

THE VISITOR



Praise and Proclaim: Deacons Are Faithful in Serving

At First Baptist Church, the definition of *deacon* has fit the role deacons play: a servant or minister in the church, tasked with various responsibilities. The term originates from the Greek word *diakonos*, meaning “servant.” In the early church, deacons were appointed to assist the apostles, particularly in serving food and caring for the needy (Acts 6:1–6).

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul wrote to his young assistant Timothy to care for the church at Ephesus and included directives on the appointment of qualified church leaders.

For many decades, First Baptist leaders included a group of male deacons and a separate group of female deaconesses. The females played several roles, including calling on shut-ins. For more than twenty years, the diaconate has been combined, and both women and men make up its membership. This equal role in the leadership group reflects the Biblical model, as Phoebe is specifically named as a deacon by Paul in Romans 16:1.

While some roles have remained the same—preparation for communion and baptism—the other common thread involves service. Deacons are “not to be served, but to serve” (see Mark 10:45), the FBC watchword for the last operational year. For example, past deacons collected offerings to assist members and others in the community with financial needs, and that function will continue.

The revamped deacon ministry described on page four outlines the role of the new diaconate, their deacon circles, and the way in which they will operate moving forward. 🏛️

The Best Tool in Each Season

THE
SHARED
PULPIT

By Co-Pastor Kendall Ellis

“[Jesus] told them this parable: ‘No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.’” –Luke 5:36 (NIV)

Pen in hand and my copy of *Canoeing the Mountains* by Tod Bolsinger in front of me, I had never heard the story of Lewis and Clark quite this way before.

I remembered learning in elementary school that Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were led by Sacagawea to explore and map out as much of the western Louisiana Territory as possible. What I didn't realize was the extent of the challenge caused by the Rocky Mountains.

Apparently, Lewis and Clark had brought with them canoes and paddles because they had expected to find an east/west waterway that would take them all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Much to their surprise, their oars were entirely useless in the rocky mountain terrain. They had a choice to make:

1. Go home because the terrain was different than what they expected,
2. Keep searching for the waterway that never existed, OR
3. Adapt to the needs of the terrain with new tools and expectations.

Perhaps like me in that seminary Christian leadership class several years ago, you are reading this and reflecting on your own life. The world is ever-changing at a fast pace. We are in uncharted territory, the terrain of our lives doesn't look like what we expected years ago, and the tools you used to get through life just don't seem to be cutting it anymore. If that's you, you are in good company. But there is still great joy for the journey ahead.

Bolsinger writes, “[When you] are in uncharted terrain...what you do is default to what you know. You do again what you have always done before.” But he goes on to say that just because an action or mindset is your default, it doesn't mean that you can't change. Like Lewis and Clark who ditched the canoes for hiking sticks, Christians have adapted century after century to faithfully follow God's leading and meet the needs of the communities around them. Even Jesus challenged his disciples not to force the new into the old but to consider how each season stands on its own.

This is not to say, “Out with the old, in with the new.” Not everything new is good and not everything old is bad. Conversely, not everything new is bad and not everything old is good. In fact, the age of something is rarely the question at hand. The real question is that of fit. What tool best fits the terrain of the present moment? In other words: How can I steward what God has given me to praise and proclaim with FBCM most effectively in this specific season of my life?



International Students Benefit from Charis Ministry

After a busy winter of collecting coats for international students, as well as food and supplies, Charis Ministry will host a fundraising dinner to further support the American Baptist campus ministry work with international students. “We appreciate all the support from the First Baptist Church family and welcome anyone who would like to continue to show love and aid to international students at Ball State University,” said **Daniel Harris**, Charis minister.



The fundraiser is **April 11 at noon** at Riverside Avenue Baptist Church, 3700 W Riverside Ave.



FUNDRAISER
FOR CHARIS STUDENT MINISTRY



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Dodgeball Sets Scene for YMCA Bible Study

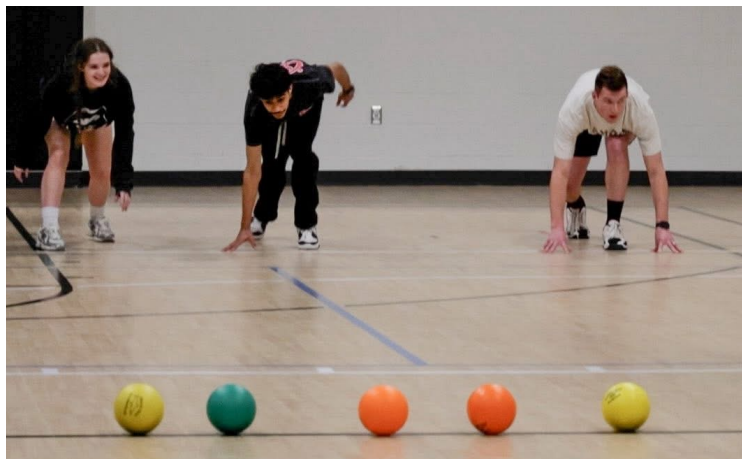


Pastors Jonathan and Kendall were asked by YMCA and Youth For Christ leadership last fall to host a Bible study for youth in sixth through twelfth grades. Having no idea what to expect, they began showing up to lead activities during open gym on Tuesday nights at 6:00 p.m. and see where things would go from there.

“I’m not an athlete, but we were eager to meet students,” said Pastor Jonathan. “While we knew no one at first, through trial and error, we came upon a game which would be easy to pick up and play, and would help us build connections: dodgeball. Everyone knows dodgeball!”

So out came the dodgeballs! Week after week, playing dodgeball became a way to meet and develop friendships with people. Throughout the fall, Jonathan and Kendall met with over thirty students. Congregational Social Work Intern Brandi Carden served snacks. YFC Northside City Life Director Nate Lex joined mid-semester to expand their reach by playing with the basketball crew.

Building on this momentum, the YMCA, YFC, and FBCM co-hosted a dodgeball tournament on President’s Day. Approximately forty students joined in the competition with another estimated thirty students hanging out to watch the action. In addition to the games, FBCM utilized grant funds to provide a pizza lunch to all students in



sixth through twelfth grade who were in the gym to make up for the closed school cafeterias. While eating, YFC Executive Director Hope Lehman shared a brief devotional and invited all the students to return the next Tuesday for the Bible study and continued fun.



The Bible study began February 24 and will continue on Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m. throughout the Spring semester. The YMCA has generously allowed the Bible study to be open to all sixth through twelfth graders, no membership required, and students are encouraged to continue playing dodgeball together in the gym following the Bible Study. 🏰

FBCM Families Are Photo Worthy

On Mother’s Day, May 10, each family (or single person) will have the opportunity for an informal portrait, to acknowledge the importance of the various households that make up our own church family. On Father’s Day, June 21, there will be a follow-up photoshoot for anyone who was unavailable for the first session.

Stay tuned for more details on this opportunity! 🏰

New Deacons Ministry Kicks Off at FBC

In addition to continuing the work of the ordinances of communion and baptism as the diaconate has done for the past decades, five new deacons will expand their roles. Those five are **Jim Butler** (Chair), **Dick Flaherty**, **Aaron Smith**, **Gayle Songer**, and **Janis Wright**.

The deacons will continue overseeing the long-running collection of offerings following intergenerational worship and distribution of funds via the Deacon Fund (for FBCM members) and Love Thy Neighbor Fund (for community members).



New directions for the group mean that they will take responsibility for a Deacon Circle, a congregational group of at least twenty individuals to whom they will provide pastoral care and important communication updates. As an offshoot of that, they will focus on guiding visitors who continue attending during their first year at the church. Those congregants' growth tracks include spiritual milestones like attending lunches, being assigned a Deacon Circle, getting plugged into a discipleship class, learning about service opportunities, and attending baptism and/or new membership classes.

Each deacon will also be a floating greeter in the sanctuary one week per month, with special attention on connecting with visitors.

In addition, the new group will work alongside the Clerk to maintain updated membership roles. Currently, the pastors, **Jonathan Balmer** and **Kendall Ellis**, are each also leading a circle during this transition while they work to re-engage inactive members and clean membership roles to determine the exact number of deacons the church will need. The church's bylaws state that there should be one deacon for every twenty active members.

Before the Deacon's Orientation on Sunday, February 1, the group had a half-day training on Saturday, January 17. Former deacons **Brian Green** and **Larry Fouch** explained how to address community, baptism, and the deacon's offerings. Social work intern Brandi Carden led a mental health first aid training based on the ALGEE method of care. Kendall walked them through the new Deacon Handbook, and Jonathan led a mock new members' class so that the deacons could experience the class before hosting one.

At the orientation during the regular morning worship service, the pastors invited them and their families to stand in the center aisle and prayed for them.

If anyone is unsure who their deacon is, they can reach out to Jim Butler. He has the list and can answer any questions. 🏠



FBCM Church Family and Other Friends Invited to “The Platinum Seat”

On Thursday evening, April 30, from 6:00–8:00 p.m., churchgoers will have the opportunity to attend “a night of Polished Conversation” that will open their eyes to opportunities and information for better understanding and serving the community. The deadline to sign up for this event is Monday, April 20, and sign-up information will be shared on Sunday mornings for the next few weeks.

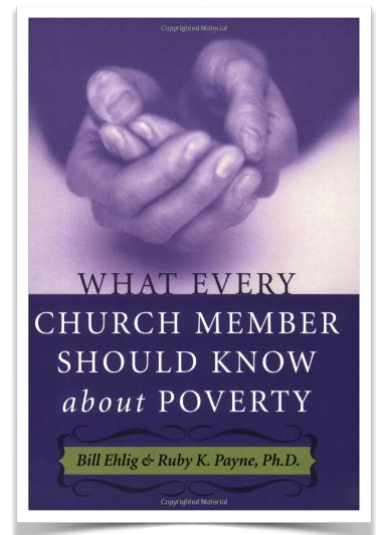
Social work intern Marlena Wolfe is helping with planning, marketing, and implementation of this event. 🏠

Wednesday Discipleship Training Set for May

When the proposal was written for the awarded American Baptist Church Palmer Grant funds, not only was there a primary focus on holistic youth programming, but also recommendations to fund congregational sessions to learn more about social concerns many Muncie students face, including poverty.

The benefits of this poverty education expand beyond student ministry. Given the downtown location of our church with low-income residents nearby and transient individuals staying at the adjacent YWCA, it makes sense for FBCM to stay informed and compassionate about the effects of poverty in our community. In addition, these sessions may help our interactions with unhoused individuals who utilize our pavilion in warmer months.

“When **Molly Flodder** suggested building the sessions around the book *What Every Church Member Should Know about Poverty* by Bill Ehlig and Ruby Payne, I immediately knew this would make a great All-Church Discipleship study for May,” said Pastor Kendall. Adults will be able to gather on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall, prior to handbell rehearsals or City Life Club Night.



Molly, who led a local nonprofit whose mission was “Empowering people in poverty toward self-sufficiency,” will lead the study. She was a certified national trainer for Ruby Payne's material before her retirement.

The group she led, TEAMwork for Quality Living, met weekly for thirteen years in the First Baptist Church fellowship hall. A part of a national movement, Circles USA, their model required people wishing to build resources to be matched up with people who were not struggling financially, who would serve as their intentional friends and accountability partners. 🏠

IN MEMORIAM

The church mourns the loss of long-time members **Steve Reid** and **Patti Warner**.

In addition, we continue to lift heartfelt prayers for **Mark and Marsha Thurston**, who are grieving the loss of their son Drew Thurston, and for **Barbara Campbell**, who is mourning the loss of her son Randy Young.



Youth Soup-er Bowl Raises \$853 for Camp Fees

FBCM youth would like to thank those in the congregation who brought soup and voted for favorites with their money, helping raise funds for youth to attend Indian Creek Baptist Camp in June. There will be youth campers and FBC pastor participants attending both the junior high and senior high camps this summer. 🏠

Get to Know: Nina Oisten



Even FBCM people who may not know **Nina Oisten** well have realized that she is one of the busiest volunteers in the congregation. She's at the volunteer desk in the church office. She's preparing and cleaning up from church dinners, including "funeral dinners." She's bringing cookies for the Fire Up DWNTWN cooling-break station. She's sewing for the Pillowcase Project. She's on the nominating committee, talking to people about serving in church leadership positions. She's serving as a greeter at different church functions. The list goes on and on.

In years past, Nina could be seen minding the nursery, tending to the plantings around the church, and doing many more tasks.

Recently, she took one responsibility off her plate and added another. In the past several years she has been a deaconess, preparing and serving communion and helping with baptisms. Nina has stepped aside from that role now that the new deacon ministry is functioning.

Her new task is a big one that requires lots of work. She is now the Church Clerk on the Church Coordination Team. "As the nominating committee was filling positions, I couldn't find anyone who was willing to be clerk," said Nina. "I thought back to my career and work I had done over the years and realized that I could tackle the job, and here I am!"



Nina doesn't feel that a few roles, such as teaching, are her gifts, but realizes that it takes many people to operate and support a church like First Baptist Church and that there are many opportunities to help. "I love my church. I've been here since I was four years old," says Nina. "It's the least I can do."

She and her late husband, Bob, raised their family at First Baptist. They met in their teens and began to gravitate to each other as Bob frequented her dad's neighborhood market where she worked as a teenager. As the years went on, Bob became a Christian and was baptized. They were involved in their careers, Bob as a finish carpenter and Nina, for many years, an employee at Central Indiana Orthopedics.

Their marriage was full of activity as they parented their four children: Cinda, Vicki, Jan, and Mike. Nina was a stay-at-home mom until Mike was in second grade and juggled the family and their activities after she started working.



Continued from Page 6

In spite of their busy lives, the family loved to travel when they could get away. They enjoyed camping, sightseeing and being together. After retirement, Bob and Nina spent twenty years as snowbirds in Arizona.

When friends and acquaintances cast their eyes on the family and life's difficulties, they feel that Nina and Bob got more than their share. Nina lost Bob two and a half years ago. Their granddaughter Nicole McGregor was killed in an auto accident in 2002 at the age of thirteen. In 2013, their daughter Vicki Conley lost her second battle with leukemia. All three of their daughters have had breast cancer, including Jan, with two bouts. Now, their son-in-law Butch Swinsick, Cinda's husband, is battling ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease.

"We've counted on the Lord to get us through," said Nina. "He is good, and he gives us the strength to manage."

Nina reminds others that the Lord works miracles as well. Their youngest granddaughter, Mike's daughter Morgan, was born with a malady that occurs with one patient in a million. A team of doctors at the National Institutes of Health was able to diagnose and treat the disease, and daily shots throughout her life have given this teenager a mostly normal life. In addition, Vicki's daughter Kara has survived two brain tumors and the major surgeries required to remove them. Their first great-granddaughter, Raelyn (Jan's granddaughter), weighed 1 pound, 12 ounces at birth, but is a healthy pre-teen now. "We have had tragedy, but we also have been blessed," said Nina.

As for Nina and her life, busy with family, she is turning 89 this month, which could mean that she should get to sit down and relax. That's not her style! "I plan to continue my volunteer work. As long as I am able to do things at the church, I want to help out!" she said. 



Spring Events



**Thursday, March 12, 6 p.m.: Youth for Christ
Banquet at The Wedding Factory**

March 14, 8:30 a.m.: Serve Your City Day

**March 29, 10:45 a.m.: Invite a Friend Sunday
/ Palm Sunday**

**April 3, 7 p.m.: Good Friday Worship
@ The Garden**

**April 5, 10:45 a.m.: Easter Worship
(Bring flowers to decorate the cross!)**

**Saturday, April 11, Noon: Charis Fundraiser at
Riverside Avenue Baptist Church**

**April 18, 1-5 p.m: Easter Open House
@ The Pastors' Home**

**Saturday, April 25, 10 a.m.-Noon:
Fresh Brewed Life (Women)**

**Thursday, April 30, 6 p.m.:
The Platinum Seat Conversation**

**May 4-8: Teacher Appreciation Week at
Muncie Central High School
(Outreach Details TBA)**

**Wednesdays in May, 5:30 p.m.:
"Understanding Poverty" Series**

On February 20, twenty-two people aged 2-88 gathered for Goodies and Games, featuring snacks, activities, table games, and fellowship.



Social Work Practicum Students, Worship/Children's Intern Help Lead FBCM Projects



Brandi Carden, an Indiana Wesleyan bachelor's of social work student, and Marlena Wolfe, a Ball State University master's student, are doing their field placement at First Baptist Church with Pastor Kendall, MDiv, MSW.

With her master's degree in social work, Kendall is qualified to help students gain practical experience in a congregational setting.

Drawing from her personal experiences with past churches and crisis intervention, Brandi led a mental health first aid workshop at the deacons' January training. Marlena is developing a guide of local service resources that can be used by the church—particularly people who volunteer in the church office.

In addition to the social work practicum students, Caroline Koby is serving the church as a worship and children's intern this academic year. 🏰



New Members of the Church Coordination Team

These members began serving on the CCT in January. Moderator: **Andy Heimlich**, Clerk: **Nina Oisten**, Member Care: **Sally Butler**, Children: **Jaden Johnson**. 🏰



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Treasurer-**Sandi Brzak**
Clerk-**Nina Oisten**

Adult-**Cheryl Flaherty**
At Large-**Ed Brzak**
Children-**Jaden Johnson**
Member Care-**Sally Butler**

Outreach-**Dana Davis**
Property-**Joseph Songer**
Worship-**Molly Flodder**
Youth-**Loraine Garrett**

