



*“The government of the church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. The membership retains unto itself the right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of the church.” - **Article 5 of First Baptist Church Constitution***

Greetings, friends,

As incoming Deacon chair, I welcome you to the 2024-2025 church year. I look forward to the coming year when we will focus even more intently on “beautiful belonging.” Thank you for your commitment to serve our church in such an important way. I am exceedingly grateful to Stephanie Kiser for the leadership she provided our congregation over the past year. Last year’s Deacons led the congregation to make important decisions that have positioned us for a positive future.

The quote from our church constitution describes one of our Baptist distinctives — the autonomy of the local church. As representatives of the congregation, the Deacons have an important part to play. Mark Green recently shared with me a grant application our church submitted to a foundation in 1993. The narrative identified two important pillars of our congregation that are just as true now as they were 30 years ago: “The congregation is widely known for innovation in ministry and stability in leadership. Only 18 pastors have served the church during its 164 years.” The only difference is we are now at 21 pastors in 195 years.

The second part of the application states, “The congregation is self-governing and wholly autonomous. Members retain authority to determine all matters affecting congregational life.” It is this combination of a highly gifted, creative, dedicated staff and strong lay leadership that has distinguished us as a congregation. We will be celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our historic Sanctuary before we know it in March 2027 and the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our congregation two years later in February 2029.



**First Baptist Church  
of Asheville**

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*beautiful belonging*

A question that sometimes comes up is "What do Deacons do?" Under our Collaborative Ministry Model of church governance, Deacons are tasked with nurturing the spiritual focus of all leaders, guiding congregational discernment, outlining the church's mission/vision, overseeing support and resources, setting primary policies/by-laws, creating overall accountability measures, and leading the church to greater spiritual maturity. We seek to be servant-leaders. A good way to do that is by being good role models — attending worship and other church activities regularly, practicing generous stewardship and enhancing our roles in the "art of beautiful belonging."

Our monthly meetings will keep you up to date on what is happening across our congregation, challenge you to help discern God's will for our missions and ministry, and encourage you to provide your input as we move forward. I am excited to work alongside you.

Blessings, Brenda

*Brenda W. Lorsch*