



How Long

by Wade Allen

The ups and downs of 2020 continue through its final month. With rising cases and official recommendations to limit gatherings, we are back to a virtual-only service. It saddens me to not be able to see your faces each week, even with a mask. Our current plan of virtual-only services takes us through the middle of December. We will keep you updated as we move through the month. It is also disappointing to not be able to gather with everyone for our annual Christmas Eve service. As with our morning worship services, a live stream service will take place at **7:00 PM on Christmas Eve.**



In a year with many disappointments, let me remind you that we are not the first people to experience unmet expectations. The psalms are full of longings for God to show up and move.

“ How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? (Psalm 13:1 NIV)

This might be our cry to God this holiday season. How long, God? When is all of this going to be over? Another psalm instructs us to trust God in our disappointment.

“ Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. (Psalm 62:8 NIV)

Let me encourage you to take your frustrations to God. He can handle them. In fact, he wants us to express our hearts to him. This year's Christmas celebrations may be a bit

different. But perhaps we can learn from this experience as we consider the longing of God's people for the coming Messiah.

Worship Schedule

- ▷ December 06 - Revealed Glory (Isaiah 40:1–11)
- ▷ December 13 - Beauty for Ashes (Isaiah 61:8–11)
- ▷ December 20 - Mary (Luke 1:26–38)
- ▷ December 24 - Christmas Eve (Isaiah 9:2–7)
- ▷ December 27 - Facing the New Year (Luke 12:22–34)

Church Business Meeting

We are learning how to function in different ways this year. It is possible that we will not be able to meet in person for the rest of 2020 (we are certainly holding out hope that we can meet in person the last two weeks of the year). But given that we need to plan ahead, we are going to be holding a December business meeting virtually. We have not done this before. All members will receive instructions on how to participate and vote. However, here are a few details that you will want to know. The meeting will be held **Wednesday, December 16**, at **7:00 PM** on the church YouTube channel and church website. You will be able to submit your vote through a computer, smartphone, or phone call. We will include an annual budget and church leadership nominations with the instruction letter.

Holiday Service Plans

Because of COVID-19 and difficulties in social distancing in a crowded sanctuary, as you have heard, First Baptist Church will not host its traditional live Christmas Eve service this year. After lengthy discussion, this was a nearly-unanimous decision made by the CCT in their November meeting. Instead, there will be a special virtual service involving all the elements with which we normally worship.

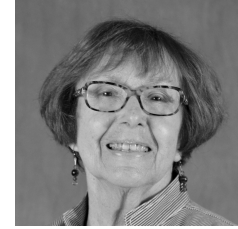
“This annual event has the largest attendance of the year,” said Pastor Wade. “We don’t want to limit attendance and turn people away, and we feel that a full sanctuary creates too many possibilities for spreading the virus.”

Worship arts pastor Clif Davis is already working on involving numerous people and creating a meaningful virtual worship experience.

Stay tuned for more details about the Christmas Eve service.

Outreach Round-Up

In spite of the time we were not able to be in the church in 2020, we have had a busy year, and people have stepped up to help serve the community.



Collection opportunities are alive and well.

Christian Ministries – FBC has agreed to provide one meal a month for the men in the sleeping rooms at Christian Ministries. Because of the Coronavirus, the staff is not asking for us to bring in meals but to provide money to cover the cost of food and meal prep.

Thanks to those who have provided donations to cover November and December. We'd like to collect at least \$25-30 for each meal provided in January through April. If you want to help, either mail a check made out to Christian Ministries (marked for Christian Ministries Meals) to the church, or be ready to turn in your donation as soon as we return to in-person services. If you are doing the latter, simply mark the check as described and put in the offering receptacle.

Salvation Army – This year the bells will not ring in our church because of virtual services as well as limited space at our north door. If it is your tradition to provide donations to bell ringers, you may mail a check made out to the Salvation Army to our church. When we return to in-person services, we will have envelopes for you to put your check in for the SA. Please drop your envelope into the collection containers at one of the checks-in areas. You all make the difference for those who are hurting.

Other collection opportunities – We continue several collections for our local community:

- ▷ socks for the homeless at Christian Ministries
- ▷ cans of food for Christian Ministries food pantry
- ▷ institutional-sized cans of food for the Grace Episcopal Church's Sunday afternoon dinner
- ▷ toiletries and cleaning supplies for the YWCA ladies

World Mission offerings increased – This year our World Mission Offering was \$460.00. That is an increase from the \$291.00 in 2019. Thank you to all who supported this annual fund drive.

Pillowcase Project continues – This year was a different year in many ways. Our YWCA ladies and our Monday night ladies did not come to make pillowcases. That said, some of our faithful sewers set up machines and sewed away. Because of their efforts, we will have pillowcases and pillows to take to Christian Ministries, Kid's Peace, and the YWCA, delivering our bounty to those in need. This group of pillowcases and pillows totals 115! This flagship ministry continues to bless people in our community.

Operation Christmas Child – Our participation in Operation Christmas Child, a ministry of Samaritan's Purse, has been completed. A total of 125 boxes were filled, and our children helped assemble them and get them ready for mailing to bring joy to children all around the world. Thanks to those who brought contents, provided money for shipping, and helped this project be successful. And thank you to Jane Patton, who has spearheaded this project for many years.

Visitor Articles

If you would like an announcement in the January Visitor, please email it to wade@fbcmuncie.org by **Sunday, December 13**.

Thank-You Notes

Betty Arthur – Dear First Baptist Church Family. Thank you for the beautiful peace lily in memory of my son, Gerald. He was dedicated at First Baptist in the spring of 1952.

Betty Arthur – Dear First Baptist Family, Thank you for the delicious fruit basket. It was a pleasant surprise.

Muriel Michael – To the Thanksgiving Basket Makers! Your beautiful basket with all the goodies will be truly enjoyed. Thank you for your thoughtfulness. Thanks also to active Mary Van Deventer for delivering it.

Shirley Johnson – Thank you First Baptist for the beautiful fruit basket. It was made up just perfect. Good fruit, sweets, and nuts. Joe and I enjoyed the fruit, and the pumpkin bread was delicious. We both love nuts, so we were delighted in getting the pecans. But the best was getting to see and visit with Carolyn Harke after all these months! P.S. Oliva, Joe and I liked your Thanksgiving Card. You did a great job. So artistic!

The Clif Davis Family – Many thanks to all the people who helped back our thanksgiving basket! We enjoyed the fresh produce and the home baked goods!

The Allen Family – Thank you for the wonderful treat basket. We greatly enjoyed the fresh fruits and goodies. We are grateful for our loving and gracious church family.

Paula & Bruce McFarland – We were pleasantly surprised to be given the lovely Thanksgiving fruit basket at church last Sunday (11/8)! What a treat with all the yummy fruit, nuts, and sweet breads. Thank you! We are so thankful we could serve the Lord and serve you all with our music and leading the choir over the past couple of years. We are so blessed by Wade's preaching and we are so blessed by the many friendships the Lord has given us here at First Baptist. Thank you for your love! We love you all too!

Facebook Live Prayer Time

During this season of social distancing, we continue a weekly Facebook Live prayer time! Look for one of our smiling faces **every Wednesday** at **7:00 PM**. Make sure to like our church Facebook page, First Baptist Church Muncie Indiana, to be able to watch and share any prayer requests or praises.

<https://www.facebook.com/firstbaptistmuncie>

Christmas Gifts for Staff

While we will not be able to do a live presentation of gifts, we are planning to present Christmas gifts to our church staff. We will provide gifts to our senior pastor, Dr. Wade Allen, and our worship arts pastor, Dr. Clif Davis. In addition, we will provide an appreciation gift to Dr. Bruce McFarland who served as first service leader and choir director through September and then stepped away because of temporarily moving to one service and the choir's ongoing break during the pandemic.

If you would like to donate, please put your monetary gift into an envelope marked "Staff Christmas Gift" and mail it to the church with a check marked For Staff Gifts.

YouTube Channel

Join us online each **Sunday** at **10:45 AM**.

<https://www.youtube.com/c/fbcmuncieorg>

December Birthdays

We would like to say Happy Birthday to the following people in the month of December. Please let them know that you are thinking of them on their special day.

12/01 - Ann Heilman Cannette	12/20 - Colton McClanahan
12/02 - Tyler Stinson	12/20 - Harold Gill
12/04 - Shirley Johnson	12/21 - Danielle Heimlich
12/06 - Eliana Heimlich	12/25 - Brian Green
12/06 - Justus Hendrickson	12/26 - Grace Wright
12/08 - Emma Wright	12/26 - Josh Barr
12/09 - Julie Morency	12/29 - Ginger Hendrickson
12/10 - Jonah Heimlich	12/30 - Bob Kirklin
12/11 - Bill Eidson	12/31 - Paula Furnish
12/15 - Amelia Resler	12/31 - Rodney Head
12/19 - Levi Allen	