

A photograph of a winter forest. Tall, dark evergreen trees are covered in a thick layer of snow. The ground is also covered in snow, with long, soft shadows cast across it. In the center background, a bright sunburst or light flare is visible, creating a warm, golden glow that filters through the trees. The overall atmosphere is serene and cold.

Highlights

Newsletter

January/February 2019



As we look towards a new year, and as we begin to implement our church's new and ambitious vision, I'd like to address some of the "myths" I've come across regarding our specific desired future about LGBTQ inclusion. Misconceptions are bound to happen whenever any church takes on a complicated challenge. We shouldn't worry when misunderstandings arise, but neither should we allow parlor and parking lot conversations to proliferate when they might be in error. For the sake of clarity and trust, and as an aid for the Discernment Team as they remain focused on their charge, I take this opportunity to nip some of these myths in the bud:

Myth: *The outcome has already been decided by church leaders.*

Truth: There is no predetermined outcome. Like the Discernment Team itself, church leaders hold diverse views on these questions. But, just as the early church gathered to seek consensus, trusting the Holy Spirit to guide and unify their fellowship, we, too, will gather to "do what seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28).

A faithful response: We should engage the time to come with patience, trusting that the God "who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

Myth: *The Discernment Team was "stacked" to influence the outcome.*

Truth: The Discernment Team was chosen according to our church by-laws to be representative of our congregation. From their earliest meetings, members have offered a diversity of testimonies and thoughtful reflections with respectful and generous hearts. Their earliest consensus has been a recognition of the complexity of the issues as they consider Scripture, tradition, and our particular church's needs.

A faithful response: We should encourage the Discernment Team members in their work, and hold them in the highest regard for guiding us through these challenging questions. We should tell them of our prayers, and express our ongoing appreciation both in person and in writing.

Myth: *We are surrendering to cultural norms and letting the world determine our direction.*

Truth: In this divided age, replete with fear-driven politics and unbending partisanship, a communal process of patient discernment guided by Scripture and rooted in church tradition is a very counter-cultural thing to do.

A faithful response: We should appreciate the seriousness with which all of our fellow members take their discipleship, and trust one another's essential convictions about the Lordship of Jesus Christ, even when we differ on matters of interpretation.

Myth: *We don't need to have these conversations because we're already welcoming and inclusive.*

Truth: Those of us who don't experience discrimination can find it hard to believe that others among us still do. While we are a remarkably welcoming, inclusive church, our identity remains unclear regarding important questions about LGBTQ inclusion.

A faithful response: Those among us who don't identify as LGBTQ can try to imagine what life is like in their shoes as members of the church. In this way, we "love our neighbors as ourselves."

Myth: *The staff isn't concerned that people have left or might leave the church.*

Truth: The staff and leaders of the church are deeply concerned about our church's unity, and we respond — with calls, notes, or personal visits — whenever we've learned that someone is considering leaving.

A faithful response: The whole congregation shares in the work of truth and reconciliation. We are all called to seek those sheep who have wandered off. While we weep when these ties are cut, we also rejoice in regaining those who have left.

The Discernment Team will be welcoming everyone's questions and concerns in listening sessions throughout the Wednesday nights of January and early February, as they prepare for a panel discussion in the Sanctuary on February 17. Soon thereafter, they will call on us all to begin participating in the very biblical and faithful task of learning, sharing conversation, and, ultimately, seeking a congregational consensus regarding LGBTQ inclusion.

In the meantime, let's take heart, trust that God is with us, and have the courage to attend to where the Holy Spirit comes from and where it goes.

— Mack Dennis

Discernment Team Update

Jesus prayed, “The glory that you have given me, I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:22-23).

First Baptist Church of Asheville is a community of faith, centered on Jesus the Christ, and commitment to his way of love and grace in the world.

The Discernment Team was tasked with helping the congregation discern with love our desired future “to welcome and include all in a way consistent with God’s love and wisdom,” and specifically, how God is calling us to welcome and include LGBTQ persons. The committee has met three times, during which the team prayed for God’s guidance, listened to one another’s stories, shared hopes and fears, and discussed the process for churchwide discernment through listening, learning, and fostering unity. We have studied Scripture, considered resources, and related conversations that have been shared among our congregation.

Unity is the guiding mission of this group. Unity is not something that we add on to our Christian practices; it is essential to our faith. Unity begins in God’s character and in God’s unconditional love for all people. In Scripture, Jesus prays for our oneness (John 17:22-23). Paul writes that we are no longer defined by our differences, but we are now one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). Being reconciled to God and to one another is a core component of the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Yet, unity does not imply uniformity. The image used for followers of Jesus is the Body of Christ, made of not one part but many, because we need one another, and we benefit from our diversity (1 Corinthians 12:14-21).

The Discernment Team recognizes the complexity of our conversations and this process. We care about faithful members for whom this discernment conversation creates anxiety, as well as those for whom it instills hope. We care about those in our community who may never feel valued enough to enter our church, as well as those who hold firm to long held beliefs about relationships. We care about those who faithfully study Scripture and come away with different interpretations. The Discernment Team wants every voice to be heard, respected, and valued. Our hope is to create safe spaces for discerning together and invite everyone to stay in the process to listen, learn, and tell her/his story.

As we enter the Christian season of Epiphany, the church celebrates God’s dream for the world revealed in Jesus Christ and how we can participate in that dream to share the love and grace of God, fully living the life God has called us to live. The word epiphany means “to shine upon,” “to reveal.” As Christ’s Spirit reveals to us the more excellent way of love that never fails (1 Corinthians 12:31), I encourage us to pay attention, be patient and kind, pray, and replace any fears we may have with hope and trust in the one who loves us and prays for our unity.

We live in a divisive culture. People who strongly disagree on important things talk *about* one another instead of *with* one another. Our church seeks to live out a different model, one where we can gather as a church family to talk respectfully and openly with one another. There are deep emotions, long held beliefs, and honest questions about how we live as followers of Jesus in relationship with LGBTQ friends, members, and their families. It is easy to rush a process or think we know where it is headed. However, the Discernment Team invites all to come along a journey. Let us read and interpret Scripture together, listen to the stories of our congregation and community, pray for one another and for this work of discernment, and trust that the Spirit will guide us along this biblical process.

If you have any questions about the process or would like a Discernment Team member to talk with your Bible study community, contact Jan Busey, jhbusey@gmail.com, or Tommy Bratton, tbratton@fbca.net.

Team: Jan Busey, Chair
Mindy Allen
Kelly Belcher
Woody Edney
Bob Gilkeson

Patricia Glazener
Ron Gough
Mark Green
Donna Lewis

Beatty Logan
Chelsea Setzer
Matthew Stacey
Tommy Bratton, ministerial liaison

— Tommy Bratton

Listening Spaces

Wednesdays, January 9–30

5:00 p.m. • Rooms MB302 and MB305

To facilitate hearing the many voices of our congregation, the Discernment Team wants to provide a listening space to hear the hopes, fears, and questions people may have. On four Wednesdays, January 9-30, there will be at least two members of the Discernment Team available to listen to congregational members and/or to answer questions about the process. Team members will collect questions and make notes on what they hear.

Bible study communities will also be invited to write out questions on note cards and return them to the church office. These questions, along with notes from the listening spaces, will guide the content for the panel discussion on Sunday, February 17.

Discernment Team Panel Discussion

Sunday, February 17

5:00 p.m. • Fellowship meal • Dining Room

6:00 p.m. • Panel Discussion • Sanctuary

The Discernment Team will gather for a panel discussion in the sanctuary to update the congregation on its work. Tommy Bratton will facilitate a conversation among Discernment Team members. All are invited to hear the team talk about the process, hopes and concerns, and respond to questions and comments heard through the listening spaces and from Bible study communities.



FirstShine Learning Center

The FirstShine Learning Center committee has been following a dream and establishing a vision for a school for some of our favorite folks in the greater Asheville community. It is the mission of FirstShine Learning Center to provide adults with developmental disabilities a safe, nurturing environment within a community of joy where they can experience dignity, grow in mind, body, and soul, and make contributions to their world in meaningful ways. We will provide developmentally appropriate activities such as art, music, exercise, dance, and vocational training. Students will have individual learning plans that provide de-

velopmentally appropriate goals in reading, math, money management, and health. Field trips and service opportunities will promote self-worth, growth in social skills, and lots of fun with friends! Service opportunities inside the classroom, around the church, and outside the center will broaden each student's awareness of needs that they can meet. Our goal is to open the Center by the fall of 2019 and offer a broad range of experiences for students who have completed their high school education. The Center will be open five days per week and will be financed through tuition pay as well as offering scholarships through gifts and grants. FirstShine Camp is known throughout the community as a weeklong experience of love and awesome activities. Building on what has been accomplished over so many years, we look forward to extending our mission in serving our adults who have previously attended FirstShine camp and welcome the opportunity to introduce the FirstShine Center to those who have never entered our doors.

Members of the work group include: Susan Blackmon, Leah Brown, Charlene Morris, Cindy Newman, David Bourne, David Hart, Martha Morgan, Jan Busey, Judy Hamrick, Mary Green, Pam Moser, Martha Worley, and Beckie Dickson.

If you are interested in knowing more about the FirstShine Learning Center, contact Susan Blackmon at 828.768.2660 or blackmonsusan8@gmail.com.

Remember and Hope: Celebrating Our Community of Faith

Wednesday, January 2 • 6:00 p.m. • Chapel

Facilitated by Tommy Bratton

The Advent season has prepared us to welcome Jesus into our daily lives, yet Christmas Day may have felt more like an ending than a beginning to many. As soon as the presents are opened and the extended family returns home, the tree comes down and the decorations are put away. The anticipation and joy are behind us and it is time to get back to a familiar routine. However, in the Christian year, the season of Christmas begins on December 25 and continues until Twelfth Night, January 5. Our challenge this year is to re-imagine Christmas Day not as an end to the season, but the beginning of a celebration. At Christmas, Jesus was born. God has taken on flesh and become human. Good news of great joy has come. It is a new beginning.

As we join together for this service, we will reflect on God's presence this past year, tell stories, and share hopes for a new year. We may or may not have nine ladies dancing, but we will talk about the nine Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and how we might cultivate those virtues in the new year.

Epiphany Vespers:

Illuminated by the Light of Christ

Wednesdays, January 9-30

6:00 p.m. • Chapel

You are invited to this contemplative and celebrative evening worship experience. This sacred time will invite you to consider where the light of Christ has shined upon you. Each week, there will be a homily led by Mack Dennis. You will hear testimony from one of our deacon leaders. Music and prayers will guide us into the presence of God.

The Epiphany Vespers provide a wonderful opportunity to invite a friend, family member, or acquaintance to join you. We invite you to this service, hoping it will create a place where you experience God in your midst.

A House United:

The Church's Mission to Become One

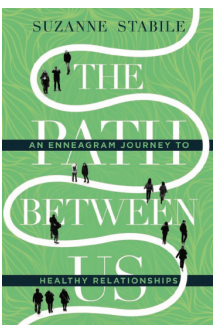
Wednesdays, February 6-27 • 6:00 p.m.

Chapel • Led by Tommy Bratton

Jesus prayed that his disciples might all be one (John 17:20-23). Jesus also commanded his disciples to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 12:34-35). This dual mission to love and to be united in our diversity is the work of the church, the body of Christ. There is much in our world that seeks to divide us, but the call of unity, for which Jesus prayed, can continue to lead our congregation to be a Spirit-filled model of community across difference, courageous conversation over angry monologues, understanding over indifference. Everyone is invited to these sessions as we study Scripture, pray together, celebrate, and participate in God's mission for the Church to be one in Christ Jesus.

Enneagram and Relationships Small Group

Tuesday evenings, 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. • January 15 - February 19



This small group will meet six consecutive weeks beginning January 15 and will discuss the Enneagram and how personalities play out in relationships. The Enneagram has much to teach us about ourselves and how we relate to others. This six-session study guide is a content-rich companion to Suzanne Stabile's *The Path Between Us*, taking us deeper into understanding our number's potential blessings and problem areas. As we understand more about each of the other numbers, we better understand the people we love the most - what motivates them, what they need, and how we can cherish them. Each session explores a different topic that will offer insights into how we can develop loving, mature, and compassionate relationships.

It is highly recommended that you have read *The Path Between Us* before the first session. Contact Laura Addis at 214.236.3663 or laura@lifeinthetrinityministry.com to register.

agapekids

wednesdays at 6:00 p.m.
resumes January 2

Agapekids is a time for preschoolers and children to participate in missions, faith development, and worship.



This winter we will build community, learn beloved hymns, and continue to explore what it means to follow Jesus.



Preschoolers meet in CB303
1st - 6th graders meet in CB221
Childcare provided for kids under 3.

Contact Amy Stertz for more information.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

You can keep up with what is happening in the Children's Ministry through our weekly e-mail and social media. To be added to the email distribution list, please contact April Nance at anance@fbca.net. To find us on social media search for the following:

facebook: FBCA Kids
instagram: fbcashevillekids
twitter: FBCAshevilleKid

The season of Epiphany calls us to share God's light with the world. Our children do this throughout the year as they serve our church and community.

Mark Green shared these words after watching our children sort thousands of items donated for our White Christmas food collection:

I recall few events I have enjoyed more. Adults aside tonight (who were also amazing), our kids rocked! They knew what they needed to do, came in with incredible excitement and then, with a lot of merriment, got everything sorted from the mess we left for them in 45 minutes! I started out trying to help and quickly figured out the best way I could help was to get out of their way. Once again, this is testament to our kids. I've told the kids, they have a permanent position in this ministry and of course they said, "That's what we want!" All I can say is WOW and thanks.



We're excited to announce dates for our 2019 summer camps! Registration will be open to First Baptist Church participants in January and to the public in March.

Advocacy Camp

June 10 - 14*
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
rising 4th - 7th graders
*dates may change

Vacation Bible School

June 24-27
9:00 a.m. - noon
4 years olds - rising 6th graders

Discovery Camp

July 29 - August 2
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
rising 1st - 6th graders

PASSPORTkids

July 16 - 19
Converse College
rising 4th - 7th graders
Optional Day Camp at church on July 15

VBS Day Camp

June 24 - 28
noon - 5:00 p.m.
rising 1st - 6th graders

Preschool Camp

July 30 - August 1
9:00 a.m. - noon
2 years old - 5 years old



REGISTRATION OPEN NOW

Celebrate the end of the year in the sand and the surf of Caswell Beach. We'll enjoy thoughtful discussions, group games and challenges, and evening parties, as well as group affirmations and senior rites of passage. Register online today at www.fbca.net.

Sunday Koinonia Youth Group

Become fully connected to the youthgroup by making Koinonia a weekly experience. "Koinonia" is the Greek word used to describe the very first Christian communities in the New Testament. Koinonia happens at FBCA as we form small groups, share in activities, and wrestle with complex and critical issues of faith together.



Snack Social: 4:10-4:30
(Game Room)

Koinonia: 4:30-5:30 (4th Floor)

RESUMES JANUARY 13
4:30 P.M.



UNIDIVERSITY

SUMMER CAMP
JULY 20-27, 2019
REGISTRATION OPEN

REGISTRATION OPEN DECEMBER - FEBRUARY 2019

Early Bird Camp Cost: \$360/student
(Register online by February 27 for Early Bird Rate.)

Regular Camp Cost: \$380/student
\$120 Deposit due at Registration

Experience a truly unique camp set on the campus of the University of Tennessee. Choose from a list of creative electives and seminars, attend thought-provoking worship sessions, and enjoy free time and recreation on the campus. Prior to camp, our group will spend two challenging days doing roof repairs in Knoxville. Register online today at www.fbca.net.



Jubilee Luncheons • Tuesdays • 11:00 a.m. • Dining Room

All Senior Adults are invited to join us for fellowship, a delicious meal, and a wonderful program. The cost is \$3 for the meal and first-time guests eat free! Contact Leah Brown at 828.252.4781 or lbrown@fbca.net for more information.

January 15

This I Believe • Led by Tommy Bratton

Tommy will share his Rule of Life and explore ways we all can live our faith each moment.

February 19

Celebrating You in 2019

We remember and celebrate the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington in February, but you don't need to feel left out if you were born in a different month. We are going to celebrate everyone's birthday during this Jubilee program! Come and see what fun and surprises await you at this birthday bash!

Stephen Ministry Corner

Stephen Ministers are trained laypeople who are eager to provide one-to-one confidential care for people in our congregation who are experiencing difficulties in their lives (i.e. death of a loved one, a chronic or terminal illness, separation/divorce, unemployment, birth/adoption/miscarriage/infertility, etc.) Please contact Leah Brown at 828.252.4781 for more information about how this ministry might assist you.



Youth/Senior Adult/Prime Time

Valentine's Banquet

GREAT FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP

Sunday, February 10, 2019
Noon

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED
\$10 per person
Contact Leah Brown at 828.252.4781 or
lbrown@fbca.net to make your reservation.





Haiti 2019

A team of 12 most amazing First Baptist Church of Asheville church members will be traveling to Port-au-Prince, Haiti February 2-9, 2019, to provide both dental, medical, and eye care. Our team consists of volunteer dentists, doctors, nurses, a trained eye care team, and support staff. Please be praying for our team as they travel to care for people in need.

Prayers for the 2019 FBCA Haiti Medical/Dental Team

This will be our seventh trip to Haiti as missionaries for our Lord and Savior. We are grateful that our church has such a ministry that we can share our talents and passion to serve. The work in Haiti is hard but very fulfilling. We have made many relationships with our friends in Haiti. Some may see us just as “white folks” that come and help them, but many see us as “one in Christ” with them in this kingdom assisting each other on all our journeys. We may need and receive as much from them as we give to them.

Please pray for our medical and dental work.

- For enthusiasm as we represent Christ
- That God will bring those Haitians to us who most need our skills
- For rest and recuperation each evening to be ready for another full day of service
- That our team stays healthy and that nothing hinders us from going and participating
- That we can be encouragers for the translators who work daily with us

Imagine the smiles of delight when a child or adult receives a new pair of sunglasses to shield them from the powerful Haitian sun! Please bring new nonprescription sunglasses and donate them in the box in the atrium. Know that these sunglasses will be immensely appreciated by the good people of Haiti.

Especially pray for Jenny Jenkins as she prepares for our arrival and for her many assistants and translators who support her and us during our time of service.

Hurricane Florence Relief Teams Head to New Bern January 16-20 and March 20-24

First Baptist Church of New Bern and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) are partnering together to send a third and fourth team to New Bern to assist those still recovering from Hurricane Florence. Teams 1 and 2 have gutted flooded homes and helped a congregation get back into their church. Each trip offers the flexibility of going with the team or driving on your own. All skill levels needed. Each team will have expert guidance. Contact Sarah Whitlock at 828.252.4781 or whitlock@fbca.net for more information.

I have always loved jigsaw puzzles. Now as I work puzzles I'm reminded of my trip to New Bern, NC. I didn't get to work tabletop jigsaw puzzles; my team was assigned a much bigger puzzle: hanging sheetrock in a church that was damaged by hurricane flooding. I was very apprehensive at first as I had never attempted such a task. However, my steady partner, Bill Arledge, and I jumped in and began figuring out which pieces went where. We had to measure and cut many pieces to make them fit, My measurement skills lacked a lot. Who knew I would need to measure in 8ths and 16ths? Our whole team of eight worked very hard and successfully completed our task.

Our accommodation were fine and we even got to do a little sightseeing in New Bern and ate some great food. This trip was a lot of hard work, but it was extremely satisfying in that we could see the results of our efforts. The folks at the church where we worked were grateful for our efforts and will hopefully be able to worship in their sanctuary in the near future.

I hope to join another group in the future and encourage others to go as well. Each of us can be a piece of a puzzle and you never know how you might fit until you give it a try.

— Mary Frick

To me, the Puerto Rico mission trip...

Introduced me to wonderful people who helped me exercise my faith and thereby grow in it.

— John Smith

Gave me the opportunity to not only share the love of God through work, but to share the love of people to a community that has been neglected. The greatest gift a person can give another is showing that they care; this is the ultimate task for all Christians.

— Cayla Slaughter

Was very rewarding. We got to impact the lives of four families that needed help in many ways.

— Chris Jordan

Was a chance to help our neighbors recover and give them hope they are not forgotten. I enjoyed going there, putting new roofs on people's houses and getting to meet new people. I love seeing their faces after we were done, knowing that they could sleep without water coming through, knowing that they felt safe, and knowing that someone came from their busy life to help them in a time of need. God works in many different ways and I enjoyed going on this mission trip because of the excitement, the love, the joy, the hard work, the sweat, and giving back.

— Max Bashor

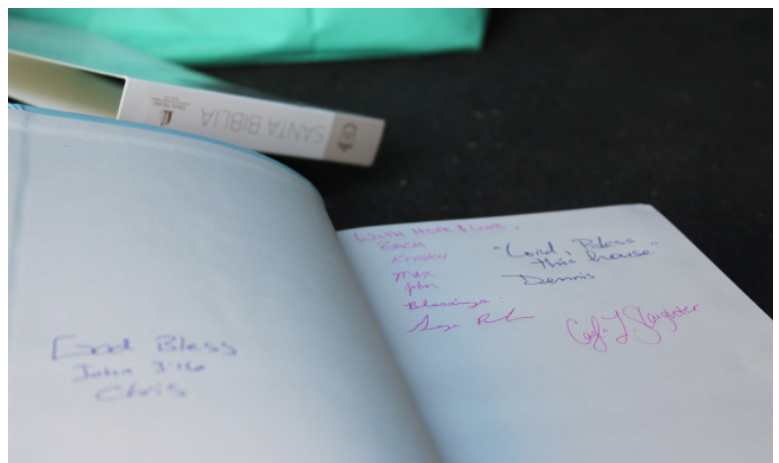


Was about being part of something greater than myself. To give of my talents and strengths and to do this in an unselfish way, with a loving spirit. Having said that, PR 2.0 was hot, humid, and hard work! This old man, with a young heart and spirit, now knows what it's like "on a hot tin roof!"

— Dennis Kabasan

Was a way to help God's people no matter where or how - a roof over a house is something I think we take for granted too often. We all need to be more giving of our talents and resources. We reached out to our fellow citizens but there is still much to do there. The people we worked with were very happy and grateful for our work!

— George Bashor





Enroll today!

Know someone looking to learn a new instrument or brush up their skills? Refer them to AFTA!

Enrollment is always open.

New term begins January 7.



January 3 & 10 - 4:30 - 6 PM AYC Mid-Year Auditions

January 6 - 7 PM *Caroling, Caroling!* Holiday Concert
featuring harpist & AFTA faculty,
Lelia Lattimore

Bach's Lunch

Asheville's Premiere Organ Concert Series

January 1, 2019 No Recital

February 5, 2019 *Festive Fanfares*
featuring Brian Garland, trumpet

First Tuesday of every month, 12:05 PM

Box lunches are available for \$5 following each performance.

For more information, visit AcademyfortheArts.org.
828.254.7841 | info@academyforthearts.org



Tate Addis, organist

Via Karis: The Way of Grace



In the Epiphany season, ministers will begin a worship series that focuses on the chapters of the *Via Karis*. It will begin on January 13, Baptism of our Lord Sunday, when we will explore the theme *Water* and be invited to remember our baptisms and our identity as beloved children of God. In the weeks that follow, themes will turn to Word, Table, Body, and Creation. In early January, copies of the *Via Karis* booklet will arrive and be available to the congregation. We look forward to gathering together around these essentials of our faith and continuing the adventurous journey of faith together.

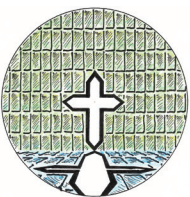
“When you open the *Via Karis*, it begins with the Rule of Life. Christians began adopting rules of life in the earliest centuries of the church. They found them helpful for giving structure to everyday discipleship. It’s a very old way of doing things, but it’s new for our church. The *Via Karis* Rule of Life is very simple, but it has the potential to strengthen the ties that bind our common life in Christ. It is meant to show how

our Sunday liturgy may become “the work of the people” every day of the week . . .

In the end, the *Via Karis* is designed to invite us into a richer experience of Christian faith, an approach to discipleship that draws us closer to God and one another. When the ministers asked themselves, “What is the true aim of *Via Karis*?” we concluded that we wanted it to be a congregation better equipped in these times to know Jesus and make him known in our everyday living . . .

The *Via Karis* is not meant to be a requirement. Rather, it is an invitation. This practical expression of faith aims to live up to its name—to be a way of grace for the people of God, so that we may continue to grow in the love and enjoyment of God, and to delight in one another, ‘until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet” (from the Preface of the *Via Karis*).

RULE OF LIFE from the VIA KARIS



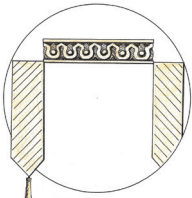
WATER (theme: Baptism and identity)

Remember we are beloved children of God

This practice recalls the Father’s statement at Jesus’ baptism that “you are my beloved Son,” and will be integrated into worship, Bible Study, and personal prayer. For example, all baptismal services during the year will have deacons stationed at each entrance with bowls of water, crossing people’s foreheads or hands, and saying, “Remember your baptism.” The individual dimension of this practice will be time for reflection about our identity in Christ.

RULE OF LIFE

from the VIA KARIS



WORD (theme: The Word of God)

Pray a Psalm every day

People may pray the same Psalm or stanza of a Psalm each day, the Psalm used in that week's worship service, or the whole Book of Psalms over the course of days or months. The purpose is to "steep the people of God in the language of prayer," so that we may be trained over time to speak the truth to God and one another in love.

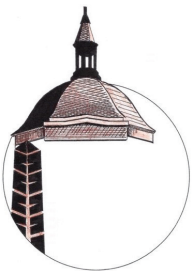


TABLE (theme: Communion with friends, strangers, and enemies)

Break bread weekly with others

People may consider this to be a meal with family, participation in Lunch at the Crossroads, the Wednesday night fellowship meal, or a supper club with their Bible Study class. There will be a simple prayer for everyone to memorize and say before the meal, which recalls the Great Thanksgiving prayer we use in worship during communion.

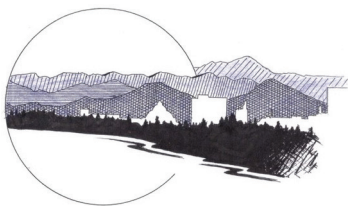
*The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.*



BODY (theme: Sabbath devotion)

Worship weekly with the Body of Christ

A practice of Sabbath-keeping, as well as a way to ask congregation members to engage in worship not merely for their own purposes, but in order to be present with and for the sake of others. This practice encourages us to recognize the ways our presence builds up the church, and how our absence leaves us diminished.



CREATION (theme: Blessing, response, doxology)

Attend daily to the beauty of the world

Every congregation member will be intentional about blessing creatures and creation, whether through acts of justice, creation care, caregiving, the arts, etc. The intention is to enable people to recognize that playing cello, planting a garden, or caring for children and the infirm are specific ways we "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God." This practice is designed to point people toward life abundant, so that we may do our daily work with greater joy and a sense of abiding grace.

Putting Our Desired Future into Action

Across these past months, our church has gathered heart and soul around our *five desired future statements*. These hopes came out of stories shared around tables this past spring from almost 300 of you. The stories reflect the goals we long to achieve, people we want to engage, and directions that are built around our strengths as a congregation. The five statements are listed below with the assigned ministry council. For each statement, ministry councils were challenged to develop one project to **STRENGTHEN** what we do well. They were also asked to begin shaping a **NEW VENTURE**. In the December 3 meeting of the Deacons, the councils and *Via Karis* team committed to 12 projects that will unfold in the coming months and years. Here are the five desired future statements with pending projects by councils:

Via Karis Team — First Baptist will be a place where the parable path of Jesus is a way of life.

- Share *Via Karis* (Way of Grace) and introduce in the Epiphany season.
- Initiate deeper teaching of the *Via Karis* in the Lenten season.

Communications and Outreach Council — First Baptist will be a church that welcomes and includes all in a way consistent with God's love and wisdom.

- Implement a marketing plan guided by Chris Cavanaugh.
- Enrich internal communications between councils and through the website.

Missions and Hands-on Ministry Council — First Baptist will wrap its arms around the city of Asheville.

- Enrich First Hands mission days by deepening understanding and long-term commitments by individuals to community mission partners.
- Launch an outreach and support effort to downtown workers, especially those who may be underemployed who work within one mile of the church.

Congregational Worship Council — Worship and music will remain essential and move beyond the doors of the church.

- Raise awareness and volunteer support of worship initiative at Swannanoa Correctional Center for Women.
- Develop a systematic strategy to communicate the worship life and opportunities to weekly (or monthly) outside groups who use our building.

Christian Formation/Fellowship Council (Adults) — First Baptist will be a church of spiritual transformation grounded in Scriptural imagination, communal discernment, and lived faith.

- Enrich the role of Shepherds in hospitality, outreach, care, and class fellowship.
- Create/deepen community through shared interest/affinity groups.

Christian Formation/Fellowship Councils (Children & Students) — First Baptist will be a church of spiritual transformation grounded in Scriptural imagination, communal discernment, and lived faith.

- Create the "Commons" as a new resource for fellowship and gathering (the Commons is the new space directly attached to the gym-formerly the "gameroom.")
- Implement at least one mission event and one social event outside of class time in each Bible study class.

Watch for more information as each of these projects develop. If you see a focus that calls to your talents, contact David Blackmon at dblackmon@fbca.net or 828.252.4781 for more information and to be directed to the right council leader.

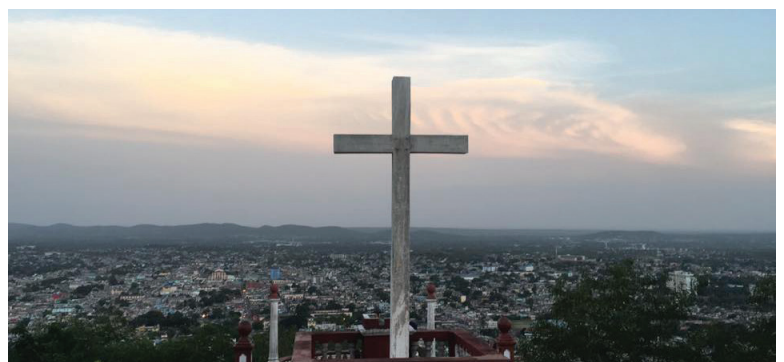


“This labyrinth is located at “La Finca,” the Baptist retreat center outside of Havana, Cuba. It is made with recycled Cuban rum bottles, and was reclaimed from the weeds by youth from Cuba and First Baptist Church of Asheville during the 2017 Youth Mission Pilgrimage to Cuba.”

Before the sun rises on Asheville on New Year’s Day, a group of 12 young adults will be flying south as they embark upon a 6-day pilgrimage to the western region of Cuba. Led by Stan and Kim Dotson, the group will begin in Matanzas, Cuba, where they will meet members from our sister church (Iglesia Elohim in Las Tunas, Cuba), including pastor Mauracia Solo. The focus of this pilgrimage will be the intersections of spirituality, creative arts, and race. Across the pilgrimage, our group will meet with local leaders, pastors, historians, and artists. Among the sites to be visited are the Kairos Center (housing the Baptist seminary), the Cuban slave rebellion museum, the Fraternity of Baptists Retreat Center (“La Finca”), and a unique art-inspired farm called Finca La Coincidencia. Each day, the group will share devotions and reflect on how these encounters may reframe or re-orient perspectives on the intersections of spirituality, creative arts, and race in our own beloved Asheville community.

Participants are Jamie Gorsuch, Sully Hart, Megan Hughes, Michelle Keener, Daniel Lewis, Julianne Lewis, Sally Little, Kate Raybon, Nathan Sales, Laura and Tate Addis, and Casey Callahan.

Please be in prayer for each of our Cuba team members, as well as the Christian sisters and brothers in Cuba with whom this pilgrimage will be shared.



Some Scenes from Advent 2018!



First Baptist Church of Asheville

Freedom. Friendship. Faith.

5 Oak Street, Asheville, NC 28801 • 828.252.4781 • www.fbca.net

Child Development Center: 828.252.3234 • Fax: 828.254.2302

Sunday Worship: 11:00 a.m. Sanctuary • 9:45 a.m. Bible Study for all ages

Minister on Call

A minister is on call 24/7 to support you in times of need. To contact the minister on call, dial 828.252.4781.

The deacon of the week can be reached through the church office or by contacting the minister on call.