



The Visitor

DECEMBER 2013

End of Year Reflections

Wade Allen

As we come to this final month of 2013, I would like to reflect a bit on where we've been this year as a congregation. In 2012, we experienced much change in our church life. Shifting our Sunday morning schedule and hiring new staff accounted for much of the change. I had hoped that 2013 would be a bit more stable. Little did I know.

We have once again been forced to deal with shifting realities this year. Budget constraints have moved us toward a leaner organization. In many ways, we have been pressed to find new and less resource-intensive ways to do ministry. Everyone has stepped up and found a way to contribute. From editing teams to organists, we are using our gifts for the good of the church.

Missional communities were birthed in our congregation in 2013. We began the year with a pilot community and have since involved over 40 people in this new ministry. Life group leaders have been and continue to be trained and coached. Monthly service projects have brought us together in mission. In-home Life groups have strengthened relationships and discipleship. I am excited about the future of this ministry.

We have also enjoyed the renewal of our congregation as new faces have been added this year (you can read more about the new members farther down in the newsletter). While it has been sad to say goodbye to friends who have passed away this year, God is adding to our number each month. We have also experienced the joy of new babies in 2013.

As we prepare to celebrate Advent and Christmas, it is important to reflect on this past year. While many of the changes we have experienced have not been easy, we are assured of God's provision. I am thankful for what God is doing among us. I look forward to the coming year and am eager to join God in his mission in this community.



Empowered to Worship

Matt Headley

“Empower” is a catchy phrase these days. Some say it’s just fancy language for delegating. That may be partially true, but they’re not really the same thing. I delegate when I get my 1-year-old daughter to pick up cheerios off the kitchen floor. I *empower* her when I hold her hand to practice walking down the hallway. The latter is typically more relational. In Acts chapter 1, Jesus promised his apostles that the Holy Spirit would empower the Church to do the work of evangelization:



“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 NIV)

As I reflect on how God is using me to empower people in our church, I realize there are some things I’m doing that few people know about. One less visible way that I empower others is in the way I plan worship.

Nearly every week, I meet with an individual in our church to collaborate on planning our weekly worship gatherings. Each time I do this, I get to learn how God is personally speaking to people in our church through the Scripture passage for each week. Together we plan a worship gathering that represents our community’s unique response to God. This weekly collaborative process empowers people in our church to “own” our worship gatherings. Worship isn’t something we watch happen or consume, but something we do together, through and with the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. This idea that worship is the “work of the people” (the definition of the word “liturgy”), ties in closely with the Baptist distinctive of the “priesthood of all believers.” You may not hear Baptists use the term “liturgy” very often, but the idea is Baptist, through and through!

“you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5 NIV)

The season of Advent is here. Advent is a time to revive our sense of urgency for Christ’s arrival at Christmas, and for his second coming, when God’s kingdom will be fulfilled. This Advent season, we will reflect on living with a sense of urgency for God’s kingdom to come in its fullness. How might God empower you to usher his kingdom into your community? Maybe by giving a neighbor or person in need a Christmas card or a gift. Could God be prompting you to empower others in your family or community to build his kingdom?

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24–25 NIV)

Worship in December

As we begin Advent, you may want to read the Scriptures ahead of time. The December schedule is:

- December 1 - The Hour Has Come (Romans 13:11-14)
- December 8 - Power of the Word (Romans 15:4-13)
- December 15 - Christmas Cantata and Reflection on James 5:7-10 (Combined Service)
- December 22 - The Perfect Gift (Romans 1:1-7)
- December 24 - Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service
- December 29 - Reflections on the Building (Combined Service)

Combined Service December 15 and 29

We will be gathering in combined worship on **Sunday, December 15** to celebrate in music and Word. Everyone will attend Sunday school at 9:15 AM (early hour) and worship at 10:45 AM (late hour) on this day. We will also gather in combined worship on **Sunday, December 29** due to the holiday season. We will follow the same schedule.

Salvation Army Bells

In December, our church will be responsible for ringing Salvation Army bells on **December 17 and 19** from **10 a.m.-8 p.m.** inside the Muncie Mall at Macys. Also, we will ring bells **December 4 and 5** at JC Pennys. This is an outstanding outreach opportunity for people of any age, and is a wonderful service project for families to do together. Sign-up sheets are available on the lower level bulletin board.

Church Business Meeting

We will have a brief church business meeting on **Sunday, December 8** at **10:15 AM** to approve the 2014 budget. There will be an informational meeting on **Wednesday, December 4** at **5:30 PM** for an extended time for questions and comments. The proposed budget is now available in the church office. Please contact CCT members with questions or concerns.

Christmas Eve Service

The candlelight Christmas Eve service at First Baptist Church Muncie is a highlight of the Christmas season. We will gather at **7:00 PM** on Christmas Eve to kick off Christmas celebrations in a beautifully decorated sanctuary. As we light the Christmas eve candle, we remember the reason for our celebration. The story of Christmas (Luke 2:1-20) is placed in the context of Christ's sacrifice for us. There is no more appropriate way to begin Christmas than by receiving the most precious gift, His body broken for us and His blood shed for us.

Caroling and Dinner at Riverside Baptist

Sunday, December 15 at Riverside Baptist Church.

If you are going caroling, be at Riverside at 3:00 PM for group assignments. Caroling at 4:00 PM Christmas Dinner at 6:00 PM. Meat, drinks, and table service will be furnished. Please bring a favorite dish or two to share. Common Ground will present the program following the dinner. Freewill offering for the program will be taken. Please contact Terry Harke at 284-2852, if you plan to carol, so groups can be organized.

Missional Community Break

Missional Communities at First Baptist Muncie began at the beginning of 2013. The ministry runs from February-May (taking a two-month break in the summer) and from August-November (taking a two-month break in the winter). This month, we begin our winter break. Life group leaders will meet during this time to evaluate and discuss the spring term plans. Please keep this team in your prayers as they work through December and January to prayerfully consider God's leading for 2014. If you have not been a part of the Missional Community, let me encourage you to consider being involved in 2014. Missional Communities are for anyone in the church, young and old alike.

New members

Over the last year, a number of people have joined First Baptist. We would like to highlight 8 of the 21 who took this exciting step forward and introduce them in this month's newsletter. (*The additional 13 will be highlighted in the future.*) This is the highest number of new members in one year since 2000.



Kelly and Dave Rodriguez stepped forward to join the congregation on March 10. They were married at First Baptist on June 15, 2013. Since joining the church, Kelly helps teach Children's Church during second service and Dave is on the Church Coordination Team. They currently reside in Muncie. Kelly is a nursing student at Ball State and Dave works at IDIA Lab doing computer programming and some design work. Welcome to First Baptist!



Katie and Zach Shutters stepped forward to join the congregation on April 21. They are married and have four children: Cami, Maren, Connor, and Nathan. They moved to the Yorktown area in 2011. Katie is a stay-at-home mom and Zach works as a software engineer at Guilford Group in Carmel. The couple feel blessed with the way their life has come together. "Zach and I both agree that us coming together was definitely part of God's plan. The timing of everything in our lives, good and bad, could not have been more perfect." Katie summarizes the thought by emailing, "Looking back, it's pretty amazing how everything has worked out!" Welcome to First Baptist!



Susan and Tory Pierce stepped forward to join the congregation on June 2. The couple has been married for five years. They have six children between them: Ashley, Tyler, Joseph, and Brandon Alvey, and Courtney and Taylor Pierce. Susan has family who are also members of First Baptist, including her mother, Brenda Cox, and her brother and sister-in-law, James and Michelle Martin. Tory was baptized at the church in June. He works at National Tire and Battery and Susan works at Dot Foods. Welcome to First Baptist!



Shelby and Jamie Harris stepped forward to join the congregation on September 18. The couple first met in Madeira Beach Florida and eventually moved here to Muncie, where Shelby grew up. They have a son, Lincoln, whom they adopted and a dog named Charlie. Jamie works at Weaver Popcorn and Shelby works at Ball State University. In their free time they enjoy camping, hiking, and spending time with family. Jamie was baptized at First Baptist in October. Welcome to First Baptist!

Children and Families Birthday Party for Jesus

WHAT: Our annual Birthday Party for Jesus...to celebrate His birth...to offer a setting for families with children to form unity and have FUN together... games, prizes, light lunch and more FUN!

WHO: Children age birth - 5th grade AND their family members and friends

WHEN: **Saturday, December 14** from **10:30 AM - noon**

WHERE: First Baptist Church lower auditorium

PLEASE RSVP - we need a count for the following events: Serving a light lunch for children and their families, prizes/gifts for children.

Contact: Christy Allen by call/text 717-5229 or email wadechristy@gmail.com

Church Office Closed

The church office will be closed from Monday, December 23 until Friday, January 3. If you have an emergency, please call Wade (765) 405-0131 or Matt (765) 405-0536. The office will reopen on Monday, January 6, 2014. This will give our office volunteers a chance to enjoy the holidays.

Calendar

Sundays – 9:15 AM Early Gathering/Early Sunday School (Intergenerational Class, K-5th grade, Junior & High School), 10:15 AM Fellowship Time (enjoy coffee, donuts, and fellowship), 10:45 AM Late Gathering/Late Sunday School

Tuesdays – 7:00 PM - Friendship Class at Riverside Baptist Church

No Friendship Class on December 24 & 31

Wednesdays – December 4 & 18 (10 AM) - Bible Study at Riverside (Jan Largent leading)

December 11 (1 PM) - Midweek Bible Study at Riverside (Wade leading). We will *not* have Bible Study on Christmas Day.

December 4 & 11 (only) - 5:30 PM pitch-in meal for those in Wednesday evening activities, 6:00 PM Handbell Rehearsal and Children's Choir/Kids Club, 7:10 PM Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal. Sanctuary Choir will meet on December 18.

December 1 – United Choir rehearsal (3:00 PM)

December 4 – Budget informational meeting (5:30 PM), United Choir rehearsal (6:30 PM)

December 8 – Life Group leaders lunch at the Allen's home

December 9 – CCT meeting (7:00 PM)

December 11 – United Choir rehearsal (6:30 PM)

December 14 – United Choir rehearsal (9:00 AM), children's birthday party for Jesus (10:30 AM)

December 15 – First Baptist/Riverside Christmas caroling/dinner (4:00 PM)

December 24 – Christmas Eve Service (7:00 PM)

December 29 – Combined SS/Worship service

December Birthdays

We would like to say Happy Birthday to the following people in the month of December. Please let them know that you are thinking of them on their special day.

12/2 Tyler Stinson

12/3 Bettyanne Morrow

12/4 Shirley Johnson

12/6 Eliana Heimlich

12/6 Katelyn Richardson

12/6 Aurora Richardson

12/8 Kasey Kirklin

12/8 John Mulcahy

12/9 Julie Morency

12/11 Bill Eidson

12/13 David Jones

12/19 Levi Allen

12/20 Harold Gill

12/21 Aggie Brooks

12/21 Danielle Heimlich

12/23 Benjamin Whaley-Jones

12/24 James Londt

12/25 Jean Jones

12/26 Josh Barr

12/26 Randolph O'Bryant

12/26 Grace Wright

12/28 Thomas Sciscoe

12/30 Jake Jackson

12/30 Robert Kirklin

12/31 Rodney Head