

The Visitor

February 2021

Opportunities for In-Person Worship and “Goodbye, Allens” Parade

FBC will reopen for in-person worship beginning February 7. Church Clerk Colleen Massoth will keep us apprised as those days approach. Read all churchwide emails to determine the status of that situation and also the stringent guidelines for signing in, where to sit, how to social distance, the importance of wearing a mask, and the like.

Members of the Church Coordination Team (CCT) have continued to meet frequently to examine the issues associated with COVID-19, have remained attentive to the Governor’s guidelines, and have tried to ascertain how to operate. We do not wish for anyone to venture out if they are not comfortable. In fact, several have told us they will not be back until after they have completed the vaccination process. In the meantime, all who have been exposed to anyone with COVID or who are experiencing any symptoms should stay home.

On Wade’s last Sunday, February 14, there will be an opportunity for a “Goodbye Parade” for those from the Sunday morning service and others who would like to participate but did not attend the service. At that time, everyone can drive by the Allens as they stand outside and express brief appreciations and good wishes.

At the end of the service, approximately 12 noon, please line your car up on Adams Street facing east (facing McDonalds if coming from the Ball Foundation building) and attendants will direct you. The service will run a little longer that day because of baptisms and a baby dedication. Watch for an all-church message from Colleen for any additional information.

Allen Family Is Moving to New Ministry in New York

By Molly Flodder, Adult Ministries

Dr. Wade Allen, our pastor since late August 2008, will leave First Baptist this month to pastor a church in Canandaigua, New York.

Wade came to us from Springfield, Illinois, although he’d had no plan to leave there. After much persuasion from FBC’s search committee, extensive prayers, and visits to our church, it became apparent to Wade and his wife, Christy, that they were being called by the Lord to Muncie. “That is a similar situation to our opportunity in New York,” said Wade. “We weren’t looking to be in a different ministry, but after the church there reached out to us repeatedly, much contemplation and prayer led us to know that God was calling us to a new opportunity.”

When Wade and Christy came to Muncie, their three children, Anna, Dawson, and Levi, were twelve, ten, and four respectively. Anna is now finishing her master's degree and getting married, Dawson is graduating from engineering school, and Levi is in the tenth grade.

There were many milestones during Wade's ministry in Muncie. A year after he arrived, the church celebrated its 150th anniversary. Another key event that was part of his time here included the completion of his doctorate degree from Northern Seminary. Then, in 2017, Wade took a sixteen-week sabbatical from the church, focusing on relaxation and reflection and doing some study on the death of Christendom as he and the family traveled abroad and in different parts of the US. In 2018, the congregation celebrated the tenth anniversary of his ministry here. (Wade's longevity at our church is the second longest in FBC's history.) Finally, he and the Church Coordination Team (CCT) have led the church through the landmines of navigating COVID-19.

During his study at Northern, many will remember Wade teaching us how to use a model of discerning God's will in our decision-making. That model has served us well, and will continue to as we seek God's will using prayer, listening, and seeking God's leading.

All of the church family will have different memories of Wade's 12 ½ years as pastor here. Many youth will remember the winter ski trips and the summer mission trips to Camp Barnabas. Anyone who has ever been part of the CCT will recall his outstanding administrative skills. Everyone will recall his technology-savvy skills that have helped us to have an outstanding church website, and improved communication capabilities that help us all stay abreast of events, times, and other information.

In 2019, a comprehensive evaluation showed us that he had high marks in most areas, especially preaching. One member of the FBC family said, "I learned so much about the Bible under Wade's preaching. I appreciate the Bible-based approach to his ministry and how he walked us through the Bible—even Revelation!"

Christy provided her interior decorating talents to beautify our elegant old church and helped establish things like the Easter breakfast, as well as serving in several ministries. In addition, her work as the wedding coordinator will be missed by people who have weddings at First Baptist Church.

As Wade reflected on their ministry here, he said, "We are grateful to have served this congregation during our children's formative years. You have all been a blessing as you have shown the love of Christ to us. We will always remember the loving congregation as representing Jesus in our lives. We will miss you but will continue to hold you in our prayers as we follow God's calling."

Thank you, Wade, Christy, Anna, Dawson, and Levi for your outstanding leadership, care, and friendship. We will be praying for you in your new opportunity, and we know you will be praying for Muncie First Baptist as we seek a new pastor. God be with you as you go.

Going-Away Party for the Allens Set for May

While a true send-off will not be happening in this time of COVID—except for some recognition and thank-yous in the February 14 service—there will be a time to celebrate the ministry of and thank the Allens when they are in the Midwest in May. The CCT is exploring the possibility of having a picnic, tentatively planned for Sunday afternoon, May 16. A team comprised of Clif Davis, Shirley Pittenger, and Molly Flodder, who suggested this idea, have said that it would be at a place with playground equipment and lots to do so that many of our young families will be able to enjoy the afternoon as well. More detail about the time, place, and what to bring will be shared as this plan unfolds.

State ABC Offices Help with Pastoral Search

By James Heimlich, Moderator

The American Baptist Churches of Kentucky and Indiana, led by Sooji Whitten Ford, executive minister, with the help of Dr. Bruce Cochran, region minister, are already at work helping FBC as we seek to find an interim and, ultimately, a permanent pastor. Our interim pastor search team is made up of Emily Anderson, Cheryl Flaherty, and me, and a larger, more long-term team will serve as our pastoral search team and will be assembled from throughout our congregation in the next few weeks.

One directive from the ABC office in Greenwood is to help us look at developmental tasks of the interim period:

1. Discovering our history, including typical patterns of making decisions and communicating—an area where our discernment process will be a great help.
2. Discovering our identity, both internally and as perceived by our community.
3. Dealing with changes in leadership. Inevitably a change in pastors leads to changes in lay leadership as some people take a break and others step up to help.
4. Renewing denominational relationships, a helpful thing as we seek an American Baptist pastor.
5. Preparing for a new pastor: tangible practicalities such as finances, housing, and office space; and intangible preparation by letting go to make room for an important new relationship.

We will commit to keeping the church apprised of our work as the months go by.

Thanks to Duane Davis for DVD Ministry Leadership: Team Members Needed

By Cheryl Flaherty, Member Care

For the past seventeen years, Duane Davis has burned DVDs of the services and delivered them to shut-ins in nursing homes and residences. In 2020 alone, Duane delivered and mailed 161 DVDs and created an additional 59, including 52 for the church archives. That is in addition to visits he made to shut-ins when DVDs were not involved. We are in awe of Duane's tireless efforts and cannot thank him enough for all he has done! Sadly, Duane has decided that he needs to step away from his much-loved ministry effective February 1.

You know it sometimes takes two to three people to replace someone like Duane? Well, that is where we find ourselves! Fortunately, Chance Lemen, son of Jeff and April and grandson of Dan and Ella Mae, will duplicate the DVDs. We may need some help in distributing the discs, especially after COVID is over. Please search your hearts and call me so that I can answer your questions about this opportunity to serve. We want to have our team in place before March. Taking a small group approach will enable this to be a very manageable form of service for anyone from 16–96! Call me at 765-520-7260 or Gayle Songer at 765-744-0991 no later than Friday, February 19. Now that we will be without a pastor, people will be stepping up to fill the gaps. This is an area where we need help. Please discern whether serving our shut-ins is a role you can play.

FBC Communications Team Is Making Improvements and Changes

The church communication team, comprised of church clerk Colleen Massoth, Molly Flodder, and Julie Davis, have been working on communications-related issues for almost a year now, having been assembled and led by Pastor Wade. They have made great progress in gearing up for altered and improved communications, both among church leadership and to the congregation. There will be a longer article detailing some of the new features coming up in the near future.

Handwriting the Book of John

Have you chosen to take the “handwrite the book of John” challenge in 2021? The idea is to handwrite ten verses a day. If you miss a day, don't worry! Just start up again the next day. For more information, google “hand copying the book of John Kairos partnership.” Last week a parishioner brought in her legal pad with several chapters finished! Way to go!

Lent Is Coming

The season of Lent begins on Wednesday, February 17. This forty-day period (no Sundays are included!!) ends on Easter, which is April 4 this year. Stay tuned for ways to participate in this season of reflection and preparation together with family and friends at FBC!

Praying for the Interim Process

Looking for ways to pray for our church as we begin the interim process? Here are five areas in which we can pray together:

1. Ask God to help us understand the **history** that brought us here, both joyful and difficult.
2. Pray about the **identity** God is calling us as a church to discover in this interim period and beyond.
3. Seek God's **wisdom** about how decisions will be made and how we can use our resources to encourage those around us.
4. Ask God to enable the American Baptist state and national **denominational leaders** to speak into our process.
5. Pray about the people at FBC and the people God is bringing to FBC, that our commitments will help bring a **hope-filled future** for our church and our community.

(Adapted from Kenneth D. Blazier, "The Tasks of a Church During the Interim Period," ABC-USA.org, <https://www.abc-usa.org/transitionministries/the-tasks-of-a-church-during-the-interim-period/>.)