

THE VISITOR



How Can We Serve?

In our lives as Christians, we are called to action. We are called to use our unique gifts and circumstances to spread the message of God's love to everyone around us. The Bible tells story after story of ordinary people who have faithfully, yet imperfectly, served God in their lives. We are much the same. The work that God has done at First Baptist Church in Muncie, Indiana, is not finished. No matter what our gifts and abilities, God has work for us to do each day. Let's continue to listen and pay attention to God's calling for us to serve. Let us pray that we will hear God's call to serve, choose to obey his call, and act in service to God and each other. 🏛️

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

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GET TO KNOW: Louise Head



In spite of a busy and productive life, Louise Head's circumstances took a big turn the spring of last year when health problems and four surgeries for intestinal-related problems took her off the active list and forced her to slow down.

One thing she hated to give up was teaching Sunday school, which she had done for fourteen years with the adult Friendship Class and later a combined class of Friendship, Two x Two, and Bykota. Louise took over teaching for the late Florence Arnold and felt she had "big shoes to fill," but she enjoyed teaching and loved all that she learned about the Bible during that experience.

With the onset of her illness, it was difficult for Louise to care for her husband, Rodney, who has been in failing health for several years. Rodney now lives at The Woodlands, a long-term care facility a few blocks from their house. His outgoing personality has helped him enjoy being at the facility, although his health issues don't allow him to be active in any way.

As Louise's health problems have intensified, son Ward (the middle of Louise and Rodney's three sons) has had to step up and take more care of the house, the shopping, and other responsibilities.

But let's step back to what the busy days at the Head house were like before Louise and Rodney were in their eighties and health struggles came their way.

Louise, who was born in the Beech Grove part of Indianapolis, first came to Muncie through pursuing her baccalaureate degree in nursing at Ball State University. When she began working at Ball Memorial Hospital, fellow nurses saw that there could be a spark between Louise and Rodney, the young respiratory therapist. With some urging, the couple began dating, and have now been married more than sixty years.

Louise and Rodney reared three sons—David, Ward, and Victor—and now have six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Although the boys all grew up at FBCM, it is Ward who has given forty-five years of his life to running the sound system during services; at weddings, funerals, and other events; and however he is needed to use that expertise.

Louise was a bedside nurse for much of her career, mentoring other young nurses and providing a warm touch and listening ear to the patients for whom she cared. Her favorite department was oncology, a department that has historically received high patient satisfaction points for outstanding care.

In 2000, when she was in her early sixties, she saw a nurse she knew and felt God nudging her to go speak with the woman. At the time, she sensed this would be a significant conversation and didn't want to do it, but she managed to stop to say hello.

“During that conversation, this woman, the coordinator of the new nursing program at Ivy Tech Community College, asked me if I would consider teaching in the program,” said Louise. “I decided to do it and I never looked back.”

Louise had completed a master’s in adult education earlier in her career and had mentored other nurses throughout her work. She was a perfect candidate for the new position. “The opportunity to teach for those eight years brought me pure joy,” said Louise. “I loved helping the students learn and build experience during their rotations at the hospital.”

In the latter part of her career, as more and more of her time was spent working independently, Louise decided that she and Rodney needed to do a volunteer job at the church that brought them together more. Because she had a nice alto voice and he was a strong tenor, they settled on the choir and spent more than two decades in Sanctuary Choir.

Another talent discovered by a nonprofit community leader in Muncie was Louise’s speaking voice. She was asked to narrate a video about the importance of stimulating a baby as part of the brain development process of a newborn. The video was distributed to most childcare providers in the community and used by many of them as a tool for parents to learn about singing, talking, and providing other stimuli to help in a baby’s development. Louise’s confident yet soothing voice was perfect for sharing the information.

Nowadays Louise is more confined to the house. She no longer sews as she used to, but enjoys interactions with her cats—Jasmine, Sarah, and Jack.

Louise reflects on her life: “I couldn’t make it day to day without the Lord. God placed me at Ball State, led me to jobs I wanted to have, and especially pushed me into my last, incredible experience in teaching. I have been so blessed.” 🏠

First Baptist Plans “Downtown Presence” at Summer Event

“Fire Up DWNTWN Muncie” is an annual summer street festival organized by the Muncie Downtown Development Partnership. The event, to be held Saturday, August 5, 2023 from 1:00 -10:00 p.m., is sponsored by Ivy Tech and various Muncie businesses. Featured activities include hot-air balloon rides, a hot-air balloon glow with special-shaped balloons, NASCAR and E-Matrix simulators, barbecue ribs, food trucks, live music, a hot rod car show, kids’ activities, and much more.

Because over 100 volunteers are needed to help the event run smoothly, FBCM stepped up last year to provide help, as a way of showing support from another downtown entity.

“There are volunteer opportunities to help with everything from setting up or chasing balloons, to setting up and tearing down of the event. Members of our congregation are invited to volunteer,” said Kendall Ellis, co-pastor.

Be on the lookout for more information about how you can be part of this fun event! with our downtown neighbors! 🏠



Our Watchword: "Not to be served, but to Serve"

THE
SHARED
PULPIT

BY CO-PASTORS JONATHAN BALMER & KENDALL ELLIS

"For Even The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45

Earlier this year, we encouraged the Church Coordination Team to consider adopting a "watchword" which would guide our ministry decisions in the coming year. While mission statements have their place, a mission statement typically puts the organization at the center. A watchword, however, is a promise from scripture about who God is and reminds us who God has called his people to be. Watchwords are a tool for congregations to refocus their attention on God's will over our own busy agendas.

We considered many possible watchwords from the many good promises of God we find in Scripture. But after discussion, it became clear that for this season of First Baptist's history, God was reminding us "not to be served, but to serve."

In Mark, some of the disciples once asked Jesus for a place of honor in the Kingdom of God. Jesus reminded them that even he came to serve, not to be served. When God shows us who he is in Jesus, he comes as a servant. And Jesus reigns as King in a totally unexpected way: in giving up his life.

We believe serving God is perfect freedom. There is a prayer often attributed to Augustine of Hippo. The prayer cries out to "God, Whom to know is to live, Whom to serve is to reign, and Whom to praise is the health and joy of the soul." 🏰

Stellar VBS Kicks Off in July

Last summer's Vacation Bible School was deemed "a big success," and First Baptist Church Muncie is gearing up to host this year's event Sunday, July 23-Thursday, July 27 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Michelle Heimlich, Bible School Director and the head of the church's Children's ministry, said, "Let's get ready for Vacation Bible School! This year the theme is Stellar!"



We are going to learn unforgettable Bible songs, eat tasty treats, play fun games, make cool crafts, and go on amazing Bible adventures!"

According to Michelle, the effort calls for lots of help to make VBS a success, and the kids are not the only ones who will be blessed! "We need people to be group leaders, station leaders, snack helpers, and nursery workers," said Michelle.

Please let Michelle know if you want to help! Every day children will learn what it means to shine Jesus's light in daily life. 🏰

The Crosses Depart from Serving Children for 50 Years

Dave and Joyce Cross, long-time caregivers for FBCM toddlers, have retired from the position they held for 50 years. Toddlers, typically two- and three-year-olds, passed through the nursery doors, played on the rocking horse and the wooden slide, ate their Goldfish crackers, participated in Sunday School class, and looked forward to their next Sunday with “Dave and Joyce.”

On May 21, the Children's Ministry organized a time of visitation and recognition for Dave and Joyce during doughnut hour. There were many on hand to greet them. Parents and students from past and present shared cards and notes of thanks to honor them.

“It is amazing to think that our children and our grandchildren were loved and cuddled by this wonderful couple,” remarked one long-time church member.



Joyce leading the Palm Sunday parade in April of 2021.

“The kids all had a better foundation because of Dave and Joyce’s love and dedication.” 🏡

Helping FBC Children Grow Up

by Joyce Cross for *We Are the Clay: God Molding Lives at First Baptist Church*

We came to FBC in 1972 when our daughter was four and our son was one. Before we had been attending very long, I became one of the dozens of ladies who took a turn watching the nursery every few weeks. Back then there were not only lots more people attending our church, but it seems like there was a higher percentage of people willing to volunteer.

A couple of years after we began attending, Pat Varner, who oversaw the nursery work, convinced me to help with scheduling and running the nursery. The rest is history. And now, about forty-five years later, my husband, Dave, and I are still a part of this ministry as we lead the two- and three-year-old nursery class.

There are so many memories for me: children whom I rocked to sleep, children who threw up on me, children who talked to me nonstop (even though I couldn’t understand a word they were saying), children going through potty training, children who couldn’t be without their special bears or stuffed animals and asked me to watch out for them, and children who said they wanted to name the new expected twins in their family “Mr. Dave” and “Miss Joyce.”

I remember so many conversations and funny things the children have said across the years.

A few memorable situations had to do with children and their reactions to a recent surgery I had. One of the children always prayed for me and expected her family to pray for me too. One day she asked them to say the prayer at mealtime again because they forgot to pray for Joyce!

Another little one got hold of my knee scooter when I wasn't walking yet, sat on it, and said to me, "Hop on!"

Another child's family brought some food while I was recovering, and he was at the door before the rest of the family and running into my arms with the biggest hug. I am blessed by all of them, and they make me laugh!

To this day, those teens and adults who are still at church or who come back to visit want to see the nursery and to see the rocking horse or the slide that they loved so much. I always feel like maybe they want to see me, too, and I certainly want to visit with them and learn where they are and what they're doing. I'm so impressed to learn about their careers, to hear about their families, and to hope I had a little part in them growing up.

One thing that has surprised parents of two- and three-year-olds over the years is that I insist on a brief Sunday school session and have always been able to get the children to sit down and learn a short statement or hear a brief story. "We could never get him to sit still like that!" moms and dads have said. But the children know that as soon as the music starts, they are to come to the table and get their picture to color and lesson handout. I tell a brief story. We sing songs and do motions with them. It helps them learn about

Own a Copy of *We Are the Clay*

We Are the Clay, a collection of stories told in the first person by active church attendees, was published in 2019.

The project was a team collaboration led by Julie Davis, who also edited the book.

"Our goal was twofold: First, we wanted the congregation to learn to recognize and articulate how God had been at work in their lives. Second, we wanted those declarations of God's faithful care to be a testimony to those around us and those who will come after us.

"It was a gift to us, as a team, to be able to learn more about others in our congregation and participate with them as they chronicled their personal journeys."

Writers were asked to think about some way—big or small—that God had been at work in their life, either at that time or in their past. They were invited to write that narrative and submit it to the initiative, which the steering committee called the Story Project.

There are thirty-five stories in the book, four of which were written about church members who had passed away. The stories are divided into different themes: "God Is Shepherd," "God Is Savior," "God Is Protector," "God Is Provider," "God Is Healer," and "God Is Present."

We Are the Clay is available in two formats: paperback and Kindle. You can purchase a copy on Amazon.com at this link: <https://amzn.to/3OCCwRs>.



the Bible and little lessons for getting along in life.

I knew I had a knack for little kids, but several years into my time with the nurseries I was asked to help with youth too. My first response was, “Youth! I can’t do that!”

When I finally agreed to help with the teens, I was blessed in ways I never dreamed of. My faith grew stronger, and I gained insight along with the kids I was helping to lead.

That experiment to help with the youth lasted thirty-four years!

I didn’t lead many of the meetings or the lessons for the teens, but I helped with everything else. I loved the mission trips and trips to conferences, Green Lake, West Virginia, Puerto Rico, California, and lots of other places. I especially loved our visit to the Native American Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. I was able to help not only with the youth in our church, but also for fifteen years with the students at the Baptist House at Ball State. Times working at Camp Tippy (Tippecanoe Baptist Camp) during the twenty-three years I help-ed there were also very special.

There were fundraisers like paper drives, bunking together in various settings, practical jokes, and lots of laughter. I recall trying to walk on a swinging bridge and going on a zip-line, even though I was fearful of both! I do have to say I loved the zip-line!

I believe I helped a few kids with serious problems, such as their parents going through a divorce, a breakup with a boyfriend, peer pressure, and even one suicide attempt.

I learned that each young person had unique qualities and that I had to respect them as individuals. I could be firm, and often needed to be, but I also had to listen and be respectful, and that helped us have great relationships. You must be able to see goodness in a small child and in older kids. Many of these kids had a great sense of humor, and being able to laugh with each of them was important to them and to me.



Dave and Joyce Cross

It was wonderful to work with kids I had taught as toddlers who were now teenagers.

It was wonderful to meet other teens whom I didn’t know as small children. I don’t really work with youth at church anymore, but those days were some of the happiest in my life. I still have ties to teenagers, however, as Dave and I bring goodies and drinks to the cross-country team at Monroe Central High School, which is just across the road from our house. It started when our younger grand-son was in seventh grade, and even though he is an adult now, we still love to meet new gals and guys and support them and the coaches. We love it.

My own family is grown, and most of my grand-children are grown; one was recently married. Dave is retired, and I have been retired from my work in medical office administration for about five years. Although I have had some personal health issues, I still look forward to being with the little children every Sunday.

In looking back, I know that all these experiences have been outstanding. I thank God that I have been blessed in ways I never dreamed. I feel Him even stronger in my life. I know that in helping the children at First Baptist Church grow up, I have been led by the Lord. He gives us what we need when we need it. I have enjoyed feeling like people can trust me and know that I love these children, because I really, really do. 🏠

FBCM Gets Building Improvements

Updates and repairs are part of taking care of the 94-year-old house of worship that God has given to us. Recent work efforts include

- Purchase of a new ice machine for our kitchen
- Installation of an automatic door opener on the handicap-accessible door at our circle drive
- Repair of the elevator "pit," and installation of a sump pump and alarm to keep our elevator safe and dry
- Moving the washer and dryer outlets in our boiler room to keep our building up to code
- Repair of the sanctuary roof
- Renovation of two rooms in the Kids' Center to create a Kids' Library and Music Room 🏠



Larry Bradburn
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