



# CENTER for FAITH and LIFE

First Baptist Church of Asheville, NC

## **The Center for Faith and Life**

*Connecting Faith and Life through Education, Exploration, and Conversation*

The “center” is not so much a building, though the facilities of First Baptist Church of Asheville will be where most of the gatherings will happen. “Center” is, instead, the overall term for a cluster 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.

Our mission 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:

### **1. Learning Gatherings for Education, Exploration, and Conversation**

- In-depth Bible Study
- Book Discussions
- Spiritual Practice Groups
- Issue Forums
- Leadership Development

*\*Nurturing Calling and Developing Leaders Among Laity and Clergy*

*\*Equipping/Training People for Faithful, Creative, and Transformational Leadership in Church and Culture*

### **2. Annual Speakers & Artists Series**

**3. Spirituality Events** - including Retreats, Pilgrimages, and Labyrinth Walks

**4. Asheville Center for Theological Study** - Seminary Level Theological Education for All



# Board of Advisors 2021



**TOMMY BRATTON**

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[In Memorium, 1970-2023]

Tommy has served as Minister of Christian Formation at First Baptist Church of Asheville since 2004. Tommy received degrees from Furman University (B.A. in Religion), Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta (M.T.S.), and Western Carolina University (Ed.D. in Educational Leadership).

Post-graduate studies include a certification in Spiritual Direction from the Haden Institute and a certification in Labyrinth Facilitation from Veriditas.

**MACK DENNIS**

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A native of Henderson, NC, Mack was ordained to the ministry of preaching in 2003. After five years as pastor of First Baptist Church, Mt. Gilead, NC, he studied homiletics and reconciliation at Duke Divinity School (Th.D., '14), and taught there as adjunct professor until 2016. He came to First Baptist Church of Asheville after serving as interim preacher at Warrenton Baptist Church in Warrenton, NC.





## BRANDI HINNANT CRAWFORD

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Brandi is an Assistant Professor of Educational Research at Western Carolina University. Self-described as a womanist, liberation theologian, critical pedagogue, and aspiring scholar-activist, her work has been published in a diverse array of academic journals.

Brandi holds a Ph.D. from Emory University in Educational Studies, a master's degree in Urban Education Policy from Brown University, and bachelor's degrees in English and Communication (media concentration) from North Carolina State University.



## LAURA LEVENS

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Laura oversees course development and teaching for the department of Christian Mission at the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky (BSK). Her scholarly interests include Christian missions history, women in Christian history, biblical interpretation, justice and transformation, and theology and practice of mission.

She is a native of Louisville, Kentucky, and is ordained through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Laura received degrees from Baylor University (B.A.) and Duke University Divinity School (M.Div. and Th.D.).





## ELIZABETH NEWMAN

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Elizabeth Newman is from Fayetteville, NC and received degrees from Wake Forest University (B.A.), Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and Duke University (Ph.D.) She taught for twelve years at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN, before joining the faculty at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond in 2002 as Professor of Theology and Ethics.



## GUY SAYLES

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Guy is a writer, speaker, consultant, and coach who focuses on the intersections of meaning and culture, ethical and effective leadership, and healing and reconciling spirituality.

He has served a leader of congregations and other organizations and as a university teacher. His education includes a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) from the Candler School of Theology of Emory University.





## NANCY SEHESTED

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Nancy Hastings Sehested, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, is an ordained Baptist minister who has pastored churches in Atlanta, Memphis, and now in Asheville, NC. She served as a state prison chaplain for thirteen years in two high-security prisons for men in North Carolina. She serves as the co-pastor of Circle of Mercy Congregation in Asheville. She has recently authored the book *Marked for Life: A Prison Chaplain's Story*.



## TERRY HAMRICK

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Terry is a congregational consultant and coach. He served for 16 years as Coordinator of Missional Leadership at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. His education includes degrees from Mars Hill College (B.A.), Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (MRE), and University of Georgia (Ed.D.).

