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THE VISITOR



Praise and Proclaim

When was the last time you were told, “Get loud!”? Many of us go through life hearing the opposite. We are told to be quiet for school lessons; to silence our phones for movies; to use our inside voices in the office so as not to disturb others’ work.

The pastors invite you to *Get Loud* again this fall. This August’s sermon series was a grand reveal of the Church Coordination Team’s new watchword for the year. Taken from Isaiah 12:4, God is calling our church to “Praise and Proclaim” him in everything that we do. Many will long remember the surprising Sunday that Pastor Kendall encouraged the children to scream and do cartwheels around the sanctuary! Being loud is not for show, but a testimony of the joy that God has produced within us.

So how will you “praise and proclaim” this year? Get plugged in during Vision Lunch on September 7!

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Building New Expectations on Past Foundations

THE SHARED PULPIT

By Co-Pastor Kendall Ellis

FBCM leaders value tradition and innovation. They hold together the rituals that spiritually form our congregation while submitting to God's will when the Holy Spirit shows a new direction. This blending of past, present, and future is a beautiful, biblical, and hopeful thing!

In February, the CCT gathered for prayer, Scripture study, and conversation to do just that. The purpose of the Vision Retreat was to discern where the Holy Spirit was leading FBCM for the 2025–26 ministry year. After two years of learning from Mark 10:45, the CCT felt that God was wrapping up the church's service-minded watchword. Of course, FBCM will not stop serving! But God has cemented a Spirit of service so strongly that our congregation is now ready for God to build upon its foundation.

God revealed Isaiah 12:4 as the watchword by which FBCM will measure all that we do:

"In that day you will say, 'Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.'" (NIV)

The CCT calls this "Praise and Proclaim." These actions create a refreshing cycle. The more we praise God for who he is, the more excited we will be to proclaim God's work to others. The more we proclaim what God has done, the more aware we become of God's activity in the world, and the more we desire to praise him. And so the cycle goes.

Each time we circle back to praise, the Spirit leads us deeper with God, our church, and our neighbors. Joy from what God has done in the past partners with new expectations. There's always more to praise and proclaim about God than we can imagine.

Save the Dates

September 7

Vision Lunch to prepare for the new church year, after service

September 14

Business meeting vote after service on interim music leader,

October 25

Downtown "Trunk or Treat" (Our church needs to provide cars with treats and treat-givers for our kids and others from around the neighborhood.)

November TBD

Operation Christmas Child, packing and preparation of collected items for the worldwide ministry project

November 8

Fall Fruit Baskets, packing and delivering to our church's shut-ins

November 9

Community Veterans Day Celebration at FBC

November 23

Harvest Dinner, after service (bring a side or dessert)

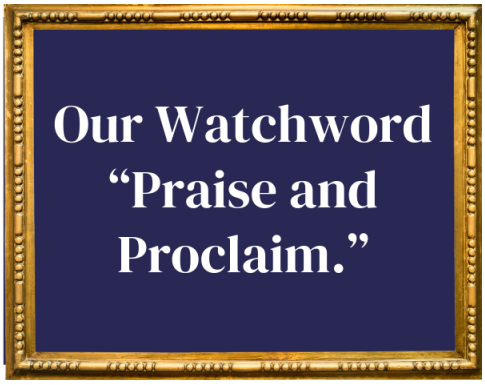
November 30

First Sunday of Advent, soup lunch, and Hanging of the Greens

Partnership with Youth for Christ Offers Rewards and Challenges

Because First Baptist Church of Muncie (FBCM) is a downtown church with an aging congregation, sustainability and growth are difficult to achieve without welcoming the presence and vibrancy of youth growing in faith. A new partnership with Youth for Christ's City Life program offers FBCM the opportunity to show hospitality to youth students while fostering Christ-sharing relationships. City Life is an already-successful program that exists in both of Muncie's middle schools. With the church's prime location downtown, this partnership would allow FBCM to expand City Life to students at Muncie Central High School.

That partnership, beginning this month and slowly building throughout the 2025–26 academic year, will enable pastors and volunteer congregants to work with teachers and students to provide academic coaching, be present friends at their extracurricular activities, and provide a place to have fun among Christians.



According to Kendall Ellis, co-pastor, "Sometimes God's Spirit dramatically and obviously splits the sea to show us the way forward. This decision to partner with YFC wasn't quite a sea-splitting moment, but it was close. It was wonderful to witness how God, on multiple occasions, invited our church into a relationship with the YFC team. The Church Coordination Team (CCT) discerned together that certainly it was God's will for us to join the community in supporting, caring for, and loving our Muncie teens. And in the process, by God's grace, as we 'praise and proclaim', we can therefore lead some to accept Jesus as Lord and affiliate with the church beyond youth and throughout their adult lives."

In Muncie's middle schools, tutoring sessions have increased from 230 in 2023 to 1,176 in 2024. Two years in a row, YFC earned Southside Middle School's "Partner of the Year Award" for their academic coaching efforts. Their work now involves several churches. With the MCHS program, there are a few other churches interested in seeing how the program progresses and joining FBCM in the work.

This partnership will help FBCM rebuild our youth program as teens begin to socialize with our congregants at weekly Club Nights, a church food-and-fun format for extending the relationships beyond school.

"This work will help move us out of our 'comfort zone,'" said Jonathan Balmer, co-pastor. "Getting to know these high school students, and becoming their intentional friends will likely help all of us be more open to serving people who are different from most of us.

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WHO? FBCM volunteers, Youth for Christ, and Muncie Central High School teachers and students.

WHAT? City Life, a partnership program, involves volunteer congregants doing three things: (1) weekly academic coaching to students during school; (2) being present in students' lives—like attending a choir concert or track meet of the youth they tutor; and (3) hosting a weekly Club Night at the church in which kids can enjoy recreation, a meal, a Bible devotional, and discipleship group discussions.

WHEN? Building from August through December and into 2026

- **August** Pastors Jonathan & Kendall soft-launched a new Club Night format on Wednesdays from 7:17–8:45 p.m. with current FBCM Youth. The pastors are currently meeting with YFC staff and MCHS staff to work out the schedule/roster for academic coaching and students' check-ins.

- **September** FBCM congregants can begin volunteering with Club Night meal service, attend a volunteer training with YFC, and complete the background check applications required. The pastors will continue establishing relationships with students at MCHS and will begin a Teen Bible Study at the YMCA on Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m.

- **October** Following Fall Break, academic coaching will begin. Club Nights will continue, though small and focused on developing the core student leaders.

- **November–December** Program continues. Relationships are deepened. Volunteers have the opportunity to attend at least one extra-curricular activity with/for their student(s). The last Club Night of the semester will be Dec. 17.

- **January 7** Club Night returns with a Spring Launch Party and welcomes more students throughout the semester!

WHERE? Academic coaching/fellowship at Muncie Central with weekly Club Night at FBCM.

WHY? FBCM's 2025–26 watchword will be God's guiding light to everything we do this year. God has been good to our church! We are compelled to share this blessing with everyone, but focusing on supporting the students and staff of Muncie Central High School allows us to be intentional in this call. In the process of being faithful to God's call to "Praise and Proclaim," we look forward to seeing what else God is going to do in and through us. Our congregation will grow in the Lord as we become more comfortable loving and serving people different from us. We pray that young people will come to know Christ as Lord.

HOW? Through the work of the Holy Spirit who has prepared the way before us, the facilitation and hard work of our pastors, and the faithful participation of the volunteers, God will use this program for the good of those involved, this church, and the community. In addition, the church has applied for a 2025 Palmer Grant, a grant given by the national American Baptist Church of the USA, which would pay for costs associated with the program. The pastors will hear whether or not the church will receive the grant by the end of September.

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What Are Questions About the YFC Partnership?



What can someone who has been out of school for forty years and is rusty in academic areas do to help these students? If you liked history, chances are you can help a student's view of history come alive by helping them study it. If you were good at English, perhaps your assistance as they learn about adjectives, adverbs, subjects, and objects can eliminate the confusion. Best of all, you don't have to do more than just provide listening ears to students' struggles and share your own life experiences as you become friends. Most students don't need you to teach them. They just need an encouraging friend who believes in them and keeps their focus.

How can I help if my availability is not always consistent for a week-after-week commitment? While a weekly commitment is encouraged to foster better relationships with students, the pastors and the YFC staff will work with you to find a volunteer role that best fits your schedule and the students' best interests.

How many volunteers will we need to make City Life a success? The more volunteers we have for academic coaching, the more relationships with students/staff can be made. We hope that everyone with flexibility in their daytime schedules will commit to academic tutoring as our church fosters new relationships with our neighbors. As for Club Night, we will need at least 2-4 adults for the meal crew and another 3-4 adults for programming. Club Night volunteers could choose to serve weekly or on rotation with other team members.

Will our current youth be involved in these weekly Club Night activities? Yes! Although our church will only be providing academic coaching at Muncie Central, any 6th–12th grader who shows up for Club Night will be allowed to participate. FBCM's current youth are already meeting on the designated Wednesday evenings and have been discussing how to welcome new MCHS students to the group.

Will we have tools to learn how to work with youth who may be different from our own in terms of socioeconomic levels, family life, etc.? Yes. We will learn some of this at the initial training, and there will be ongoing contact points with YFC to help us with the resources we need to increase our comfort in working with these students.

Will others in the church who are not volunteering in the program have the benefit of learning about working with people who may be living in poverty or lack several resources in their lives? Yes. Sometime this church year, we will have a training, *What Every Church Member Should Know about Poverty* (by Dr. Ruby Payne, led by a congregant who is a former certified trainer of the material), and a "Community Food Experience" (Second Harvest Food Bank simulation).

Get to Know: Ruth Anne Reagan

Ruth Anne Reagan, "Anne" to many of her friends, has spent her working life in nursing, first as an LPN and eventually an RN with a bachelor's degree in nursing. She served in leadership roles in long-term care and community health. She was also a teacher at the Muncie Area Career Center, teaching a nursing intensive to high school students who often ended the class ready to sit for the Certified Nursing Assistant exam and be qualified to step into those positions after high school.



Ruth Anne Reagan

Anne and **Jim Reagan** began attending First Baptist after his lifelong friend, **Jerry Williams,** lost his mother, Nova Jarvis. Jerry and Pam Williams have been friends with both of the Reagans for many years. The funeral was over a year ago, and they've been attending ever since.

When Jim and Anne met, he was working for the Teamsters, and she was in management at a nursing home. She had a son from a previous marriage, and he had four sons from his previous marriage. They dated for six years and, eventually, at the insistence of his mother, had a small wedding in the chapel of a Tennessee hospital where his mother was a patient. "We like to tell people we met in a nursing home and got married in a hospital!" said Anne.



Jim and Anne Reagan

Anne holds a master's in gerontology and for years has cared for people with dementia. The sad truth is that now her husband, Jim, suffers from dementia and, in their struggles, both are experiencing the "long goodbye" associated with the insidious disease.

In spite of the time commitment and challenges in caring for her (according to friends) "funny" and "good-natured" husband, Anne's home reflects her creative skills and landscaping capabilities. She is a seamstress and has a penchant for decorating. Projects such as a macramé screen to hang on the patio are in process. Colorful flowers and plantings are all around the perimeter of their condo.

Anne's interest in plants started in her childhood. Her parents gardened, and she and her five siblings helped tend and pick the vegetables so her mother could do home canning for the winter months.

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She attended Wapahani High School, first playing clarinet and eventually serving in the rifle corps of their award-winning band. Learning to play clarinet taught her music-reading, which gave her the confidence to play with the FBCM handbell group. In spite of her nervousness at first, Anne said she really enjoys it.

Anne has also been involved in helping prepare lunches for church gatherings."I have to be able to volunteer in places where Jim can be nearby," she said. They also always make it a point to come to donut hour. It allows both of them to fellowship with others and gives Jim some routine each Sunday morning.

These days, Jim can't make a coconut cream pie to auction off as he did at their last church, but people still remember the $65 the pie earned for the fundraiser!

"I'm a person who believes that faith is relatively simple and gives us 'truths' to follow that are easy to remember: 'Love thy neighbor,' for example. Following Christ provides us with a simple road map of love, forgiveness, and hope. Jesus chose me," she said, "and I am part of God's children who choose to walk with him."

Dr. Clif Davis Ends His Eleven-Year Tenure with FBCM

After eleven years as Worship Arts Pastor, **Dr. Clif Davis** left First Baptist church in July to serve full-time at Taylor University. Clif came to FBCM in 2014 while he was a student completing his doctorate in music at Ball State University. He began working at Taylor in 2012, but his work there was part-time, so he continued his role with the church at around twenty hours per week.



Dr. Clif Davis

Throughout his time, Clif's wife, Julie, and their children, Sandy, Heidi, and Ian, all contributed to the music by singing and playing piano, synth, organ, drums, bass, saxophone, or guitar. According to attendees of FBCM, Clif himself continually "shone" on his major instrument, piano.

A parade of Taylor students often came to fill the praise band roster, singing and playing in instrumentalist roles, a real blessing to the congregants at FBC. "We will really miss the Taylor students now that Clif is gone," said member **Donna Fouch**. "They brought a variety of instruments and talent. Their 'Glad to Be Here' energy was obvious, and we were blessed by the joyful and spiritually uplifting music."

One role Clif filled was to oversee the contributions of the many Taylor students who served as interns working for one or more semesters at FBC. He helped them develop learning plans, and they helped lead the band in preparation before and during each worship service.

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Over the years, Clif's contributions were many. He worked with the pastors to determine worship music that supported the Scriptures and themes of the services. The results of his planning created a much-loved part of his leadership for those worshiping each Sunday.

He also encouraged those playing and singing and helped them with their musicianship. **Emily Anderson,** a member of the praise band for his whole tenure, spoke of this: "He helped me develop my range, expanding my low voice—mostly alto—to include a higher range. He helped all of us increase our confidence and grow in our faith as we shared our worship music."

Clif's foray into musical composition was a great benefit to the church as well. He was able to use some of his music for many special occasions, including "Called as Partners", a choral piece that a combined choir performed for the ordination service of Pastor Kendall Ellis in late 2023. Over the past 15 years, Clif has created over 100 compositions and arrangements, as well as over 200 videos.

Clif's wife, Julie, will continue close ties with the church as she leads her small group in completing the study of the book of Romans. In addition, she will continue serving as copyeditor of *The Visitor*. "As a professional book editor, Julie's expertise is invaluable," said **Molly Flodder**, editor of the publication. "We're delighted to have her help going forward."

On Clif's last Sunday at FBCM, July 13, the church hosted a send-off lunch and "Clif's Cookie Caper." Along with a stuffed Cookie Monster, Clif, a cookie aficionado, received cookies to eat, bake, and freeze. A "Clif's Cookies" recipe box, signed by members of the church family was also a gift.

In a thank-you message to the church, Clif said, "We appreciate the way you shared your hearts with us through the years and look forward to great reports on how FBC Muncie is thriving through God's grace."

In Memoriam

Deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Rodney Head, who passed away in August.



Community Veterans Celebration On November 9

First Baptist Church of Muncie will host a community "Veterans Celebration" on Sunday afternoon, November 9, at 3:00 p.m. The purpose of the event is to celebrate and thank veterans for their service to our country.

A combined community choir, soloists, instrumentalists, and readers of Scripture and other elements will share with the audience. Anyone interested in participating in the program should contact Molly Flodder or Cheryl Flaherty.

"Our plan is to fill the church," said Molly Flodder, co-chair of the event. The planning team of fourteen people includes church family members: **Coby Anderson, Susan Burke, Jim Butler, Cheryl Flaherty, Loraine Garrett**, and **Chris Wright**. The other co-chair is Sandra Hoover, retired volunteer director at IU Health Ball Hospital.

Nearly 30 kids enjoyed five days of "Messy Camp" Bible School.













FBCM sent 7 campers and 3 cabin leaders to Indian Creek Baptist Camp this summer.

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Worship Arts Pastor
Open

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