



# FIRST MEMPHIS

A Different Way to be Baptist

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## REMINDERS

**In-person worship resumes  
October 4.** Learn more on  
page 2.

**Temple Under the Trees**  
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**Update from the Transition  
Team**  
Learn more on pages 4-5.

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Children & Families** are on  
page 5.

# Together

Vol 36 No 10

October 2020



## The Wicker Basket

REV. DR. RANDY L. HYDE, INTERIM PASTOR

I've been telling the following story for more than fifty years.

As a teenager, I attended a weekend youth conference at First Baptist Church in Paragould, Arkansas, my hometown. A large number of our high school contemporaries attended, if for no other reason than, I suppose, there wasn't much to do in Paragould for teenagers back in the day! As I recall, the

sanctuary was quite full.

In one of the sessions we were invited by the retreat leaders to submit questions by writing them down on slips of paper and putting them in the offering plates. One question was, "Why should I read the Bible everyday when most of what I read I then forget?" Here is how the retreat leader responded...

Suppose you take a wicker basket and decide to fill it with water. You pour bucket after bucket of water into the basket. What is going to happen? The water will not stay in the basket, but will leak through the openings in the wicker. However, if you pour enough water into it, eventually you will have a very clean wicker basket.

I had remembered that all those years, even though, after a while, was not able to recall who the retreat leaders were. A few years ago, while scrolling through Facebook, several of my friends, in Facebook terminology, "liked" Landgraf Retreats, led by Laura and John Landgraf. Landgraf... Landgraf... that name sounded

familiar to me. It certainly is not a common one. Landgraf... how did I know that name? My memory, as challenged as it can be sometimes, flashed back to that night, back to the mid-60s and that youth retreat at First Baptist in Paragould.

So, using Facebook's capabilities (this is one of the good and positive things about social media), I messaged the Landgrafs and asked if they were indeed those retreat leaders. Yes, Laura, responded, the Landgrafs had led a retreat at the church and remembered the event. John didn't recall the wicker basket analogy, but did recollect leading the retreat.

Now, when I repeat the story I will be able to say that it was John Landgraf who provided me this lifelong insight. It may not matter that much to you - and I suspect John would be the first to tell you the story is more important than the storyteller—it means a great deal to me, if for no other reason than it has challenged and inspired me all these years.

I hope it does the same for you.

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## WORSHIP

### Deacons Vote to Reopen Worship Services Beginning October 4

Deacons voted in a special called meeting on September 27 to reopen worship services on **Sunday, October 4**.

This vote follows the recommendation of the Reopening Task Force to open worship services to the congregation.

The Task Force has been meeting regularly the past several weeks to discuss and plan the appropriate time and procedures for the reopening. In addition, your deacons have spent considerable time discussing this at each of their meetings. We take great care and responsibility in doing everything possible to provide a safe and sanitary environment in which to gather. We are thankful for this opportunity to again worship together.

But, please be aware that your worship experience will be somewhat different. We ask that everyone enter and exit through the Welcome Center. Everyone who enters the church must wear a mask while inside the building and

will need to sign in prior to entering the sanctuary. Some pews will be inaccessible and nuclear families should sit together with at least 6 feet between anyone else. You are asked to refrain from congregating/lingering in the Welcome Center before or after services and observe social distancing.

While we feel the time has come to worship together again at church, please understand that there may still be risks particularly among those with chronic illness and the elderly. We encourage anyone who has concerns about their health and safety to worship with us virtually. We will still be broadcasting on the radio and live on our Facebook page.

We ask for your patience, prayers, and understanding as we navigate through this phase of our return to worship together.

## CHILDREN

### Temple Under the Trees

BEGINNING OCTOBER 4, 3-4 PM



Beginning October 4, our children, ages 3-10, will meet for an hour on Sundays from 3-4 pm in an outdoor classroom.

Please bring a chair or a blanket to sit on, and space yourselves 6-feet apart.

We'll divide into two groups, Preschool through 1st Grade, and 2nd-5th grades. For the time being, I would like for one parent/guardian to accompany our 3s, 4s, and 5-year-olds in case they need assistance.

The hour will be divided into two sessions: I will lead a 30 minute Children's Worship session, and a volunteer will lead a 30 minute Kid's Missions session. We will rotate between the two groups.

I'm excited for this opportunity to gather safely with our children, as I know they have missed being together!

—Holly

## WELCOME

### The Common Church

The Common Church, under the pastoral leadership of Broderick and Dione Connesero, has begun meeting in our chapel. On September 13, prior to our worship, Tom Marchand and I greeted them and welcomed them to First Baptist. Essentially, what I said to them was that we consider their presence not merely a sharing of our space, but that our congregation, along with theirs and the others that meet in our facilities, are one church. And, I promised them, we look forward to sharing ministry with them, not just space.

In a fractured world such as ours, it is important that we not only proclaim unity with our words, but that we model it by our actions. The presence of the Common Church gives us a wonderful opportunity to say to midtown Memphis that we care for one another regardless of the color of skin or style of worship, and together we can be the presence of Christ to those who so desperately need such a witness.

Please pray for our sister congregation, and when given the opportunity, we will share with you ways we can minister together in the name of Jesus.

Randy

## GIVING

### Giving Options

ONLINE GIVING OPTIONS AVAILABLE

We are grateful for your continued financial support of FBC during this pandemic. Though we are not physically worshipping together, allowing you the opportunity to place your gifts in an offering plate, your support can be easily sent to FBC via several convenient options.

**Mail:** You may continue to mail your check to the church, FBC, Attn: Financial Administrator, 200 E Parkway N., Memphis, TN 38112.

**Online via our website:** [www.fbcmemphis.org/giving](http://www.fbcmemphis.org/giving), using a credit card.

**Online via your bank's bill pay or ACH Payments:**

If you already pay your household bills through online banking, you can simply add First Baptist Church as a new additional payee using the church address and phone number and include your envelope number. Email Lisa

Butts to get your envelope number. You can put in an amount to send automatically each time period or you can simply go in each week/month/etc., and have the amount sent to us just as you would other bills.

For those who would prefer to have an automatic payment set-up from your bank account or credit card, you can request ACH Form from the finance office, complete it, sign, and return to the finance office. The form will lead you through completion. You have the option of specifying what account you want to the amount to be deducted from, the amount, frequency, and whether or not you want an ending date.

If anyone has questions concerning these giving methods, please email Lisa Butts ([lbutts@fbcmemphis.org](mailto:lbutts@fbcmemphis.org)). God Bless and stay healthy!

## LETTER

### Letter to the Church

*We grieve the death of our dear friend Linda Marks. Prior to her passing, she sent the following note to her church family. As of the deadline for this issue of Together, final arrangements are yet incomplete. We will provide a notice when they are determined.*

Dear FBC Family,

I have been simply overwhelmed by your love and concern during my illness. Through you, I feel surrounded and upheld by God's love.

Huge thanks for the meals, cards, calls, and—most importantly—prayers. I can feel your presence, and God's.

Much love and gratitude,

Linda Marks

## MEMORIALS

In memory of **Brian Kellett** by

Mr. & Dr. Mark Weaver  
Ms. Amanda Galloway  
Mrs. Paula McPeak  
Ms. Heather Terry  
Ebet & Clayton Peebles  
Ms. Sara Burnett  
Brian & Michelle Mallory  
Dr. Chris Cooper  
Pat Qualls  
DW McAlister  
Mr. & Mrs. Kelton Morris  
Mr. & Mrs. Bill Wilson

## TRANSITION TEAM

### From the Transition Team

In the next three editions of Together, the Transition Team will be sharing gleanings from the congregational conversations as a reminder of all the hard, good work the church has done over the past year. These pieces will be part report, part preparation for an online gathering in November that will bring our congregational conversations to a close.

The team has chosen Together as its main outlet because it has the most reach within the congregation. If you have questions about any of what is below, want to ensure that a particular insight is on the record, or desire to receive fuller summaries of the congregational conversations, please contact a member of the transition team made up of **Shawn Hawkins** (chair), **Mike Ward**, **Sally Smith**, **Gloria Hodges**, **David Weatherspoon**, **Robin Miller**, **Cherish Mathis**, and **April Blankenship**.

On September 29, 2019, we gathered to consider FBC's history. Through a timeline activity, the sharing of photos, and discussion around the tables, here are some of the themes that emerged:

- relationships are key, and these are most powerfully built within groups and classes
- FBC contains multitudes - newcomers and long-timers as well as people all along the political and theological spectrum - which is both cause for celebration and challenge
- children's and youth and music ministries are sources of great hope
- the church retains a commitment to Midtown, anchored by people who stayed after the split
- there are many who are willing to do a lot of work on behalf of the church
- healthy dialogue is valued and essential
- difficulties FBC faces include building usage and accessibility, the financial picture, a desire to engage the community more fully, relationship-building across groups, communication gaps, and the wide range of what people know about how the church works

The October 27, 2019, congregational conversation

focused on connections and featured an interactive map and a photo station in addition to small and large group discussion. Some of the themes from the first event were echoed, along with:

- a desire to create more means of intergenerational interaction and noticing who is and isn't here
- identification that mission projects might hit several targets: connecting people across groups, engaging intergenerationally, and catching people who aren't engaged at the church in other ways
- church members' request for a forum to discuss tender subjects
- a need to make first-time visits easier through increased signage (inside and outside) and sanctuary and outdoor lighting (particularly at night on the Parkway side) and more greeters who are informed about goings-on and willing to walk newcomers to classes could be helpful
- a note that communication is key and that not everyone has the same communication preferences

The November 17, 2019, congregational conversation addressed FBC's mission, using the gathering to collect diapers for Hospitality Hub, feature tables set up by mission partners, and map FBC's many assets (including financial, physical plant, individual talents and relationships, relationships between FBC and the community, location, radio access, reputation, and ministries offered). We talked about:

- how FBC is already making a big impact by providing space, funding, and person power to community organizations through individuals and the congregation as a whole
- how FBC can expand its impact by both considering additional mission partners and narrowing its mission focus, leveraging spiritual gifts more intentionally, working on the culture of the church to encourage more full participation, using the facility more effectively, improving communication, and getting more people involved in hands-on work

From the Transition Team, continued

In December we took a break from the transition facilitation process, and the transition team hosted a Christmas party instead with cookie decorating, music, Christmas photos and other merriment!

On January 12, 2020, the transition team offered a conversation outside the typical transition facilitation process in response to requests for a space to name hurts. Through our discussion in the large group circle, these needs were identified:

- clarity around leadership structure, inviting more people into decision-making and ensuring decisions are communicated out from committees
- support for ministers, including defining the role of the personnel committee, educating about what it means to welcome and embrace a minister, creating constructive feedback loops for leaders, and establishing helpful expectations of ministers
- increased communication about ministry opportunities/events/leaders and building and budget questions as well as more frequent church conferences
- capitalizing on the reputation of FBC in the community and energy when it bubbles up, encouraging engagement in processes, listening intentionally to younger members, and celebrating who is here
- building relationships across groups through focus on common ground, more opportunities for interaction and dialogue, and noticing when someone is absent/struggling

- leading with love by ensuring safety for those with less power, embracing healthy conflict over avoidant comfort, building the atmosphere that makes people want to invite others to church, deepening trust, and living in the tension between seeing the gospel as political and wanting to keep politics out of church

On February 23, 2020, we turned our attention to the future and identifying common ground on which to build. The gathered group named that will require:

- more intentional, cross-generational time together with a substantive focus (worship, Bible study, topical study, mission project, etc.), an overt invitation to all, and attention to availability of the various segments of the congregation
- development of a culture of listening well using structure/ground rules/covenanting that are reiterated often
- expanded means of communication

The willingness to work is there but needs organization and direction in terms of examining the leadership structure, getting real buy-in from congregation before big decisions, developing deeper relationships with mission partners and those who share our space, and distinguishing between logistical and spiritual problems.

Thank you for your participation in this process! Your involvement and insights have paved the way for FBC to move into the next chapter of its ministry.

## CHILDREN IN WORSHIP

### Children's Sabbath

OCTOBER 18

Children's Sabbath is Sunday, October 18. In addition to our regular Sunday morning broadcast, our children will participate in a special service online.

This is always a special day of worship led by the youngest members of our church family!

## CHILDREN & FAMILIES

### First Family Pumpkin Party

OCTOBER 30, 6-8 PM

Please join us on Friday, October 30 from 6-8 pm for some Halloween fun! We will gather in the main parking lot. Please wear a mask and keep 6-feet apart, and bring a lawn chair for the movie.

- Pumpkin carving (bring your own supplies.)
- Costume Parade
- Spooky Drive-In Movie (PG rating)

Please contact Holly if you can donate candy for individual treat bags, newspaper for pumpkin carving, or help with set up/tear down.

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