



FIRST MEMPHIS

A Different Way to be Baptist

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Together

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Embracing Diversity within Church

REV. DR. RANDY L. HYDE, INTERIM PASTOR

First Baptist in Pensacola is a large, diverse congregation. I know that personally because I preached there in 2005. As the choir came in for the 11:00 service, the second one of the morning, they just kept coming and coming and coming . . . at least 100 voices all told. From my discussions with friends in the church, I sensed there were many differing opinions,

theologies, political views, and attitudes represented within the congregation. Leading churches like that must be a lot like herding cats.

All of that is to say that Barry Howard, the church's former pastor, knows what he's talking about when he writes of how to navigate diversity within a church. He cites the following varieties of thought and opinion: generational, biblical translations, racial and ethnic, worship times and styles, curriculum, missional partnerships, denominational backgrounds, political, and theological.

He then acknowledges that such an array of diversity makes church life both more enriching and fatiguing. Let's start with the fatiguing part . . .

- It becomes more challenging to communicate across diverse platforms.
- Planning a program of discipleship, ministry initiatives or activities for a diverse congregation can become cumbersome.
- Navigating the tension created by

extraordinary diversity can weary the staff (I would add that is also true for volunteer lay people).

—The greater the diversity, the greater the potential for conflict.

Now for the enriching aspect of diversity:

—Those in a diverse congregation learn to respect varying points of view (I would say that is true if people are willing to listen to varying points of view).

—Multiple generations, ethnicities and spiritual backgrounds tend to provide multiple perspectives that enrich the overall ministry of the church.

—If a diverse congregation is diligent 'to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace' (Ephesians 4:3), that congregation can be a powerful witness to the transformative power of the gospel.

—A diverse congregation usually is composed of diverse spiritual gifts, talents and skill sets.

—A highly diverse congregation is

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TRANSITION TEAM

Transition Team Update

TEAM MET VIA ZOOM ON JUNE 28

For those following along with Laura's weekly *Table Talk* articles, she said in her July 1 note, that the transition team met via Zoom on Sunday, June 28.

We, like you, are looking forward to the day we can be back together physically as a church. Although our time apart during the pandemic has been stressful and less than ideal, let's gather strength from what we've learned about ourselves and look toward the future with hope and anticipation.

We are encouraged to see our members found creative ways to stay in touch and be "church" to each other throughout the pandemic. That creativity and adjustment to changing times will be useful assets when we are back together and conclude the transition period we have been in over the last several months.

Since last September we discussed and learned about our history, where our members live in the community, hurts, disappointments, accomplishments, mission projects and partners, proposed changes to how we operate, leadership needs and our future. We experienced fellowship through numerous meals and a Christmas party.

Soon the transition team will conclude its work and a pastor search committee will be formed. Please continue to think about our future and how our church will move forward in the age of *COVID-19*. Begin to pray for the pastor search committee and the person who will be our next pastor.

Be safe!

Shawn

FAMILY EVENT

First Family Drive-In

AUGUST 7, 8 PM

All families are invited to drive into the north parking lot where we'll project a movie onto the side of the gym. Bring your own lawn chairs, drinks, popcorn/snacks, and I'll provide the movie candy. We will update you as more information becomes available.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

Women of Faith Class Zoom

WEEKLY ZOOM MEETINGS

The Women of Faith Sunday School class faithfully meets virtually, via Zoom, each Sunday at 10 am.

If your Sunday School class would like to set up virtual meetings contact Bridget Ellis (bellis@fbcmemphis.org).



SUNDAY SCHOOL

Promotion Sunday

AUGUST 16

Rising Kindergartners, 3rd Graders, and 6th Graders will be honored during morning worship as is our tradition. Holly will personally deliver the Bibles that weekend.

GIVING

Financial Update

ONLINE GIVING OPTIONS AVAILABLE

Despite the current economic situation, First Baptist has kept its financial head above water. FBC is fortunate to be filled with generous and compassionate members who feel a great need to continue their support to the church during these difficult times.

Towards the end of April, FBC was approved for a \$203,982 Payroll Protection Program loan (part of the Federal CARES ACT). These monies allowed us to continue to provide salaries to not only our church staff who have worked throughout the pandemic but also to keep our First Baptist Day School (FBDS) teachers employed and paid during the period the school was closed. It appears we have met all the requirements for these monies to be considered a non-repayable grant as opposed to a payable loan.

In addition to these PPP funds, our day school director, Stacey Graves, applied for and received state grant funds totaling \$85,398 which covered our loss of school income during the month of April.

The church and day school are currently operating with a positive balance and praying this continues. The FBDS reopened on June 15 with approximately 40% of our enrollment before the pandemic. Stacey is optimistic about the school's future as 107 kids are registered for the fall semester. Now, we have to say our prayers and all do our part in keeping the virus numbers from rising.

Our offering total through June 30, 2020 is \$234,604, (\$25,708) behind giving at this time last year. That number may not seem good but again considering the times, I'm thankful it's that low.

Even though I am working from home, I am available to answer any questions and help with any financial needs you may have. Many of you have inquired and begun automatic offerings set up through the church. Many have now set up bill pay for your offerings through your personal bank accounts. If you have questions about either of these options, I will try my best to answer them. You can reach me at lbutts@fbcmemphis.org or call 901-454-1131 and leave a message.

Thank you.

Lisa Butts, Financial Administrator

MEMORIALS

In memory of **Mildred Houser** by

Anonymous
Ms. Ann Powell

In memory of **Joyce Varner** by

Anonymous

In memory of **Hubert McCommon** by

Ms. Ann Powell
Ms. Anita Cobb

In memory of **Mildred Houser** by

Anonymous

In memory of **Verna Bohannon**

Anonymous

In memory of **Dwight Spearman**

Anonymous

In memory of **Amy Ibson**

Anonymous

In memory of **Genevieve Adams** by

Anonymous

In memory of **Vinson Cobb** by

Rob & Margaret Andrea

In memory of **Jean Rose Raney**

Anonymous

HONORARIUM

In honor of **Randy Hyde's birthday** by

Ms. Ann Powell

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a different way to be Baptist

Embracing Diversity, Continued from page 1

a vivid picture of the diversity of God's universal family.

Whether we like it or not, churches are more diverse today than at any point in their history, regardless of the size, and it doesn't look as if that is going to change course any time soon. In response to that reality, Barry suggests that "churches that embrace their diversity and learn to navigate it wisely may discover their diversity to be a wellspring of kingdom potential."

Why do I mention this? Because our church represents diversity even in a relatively small fellowship. Too often, varying views—especially when they fall under the rather large and often ambiguous heading of *politics*—lead to separation of fellowship or friendship. So, some say that certain subjects should be taboo for the church. The problem is, who determines what is appropriate to discuss and who defines those discussions that are off-limits? For example, how can we possibly ignore the social upheaval our country is now facing in regard to the Black Lives Matter movement? Does the gospel

respond to such events and attitudes?

The Jesus Initiative, a group of—yes—diverse people in our church have attempted to take up the gauntlet of bringing before our congregation those things we can discuss and act upon that represent what our faith is about. The pandemic has, as with most things, gotten in the way of our progress. I would ask that you pray for our group, that when we do resume active and healthy dialogue within our church, we would do so out of a concern to be the presence of Christ in our community.

And that's where the water hits the wheel. When you wonder if a subject, or an action, is appropriate—or otherwise—for our church in terms of engagement, ask yourself what Jesus might do in our given situation. Where would you find Jesus in the midst of what is going on in our world? If we let that be our guide, we can discuss and act even when there is not total agreement. Can we agree on that?