


THE VISITOR



Advent Season Reminds Us of Rhythms of the Church Year

Advent is the beginning of the church calendar. It begins the rhythms of the church's year—rhythms which are not determined by the spinning of the sun or the turning of the moon (like solar or lunar calendars), but by the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It's a year built around the rhythms of God's relationship with his people.

As this new year begins, it's a good time to think about our own rhythms of discipleship. Are our lives punctuated by prayer? Are feasting, fasting, and Sabbath rest as much a part of our lives as eating and sleeping? Do we live with anticipation of God's work in the world, or are we swept up in life's demands or even grating monotony?

The most famous Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," was originally a poem in Latin. Its seven verses formed a reverse acrostic that read, *ero cras*, meaning "I shall be with you tomorrow." As the Lord is with us in our tomorrows, might we be attentive to him in worship, word, and deed as our life is shaped by his Word and his presence. 

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"The Shared Pulpit"

BY KENDALL ELLIS AND JONATHAN BALMER, CO-PASTORS

Pastor Kendall: My church growing up didn't follow the church calendar. "Advent" was just a word on my vocabulary quiz—"the arrival of a notable person or thing." It wasn't until my senior year of high school that I learned about Advent as a spiritual season when I stared confusedly while my friend Zack told me about his family lighting the candle of their church's Advent wreath.

The more he talked about Advent, the more curious I became. I spent the next couple of years in Georgetown's college ministry learning about Advent. Later, I *finally* celebrated Advent for the first time in Waco. I've been hooked ever since.

Pastor Jonathan: Advent is the age in which the church lives. That is because Advent is about the second coming of Christ just as much as it is the first. And we live in the time in between.

As Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 313–386) put it, "There is a birth from God before the ages, and a birth from a virgin at the fullness of time. There is a hidden coming, like rain on fleece, and a coming before all eyes, still in the future" (Catechetical Lecture 15.1).

Pastor Kendall: As much as I love Hallmark movies, Advent is not like them. There's nothing saccharine about it. Advent, as Fleming Rutledge said, is *not* for the faint of heart.

The God of creation is coming to save—but he comes to occupied territory. "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. And ransom captive Israel!"

Neither is this waiting we do passive, like waiting for my Amazon package to finally arrive. As 2 Peter 3:11b–12a says, "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming."

Pastor Jonathan: We look forward. We speed. We wait. And we hurry up.

"Joy to the World" says, "Let every heart prepare him room." And it's a fitting Advent anthem as it is about Christ's second coming, not merely the first.

This season, and beyond, why don't we prepare our hearts? Because if the Lord's light really does arrive in a world filled with darkness, we certainly need to prepare just as we need one another. There are many ways we can "prepare him room." Some of them are coming up:

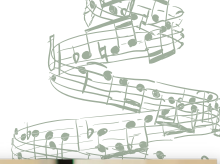
- Christmas Eve service, Dec. 24 at 7:00 p.m.
- An All-Church Four-Week Bible Study this January
- Life Groups begin their seasons in February



"Prepare him room."

Advent Reminds Us of "Now and Not Yet"


BY DR. CLIFTON DAVIS, WORSHIP ARTS PASTOR



So many carols remind us of the wonders of the birth of Christ. Whether we hear “Joy to the World” in the grocery store, around the piano in our homes, or in church, we are connected to the reality that Jesus came to earth as a baby. The Bible declares “a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:23 quoting Isa. 7:14). What great news!

Yet, even when Jesus came the first time, all was not peace, hope, love, and joy: Mary and Joseph had no room in the inn, the magi pursued a long journey to see the Christ child, and Herod killed babies to stay in power.

I find that the story of God, as related in the Old and New Testaments, balances the reality of “now and not yet” in a way that declares the Kingdom of God is **now**—and also the rule of God is **not yet** fully visible. Advent, a time of preparing for the birth of Christ, allows us to acknowledge to ourselves and to God that all is not yet right in our world and in our hearts. When we take the time for Advent before Christmas (and, honestly, Lent before Easter), we gain a richer experience of the God who waited to fulfill the prophecies of the first coming of the Messiah. We gain context for why God could be waiting to fulfill the prophecies of the second coming of the Messiah. Our faith deepens to include the mystery of holding onto both “now and not yet.”

As we sing together in church during Advent, are you willing to let the lyrics linger in the waiting and preparing for Christ instead of jumping right into songs about Jesus’s birth? How will that help you understand the “now and not yet” in your heart, your life, your world? 

Spirit of Holiday Joy Paves Way for Upcoming Adoption

When the **Stephen II and Jessica San Miguel** family first attended FBC Muncie about eighteen months ago, it felt like home to them. People seemed to have genuine interest in their family, and they experienced sincere Christian friendliness—qualities that Stephen and Jessica look for in a church.

Stephen has two children by a first marriage who live in Ohio: Faith and Gavin. Faith commented that she enjoys visiting FBC because of that friendliness, and many in the services help people feel they are part of the family.

At the time Stephen and Jessica began attending First Baptist, they were a family of four: the two of them and their preschool children—daughter, Rory, and son, Stephen III.

Today they are a family of five and wait with excited expectation through these winter months for RyLee, the fifteen-month-old daughter they have had since late June, to be legally part of their family.

Stephen and Jessica met seven years ago at the New Castle Correctional Facility where both were working. Stephen had worked in Ohio for twenty years, where he was in restaurant management. He calls the Dayton, Ohio, area home even though he grew up in a military family that moved around a lot.

Jessica, who hails from northern Illinois, returned to school at twenty-seven, obtained her criminal justice degree, and now works at Muncie law firm McKinney & Company as a paralegal.

Stephen has been at the New Castle prison for ten years. He works in special weapons and emergency and supervises the transportation team.

His experience at the prison makes him especially suited to join the FBC security team. The gift his work brings to the safety of the church is his ability to always watch and see what is “out of place.”

“The church has more than a dozen cameras, and we can look at our tablet and determine easily if people are where they are not supposed to be or doing something they shouldn’t be doing. That constant attention to what is going on all around me is an ongoing part of my life,” said Stephen.

Jessica has enjoyed working in the church. She and the older two children were part of the assembling of snacks and sodas for Operation Light in the Darkness, a ministry to local emergency department nurses. Rory, who is now in kindergarten, especially loved helping assemble the items for distribution.

The San Miguels were invited by **Coby and Emily Anderson** to attend church. When they first started coming, Dr. David Hinson was the interim pastor. In fact, a few months ago when they first had custody of baby RyLee, Dr. Hinson was just ending his interim position and officiated her baby dedication.

RyLee, who was born to a member of Jessica’s extended family, was a “kinship placement” for the San Miguels. To keep her out of foster care, Stephen and Jessica took responsibility for her.



The San Miguel family includes Stephen II and Jessica (top), Stephen’s daughter Faith (middle), and their children Rory, 5, RyLee, 15 months, and Stephen III, 3 ½. Stephen’s son Gavin is not pictured.

She was behind in her development and had to be tested frequently to see if she was achieving milestones. Jessica said, “At her last appointment the doctor told us how she is blossoming as she has grown and is excelling. She is even walking all over the place! The doctor expressed that she is thriving because of the love and care she is receiving.”

The other children love her so much. They want to be a big help with her. Stephen III says, “I can’t believe we got a baby. I just love her!”

As the kids get older, Stephen and Jessica want to take the family camping. They can picture the day they have a camper of some kind and have all three of the children learning to love the outdoors.

RyLee has a role in that vision of the future. God brought her into their purview, and the legal system will formally unite her with their family. That time is coming soon, and as they experience the joys of Christmas and the hope when life is lived in Christ’s presence, they are surrounded with an extra measure of anticipation this holiday season. ✨



Children and youth ages 4–13 pack Christmas gifts and supplies into **100** boxes to prepare for mailing to Operation Christmas Child. This initiative is part of Samaritan’s Purse. People at FBC are among hundreds of churches that collect shoebox gifts filled with toys, school supplies, and hygiene items to be delivered to children in need around the world—demonstrating God’s love in a tangible way.

Vision 2022 Fund Continues to Grow

BY MOLLY FLODDER


Late last year, interim pastor Rev. Dr. David Hinson, with support from the Church Coordination Team (CCT), introduced a fundraising theme for this year. The descriptive phrase was VISION 2022. It was centered around God's vision for the future of First Baptist Church of Muncie and its life-changing ministries. The focus of our prayer, our mission, and our gifts was emphasized.

It was a God-sized effort we could not do in our own power. A few felt that to do another giving initiative would be a monumental effort, given that it followed the successful property fundraising campaign of 2017–2019 (The Legacy Campaign) but were quickly amazed at what God was able to help us do.

At the time, Dr. Hinson said, "My prayer is that you will give generously above your regular tithes and offerings until we reach our GLORY (\$22,000), HALLELUJAH (\$44,000), AND AMEN (\$66,000) goals." The effort focused on new initiatives: 1) expanding youth and children's ministries, 2) solidifying FBC's role as a teaching congregation through internships/mentees, and 3) providing enhanced support for the church's 2022 ministry/mission needs.

Armed with this vision, the church rose to the occasion. Church donors achieved the Amen goal around Easter and were well past the Hallelujah goal after Dr. Hinson left in July. In fact, God's directing us to bring **Jonathan Balmer** and **Kendall Ellis** to be our new co-pastors was even more clear as we were able to use some of the money to help them begin addressing and expanding our youth and children's ministries.

We are now at nearly \$80,000 with the Vision 2022 fund, and dollars are still coming in as we continue to create the tools we need to strongly declare the gospel of Jesus Christ. As the year ends, we have exceeded the Vision 2022 goal by 18 percent, and our planning for what we personally can do—large or small—will extend into 2023 for as long as generous members of the FBC family make it their vision, too.

The CCT moderator and leaders gratefully thank all for their gifts and prayers. 



The life group led by James and Michelle Heimlich gathers at Christian Ministries to serve a meal and to fellowship with the men staying in the sleeping room. From left: **James Heimlich**, **Emily and Coby Anderson**, **Loraine Garrett**, and **Janis Wright**.

Highlights of Soup Lunch & Hanging of the Green



Top: Natalie Green; Deena and Brian Green.
Bottom: Jim Hiatt and Gayle Songer; Irene Hiatt,
Mark Flodder, and Eilla Mae Lemen;
Eastern Gate Quartet (lunch entertainment).



Michelle Heimlich to Fill Part-Time Staff Position

Katie Braswell, digital communications specialist at First Baptist Church, has resigned, and church member **Michelle Heimlich** will assume the role.

Katie, a former member of FBC and resident of Muncie, now lives in Wake Forest, North Carolina. She worked for two years communicating via the Wednesday Weekly, improving our social media presence, and providing other communications materials for the FBC family in Muncie. Katie also helped plan this publication and provided graphic design for the first seven issues.

Michelle, her husband, **James**, and their family have attended church at First Baptist for more than ten years. She grew up in Muncie and got her degree in journalism at Ball State University. She previously worked at Ball State in University Communications as a photographer for campus public relations.

Michelle said, "I am excited to use my gifts to help keep our First Baptist Church family informed and connected through all our different communication channels."

"We are delighted to have Michelle, who is right here with us and is aware of all the activities in the church, being able to easily communicate with our pastors and leadership team as she passes along information to the congregation," said **Molly Flodder**, editor of *The Visitor*. (Molly was part of a communications team that hired Katie shortly before former pastor Dr. Wade Allen left in early 2021.)


"We thank Katie for her hard work. She leaves us because of her part-time employment responsibilities," said Molly.

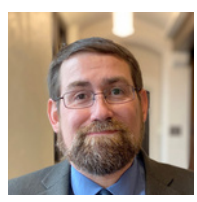
"It was a pleasure to be in communication with the caring and close-knit people at FBCM," said Katie, "and I am grateful for the opportunity." ✨



Several New CCT Leaders to be Elected

The highlighted members of the Church Coordination Team are ending their service commitments at the end of the year. The church body thanks them for their leadership during a challenging time. During the past three years, in-person services were halted two times because of COVID-19, services changed from two to one per week, a pastor left, an interim was hired, and new co-pastors were elected. In addition, major property improvement work was done on the church building.

On Sunday, December 18, there will be a business meeting after the service to elect a slate of leaders to replace these outgoing members of CCT. 



JAMES HEIMLICH



MOLLY FLODDER



GAYLE SONGER



CHERYL FLAHERTY



DEENA GREEN



JOE SONGER

First Baptist Church Leaders as of December 2022

Co-Senior Pastors—**Kendall Ellis** and **Jonathan Balmer**

Worship Arts Pastor—**Dr. Clifton Davis**

Church Coordination Team

Moderator—James Heimlich *

Treasurer—Dan Lemen

Clerk—Julie Kirklin

Worship—Emily Anderson

Property—Joe Songer *

Adult Ministries—Molly Flodder *

Youth Ministries—Deena Green *

Children's Ministries—Michelle Heimlich

Member Care—Cheryl Flaherty *

Outreach—Gayle Songer *

At Large—Larry Fouch

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