



HIGHLIGHTS

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ASHEVILLE



FALL 2021

BEAUTIFUL BELONGING

This September and going forward, our congregation will gather around the theme of "Beautiful Belonging." Far more than a theme, I consider the phrase "beautiful belonging" as more of a dream, a way of being in the world, and a means of communicating who First Baptist Church of Asheville really is and what we're about. Still more, I believe it can be a compelling way of distilling the whole theme of the gospel itself so that we may better understand who God is, and who God is calling us to be.

I also believe First Baptist Church of Asheville already embodies a vision of beautiful belonging. We belong to God. Our belonging is rooted in the church's baptismal liturgy that calls us to remember, "You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." By water and the Spirit, we belong to Jesus Christ, who draws all people to himself (John 12:32). Received into the household of God, we share in Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

We belong to one another. "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..." (1 Corinthians 12:13). Bound together in Christ's love, privilege and partiality give way to solidarity and mutuality. As scholar Willie Jennings says, in the fellowship of belonging, our differences become the very gifts that inspire and enable true communion.

We belong to creation. "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). Called to be stewards of God's creation, we seek the flourishing of sacred places, and the consecration of desecrated places, in order to live in harmony with land and all living things.

As a community of belonging, we're also made able to recognize beauty. We see the beauty of God revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is "the image of the invisible God...all things have been created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:15-16). Jesus is the glory of God in human form, a foretaste of heaven's beauty. In his beauty, we see our own destiny in God.

The beauty of God is revealed in the artful expressions of our faith—in the gathering of the faithful and in the truth of the gospel proclaimed. "With trumpet sound...with lute and harp...let everything that breathes praise the Lord!" (Psalm 150). We aspire to God's beauty in our common life, from liturgical expression and fellowship, to the musical arts and architectural design.

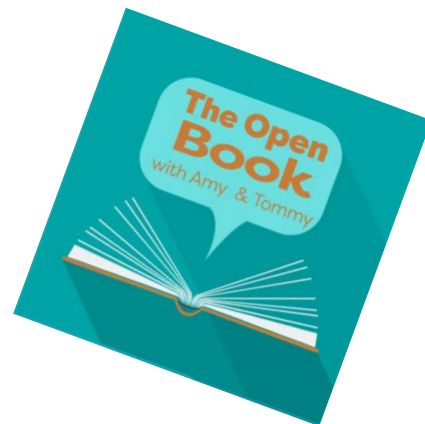
The beauty of God is revealed in those whom Jesus calls blessed: the poor, the hungry, those who weep, the peacemakers, the persecuted, the pure in heart. "Yours is the kingdom of God...for you will be filled...for you will laugh" (Luke 6:20-21). The Spirit equips us to see the beauty of God's image in the powerless—those Howard Thurman calls "the disinherited." In this beautiful community of belonging, we discover what it means to belong to God.

I invite you to explore this issue of Highlights about engaging the theme of "Beautiful Belonging". Join us as you're able on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings this fall. Together, with God's help, we will find our way to deeper understandings of what it means to be "marked as Christ's own forever."



The Open Book with Amy & Tommy

We will continue to offer a weekly virtual Bible study option on our website and YouTube channel for those who are not able to be with us in person. Each Sunday, Amy and Tommy invite you to join them as we open and study the Bible. Some weeks, we will open another book that we'll read and learn from as well. The purpose of the Open Book conversations is opening ourselves up to discover truth and meaning in our lives through relationship, Scripture, and other books that encourage us along the way. We'll begin this fall by reading *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone* by Brené Brown.



Wednesday evenings in September "A Community of Beautiful Belonging" 6:00 p.m. in the Chapel

Join us to hear reflections from ministers and members on the ways we embody beauty and belonging with God, one another, and creation



AgapeKids AgapeKids will resume September 8 at 6:00 p.m.



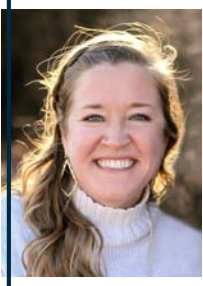
Preschool and Elementary kids can be dropped off and picked up in the Sacred Garden. If the weather is bad, we'll meet in the gym. We will gather for a shared story time then divide into two groups (3 year old - kindergarten and 1st- 6th grade).

Out of an abundance of caution, children and leaders are asked to mask even though we are outside. We will continually review our meeting protocols as we get updates from the CDC and consult with local medical professionals. Any updates and changes to our gatherings will be shared in the FBCA Kids weekly email.



AgapeKids is a time for preschoolers and children to participate in missions, faith development, and worship. Our theme for the year is Beautiful Belonging. Through the year we'll talk about belonging. We'll explore what it means to belong to God, our church, our community, and each other.

**Wednesday childcare is available for children under age 3.
Contact Amy Stertz at astertz@fbca.net or 828.252.4781 for more information.**



Laura Addis, laddis@fbca.net
Ministry Associate, Students (part-time)

We welcome Laura as the new Ministry Associate for Students. Laura's many gifts in ministry and her deep love of students will be a tremendous asset for our youth ministry and our wider congregation. Laura will provide direct oversight with youth Bible study groups and will share in the leadership and teaching of ongoing youth programs.

In their own words



"The first day back at church in-person was amazing for me. I loved being in service in real life and being able to worship alongside the youth. I felt more connected to God than I ever had during the pandemic."
 (Claire Lim, 11th grader)

YOUTH FALL RETREAT

October 29-31



REGISTER @
fbca.net

STUDENT PILGRIMAGE CAMINO INGLÉS (SPAIN) * JULY 10-22



Student Pilgrimage: Camino Inglés (Spain) July 10-22, 2022; Classes 2021 & 2022

Informational Meeting - Sunday, Sept. 12, 6:15 p.m.

The practice of pilgrimage is ancient and sacred, and traces of faithful pathways can be found across the world and even across religious traditions. One of the most significant Christian pilgrimages leads to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Next summer, we will lead a group of students on part of this ancient pathway. There will be both a physical and a spiritual journey to travel together. In preparation for the July pilgrimage, a series of training sessions and local walks will be planned.

Contact: Kristen Kirby (kbbkirbs@gmail.com)

*Those who put their strength in You are truly happy;
 pilgrimage is in their hearts (Psalm 84:5)*

Team Members: George Bashor, Carlos Collazo, Jeff Kirby, Bill Loftis, Susan Loftis, Cayla Slaughter, Bruce Young, Kristen Kirby (team leader)

↙ ↘
Agape starts Wednesday, September 8: 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Koinonia starts Sunday, September 12: 5:00-6:00 p.m. ↗ ↘

The Center for Faith & Life (CFL) is comprised of educational and formational experiences aimed at connecting the challenges, opportunities, and callings of life with the resources of wisdom, beauty, and practice found in the Christian faith. The mission of the CFL is to explore theological imagination, nurture vocation, and encourage engagement by offering gatherings and convening conversations at the intersection of church and world.



Four distinct approaches will be employed to address our mission:

- School for Theological Study - Seminary Level Theological Education for All
- Annual Speakers & Artists Series - Each Spring
- Spirituality Events - Retreats, Workshops, Pilgrimages, and Labyrinth Walks
- Learning Gatherings for Education, Exploration, and Conversation

These approaches seek to enhance our congregation's vision of beautiful belonging, peacebuilding, and abundance centered on Jesus and his way of love and grace.



LEARNING WHO WE ARE FROM WHO JESUS IS: Reflections on Identity from the Gospel of John

Dr. Guy Sayles

Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m. (hybrid)

October 5 - November 23

BOOK DISCUSSION: FAITH AFTER DOUBT

Dr. Terry Hamrick

Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. (hybrid)

UNTAMED HOSPITALITY: WELCOMING GOD AND OTHER STRANGERS

Dr. Beth Newman

Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. (virtual)

LISTENING TO THE WILDERNESS IN PANDEMIC TIMES

Heather Swanson

Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. (in person)

GROWING IN MYSTERY AND MATURITY: STUDY OF EPHESIANS

Dr. Tommy Bratton

Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. October 5 - November 17 (in person)

Register online at centerforfaithandlife.org

I WAS HUNGRY

Hunger has been a daily concern for some across the pandemic and even before. FBCA has set a table for friends and neighbors throughout the community. Pre-COVID, our congregation hosted a weekly meal for up to 150 people, shared food bags on that day with folks in need, and supported monthly food distribution at Battery Park and Vanderbilt Apartments (housing for low-income seniors). The gifts were simple responses to Jesus' invitation to feed the hungry.

When March 2020 hit and COVID limited our options, over 40 volunteers exhibited their creativity. They transformed in-person meals to safer models. Quietly and without fanfare, the teams settled into a weekly Thursday rhythm of the following:

- 20 bagged meals handed out on Charlotte Street. (1000 served annually)
- 200 bagged lunches shared with friends at Western Carolina Rescue Mission. (10,000 served annually)
- 74- milk boxes filled with food for about 24 families representing 70 plus children and 40 plus adults. Our maintenance staff joined in to help make home deliveries each week. (over 5000 served annually)



Monthly food deliveries by our maintenance staff to Battery Park and Vanderbilt continued on schedule throughout the pandemic as did food bags for White Christmas in December 2020. The team responded to emergent needs as a homeless shelter opened at the civic center. In later months, one of our church members assisted us in finding an inroad to share 24 boxes of groceries each month with new friends at Altamont apartments just down the street. Other partners, such as Asheville City Schools, opened doors to supporting 300 children each week as they gathered in pods to enrich their in-home learning. We came alongside Asheville Strong to deliver almost 2000 meals to those shut-in by COVID. Others in our church showed up at MANNA to support their ongoing operation even as many continued to offer meals through the Veterans Restoration Quarters sponsored by ABCCM.

The weekly story of grace continues as members share food and volunteers pack boxes. In each delivery, we sense the presence of Christ, welcoming the stranger and caring for those on the margins. In 2018, our church identified "wrapping our arms around Asheville" as central to our vision and work as God's people in this community. Across these past months of trial and struggle, we have been true to our calling and faithful followers of Jesus. Thanks be to God.



Blessing of the Animals

On October 3 many churches will celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. A common practice for this day is a blessing of animals. We want to celebrate and bless all of the creatures in our lives who make our days so much brighter by sharing with us their unconditional love and companionship. We invite you to bring your beloved pets to the **Sacred Garden** for a time of blessing. You may drop in between **6:00 - 7:00 p.m.** All animals should be leashed or in a pet carrier.



SIGN-UP FOR A MISSION PROJECT THIS FALL!

LOCAL MISSIONS FOCUS WEEKEND: OCT. 14-16

We want 100+ members and friends of our church to join in one of our local mission projects. Jobs for every age group and skill level will be available through projects that support our church ministries and the local community. Sign-ups begin Sunday, September 19 and will also be made available online. Specific volunteer opportunities include Manna Food Bank, BeLoved Asheville, Greenworks, Black Mountain Children's Home, and Habitat for Humanity. All Saturday projects will conclude with a bagged lunch in the atrium parking lot at 1:00 p.m.

OTHER FALL MISSIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

Blood Drive 9/22

2:30-7:00 p.m. in the gym
FBCA is hosting a blood drive. 25 donors needed!



CROP Walk September 26

2:00 p.m., St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Join fellow FBCA members and the Asheville community as we walk to end hunger.
Contact: Brenda Denton (bbelle2001@gmail.com)



Meal Ministry



Food Pantry (Wednesdays)
Lunch at the Crossroads (Thursdays)
Thank you for your continued food donations that help us provide our neighbors with nutritious food!

Senior Manna Food Team

4th Thursday of every month
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
Help pack and sort food.
Contact: Ed Graham (edgraham03@gmail.com)



Disaster Response Efforts - Haywood County



We are sending a team of volunteers on **Saturday, Sept. 18** to respond to flooding from Tropical Storm Fred. Work will focus on the initial home rebuilding process. Sign-up in the atrium or contact Jim Worley (jim@jhworley.com).

Puerto Rico Mission Team

October 17 - 23



FBCA will send another mission team to help with hurricane clean-up and rebuilding projects. Team members include George Bashor, Carlos Collazo, Jeff Kirby, Bill Loftis, Susan Loftis, Cayla Slaughter, Bruce Young, and Kristen Kirby (team leader). Contact: Kristen Kirby (kbbkirbs@gmail.com)

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

MANAGING GRIEF IN OUR COMMUNITY OF FAITH

**MB 302 * 6:00 p.m.
Oct. 6, 13, 20, and Nov. 3.**

Are you dealing with the pain caused by the death of a friend or family member during the past year? You are not alone. Join others to share your experiences, receive support, and learn ways to manage your grief. Contact Leah Brown at lbrown@fbca.net or 828.252.4781 by Oct. 4 to register for this group.

CARE CORNER WITH LEAH

Friends, you may access pastoral care when you are experiencing a crisis, illness, hospitalization, death in your family, or when you are in need of support. During weekdays, please call 828.252.4781 and ask for the minister on-call. After 5:00 p.m. and on the weekends, you may also call this number and you will be directed to leave a message for the minister on call. Feel free to contact me directly at 828.252.4781 ext. 1317 if you need assistance with elder care information, resource coordination for all ages, or referrals for counseling.

Confidentiality is important to us. We need your permission before we share information about you with others in the congregation or place your name on the prayer list. We are all called to offer care and love to those around us. Stephen Ministers are trained lay people in our congregation who are eager to listen, pray, and care for those who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. If you feel that you would benefit from talking with a Stephen Minister, please contact Leah for more information.

THIS FALL AT AFTA



ACADEMY for the ARTS



ENROLLMENT IS ALWAYS OPEN

AcademyfortheArts.org

BACH'S LUNCH

Asheville's Premiere Organ Concert Series

Bach's Lunch 2021-22 Season

Join us for Asheville's premiere organ series featuring Tate Addis. Concerts are at 12:05 pm in the Sanctuary.

academyforthearts.org/bachs-lunch

December 7 - Christmas Around the World

April 5 - Lenten Meditation

July 5 - Organ Music from the United States

Find us on social media!



@AcademyfortheArts



LIVING IN THE WAY OF GRACE

Via Karis ("Way of Grace") is a guide for our church that combines essential teachings of the Christian faith with a "Rule of Life" composed of five spiritual practices. This way of grace offers our congregation practical ways to deepen our friendship with God and one another through worship, education, mission, and fellowship. Here are a few ways members of our church have been living this way of grace.

Water ~ Remember we are beloved children of God

Word ~ Pray a Psalm daily



This summer on her sabbatical, Amy spent time reading and studying the Psalms. In his book, *Open and Unafraid: The Psalms as a Guide to Life*, W. David O. Taylor says, "whatever else they are, the psalms are prayers. They're prayers for people who already know how to pray as well as for those who don't know how to pray at all." As a congregation, we are still learning how to pray the Psalms together. Look for an Advent devotion that will deepen our understand and practice of praying the Psalms that comes out of Amy's studies.

Table ~ Break bread weekly with others

Body ~ Worship weekly with the Body of Christ



This summer, we were able to gather again for in-person worship. We continue to offer a livestream option for those who are not able to be with us. The gift of worshiping together is essential to who we are as a community of faith. It has filled us with so much joy to be able to sing, pray, and hear the word of God together in this beloved community.

Creation ~ Attend daily to the beauty of the world.

This summer, our youth spent a lot of time in our rooftop garden. In addition to tending to many plants, they created a mural that can hang outside for years to come. Our youth ministry summer intern, Ellie Stewart, reflected on this process and shared, "The week before I left, we finished. Handprints were carefully (or not so carefully) pressed to the sky, the mural was hung up, the garden is flourishing, and the tomatoes are ripening!! The hearts of these youth overflow with love for their community, God, and each other. The growth of the garden is nothing compared to the amazing growth of righteousness and praise in these young people."



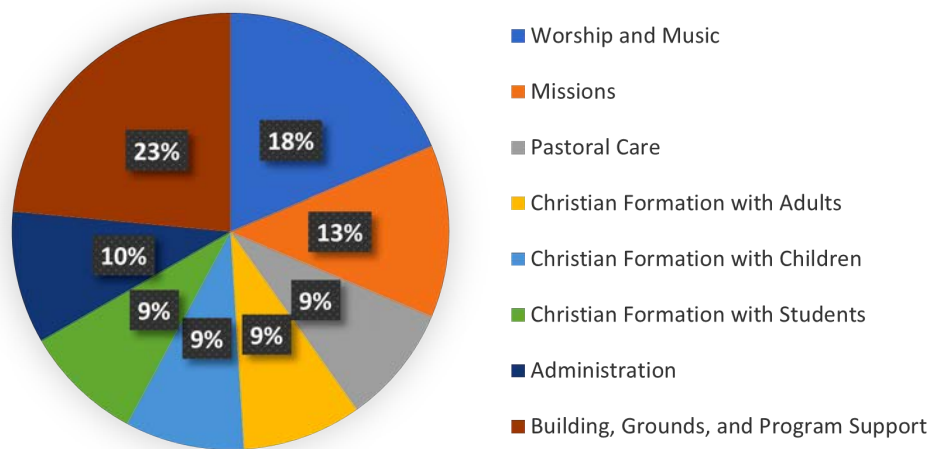
How about you? How are you living and practicing the Via Karis, the way of grace?

First Baptist Church of Asheville thrives through its open doors and welcoming hearts. We continue our almost century long invitation from this sanctuary as we invite others into vibrant relationship with God and one another, to become the presence of Christ in and through the church. Keeping those doors open and our lights on demands hands and feet, routine supplies and uncommonly gifted people.

The 2022 budget includes all of this even more as our congregation and community recover from almost two years of pandemic and transition. If approved, we will spend about 59% of the total budget on needed people to engage and inspire, care and lead the 1000 plus people who call this place home. Other dollars will purchase everything from retreats to light bills to Sunday morning Bible study materials.

We join these resources with volunteers of all ages to worship, serve, and grow, reaching out through partnerships stretching down the street and across the hemisphere. These and others welcome almost 1500 through our doors every week as they access childcare, engage in music lessons, gather for worship, and volunteer to help. Others come together to support one another in recovery or join in the job of caring for this community. We make the most of every dollar. When you combine personnel and program costs, the ways we make a difference look a lot like this...

2022 Budget



We need your help! In 2020 and 2021, members and friends of our congregation have been so gracious. In 2020, over 400 households gave \$1,757,430. The average gift was \$4339. That's a little over \$350 each month. Across the past 18 months, members and friends have given an additional \$188,000 to COVID Relief, local missions, food ministry, global missions, and AFTA. That does not include the costs of donated food that so many have shared. A grand story of God's love is unfolding in our hearts! It takes us all to open our doors on Sunday morning or send a team overseas to roof storm-torn homes or provide medical or dental care. Summer programs for our children and students require generosity in a season that has stretched our pocketbooks thin even as our emotions have frayed. Thank you in advance for helping us chart our way forward in 2022 as we share God's love with those near and far.

Changing Our Giving Equation

Most often, members and friends focus on the difference giving makes in our church or broader community. They recall some part of a Sunday service or a moment they were involved in missions. Others remember lives given fully to God, our children and friends coming up out of the waters of

baptism to walk in newness of life. In these stories, the value of gifts often focuses on an outcome in or for someone else. But, more often, the real change unfolds in the one who gives. As we offer what we have to God, our hearts open and our lives learn how to flourish. Our priorities shift to embrace the longings of the Holy. Daily actions embody the very invitation of Jesus to love as he loved. If we really hope to see our gifts make a difference, we simply need let go of what we desire and offer it as a sacred gift, spent fully for the sake of others even as we are made new in Christ.

Nurturing Our Hopes

Transformation in our hearts stirs hope for change in God's world. FBCA welcomed the Spirit's call even in the midst of COVID. Members and friends gathered for worship, fed the hungry, and discovered ways to come together even when everything was pulling us apart. Across 2022, we long to nurture the foundations of our church's outreach and service as a people committed to an adventurous following of a crucified and risen Lord. Here are just a few things your gifts will enable:

- Expand our outreach welcoming all into relationship with God and fellowship in our church.
- Enrich weekly gatherings for worship and service as we deepen our internal relationships.
- Offer continued support, care, and friendship for our neighbors in need.
- Engage the full congregation in conversations about FBCA's 5-year dreams, 2022-2027.
- Consider recommendations to position our campus to serve our mission and community.
- Complete a capital campaign for needed repairs and enhancements of our sacred spaces.
- Launch a full year's offerings through the Center for Faith and Life.
- Celebrate and expand our commitments through the Academy for the Arts at FBCA.
- Enhance our support and outreach with families in the CDC.
- Enable our youth as they host FirstShine Camp for ages 8-16.
- Revisit the launch of FirstShine Learning Center.
- Explore new partnerships in a post-COVID environment.

How Can We Give?

Most fund our church's ministry through weekly gifts from their income. Giving is truly a part of our worship. Others give out of stocks, retirement savings, or real estate. Seniors who benefit from Required Minimum Distributions can structure giving to make the most of their dollars. Wally Davids, our Director of Operations and Finance can assist you in sharing your gift. You can reach Wally at wdavids@fbca.net or call Wally at 828.252.4781.

Why Pledge?

Some churches have moved away from annual pledges. Many in our church give faithfully and never pledge. How does FBCA use this information? Your annual pledge helps us plan our budgeting for 2022. Our plans rest on pledged gifts, non-pledged gifts, those gifts that exceed annual pledges, and gifts shared on Sunday through the offering plates. The more we know in advance about financial giving in 2022, the better we are able to move forward with confidence.

Let our pledges serve as a loud Amen to the changes God's is bringing forth in each of us and across our entire congregation. You should receive a pledge card in the mail soon! Pledge cards are also available online at fbca.net/online-giving.



THE ART OF HOSPITALITY AND OUTREACH – TOMMY BRATTON

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." ~ Galatians 6:5
Venit hospes, venit Christus - "When a guest comes, Christ comes"

Hospitality is a celebrated Christian virtue. The first impression most people have of our church family, and maybe the Christian faith itself, is formed by how they are cared for and welcomed by us. I've heard that people form impressions – positive or negative – within the first 30 seconds.

How do we show people they are loved and that they belong?

Notice: Be present in the moment. Give a warm welcome to the person right in front of you, whether guest or member. Look around for people whom you don't know.

Personal Attention: Introduce yourself and learn guests' names. Anticipate their needs and ask how you might help. Introduce them to others you know.

Follow-through: Give a warm goodbye and thank them for coming. Ask if they have given their information to someone. If not, have them fill out a card so a minister can follow up. Answer any questions guests have or connect them to a minister.

The Art of Invitation

For most of us, it tends to be easier to welcome people to church once they arrive rather than going out of our way to invite them ourselves. However, a personal invitation is perhaps the best way to invite someone to church because there's an existing connection for the invitee. People will typically feel much more comfortable attending a new church when they already know someone there. It can help take away the anxiety of having to navigate around on their own, or the fear of sitting by themselves.

Social Media Advocates – Do you have Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter?

If so, you can share the story of our congregation with your friends. Here's how:

1. Follow the church on social media
2. When you view our posts, like and share them.
3. Share an event post and invites friends.
4. How have you experienced beautiful belonging with God, one another, creation? Watched a sunset? Hiked with friends? Etc. Post a picture to your social media account and add #beautifulbelonging and #fbcasheville.

First Baptist Church of Asheville

beautiful belonging

Church Office Hours: Mon-Thu 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Fri 8:30 a.m. – Noon

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

Child Development Center: 828.252.3234

Sunday Worship: 11:00 a.m. Sanctuary ~ 10:00 a.m. Bible Study for all ages