at [www.firstevan.org/baptisms](http://www.firstevan.org/baptisms).



[Slocumb Tashie](#) baptized December 18.



[Aaron Wu](#) baptized December 18.

# OUTREACH



## Sharing Spiritual Conversations (Men's Group)

Wednesdays, January 11–April 26  
6:15–8:00 p.m., E111

Evangelism and discipleship shouldn't be done in isolation! Come to hear and share spiritual conversation stories that are happening. We also discuss proven ways to engage the lost that are Biblical, clear, and not awkward. Let's live to the fullest as we seek the Kingdom together. Contact Chuck Dalton with questions or interest at [chuck@chuckdalton.com](mailto:chuck@chuckdalton.com).

# MEMPHIS MINISTRIES



## Life Choices: Bottles For Life

Each January, Life Choices invites churches and individuals to participate in their Bottles For Life campaign to raise awareness and funds for the sanctity of life. Pick up and return bottles to the Fellowship Hall filled with change, cash, or check. This is a great opportunity to get involved with Life Choices and help empower women to choose and cherish life!

# YOUNG ADULTS



## Fair Game

Tuesdays, starting January 24  
7:00 p.m., The Hall's House

All young adults are welcome to join as we bring back Fair Game on Tuesdays. We openly discuss young adult's questions such as: *Did God create evil? Should guns be banned? Why is homosexuality treated differently than other sins in the church?* and more! This is a safe and welcoming space. We hope to see you there! Our first meeting will be January 24. Contact Kassie Sanborn for the address [ksanborn@firstevan.org](mailto:ksanborn@firstevan.org).

# MEN

## “Experiencing God” Workbook Study by Henry Blackaby

Wednesdays, January 11–April 19  
6:15–7:45 p.m., A221



This is a 12-week study with discussion in small table groups. This is for men seeking direction for what is next...young men just starting out all the way up to older guys with some gas left in the tank who desire to sprint to the finish.

If you would like to participate email Lynn Ballinger at [lhb2@aol.com](mailto:lhb2@aol.com) to register and he will send you a link to order the workbook.

## “The Book of Isaiah”, Part 2

Mondays, January 30–May 1,  
6:30–8:00 p.m., E143 and  
Wednesdays, February 1–May 3,  
6:30–7:30 a.m., Zoom



Isaiah is known as the “Prince of Prophets” and his prophecy is the most theologically significant book in the Old Testament. The format includes weekly study assignments, small group discussion, and lecture. We will be studying Isaiah 40–66. New men are welcome. Contact Buddy Jones at [buddyjones0@gmail.com](mailto:buddyjones0@gmail.com).

## Men's Fish Fry

Tuesday, January 24  
6:00–8:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall  
Cost: \$7/person or \$50/table



Our guest speaker Steve Wiggins is a five-time Grammy Award nominee of the band Big Tent Revival and founder of Living Room Study and Groundworks Ministries—both discipleship ministries that focus on Biblical literacy.

Tickets can be purchased in the Fellowship Hall on Sundays beginning January 1. Contact John Dawson, 901-485-0859, or Jack Pepper, 901-833-0721 for tickets or additional info.

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
**Men's Retreat**

Friday–Sunday, April 21–23  
Riverside Resort, AR

# WOMEN



## Heart to Heart Women's Bible Study "Leaving a Legacy of Eternal Significance: A Study of 2 Timothy" by Crickett Keeth

January 10/11–March 7/8  
Tuesdays, 9:30–11:30 a.m.  
Wednesdays, 6:15–8:00 p.m.

Join us for an 8-week, verse-by-verse study of 2 Timothy as we look at the life of Paul and the legacy he left behind with Timothy. We can follow Paul's example as we build into the lives of others and spur them on in their faith. Register at [www.firstevan.org/h2h](http://www.firstevan.org/h2h). Cost: \$10.



## A Colorful Day "Rooted in the Seasons of Life"

Saturday, February 4  
9:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m. | Cost: \$15\*  
\*additional cost for some sessions

Registration begins Sunday, January 8  
Come join us for a special day filled with learning, creativity, and encouragement. You will have the opportunity to sign up for two electives taught by fellow women of First Evan with lunch to follow. This day provides a wonderful opportunity to invite neighbors, friends, and loved ones to experience the community we have at our church. Childcare is provided, but registration is required: [www.firstevan.org/colorful](http://www.firstevan.org/colorful).

## Precept Bible Study "Jeremiah, Part 2: When God's Judgment Finally Comes (Ch. 25–52)"

Tuesdays, January 17–March 7  
6:00–8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Learn what God's message was to a rebellious Judah as Babylonian exile loomed. Workbook purchased online, cost: \$18. For more information or to register, contact Sara Butler at 901-491-0101 or [sarabutler6@gmail.com](mailto:sarabutler6@gmail.com).

## A Letter from Christy Bicknell

Transitions carry many emotions, and I can move at warp speed between each one.

I am incredibly excited about the opportunity this year holds as Crickett passes the Women's Ministry baton. Over the next few months, she and I will work together to celebrate her ministry and transition the role. I expect it to be a sweet time. A fun time. A time to affirm the legacy of generations of strong women of faith and ministry at First Evan and a season to dream.

I also enter the new year with a range of other emotions, including loss and grief. Our family walked through the Christmas holidays with my dear father-in-law, his home hospice care, and passing. And so, as 2023 kicks off, like most of us, I hold all these emotions in tension, with a specific prayer for our women.

In our everyday moments and in the extraordinary, I pray that each of us finds a place of *belonging* and a place of *becoming* at First Evan.

Through sweet, transformative relationships and serving, I pray a sense of belonging gives us space to build trust so that we continue to grow in our "becoming"—a maturity and steadfastness in faith and purpose.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for trusting me with this new role.

I look forward to moving together through the next year with a shared vision to be a place of *belonging* and *becoming* as we pursue Christ and make Him known.

Christy



## Hanging the Greens

Hanging of the Greens began with a devotional by Judy Griesbeck who spoke of Jesus as the Bread of Life and gifted everyone with a pan of her homemade rolls. We then spread out to make our wreaths from shared greenery, while sipping coffee punch and hot cider and munching on Mary Minor's amazing pound cake.

We left with a shared experience of our Creator God enabling us to make a unique designer creation. Hope to see YOU next year.

## Women's Christmas Dinner

What a special evening together with Hannah Kerr at our First Evan Women's Christmas Dinner at the Memphis Hilton! She is a gifted songwriter and singer, and she pointed us to Jesus through her music. Thanks to all the women who decorated tables and to the men who waited tables for us. It's a festive evening when our church family comes together to share the meaning of Christmas with others.

# FEC KIDS



*Pictured: Children singing in the December service; Emmanuel: A Christmas Experience with live nativity, crafts, and dinner; and the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service with Children's Nativity.*

## FEC Kids Midweek

Wednesdays, January 11–March 8  
6:15–7:30 p.m.\*

Preschool, C-Wing  
K–5th Grade, Gym

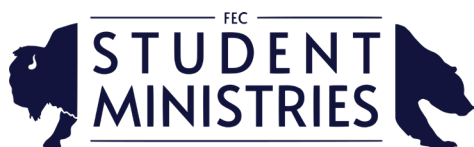
(\*available until 8:00 p.m.)

Our weekly Midweek program builds on our Sunday morning lesson and looks at what it means to live for Christ, K–5th graders will have theme nights, scripture memory work, discipleship groups, games, and guest speakers! Our preschoolers will reinforce Sunday's lesson and participate in crafts and play. New to Midweek this semester? Sign up at: [www.firstevan.org/feckids-midweek](http://www.firstevan.org/feckids-midweek).

# STUDENTS



**Student Ministries Lock-Out**  
Friday, January 13, 9:00 p.m.–7:00 a.m.  
Get excited! We have a fun night of activities planned, and we can't wait to hang out with you guys all night! See you there! Register by Sunday, January 8 at [www.firstevan.org/lock-out](http://www.firstevan.org/lock-out).



**Student Ministries Midweek**  
Wednesdays, January 11–May 3  
6:15–8:00 p.m., E226/E202  
Impact, 6th–8th Gr., E226  
Common Ground, 9th–12th Gr., E202  
Midweek is a place for students to meet together and have the opportunity to grow in their relationship with Jesus, their friends, and their adult small group leaders. Each week we meet to connect with one another through food, worship, teaching, and small group time.

## A Very Classy Christmas

For our final Midweek of the semester, High School and Middle School dressed in their classiest dress and played games and had fun! We will resume Midweek on January 11.

# GLOBAL MISSIONS



## SAVE THE DATE: Global Missions Conference

February 19–February 26

**Speakers:** Roger Lowther, Japan and Frank Fortunato, OM USA

The theme of the upcoming conference is “All the Nations Shall Glorify Your Name!” It flows from our theme verse, “*All the nations you have made shall come and worship you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name*” (Psalm 86:9 ESV). The emphasis will be on worship and how worship propels missions.

Roger Lowther, serving in Japan, will be our speaker the first Sunday. Frank Fortunato, with OM USA, will be our speaker the following Sunday. There will be several scheduled and non-scheduled activities in-between.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

### Sunday, February 19

**Sunday Morning Service:** Speaker – Roger Lowther

**Sunday Evening:** Concert, stories, and teaching from Roger Lowther

### Wednesday, February 22

**Midweek Fellowship Meal**

Highlighting “media” as a creative way to honor the Lord

**Kids:** Jesus Film for Children

**Adults:** Jesus Film and other JesusFilm Project resources

### Friday, February 24

**Dinner**

**Service:** Frank Fortunato/missionary reports, Proskuneo

### Saturday, February 25

**Light Breakfast**

**Breakout Groups/Seminars with Missionaries/National Partners:**

Sharing of how First Evaners are using their creative arts skills to honor the Lord.

**Worship Leader Track:** designed for worship leaders from ethnic churches.

**Saturday Evening:** Sunday Schools meet with Missionaries and National Partners for informal dinners.

### Sunday, February 26

**Speaker:** Frank Fortunato

**Morning Worship:** Proskuneo

**Evening Worship:** Multicultural Night of Worship with local ethnic churches

**Dessert Fellowship:** Ice Cream and Brownies

**Throughout the Week:** Zoom Meet & Greets

**Sundays:** Visiting Missionaries and Nationals in Sunday School classes; Small group get togethers in homes



## Sustain Ukraine

Sunday, January 8

12:00 p.m. Lunch in E125/126

Packing from 1:00–3:30 p.m.  
in the Gym

We look forward to seeing those who signed up as we partner with David & Katya B. and *Kids Around the World!* We will be replenishing KATW's supplies of food packets that were previously sent to Ukraine for frontline people in need. Your contribution of time will make a difference in people's lives! Great news, Sign-up full! No more volunteers needed.

## Short-Term Missions Trip Opportunities

Global Missions is considering a number of short-term missions trips over the next several months. Though many are not yet on the calendar, we are considering the following opportunities. Please let the Missions Office know if you are interested in considering going on a trip in order to serve and to see what God is doing through our ministry partners.

**Malaga, Spain: Media Center Work Team with Dan Wicher**  
Work Trip, March 10–19

**Malaga, Spain: SentWell Center with Alex and Amy Galloway** Work/Prayer Trip

**Dominican Republic: Cru with Meg Robbins**  
Evangelism and Work (geared toward families)

**Uganda: Sam and Suzie Davis** Vision/Prayer/Evangelism/Training

**India/Nepal: Ministry Partners in Area** Teaching/Training (men and women's trips)

**Mexico: Tlapaneco Ministry Partners** Teaching/Work/Evangelism

**Romania: Ministry Partners in Area** Children's Ministry/Vision Trip

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>New Year's Day Service</b> 1 10:45 a.m., Fellowship Hall <i>No Sunday School</i>  <b>FEC Prayer Focus</b> 5:00 p.m., Zoom	Church Offices Closed For New Year's					
<b>Communion</b> 8  <b>Sustain Ukraine</b> 12:00 p.m., E125/126 1:00-3:30 p.m., Gym  <b>FEC Prayer Focus</b> 5:00 p.m., Zoom		<b>H2H Women's Bible Study</b> 10 9:30-11:30 a.m. Fellowship Hall  <b>Council Meeting</b> 6:15 p.m.	<b>Midweek Fellowship Meal</b> 11 5:00-6:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall  <b>Midweek Activities</b> 6:15-8:00 p.m.			<b>Student Ministries Lockout</b> 9:00 p.m.-7:00 a.m., Meet in Gym Lobby >>> >>>
15  <b>FEC Prayer Focus</b> 5:00 p.m., Zoom	Church Offices Closed For MLK Day	<b>H2H Women's Bible Study</b> 17 9:30-11:30 a.m. Fellowship Hall	<b>Midweek Fellowship Meal</b> 18 5:00-6:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall  <b>Midweek Activities</b> 6:15-8:00 p.m.			
22  <b>FEC Prayer Focus</b> 5:00 p.m., Zoom  <b>Worship and Prayer Meeting</b> 6:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall		<b>H2H Women's Bible Study</b> 24 9:30-11:30 a.m. Fellowship Hall <b>Men's Fish Fry</b> 6:00-8:00 p.m., F-Hall <b>YA Fair Game</b> 7:00 p.m., The Hall's House	<b>Midweek Fellowship Meal</b> 25 5:00-6:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall  <b>Midweek Activities</b> 6:15-8:00 p.m.			
29  <b>Discover First Evan</b> 4:00-6:00 p.m., Chapel <b>FEC Prayer Focus</b> 5:00 p.m., Zoom	<b>Men's Isaiah Bible Study</b> 6:30-8:00 p.m., E135	<b>H2H Women's Bible Study</b> 31 9:30-11:30 a.m. Fellowship Hall <b>Young Adults Fair Game</b> 7:00 p.m., The Hall's House	<h1>JANUARY 2023</h1>			