

# *THE VISITOR*



## *Ordination Service and Celebration Set for November 5*

All members, friends, neighbors, and community associates are invited as we celebrate the ordination of **Pastor Kendall Ellis** and the ordination recognition of **Pastor Jonathan Balmer**. Festivities will begin with a special breakfast reception in the fellowship hall at 10:15 AM. The historic ordination service will be held during intergenerational worship on Sunday, November 5 at 10:45 AM at First Baptist Church, Muncie.

Rev. Sara Jane Nixon, Associate Pastor of Crestview Presbyterian Church (West Chester, Ohio), will be preaching the sermon. American Baptist Churches of Indiana & Kentucky Executive Minister Rev. Mark Thompson and Regional Minister Rev. Bruce Cochran will be giving the charge to the candidates. The congregation will pray for the pastors through the traditional laying on of hands. Worship will conclude with the newly ordained Kendall leading the church in the celebration of communion. 🏛️



## Wait . . . What is Ordination?

“Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.” - 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13 (NIV)



Ordination is a setting aside of a person by the church for a role in service and ministry. Those who are ordained often preach, disciple others, and administer the sacraments (or, as some

Baptists prefer, ordinances) of baptism and communion. It is both a recognition of gifting and a prayer for the Spirit’s continued gifting and guidance, accompanied by the laying on of hands. As UK Baptist theologian Stephen Holmes said, “The general, but by no means universal, Baptist pattern of leadership is twofold: elders [pastors] and deacons, whose responsibilities are respectively for the spiritual guidance and practical care of the church” (*Baptist Theology* [T&T Clark International: London, 2012]).

Baptists, emphasizing the autonomy of the local church under the lordship of Christ, have long cherished the important role of the local congregation in discerning God’s will and calling and ordaining the ministers of the church. Local Baptist congregations have done so without a bishop or synod deciding for them. But that is *not* to say that the local church is *alone* in this weighty decision. Baptists have a long history of respecting *all* of the following when it pertains to God’s call to pastoral ministry in the church:

- ◆ **a personal sense of a call to ministry,**
- ◆ **congregational confirmation, and**
- ◆ **counsel from other (“sister”) churches.**



## A Look Back at FBC Ordinations

While there have been very few ordinations taking place at First Baptist Church in its 164-year history, there were three in 1959: a rare occurrence in any church.

Ted Schuck was a young member who dedicated his life to full-time Christian service, and after a few years of pastoring and plans to attend Southern Seminary, he was ordained in February 1959.

A few months later, Frank Johnson, a graduate of Ball State Teachers College, was ordained after completing his second year at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary.

Jim Waters, who was licensed to preach by the church in 1952, had graduated from William Jewell College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He had assumed roles in church leadership in other locations and accepted the pastorate of the Maple Crest Baptist Church in Kokomo, Indiana, just prior to his ordination on September 25, 1959. 🏰

## IN MEMORIAM

Within the last quarter, the First Baptist Church family has mourned the deaths of **Ernestine Shields**, **Bob Oisten**, and **Sharon Jackson**. Please keep their families and friends in your prayers. All three were long-time members of our congregation. 🏰



# Ordination of Woman in 1885 Was an Anomaly

By Jonathan Balmer



Frances E. Townsley

As a case study to understand the how and why of Baptist ordination, consider the life of Frances E. Townsley—one of the first women ordained as a Northern (American) Baptist minister in 1885. Her autobiography, entitled *A Pilgrim Maid*, addresses God’s call to pastoral ministry: personal sense of a call, congregational confirmation, and counsel from other churches.

Frances Townsley grew up in Massachusetts, raised by a widowed mother who often took in tenants to make ends meet. Among the many coming-and-going temporary tenants was evangelist and reformer Sojourner Truth, who impressed Frances. After Frances’s Christian conversion, she attended the Evangelical Wheaton College in Illinois. Wheaton, *unlike* many universities at the time (like Yale or Harvard), admitted women. She studied languages and the Bible, and was an active writer—even penning an early history of Wheaton College.

The sudden death of Frances’s mother led her to become a teacher to support herself financially. One day, her friend Nell visited her at school. She said, “Dear, I am convinced that you are to preach the everlasting gospel of our precious Lord!” This surprised Townsley. And yet the suggestion left an indelible imprint on her.

“Why did the memory of past privileges, a mother’s Bible teaching, a thousand experiences once so mysterious and some of them so unusual, now seem to weave together into the warp and woof of my new purpose to take my friend’s suggestion and use my gifts of writing and speaking in teaching what I knew and should yet learn of God’s word and spirit and grace for men?” Townsley asks in her memoir. The answer became clearer as she followed God’s call into ministry.

**Here we see a sense of a personal call and gifting for ministry in Frances’s life**, instigated by the recognition of her friend. It is the beginning of her pathway to a life in ministry—and eventually ordination.

We live in a culture that valorizes and celebrates visionaries and “disruptors” (Silicon Valley is built on such stories of founders who “broke the mold” or “thought outside the box”). But what makes Frances Townsley’s story, and the idea of ordination, different is its deference to the discernment of the whole body of believers. In the Baptist tradition, the step of women’s ordination was collective and Spirit-led—not the fruit of a renegade individualism.

The viewpoint of Frances Townsley is contained in I Corinthians 14:40: That everything should be “done in a fitting and orderly way.”

As her evangelistic career developed, Townsley was eventually invited to pastor the Baptist church in Fairfield, Nebraska. She preached weekly. But she was a self-described “stickler for church order,” and refused to preside over communion, as she was unordained.


Though she noted not everyone practiced as she did, complaining that “men from our seminaries . . . brought confusion and discord into the church by administering ordinances (and one would have performed a marriage ceremony) without proper ecclesiastical sanction.” While such particularity may sound odd to modern ears, it’s clear that Townsley had great respect for the church’s order and the role of recognition and setting aside that ordination entails. (Our church by-laws set aside Deacons and Elders/Pastors for the role of administering communion).

Her church soon grew tired of sending for outside ordained ministers for communion Sundays. And, eventually, Townsley was persuaded to allow an ordaining council to examine her. A man she calls “old Deacon Spencer” told her, “You do all the drudgery of a pastor's office, and the endorsement of the same should be open, not tacit, and as public as your service.” **Here we see the church’s recognition serving as an important part of the ordination process.**

Then, an ordaining council of fourteen Baptist churches convened and examined Frances E. Townsley for three hours. The council recessed to review her testimony, understanding of Biblical doctrine, and apparent gifting. They also deliberated the principle objection to her ordination: “In his gifts and callings, is the Holy Ghost limited by the fact of sex?” In the end, their vote to ordain was unanimous. **Here we see the role that counsel from other churches plays in Baptist ordination.**

As one might imagine, this step of ordaining a woman (novel for its time and place) attracted a lot of attention after the fact. Townsley took offense to the idea put forth by a certain prominent Eastern Baptist paper that it was *only* her personal “deep conviction of having been called of God to preach the Gospel” serving as the reason she was ordained. The paper called this a “feeble justification” accepted by a “small council in a remote frontier town.”


Townsley replied to these objections: “Certainly! I fully agree with the writer that ‘a conviction though genuine may be a mistaken one.’ But not a report sent out by that council ever hinted at such a ‘reason.’ An ordination council is called partly to decide whether the conviction of the candidate is ‘a genuine’ or ‘a mistaken’ one. They referred to my conviction, but stated as a reason for voting to ordain, *their own united, unanimous conviction*” (emphasis original). She also noted that the frontier was several hundred miles west of them, and the council larger than most she had seen convened since, so that objection was also unwarranted.

*Editor’s Note: We can see all three in Townsley’s story: a **personal call, church confirmation, and the counsel of other churches** are important parts of her own historic ordination. And, while much has changed since 1885 in American Baptist denominational life, the process Pastor Kendall and Pastor Jonathan are going through has each of these components as well.* 

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## Planned Open House Will Reach Out to Downtown Neighbors

The Heimlich life group is organizing a church open house on September 23 from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Neighbors may first notice community musical groups playing or food being served. In addition, tours of our historic church will be part of this day. Finally, there will be prize drawings with items from a few downtown merchants.

“This is a chance for us to get to know our neighbors,” said **Loraine Garrett**, a member of the life group. “Our group is working hard, but we’ll need other volunteers to help make this a special day and to make our neighbors feel welcome.” 



# Ordination Timeline

July 2022

Pastors Jonathan Balmer and Kendall Ellis begin their pastorate at First Baptist Church Muncie.

Sept. 2022

Pastor Kendall is licensed by First Baptist Church Muncie.

Oct. 2022

Regional and Executive Ministers of the American Baptist Churches of Indiana & Kentucky informed that the pastors would like to enter the ordination (Kendall) / ordination recognition (Jonathan) process.

Mar. 2023

The pastors have their first individual meetings with the denomination's regional Committee on Ordination and Recognition of Ministerial Standing (CORMS).

May/June. 2023

Pastors complete individual personal and psychological inventories and psychological evaluations and profiles.

Sept. 2023

Pastors submit their individual doctrinal essays, responding to questions and explaining their understanding of important matters of doctrine, ministry, and theology.

Oct. 2023

Pastors are evaluated based on their doctrinal essays and the information gathered and CORMS issues a recommendation.

Nov. 2023

Ordination service for Pastor Kendall and ordination recognition of Pastor Jonathan.



# Save the Date for Fresh-Brewed Life Breakfast

The fall Fresh-Brewed Life women's breakfast has been set for Saturday, October 28, from 10:00 AM to noon in the Fellowship Hall.

Betsy Whaley, a nonprofit leader from Berea, Kentucky, will be the featured speaker. Her talk will focus on navigating life's transitions with grace and humor. For sixteen years, Betsy and her husband, David Jones, served at First Baptist Church: he as youth pastor and later administrative pastor, and she in lay-ministry roles. For most of her years in Indiana, Betsy was deputy director of the Julian Center, a domestic violence shelter in Indianapolis. Today she plays a key role in a nonprofit focused on economic development for communities in Appalachia. Betsy is an ordained minister and is very comfortable in the pulpit. She brings a deep sense of concern for society as well as a sense of humor to her speaking engagements.

"This will be our fourth Fresh-Brewed Life breakfast," said **Julie Davis**, event chairperson. "We are thankful to have **Brian Green** and a variety of FBC volunteers coordinating the food items. Our team of FBC women works hard to plan a morning that's focused on helping ladies from both our congregation and the community feel warmly welcomed and loved as they are. Any female aged twelve or older is invited." Attendance is roughly three-quarters FBC women and one-quarter guests and others from the community.

Registration for this event will begin in mid-October. Watch your *Wednesday Weekly* and other church emails for details!



# *Discerning a Call to Ministry*

BY CO-PASTORS

JONATHAN BALMER & KENDALL ELLIS



THE  
SHARED  
PULPIT

**K:** I made the local newspaper (somehow) after a striking performance at my fourth grade class's living wax museum. Everyone in my class chose a career to research, wrote a script about it, and dressed the part for the day while we taught younger students about the different jobs that made up our Frankfort, Kentucky, community. My great-grandmother, Lorena, proudly cut the article and displayed my picture on the fridge for years. The career I chose: *dog groomer* (complete with my favorite toy dog whose hair I'd style for hours!). I guess you could say that becoming a minister wasn't exactly on my short list of career goals. But incredible things happen when we allow God to guide our steps.

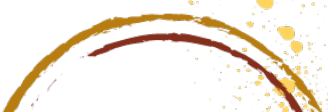
**J:** I had an influential youth minister, and it was under his leadership I first considered ministry for myself. My eleventh-grade English teacher, Ms. Anne Helwig (who I later found out was an American Baptist), wrote on my review for a poetry presentation "You could be an English teacher—or a Preacher." I have done both of those things in my life. These mentors were inspiring and perceptive!

**K:** When I finally graduated with a bachelor's degree from Georgetown College, I had no idea what God's purpose for my life was. Despite preparing for medical school for four years, I felt God closing that door in my life. I took a gap year, when I had more jobs than I could count—just to see if anything stuck. It was during this wandering period that I first heard a quote by theologian Frederick Buechner that has stuck with me ever since: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

**J:** I didn't enter college set on going into ministry. The job markets had not recovered from the Great Recession of 2008/2009. A combination of studying what I loved while still "being marketable" drove my decisions. I decided to major in English and history and was certified to teach eighth through twelfth grade in those subjects. But after various church internships and teaching in Kentucky and South Korea, the idea of seminary wasn't going away. I asked my college pastor about seminary, and he didn't seem absolutely horrified that I would consider it. So I began to prayerfully apply, and the church where I was a member at the time voted to endorse me for seminary.

**K:** The center of the Venn diagram between my passion and the world's hunger happened to be congregational social work. So naturally, I followed my then-boyfriend to Waco, Texas. God provided a full tuition scholarship to study toward a dual Master of Divinity and Master of Social Work from Baylor University. And throughout that time, doors opened for me to serve both churches and Christian nonprofit organizations. Finally, after years of feeling lost, God revived a sense of purpose in my life. I knew I was exactly where God had called me to be. When Jonathan and I finally got married in 2019, we both knew that one day God would call us to serve in ministry together.

**J:** Seminary was a time of learning, affirmation, and confirmation in my call. I had always been troubled by the warning of James 3:1 ("Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" [NIV]) ever since we first studied James in my youth group days. But I came to learn that "whatever God commands, God supplies" (Augustine of Hippo). We see that in Scripture. God sometimes does call us to places with high expectations. But he also does not leave us alone. He equips the church, "the saints," for good works (Ephesians 4:11–13).





## Get to Know . . .

By the time you read this article, **Abby Shreves** will be experiencing her first few weeks of college at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. For a Cowan High School graduate who has not ventured far from home, this incredible change of venue and variety of new experiences may be difficult at best! Although her first semester will mostly be general education requirements, a class called Current Topics of Astrophysics, will be her first foray into courses required for her major. As a self-described A/B student who has had only one physics class, Abby knows she has her work cut out for her.



**Abby Shreves**

In ninth grade, Abby got hooked on the TV show *Stargate*, a science fiction television program about space travelers trying to find a way to return to earth. It really piqued her interest in astrophysics. Having had some issues with epilepsy, Abby knew she would likely never be able to be an astronaut, so she became focused on what she would need to learn and how to proceed to build a career in this field. When she graduates, she will earn a bachelor's of science in astronomy and astrophysics.

For the past two summers, Abby has been employed at TeenWorks, which has provided her with six weeks of community-based work and weekly professional development. Most of that work this past summer was done at Prairie Creek Reservoir. In addition, she was employed at Mitchell Daycare, a YMCA-partner organization, for part of the summer.

Work allowed her little time to go to Summit Lake, a place she thoroughly enjoys. Swimming, kayaking, and riding in a boat are all relaxing activities for her. "I also like to draw, paint, read, and watch movies," she said.

Abby has been part of the team of youth running the live stream camera at First Baptist Church during Sunday morning services for more than a year. That service option was first presented during the worst days of COVID and has continued for shut-ins and people who are participating in church from home.

She is the younger sister of **Elizabeth Shreves**, who is involved in the children's ministry at First Baptist Church. They have a younger brother, Aaron. At home, Abby has two dogs and two cats whom she likely misses as she is far away in college.

Abby's grandfather, who is a minister, has been influential in her Christian life. "However, I think the most influential Christian in my life," said Abby, "is **Irene Hiatt** at FBC."

"As I leave, I'm excited about yet scared of possibilities. But a person has to step out," she said. "I have to keep believing and have faith and trust in God." 🏠

## *Help with College Student Support Projects*

While college students, like Abby, are meeting new people and navigating new experiences, they need to know that their church family is praying for them and caring for them. Anyone who would be willing to help send an occasional goodie and encouragement box for Abby while she is away should contact **Irene Hiatt** or **Molly Flodder**.

We have several college students who could use notes of encouragement or an occasional pick-me-up. **Andy Heimlich**, for example, started his schooling at Ivy Tech Community College this summer. Watch the *Wednesday Weekly* for ways you can become involved. 🏠

# *FBC Has Long Ties to Ball State University Campus Ministry*

In the 1950s, there was an increased interest in religion on college campuses. For example, Muncie-area Baptists established the Baptist Student Foundation at Ball State Teachers College. The members of First Baptist Church and their pastor, Dr. Ray Johnson, were active in that development, and the ministry started in 1954.



**South Gateway to Campus**

In the spring of 1960, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Ball gave their former residence on Petty Road to the Indiana Baptist Convention for use by the Baptist Student Foundation. The gift was in honor of Mr. Ball's father, William C. Ball, one of the five brothers who founded what is now Ball Corporation. In the Petty Road location, there was space for at least six students to live, as well as areas for Bible study, meetings, and fellowship. Three current FBC members who lived in that particular "Baptist House" during their BSU years were **Carolyn Harke, Julie Davis, and Janis Wright.**

Near the end of 2005 the large and stately Baptist House had to be sold. Its size and age made it a maintenance expense that the organization could not support. The group purchased a ranch-style house on Abbott Street at the northeast corner of campus in 2006.

In 2009, David Jones became part-time campus minister. He replaced the retiring Charlie Gilbert after David's role of youth pastor ended and his short stint as interim administrative pastor at FBC

was over. David served five and a half years. Just after he took the helm, he led a student retreat during which the students decided to name the House and the ministry the Oasis.

Finally, after David's move to Kentucky, the Oasis became a home for a few international students who hosted Bible study and discussion for approximately two years, according to **Joe Songer**, who was on the Board from 2009 until recently. Student leaders who lived at the Oasis house were coordinators of that work.

Joe looks back to the '60s: although most of his studies were at Indiana University, he spent time at BSU and joined the then-named Baptist Student Union. He sees it as an important time in his Christian growth. Those days in the '60s to meet with like-minded students gave him a direction to continue his development in the Lord.

"It's an important task for churches to support students as they find their independence, praying that they will link up with experiences that will deepen their faith," said Joe.

In 2019, the Oasis house on Abbott Street was sold to the university, which had been buying up properties along that street.

Plans for resurrecting and building a strong BSU student and Baptist church connection are underway. Joe points out after having observed the final years in the Oasis house that the ministry to international students is very ripe. It is a chance for church supporters and funders to have new mission fields, helping students give their lives to the Lord or strengthening their relationships with the Lord as they develop bonds with other Christians.

A Board has been restructured, and Pastor Jonathan serves as one of the members along with several pastors across the state. "Our focus will be on international students, and we are in the process of hiring a part-time pastor who will lead the students," he said. Jonathan reported that the Board has been talking with **Robert Burton**, the pastor of Riverside Baptist Church, and everyone is feeling it is a good place to host Bible studies and fellowship for this new ministry. This relaunch, according to Jonathan, will take some time, but the Board is committed to "doing it right." 🏰



# Summer VBS Theme "Shine Jesus Light" Was Stellar





## FIRST BAPTIST LEADERS

### Senior Co-Pastors

Kendall Ellis

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Jonathan Balmer

jonathan@fbcuncie.org

### Worship Arts Pastor

Dr. Clifton Davis

clif@fbcuncie.org

### Ministry Resident

James Heimlich

### Church Coordination Team

Moderator – Doug Gregg

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Worship – Emily Anderson

Outreach – MaryAnne Bayer

Property – Larry Bradburn

At-Large – Larry Fouch

Youth – Loraine Garrett

Member Care – Debbie Gregg

Adult – Carolyn Harke

Children – Michelle Heimlich

Clerk – Julie Kirklin

Treasurer – Dan Lemen

### Deacons

Deacon Chair – Brian Green

deaconchair@fbcuncie.org

Emily Anderson

Larry Bradburn

Larry Fouch


Irene Hiatt

Nina Oisten

Jane Patton

## *Start Planning for Holiday Events*


Watch the *Wednesday Weekly* for announcements about upcoming events in November and December. Among them are these things you won't want to miss!

- Fall Fruit Basket Preparation and Delivery to Shut-ins (Saturday, Nov. 7)
- Harvest Dinner (after church on Sunday, Nov. 19)
- Hanging of the Greens and Soup Lunch (after church on Sunday, Dec. 3)
- Christmas Eve Service (Sunday evening, Dec. 24) 


## *Stay Informed Through Wednesday Weekly*

All congregants with email receive the *Wednesday Weekly* each Wednesday morning. A quick click opens the document. Inside the *Weekly*, there is a blog focusing on the pastors' upcoming sermons as well as an assortment of announcements. Other links on the page allow people to look at the youth newsletter, children's newsletter, the prayer list, the month's birthday list, and other information. This e-publication is also available on the church website.

Information for this weekly publication may be forwarded to the digital communications specialist for the church, **Michelle Heimlich**, at [info@fbcuncie.org](mailto:info@fbcuncie.org).

For those who do not see the publication via email, there is an opportunity to read what it contains as a hard copy. These are located at the Welcome Center. 

## *Proofreader Needed*

Someone with a good grasp of grammar who can easily pick up on typos is needed to help with *The Visitor* each quarter. We do not need a copyeditor to address style or rewrite copy, because Julie Davis is a professional editor. Contact Molly Flodder or Michelle Heimlich if you are interested. 

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