



FIRST MEMPHIS

A Different Way to be Baptist

200 E. Parkway N.
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www.fbcmemphis.org

REMINDERS

Advent & Christmas: Learn more on page 2.

Learn more about or **worship options** on page 3.

Worship Notes can be found on page 3.

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Transition Process Conclusion

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Together

Vol 36 No 12

December 2020



From Taking to Receiving

REV. DR. RANDY L. HYDE, INTERIM PASTOR

My friend Steve Hancock, pastor of Second Presbyterian in Little Rock, recently shared with me a piece he wrote for his congregation. The context is weddings, and obviously is an application for their stewardship emphasis. However, it can be applied in several ways. So if you choose to read this (and I hope you certainly do), consider it in terms of the Advent/Christmas season.

I was ordained in 1981, and have officiated at well over 200 weddings. Sometimes couples want to write their own vows, which is fine with me. My advice at that point is, "just don't make them too long or too sugary. Remember, these are promises, not sentimental love poems."

I recently stumbled across some vows that caught my eye. (These were not from a wedding I was doing, but from a wedding done by another minister.) The vow began, "I receive you, name, to be my wife/husband." It was the first time I saw the verb "receive" read in the vows. Vows normally begin with the words, "I take you."

When we take something, we feel possessive about it. If I'm at the Dunkin Donuts counter selecting a baker's dozen for my office mates, I point at the trays on the sloped shelves and say Let's see. "I'll take two chocolate frosted. I'll take three blueberry glazed", and so forth. And there's nothing wrong with feeling proprietary about the donuts I choose and then pay for. But a spouse or partner for life isn't something we possess. In truth, they're more like a gift we receive.

Receiving is a virtue that most of us struggle with on a daily basis. When we give, we're in control. I can give you a compliment, a

letter of reference, a Starbucks gift card. In each case, I'm setting the terms. I have power and options and discretion. When we receive, that's not the case at all. We're vulnerable and not in control. That's why receiving something can make us feel uneasy, dependent, or under obligation. Especially when we receive something for nothing, we often calculate how to return the favor. "The next lunch is on me," we say. Who wants to be indebted?

"Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it," said Jesus. If this passage baffles, don't look to the cuteness or sweetness of kids, as if our Lord were drawn to their dimples and innocent eyes. Think rather of children as champion receivers. By necessity. They're little bundles of need, totally dependent on the grace of grown-ups willing to look out for them. They happen to be much better at receiving than the rest of us.

"What do you have that you did not receive?" Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians. "And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" When I hear Paul talking like this, I think of the peculiar deliberation of some people in church wondering whether or

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ADVENTURE

La Fiesta de las Posadas

DECEMBER 13, 5-7 PM

Our children and families are invited to take part in the procession of Las Posadas. Las Posadas is Spanish for “lodgings”. In Latin and Central America, it is a festival celebrated during the season of Advent.

A group representing the Holy Family stands outside a series of houses, singing songs, asking for lodging. They are refused time and again until the group reaches the designated house. Finally, the travelers are permitted to enter. Prayer and song continue in the home, and festive foods are shared. The evening ends with a piñata in the shape of star.

This year we’ll celebrate Las Posadas together at First Baptist; taking a pilgrimage around our building, knocking on the exterior doors, and ending with a piñata celebration outdoors. I look forward to celebrating the Nativity with you all in this special way!

—Holly

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS

Special Services

SERVICE OF CONSOLATION AND CHRISTMAS EVE

Service of Consolation • December 20 • 4 pm

Join us as we mark this night together, gathering to name our grief and together find healing as we wait for the light brought to us by Emmanuel.

Please RSVP, for this service, to Bridget Ellis (bellis@fbcmemphis.org) by December 16.

Christmas Eve • December 24 • 6 pm

Invite your friends and family to join us for our Christmas Eve service in our Sanctuary.

Together we will wait for the good news of the birth of Jesus Christ.

ADVENT

When God Came Down

2020 SERMON TEXTS AND TITLES

First Sunday of Advent, Nov. 29:

Already, 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Second Sunday of Advent, Dec. 6:

It Doesn't Begin with Jesus, Mark 1:1-8

Third Sunday of Advent, Dec. 13:

Nots, Neithers, and Noes, John 1:19-28

Fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 20:

A Departing Angel, Luke 1:26-38

Christmas Eve, December 24:

Waiting for Good News, Luke 2:1-20

ADVENT

Nativity Lights

IN HONOR OF LINDA MARKS

Our Nativity Lights display that sit on our front lawn, will be lit during Advent and Christmastide this year in honor of **Linda Marks**.



WORSHIP

Shelby County Coronavirus Cases and In-Person Worship

Church staff and the Reopening Task Force are watching the rise in Covid-19 cases very closely and are working to have a plan in place if the Shelby County Health Department mandates a new directive that affects future in-person worship services.

If worship services must return to a virtual format, look for information regarding the changes from the church office.

We appreciate your patience and grace as we continue to navigate through this pandemic.

WORSHIP

Worship Options

SUNDAYS, 11 AM

We are grateful to everyone for adhering to our Reopening Protocols and to our volunteers who help each Sunday run smoothly since resuming in-person worship on October 4.

If you have not attended yet, plan to return soon, 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 Sanctuary and Welcome Center before or after services and observe social distancing.

You may review our entire Reopening Protocols on our website (https://fbcmemphis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Reopening-Protocols_final.pdf)

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 seniors.

We encourage anyone who has concerns about their health and safety to worship with us virtually.

You can join us at 11 am Sundays to watch the worship service via Facebook Live on the church's Facebook page.

The service can also be found on our YouTube channel or linked to our website.

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

Let's keep the faith and pray for one another, our church, and our community!

GIVING

Year-End Giving

DEADLINE FOR GIFTS IS DEC. 31

What a year 2020 has been! I pray it will soon be behind us and relief be in the near future. I know some in the congregation have lost their jobs. Others have had salary cuts and still others in retirement are worried about the state of their savings. I just want to say how deeply appreciative First Baptist is for each of the gifts you have been able to give.

As the year draws to an end, and you realize you meant to gift more to the church, or find yourself with excess funds, you may put them in the Sunday offering, or mail

them on or before Thursday, December 31 if you'd like them credited towards your 2020 charitable donations for federal tax purposes. Gifts postmarked after 12/31/20 will be credited toward your 2021 donations. If mailing your gift, use the following address: First Baptist Church, Attn: Lisa Butts, 200 E Parkway, N., Memphis TN, 38112.

Thank you again for remembering your church once again during this season of giving. Merry Christmas!
Lisa Butts

GIVING

Giving Options

ONLINE GIVING OPTIONS AVAILABLE

We are grateful for your continued financial support of FBC during this pandemic. If you are still worshipping with us virtually, FBC has several convenient options for financial support outside of the offering plate.

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, 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).

From Taking to Receiving, Continued from page 1

not they should take communion. You don't take a gift any more than you take a spouse. Both are lively realities that we graciously receive, even when we don't comprehend or approve of every aspect within them.

For future weddings, I'll at least suggest the couple consider the word "receive" in their vows.

Let us joyfully receive the gift of God's coming to us in God's Son who calls us to follow him. How better to acknowledge our gratitude for something—and Someone—we do not deserve?

Randy

PASTOR SEARCH PROCESS

Pastor Search Committee Nomination Forms

NOMINATIONS DUE DECEMBER 6

Following the conclusion of the last congregational conversation meeting led by our Transitional Facilitator Rev. Laura Stephens-Reed and our Transition Team; Tom Marchand, chair of Deacons, outlined the procedures for the formation of a Pastor Search Committee in accordance with the Bylaws of First Baptist Church.

Members received in the mail a letter and card for submission of names for the Pastor Search Committee.

These nominations are due **Sunday, December 6.**

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Capital Campaign to Raise Funds for Replacement of

First Baptist Church's capital improvement fund-raising campaign will run through January 2021, and will allow us to replace our aging A/C systems.

Deacons voted unanimously to support a recommendation from the finance committee to move forward with the replacement of the chiller as well as the air handler in the Chapel. Our goal is to raise at least \$100,000 with the remainder of the cost, estimated at \$125,000, to be paid from our reserve funds.

It may seem odd to be concerned with cooling the church just as winter is approaching. But the process to replace the chillers takes about 12 weeks and needs to be completed prior to the onset of warmer weather in the spring.

A slate will then be tabulated and presented to the church for approval in a special church conference/business meeting immediately following worship on **Sunday, December 13.**

If you have any questions about this process please contact a church staff member, Tom Marchand, or you can send an email to fbcmemphisdeacons@gmail.com.

Thank you for your support and dedication to First Baptist Church. Please prayerfully consider your recommendations and submit your nomination card by December 6.

Our beloved church building is 70 years old and as with any structure of that age, there will be maintenance needs that are necessary from time to time.

At the printing of the newsletter, \$8,050 has been raised toward our goal of \$100,000.

We ask for your prayerful support as well as your financial support as we continue this fund-raising campaign which will ensure we are able to continue worshiping in this beautiful, sacred space for years to come.

If you have any questions about this process please contact a church staff member or Tom Marchand at fbcmemphisdeacons@gmail.com.

Tom Marchand Jason Callahan
Deacon Chair Finance Chair

COMMITTEES

Joy of Serving

COMMITTEE INTEREST

Are you interested in using your gifts on one of the following committees or task forces? A list of each committee/task force is below. If you are interested in serving on a committee/task force please prayerfully consider in what way you can serve.

Please send your interests to Bridget Ellis (bellis@fbcmemphis.org) or contact a member of Committee on Committees (David Richardson, Mary Ann Rogers, Courtney Pace or Shawn Hawkins.)

Committees:

- Missions
- Finance
- Personnel
- Children
- Youth
- Senior Adult
- Committee on Committees
- Day School
- Property
- Public Relations

Task Forces:

- Church-wide Fellowships
- Flower Coordinator
- Care and Share
- Weddings
- Baptism and Lord's Supper
- Greeting and Security
- Church Archives
- Memorial Prayer Garden Board
- Broadcast Media and Technology

MEMORIALS

In memory of **Brian Kellett** by

Marge Palazzolo

In memory of **Linda Marks** by

David & Sara Cunningham

Ellen Demarrero

In memory of **Andy Simmons** by

David & Sara Cunningham

Kathleene Sims

CBF Kentucky

Jean & Henry Malone

Nancy Outlawe

Family of Polly Bristow

Willena Highsmith

David & Sharon Senn

Webb Family

In memory of **Warren Jordan, Jr.** by

Family of Polly Bristow

In memory of **Dwight Spearman** by

Family of Polly Bristow

In memory of **Polly Bristow** by

Ann Powell

In memory of **Hubert McCommon** by

Family of Polly Bristow

In memory of **Iva Lou Flowers** by

Anonymous

David & Sara Cunningham

Kathleene Sims

Bill & Betty Wilson

Suzette Coors

Beth & Mike Mikeska

Carolyn Wingate

Leigh & Gregory Kershner

Vicki & Joseph Pittard

Caroline & Wilson Orr

Mary Katherine Stout

Judy Dodd

Willena Highsmith

Greer & Carol Richardson

Kathy & Mark Brown

Mr. & Mrs. Don Pritchard

Aliou Niang

ASHA'S REFUGE

Asha's Refuge Toy Drive

DEADLINE DECEMBER 11

Asha's Refuge, located on third floor south of the building, is collecting toys for their clients.

If you can donate a new, unwrapped toy, please contact Jenny (jenny@asharefuge.org) to arrange a collection time.

They are seeking gifts for children ages 2-12. Ideas include: sports balls; jump ropes; large building blocks; baby and toddler toys; baby books; children's board games; toddler plush toys; coloring books and crayons; art supplies.



PRAYER GARDEN

Memorial Prayer Garden

In memory of Andy Simmons, a plaque has been added to the Prayer Garden memorial wall.

A plaque on the Prayer Garden memorial wall in memory of Iva Lou Flowers was donated by the Flowers family.

For more information on final arrangements in the First Baptist Church Memorial Prayer Garden contact Sandra Chandler.

TRANSITION UPDATE

From the Transition Team

PRIORITIES, GUIDING QUERIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS MOVING FORWARD

Thank you all for your participation throughout the transition facilitation process, including our final congregational conversation by Zoom! Below are priorities, guiding queries, and recommendations based on all that you shared during the discussions over the past year. If you have questions, you are welcome to contact a member of the transition team: **Shawn Hawkins** (chair), **Mike Ward**, **Sally Smith**, **Gloria Hodges**, **David Weatherspoon**, **Robin Miller**, **Cherish Mathis**, and **April Blankenship**.

Hospitality—all are welcomed

Priorities

- Love one another well so that we can be ready to welcome others
- Create new ways to bring people into church
- Let newcomers know we are glad to see them via signage and personal touch
- Prepare ourselves to love our next pastor (and family, if applicable)

Guiding questions in planning ministries

- Whose needs might this ministry meet?
- How might a newcomer find a way into this ministry?
- What might we tweak the ministry and/or the space where it takes place to make it accessible to other demographics?
- What would allow our new pastor to get off to the best possible start?

Recommendations

- Now
 - o Set wheels in motion for the formation of a pastor search team
- Near term
 - o Create easily editable picture directory, accessible online and with hard copies available for those without convenient internet access, to build recognition among church members and to give them confidence approaching people they don't know
 - o Invite congregation to join pastor search team in brainstorming ways to make the new pastor feel at home

- o Revisit website to make sure key first-time visitor information is easily accessible

- o Wear name tags on Sunday mornings
- Longer term
 - o Host open gym opportunities
 - o Increase outdoor lighting, particularly on Parkway side
 - o Improve outdoor and indoor signage, including Sunday School and worship times and which door to enter
 - o Have people available and trained to welcome and walk newcomers to Sunday School classes and worship
 - o Conduct an accessibility audit to pinpoint challenges for those with impairments

Community—all are valued

Priorities

- Increase opportunities for interaction across groups and generations
- Open the channels of communication between committees/leadership groups and congregation
- Prepare ourselves to welcome the leadership of our new pastor
- Make it possible for new groups to launch and stick
- Notice who is falling through the cracks

Guiding questions in planning ministries

- How might we get the whole church involved in—or at least informed about—this ministry?
- What might God be up to through our new pastor?
- Who might this ministry provide care to?
- Who might not feeling cared for? What work needs to be done so that those people do have a source for care?

Recommendations

- Now
 - o Hold a series of online prayer meetings around focused topics (e.g., formation/work of the search team, the pastor who will eventually be called to FBC)

From the Transition Team, continued from page 7

- Near term
 - o Implement online pieces of the “letting people know who the leaders are” document (in folder shared with transition team) for improved communication between committees/groups and the congregation (can complement online picture directory)
 - List committees/small groups and contact people on website.
 - Make use of social media for committee/small group news, event announcements, calls for participation, and person to contact for more information.
 - o Create, build consensus around, and continue to educate about (“here’s what we’re looking for, so here’s what we can expect from this person”) pastoral priorities
- Longer term
 - o Implement other pieces of the “letting people know who the leaders are” document (in folder shared with transition team) for improved communication between committees/groups and the congregation
 - Make good use of bulletin boards.
 - Highlight a committee/small group each week in worship with a 1-3 minute Ministry Moment. (For added impact, have someone record the Ministry Moment on a smartphone and share the video on social media.)
 - Highlight a committee/small group each month in Together.
 - Create an easily accessible “mail room for committees/small groups where church members can see the names of committees/groups and leave suggestions or questions in that group’s mail slot.
 - o Look for natural opportunities to bring whole church together around special days or emphases, forming a standing social committee or ad hoc task groups to plan those events
 - o Set up helpful feedback loops for pastor from the outset
 - o Appoint a Christian education committee to start and support new spiritual formation opportunities for groups whose needs aren’t currently being met, such as younger adults
 - o Assess now (“assessing current ministries” - document in folder shared with transition team) and on an ongoing basis (“ministry reflection form”—

document in folder shared with transition team) the need for/viability of committees and groups to ensure all church members have a solid place to plug in and build relationships

Service—all are served and given a chance to serve

Priorities

- Get to know people we share space with – from landlord/tenant to ministry partners
- Consider best use of building in service to our church, partners, and community
- Get in touch with our denominational identity
- Offer cross-generational mission opportunities

Guiding questions for planning ministries

- How might we involve our ministry partners in what we’re planning?
- How might we show God’s love through what we are planning?
- How is our campus serving our community well? How might it serve the community even better?
- How is what we’re doing good news to CBF? How is what CBF doing good news to us?
- What could it look like for our whole congregation serve the community together?

Recommendations

- Now
 - o Affirm that while the church is located in Midtown, it draws from and serves the whole city
 - o Consider space-sharing opportunities as they arise with churches/organizations whose values align with FBC’s and who could be true ministry partners, not just tenants
- Near term
 - o Communicate who is using the building and when via building maps and church calendar
- Longer term
 - o Look for all-age service opportunities, whether set up by the church or through events planned by other organizations
 - o Learn more about who CBF is, what it does, and how we can be involved from those closest to it:
 - David Weatherspoon, CBF-endorsed chaplain
 - Jason Callahan, member of CBF Global

Continued on page 9

Governing Board

- Shannon Malone, member of TN CBF

Coordinating Council

- Rick Bennett, TN CBF Coordinator

Dialogue—all are heard

Priorities

- Continue rebuilding the culture of trust across the congregation as a whole
- Involve more people in leadership

Guiding questions for planning ministries

- How might we ratchet up the safety of this ministry so that all people feel they can fully be themselves?
- How might we bring others along in this process?
- Whose gifts are being under-utilized?
- Whose gifts are being stretched too thin?
- Who might our group mentor for future leadership?

Recommendations

- Now
 - o Implement conversational covenant (in folder shared with transition team)
 - When listening, assume positive intent in others, avoid interrupting, separate ideas/viewpoints from people, and acknowledge there may be more than one right idea/way.
 - When speaking, attempt to be honest and fair in what you share, ask rather than assume, seek common ground, and filter all statements through the two greatest commandments: love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.
 - o Increase transparency around church finances, including non-liquid assets
- Near term
 - o Hold a deacon election for a new class of active deacons
 - o Implement a rotation of active deacons
- Longer term
 - o Have conversation about what the church learned from the pandemic, including what it wants to focus on and what it wants to shed
 - o Increase number of church conferences to 3-4 per year, with different groups reporting at each.
 - o Use “fist five” document (in folder shared with transition team) to check temperature along the way to

big decisions

- A fist means, “I vote NO.”
- 1 finger means, “I’ll just barely go along” or “I don’t like this but it’s not quite a no” or, “I think there is lots more work to do on this proposal.”
- 2 fingers means “I don’t much like this but I’ll go along.”
- 3 fingers means, “I’m in the middle somewhere. Like some of it, but not all.”
- 4 fingers means, “This is fine.”
- 5 fingers means, “I like this a lot. I think it’s the best possible decision.”
 - o Hold regular open deacon meetings at which any church member can observe what deacons are working on
 - o Streamline committee structure so that it fits the church’s size
 - o Consider hiring a part-time administrator to facilitate communication among groups and between groups and the church

As we change gears from the transition facilitation process to the pastor search, here are some ways you can continue to be active in preparing for FBC’s next season of ministry:

- **Share how you’d like to be involved with any of the above.** Contact Randy or a transition team member to get connected to the right person or group to offer your gifts.
- **Participate in the election of the pastor search team.** See details on this process from deacon chair Tom Marchand. (More details are available on page 5.)
- **Pray for:**
 - o The priorities listed above
 - o FBC as we elect the pastor search team
 - o The search team as they do their work
 - o The yet-to-be-called pastor
 - o The yet-to-be-called pastor’s loved ones
 - o The yet-to-be-called pastor’s current ministry setting
- **Write a note or draw a picture of welcome to give to the yet-to-be-called pastor.** Keep it in a safe place or drop it off at the church office to hold it until the time to share it arrives.
- **Continue to support the church and its ministries.** FBC desires to continue serving its members and neighbors in a variety of ways.

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Email: bellis@fbcmemphis.org

a different way to be Baptist

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, 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). God Bless and stay healthy!