

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
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## The Visitor

JANUARY 2013

### Into 2013

*Wade Allen*

As we come to the close of another year, we often reflect on where we have been and where we are going. As a church, 2012 has been a particularly eventful year. We changed our Sunday morning schedule in the spring and hired additional staff in the summer. Both of these decisions involved a lengthy discernment process that began in 2011 and received strong congregational support. Nevertheless, such changes are significant for any congregation. Change is never easy; it always requires adjustment on some level.

I wish I could say that 2013 will be the year of stability. It would be nice to sit back and not have to think about significant changes. Unfortunately, the world keeps changing around us and challenges us to adapt. As we look into next year, I want to highlight at least two areas of focus for January.

**Stewardship** – One area of focus for 2013 will be stewardship. While this includes financial

stewardship, it is much more. As a congregation by necessity, we are shifting leadership and ministry support toward younger attendees and members. As we have experienced loss in recent years of aging members (to death and assisted living facilities), we are finding the pews filled with younger people. This generation will need to pick up where the older generation has left off. This is not to diminish the continued participation but needed care of older members, but we must consider what will be in the next twenty years. We will need to reconsider how we use our resources as a part of this process. But at the same time, everyone needs to be faithful in time, talent and financial resources if First Baptist Church is to remain viable. We will be having a family conversation regarding stewardship in the early part of 2013.

**New Communities** – I have been working with a small team to implement new communities/discipleship initiatives at the beginning of next

year. We have found that discipleship looks a bit different for the younger generation. While the values are the same, culture has shifted significantly in the last fifty years. We will be piloting a new community beginning in February. This community has the potential for great impact in our congregation and our local community. I hope that some of you will consider joining this effort.

Will 2013 be a year of change? I am sure that it will be. What will those changes be and how

will they affect each of us? I am not sure. Yet, I am convinced that God will lead us and direct us toward His vision for First Baptist Church. We may need to shift our resources; we may need to try new methods of ministry. May God give us the ability to hear His voice as we navigate our ever-changing world. May He give us the courage to adapt to new callings as we continue to fulfill the Great Commission.

(Matthew 28:19 NIV) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

## #storyofmylife

*Matt Headley*

I've noticed a trend. After recently donning some new leadership and life roles, many good-natured folks have inquired about what I've done with my life lately (besides create the illusion of a perpetual chaotic furor). What you're reading is one attempt towards bucking this trend.

I believe good leaders tell stories. While I don't have the strongest track record for consistent updates on Facebook or Twitter, I'm planning to regularly carve out time to tell stories here of what God is up to in my life and ministry. Here goes.

Four big things began in my life between July and October of 2012.

- July: Youth Ministry. I was called to join the staff a parachurch organization called Muncie Area Youth for Christ (YFC) as the coordinator for a "Campus Life" ministry in the Muncie Central High School community.
- August: Church Leadership. After three years of serving First Baptist Church of Muncie as a worship arts director, I was called to serve as an associate pastor, broadening my previous leadership role to include outreach ministry.
- September: Parenthood. My wife and I met Hannah Joy, an amazing new person who is also our first child. Three words: Beautiful. Scary. Hilarious.
- October: Education. For the grand finale of my journey through an M.Div. with Northern Seminary, I began a chaplaincy internship with the gifted staff in the spiritual care department at Ball Memorial Hospital.

These new commitments have presented me with some exciting and formidable challenges. I've been humbled by the patience and grace friends around me have extended as I work to balance these commitments out. I hope that, as I tell my story and how God is working through it, you will see him moving in your own life, in our community, and maybe even the world. Peace!

## Missional Communities

**Story of Transition** – In the summer of 2012, the young adult small group had been meeting for over three years. The dynamics of the group had changed. Some had children; new members had joined the group. The group sensed that God was moving among them, but did not realize exactly what that meant. The group entered an intentional time of discernment throughout the summer and fall of 2012.

The group asked the question,

Reflecting on what God has taught us, how is He calling this group to action so that our efforts might be expanded for the benefit of the church and the community?

The group considered possibilities of dividing the group, discontinuing the ministry or sending out families to begin new groups in the community. As the group explored its calling, it concluded,

God is calling some of us to step out of this existing group in order to begin (lead) new groups in our church (perhaps missional groups). Some of us feel that God has called us to stay as this group. This will open the group to others (allowing this group to be accessible) so that they may be discipled as we have been.

We did not know exactly how this would play out, but we knew that God was calling this group to something different, something that would open the door for new people to engage. Around the same time, Matt and I attended a workshop in Fort Wayne about missional communities. As we explored the dynamics of this approach, we felt that God was calling us toward this direction.

We began reading, exploring and considering this approach to discipleship and community. A team of four members was formed to map this out. Colleen Massoth, Tim Stigers, David Rodriguez, Heather Headley and I began meeting to discuss how we might begin a similar approach that was contextual to First Baptist Church Muncie.

In our process, we explored the values of First Baptist Church Muncie; we even rummaged through scrapbooks from Sunday School classes from 60 years ago. We discovered that the values of previous generations (Sunday School classes) were the same as the values for these communities. While the world looks much different, the dynamics of living life together have not changed. The format of missional communities will be different from Sunday School, but the values will be similar. The groups will be on mission together in the community; they will spend time in close fellowship (through Life Groups) and will support one another through the good and bad that life brings.

The team felt that God was leading this direction. We sensed that God was prompting us to give this format a shot.

**Plan for Pilot Group** – The team turned to a model for missional communities out of England. Europe has experienced cultural changes we are now experiencing in America. Church attendance among adults is plummeting; the church is no longer the center of culture. Mike Breen and Alex Absalom, in *Launching Missional Communities: A Field Guide* detail the approach in St. Thomas' Church in Sheffield, England fifteen years ago. He suggests beginning with a pilot community. It is a way to test out the format and learn from the experience.

We plan to have a pilot community at First Baptist Church Muncie in 2013. In the month of January, we will have an informational meeting (Wednesday, January 9) for those who are interested in participating in the community. Participants will have a chance to sign up for Life Groups through January 20. The community will begin in February 2013 and will conclude at the end of May 2013.

**What are Missional Communities?** – There has been much written about missional communities. I will try to keep this brief, but I would like to give you an idea of what we are talking about. Wikipedia defines missional communities as,

groups of . . . people who are united, through Christian community, around a common service and witness to a particular neighborhood or network of relationships. With a strong value on life together, the group has the expressed intention of seeing those they impact choose to start following Jesus, through this more flexible and locally incarnated expression of the church.

In short, missional communities are mid-sized (25-50 people) and serve to connect people in the work of God in our community. They are larger than small groups, but they are smaller than worship gatherings. Sociologists have concluded that this group size is ideal for mission projects. They are often centered on a particular geographic region or mission focus.

In larger church settings, there may be several missional communities. But for us, we will begin with one. The missional community will meet twice a month. They will meet on the first Wednesday of each month for a meal and fellowship. They will gather for a mission/service project on the third week of each month.

**What are Life Groups?** – While missional communities are ideal sized for projects, they are a bit large for life-on-life connections. Embedded in missional communities will be Life Groups of 6-12 people. They will meet on the second and fourth week of each month for Bible study, prayer and fellowship - living the Christian life together. For now, we will have an open sign up and divide interested participants into Life Groups for the duration of the Pilot Group (February-May 2013).

Life Groups will meet in homes; the date and time will be determined by the Life Groups themselves. Leaders will also meet on the first and third week of each month for training and sharing.

**How can I get involved?** – You might be asking, how can I get involved? The first way would be to attend the January 9 informational meeting. Come and find out more about how these groups will function. If you would like to be involved in a Life Group, you will have an opportunity to sign up through January 20.

If you choose to be involved in the pilot community, you will have an opportunity to connect with others, serve on Mission projects together and be involved in a Life Group. Again a typical monthly schedule will look like this.

- First week - Meal and Sharing Time at Church on Wednesday evening
- Second week - Life Groups in homes
- Third week - Mission project
- Fourth week - Life Groups in homes
- Fifth week (if there is one) - no meetings

**Informational Meeting on Jan 9** – On January 9 at 6:30 PM, we will gather in the lower auditorium for an informational meeting about missional communities. Dinner will be served at 5:30 PM.

**This is a test, only a test . . .** – Perhaps you are listening to the radio and hear a long beep. The broadcaster usually says something like, “this is a test, only a test.”

This pilot group is only a test. We hope that we will find that these gatherings are life transforming. We hope that this pattern of ministry will prove fruitful and that we will continue it beyond the pilot group. At the same time, we hope to learn from mistakes as we navigate these new waters together.

I hope that you will join us as we explore new ways of discipleship and mission.

## Wednesday Evenings During Holidays

Please note that on **Wednesday, January 2**, there will be no Wednesday Evening Programs. We will resume Wednesday evening programs on January 9.

## Youth Ski Trip

The youth will be traveling again this year to Green Lake, Wisconsin. If you would be willing to sponsor a teenager for their January 2013 ski trip, please contact Wade. Kids pay for half of the cost. We are looking for sponsors to pay for the other half. Any donation would be helpful, but a full sponsorship would be \$100.

## Business Meeting on January 13

We were unable to make the proposed constitutional changes on December 16 due to attendance. We needed to have 40% of active attendees in the meeting. However, the support for the change was overwhelming. We will have a brief business meeting following both services on January 13 to conduct this business.

## Church Music Discernment Process

Beginning in January, a group of leaders will begin a series of meetings to discern the way we use music in our church. The discernment team will address issues including rehearsal schedules and leadership personnel.

## Church Office Closed

The church office will be closed from Monday, December 24 through Wednesday, January 2. You may contact one of the pastors during this time if you have a pastoral need. Wade (765-405-0131), Matt (765-405-0536) or Robert (765-749-6105) will be available by phone.

## Printed Directory

You may pick up a printed directory at either door of the sanctuary as you leave today. There will also be copies in the church office.

## New Website

We have updated the website to a new format for use on mobile devices. Please check it out and let us know what you think and if anything needs to be added to the site.

## Sanctuary Choir

Sanctuary choir is open to new members. Reading music is helpful but not required; just have a love for praising the Lord in song. We rehearse 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., Wed evenings, except on special occasions and participate in worship leading during the traditional service.

## Handbell Rehearsals

The Handbell Choir will be on a holiday break from December 12 - January 2. They will rehearse on December 5 and will resume rehearsals on January 9, 2013.

## Stewardship Sermon Series

For the first six weeks of 2013, we will be focusing on stewardship. It is no secret that we are suffering the loss of financial support as aged members are passing away and/or moving into assisted living facilities. But stewardship is more than dollars. It is about fully offering ourselves to God. We will engage Scripture around this topic together in the New Year. We hope that you will join us in this important series as we study Scripture together.

- January 6 - Posture of Sacrifice (Matthew 2:1-12)
- January 13 - Giving God Credit (Psalm 29)
- January 20 - Spiritual Gifts: Part 1 (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)
- January 27 - Spiritual Gifts: Part 2 (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)
- February 3 - Two Masters (Luke 16:13-15)
- February 10 - Hearts Follow Treasure (Matthew 6:19-21)

Following the series, we will move into the season of Lent together.

## Thank You Notes

**From Children's Ministry** – Special thanks to Dana and Duane Davis for the wooden nativity sets. Duane made a set for each family in the children's department, a total of 12 sets. The children enjoyed coloring each piece. They are a beautiful and great keepsake for the children. Thanks so much!

**From Dick Stemmer and Penny Morris** – To all at First Baptist Church, a church that is always there for you through good times and bad times. Thank you for all the prayers, the cards, the visits and the many blessings you have brought our way. May God bless all of you and bring you the many blessings that you have brought to us. From the bottom of our hearts.

**Salvation Army Bell Ringing** – Thank you so much for ringing bells for the Salvation Army. Our kettles had donated \$709.71 in two days.

## Calendar

**Sundays** – 9:15 a.m. Early Gathering/Early Sunday School, 10:15 a.m. Fellowship Time, 10:45 a.m. Late Gathering/Late Sunday School

**Wednesdays** – 5:30 p.m. - Evening Meal, 6:00 p.m. - Childrens' Program, 6:30 p.m. - Bible Study & Handbell Rehearsal, 7:40 - Choir Rehearsal

Note: There will be no Wednesday evening programs on December 26 and January 2.

**January 9** – Missional Community Information Meeting

**January 12** – Children's Ministry Team Meeting

**January 13** – Business Meeting following each service

**January 16** – Music Discernment Process Meeting One

**January 18-21** – Youth Ski Trip

**January 23** – Music Discernment Process Meeting Two

## 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.

2 Jennifer Hudson-Roberts  
3 Dale Stone  
8 Bob Oisten  
10 Dale Jones  
6 Aurora Richardson  
Phoebe Reid  
Marsha Venable  
Julia Whaley-Jones  
14 Grace Hahn  
18 Lester Bryars

Marjorie Wright  
21 Sharon Jackson  
Annie Wright  
25 Gene Carr  
Grace Wright  
26 Ann Siverly  
28 Pam Kistler  
31 Patty Stigers  
Bill Turner