



The Visitor

JANUARY 2017

A Special Year

Wade Allen

January 1 is just another day on the calendar. Yet our devices now display another number, 2017. It takes a while to get used to the new figure; but the digits remind us that we are starting something new. 2017 is going to be a special year for First Baptist Church as we prepare and live in a season of pastoral sabbatical.

From June through Labor Day, I will be away from the church. Thanks to a Lilly Foundation grant, our family has an opportunity to travel, rest, renew and reflect. One might assume that things will slow down around the church during this period; that person would be terribly wrong. In fact, the church will be engaged in an intense season of discernment, reflection and ministry while I am away. Church leaders are busy planning this experience and hope to have a detailed plan in place by early spring.

There is much to anticipate in 2017. It might be strange for me to be away from daily ministerial duties; I have never had a sabbatical in my 23 years of ministry. But I am sure that God will provide for both me and you as we have been given this wonderful opportunity.



Worship in January

The January schedule is:

- January 01 - Prayer for the New Year
- January 08 - Lesson in Humility (Matthew 3:13-17)
- January 15 - Reconciliation (Ephesians 2)
- January 22 - Following (Matthew 4:12-23)
- January 29 - The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

New Year's Day Worship

We will be gathering with The Revolution Church on New Year's Day at **11 AM**. The service will be a combined service of prayer for our community. There will be no Sunday school or child care provided for children.

Marriage Retreat

The Marriage Retreat committee is excited to announce that First Baptist Church will be organizing another retreat this coming February. With lots of positive feedback from last year, we have eagerly started planning our next retreat. With relevant, Bible-based discussion topics, fellowship, music, and quality time with our spouses, we are looking forward to what God has in store for our marriages.

The retreat will take place at the Artist Colony Inn in Nashville, IN on **February 17 and 18**. The cost is \$100 per couple. A \$25 deposit is required to hold your spot. Act fast! Only a limited number of rooms are available. (Sponsorships may be available. Please see Melanie Graham for more information.)

Youth Ski Trip

A group of teens from our church will be traveling to Green Lake, Wisconsin **January 13-16**. They will be attending the *SKWIM* conference. You can read more about the conference at <http://skwim.org>. Please keep the group in your prayers as they travel. Also pray that God will use this time of retreat to strengthen our teens spiritually.

Missional Community Update

Life Groups are on break during the months of December and January. If you are interested in being a part of a life group when they kick back off in February, please let Wade know.

Plans for Sabbatical Underway

By Molly Flodder, Moderator

As you likely know, First Baptist Church was selected by the Clergy Renewal Program (funded by Lilly Endowment) as a recipient of a grant that will allow Pastor Wade Allen and our church to participate in a Sabbatical. In October, the grant for \$40,901 was received, and we have since discovered that of the 29 Sabbatical awards in Indiana, First Baptist of Muncie was the only Baptist church receiving the designation.

As one realizes when thinking of the word "Sabbatical," this is a time of rest and relaxation for the Pastor and his family. Wade has been Pastor here for more than 8 years and has never had this kind of respite in his pastoral career. But the Sabbatical is designed to be more. It is a time for participating pastors also to reflect and study.

Wade's reflection and some of her personal travel will be tied to the issue of the death of Christendom. What that means is the reality in our culture (and many others) that the Church does not hold a place of central importance in society as it once did. The numbers of people who attend church has declined and Millennials

seem to be leaving the church at a rapid rate. Wade will be examining this issue, meeting with pastors and determining why strong churches are strong as he travels in the United Kingdom, the New England area and Georgia.

His time away from the church and all pastoral duties will be 15 weeks, from early June to mid-September. In his absence, there will not be “business as usual” with a substitute Wade in the pulpit. In fact, this program is designed to be a time of reflection and rebirth for the church in the pastor’s absence. A portion of this grant is for the church to use for discernment and renewal as well.

In the grant application, the Sabbatical team (Mary Ann Bayer, Bill Eidson, Molly Flodder, James Martin, Shirley Pittenger, Joe Songer, and Mark Sue) worked on having our church be immersed in service projects—both continuing and new— that seem to be the heartbeats of vibrant churches in our culture.

After the awarding of the grant and subsequent study, Wade and the CCT (Church Coordinating Team) leaders have been looking at frameworks for meeting needs in our community. They are zeroing in on “Joining God in the Neighborhood,” a Transformed by the Spirit Resource of the American Baptist Churches USA. Instead of approaching Wade’s topic by focusing how to “fix” churches, our exploration and service will ask better questions such as “How do we discern what God is doing in our neighborhoods, communities, and churches and how do we join God there.”

As the months unfold we will share more and more about how this will roll out and what service projects people can elect to do in learning about what God is already doing in our community. In the meantime, we can tell you that our pulpit will be filled by several local pastors as well as out-of-town leaders who are finding how to discover God’s best for their local ministries. Lest you think this sounds disjointed and difficult to get behind, all of these resource people will be involved with Wade and a small team from CCT in planning this time of study and discernment and tying all of the messages and the other work together. We also will have the opportunity to participate in training, including a workshop led by Dr. David Fitch. He is at Northern Seminary and is a prolific writer and speaker on cultural engagement, theology and other missions of the Church.

The CCT has scheduled a retreat in January to continue planning. We will be asking many of you to get involved as we develop summer plans, communicate, roll out, engage and evaluate our new opportunities to see how God is working in our midst as we observe what God is already doing all around us so that we can join him in that good work.

In the meantime, you might want to read Luke, Chapter 10: 1-23, be prayerful about this time of learning and growth, and stay tuned for more information on how we all can learn, serve, and grow in this special focus for our church, the issues the local church must face in Mission including cultural engagement, leadership and theology.

Visitor or Bulletin Information

If you would like to place an announcement in the church bulletin, please email it to wade@fbcmuncie.org. If you have an article for the February newsletter, please email it to wade@fbcmuncie.org by **Sunday, January 22**.

Thank You Notes

Maryanne Bayer – Thank you so much for braving the snow and the cold to ring bells for the Salvation Army. First Baptist Church members and friends and done this for several years and hope to continue in an inside venue.

Calendar

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

On January 1, we will have one service at 11:00 AM

Tuesdays – 7:00 PM Friendship Class at Riverside

Wednesdays – 6:00 PM Praise Team and Children’s Choir, 6:30 PM Handbells, 7:00 PM Men’s Bible Study, 7:40 PM Choir

January 1 – Combined New Year’s Day Service at 11 AM

January 2 – Church Office Closed

January 13-17 – Youth Ski Trip

January 17 – CCT Meeting

January 21 – CCT Retreat at Open Door

January Birthdays

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

1/2 - Jillian Barr

1/3 - Dale Stone

1/8 - Bob Oisten Jr.

1/10 - Julia Whaley-Jones

1/14 - Grace Hahn

1/17 - Andrew Heimlich

1/18 - Lester Bryars

1/18 - Gabriel Rodgers

1/18 - Marjorie Wright

1/21 - Sharon Jackson

1/21 - Katie Shutters

1/21 - Annie Wright

1/25 - Gene Carr

1/26 - Veda Massoth

1/27 - Kelly Rodriguez

1/28 - Pam Kistler

1/30 - Heidi Davis

1/30 - Martin Lewis

1/31 - Patty Stigers

1/31 - Bill Turner