

The First Baptist Connection

February 2021

News and Updates for our Family in Christ

Visit our website @ www.fbcbloom.org

Updated guidance for those gathering in-person at FBC:

- Please wear a face covering for worship as a gift of love to those around you. Exceptions include:
 - Children under age 5 in worship services.
 - Worship service leaders and Sunday school teachers only while leading/teaching.
 - All children's SS classes while in SS classrooms.
 - Outdoor gatherings.
- Please observe social distancing when possible and move conversations outdoors.
 - Sanctuary seating is every-other-row. Please allow six feet between families/households.
 - No food or drink is available in the narthex.
- Please do not attend if you or someone in your immediate household has symptoms of COVID-19 or has recently tested positive.
- An offering box is available in the narthex but is not being passed during the service.

We encourage anyone who is unable to attend in-person to participate online:

- Links for live worship services are posted weekly at [Facebook.com/groups/fbcbloom](https://www.facebook.com/groups/fbcbloom).
- Recorded worship services are available to the public at [YouTube.com/fbcbloomfield](https://www.youtube.com/fbcbloomfield).

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BIRTHDAYS

9 th	Casey Porter	13 th	Janet Schmidt	23 rd	Sherry Weeks	27 th	Paula Bartlett
10 th	Lindsey Sullivan	14 th	Lucy Foxworthy		Benjamin Hudson		Betty Miller
11 th	Kay Pierce	20 th	Mike Canty	25 th	Gary Sullivan		Dylan Lanz
12 th	Nancy Sullivan	21 st	Sharon Terrell		Wesley Porter		

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ANNIVERSARIES

14th Earl & Joann White
16th Steve & Kathy Ham

Reshaping Church Update

February 2021

You may have encountered the term, “Reshaping Church,” during worship, in the bulletin, or in this monthly newsletter. There’s a good chance that even if you’re familiar with the term, you’re not certain what it means is or why our church is involved with it. My goal in this space is to help clarify some of the ambiguity.

As a refresher, Reshaping Church is a guided discernment process designed to help churches grow into more fruitful expressions of the Body of Christ. It is a partnership between Central Baptist Theological Seminary (Shawnee, KS) and Pinnacle Leadership Associates (Chapin, SC) made possible by a grant from the Lilly Endowment (Indianapolis). 2021 is the first year that the program is being offered, and we are among the first churches to participate.

A church-wide launch event was scheduled for early January, but we postponed it when the publication of two resources was delayed. In the meantime, the Coordination Team (deacons, moderator, pastor, and six others who expressed interest) met virtually with our Coach, Rev. Debra Griffis-Woodberry of Pinnacle, and Rev. Mark Tidsworth, who wrote the book *ReShape: Emerging Church Practice in a Volatile World*. We are making sure we have a firm understanding of the process and our projected timetable before rescheduling the launch event. Look for an announcement soon.

After the launch event, there will be an eight-week period during which the entire church is encouraged to participate in one of several small groups. Some of these small groups will convene only for this journey, while other small groups may be existing Sunday school classes. Due to the pandemic, some small groups may be done online only while others may meet in-person but socially distanced. We will get creative to include as many people as safely possible! This small group segment is probably the most vital component of the process. Small groups will read the ReShape book, view video clips, and have conversations about the future of our church. The ideas generated in these groups are the ideas which will form our ministry plan for the years ahead.

This is really a very Baptist thing to do. An exclusive group is not telling the church what the future will be. Rather, the whole congregation, in the form of these small groups, will be praying and discerning together what the Spirit is saying. The final ministry plan which emerges from this process will arise from the ideas of the whole body of believers.

Why us? Why now? These are perhaps the most important questions. Three things rise to the top for me.

First, this fits our season of life as a church. In 2019, we celebrated God’s faithfulness to FBC through 150 years of ministry. In 2020, we made a series of fruitful adjustments in order to keep that ministry going in the midst of a global pandemic. In 2021, it is time to look to the future with that history and those adaptations fresh in our minds.

Second, I believe the pandemic is a metaphor for the future. On the small scale, it has been an era unlike anything we’ve ever experienced, causing us to make adaptations we’d not seriously considered before. These adjustments – like the addition of online giving or the transition to livestreamed services – are the very sorts of things that will be necessary for fruitful ministry in years to come. We are therefore invited at this moment in history to prayerfully consider what other adaptations the Lord might be preparing us to make so that can be ready to thrive in an increasingly changing world.

Third, as one of our deacons reminded me, we’ve done this *kind* of thing before. Prior to the construction of the CLC, small groups gathered in homes to dream about the ministries the Lord was calling our church to pursue. That process wasn’t exactly the same as Reshaping Church but the idea is similar: get the whole body of Christ together in smaller, more intimate groups to talk, listen, and pray, in order that we might discover the future to which God is calling us.

Much more could be said and will be. I am learning this process along with you. What I am confident in is this: if FBC Bloomfield says, “Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening,” the Lord will speak. We prayed in 2019 that God would prune our branches and make us even more fruitful. He is answering that prayer. Let’s follow wherever He leads us!

Grace and peace,
Nathan

A Note from Pastor Nathan

"Love one another as I have loved you."

John 15:12

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

Luke 10:27

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."

Luke 6:27

These teachings of Jesus are fitting for us to consider during the month of February, with Valentine's Day, when our culture talks more about "love" than it does during other times of the year. Who are Christians called to love?

Love one another. That's the other followers of Jesus, the church. This is hard, because church is made up of broken human beings like me. Human beings make mistakes. We miscommunicate. Sometimes we do the wrong thing. Other times we do the right thing but in the wrong way. We hurt one another accidentally. We hurt one another deliberately. Sometimes, after wounding someone, we keep digging the wound deeper, maybe without realizing it! These kinds of creatures are hard to love, and yet we are these kinds of creatures. Jesus says the distinctive thing for which we will be known is our love for one another. We live in a "give up on anyone who has hurt me" kind of world. Jesus calls us to be a "love everyone who has hurt us" kind of church. Beloved, let us love one another. *Holy Spirit, help us!*

Love your neighbor. When a Jewish audience asks Jesus to define "neighbor," he presents a Samaritan as the ultimate example, deliberately exposing a bitter ethnic divide. February is designated "Black History Month." Events of recent times have reminded us of our own culture's racial tensions. When we think of racism, we may think of deliberate, cruel, violent things white people have done to black people throughout history. But just as problematic are the subtle prejudices of our own hearts today, whether based on race or other factors. To be human is to have a biased heart. To be a follower of Christ is to pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart..." There may be more "isms" in our hearts than we are ready to admit. *God, you love the whole world and you know our hearts. Change our hearts and set us free!*

Love your enemies. I find that my heart is skilled at manufacturing enemies. Maybe yours is, too. We might not use the word, "enemy," but we sure act like those who have done things or said things we don't like are our ultimate problem. There is no question that people can be difficult. There are some who are explicitly and overtly opposed to Christianity. But more often, people just irritate us. People can be hard to love. But God is an enemy-loving God, who invites the wicked to repent and live, takes no pleasure in our destruction, and sent Christ to die for us while we were His enemies because of sin. While our Lord Jesus was dying at the hands of His enemies, he prayed, "Father, forgive them..." *Lord Jesus, give us your heart for our enemies, to love them as you love us.*

Let's consider the three groups above: other Christians, neighbors, and enemies. Is there someone in one of these categories – or maybe in each of them – for whom the Lord is calling you and me to *intentionally* pray? I imagine that as we pray for our brothers and sisters, our neighbors or enemies, we will find ourselves loving them more faithfully with the love of Jesus Christ.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on...

Grace and peace,
Nathan

FBC Body of Christ,

If you haven't taken the opportunity to read the "Reshaping Church Update" that Pastor Nathan has provided in this newsletter, please do so. I believe that this is a great opportunity for us as the body of Christ to be a part of determining what God has in store for the future of FBC. Reshaping Church will guide us through a process of discerning what future initiatives will provide us with opportunities for worship and ministry that will strengthen our relationship with Christ and give us direction in our role as the body of Christ in this church and our community. I want to encourage each of you to attend the launch event once that has been scheduled and also to participate in one of the small groups. With our reliance on God, these small groups will provide input on how we will worship and minister in the future. We need your input, so please prayerfully consider being a part of it. I am looking forward to participating with you and finding out what exciting ministries God has in store for us at FBC.

As I finished writing this, the following verse came to mind. "For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland." Isaiah 43:19 NLT. He has already begun as Pastor Nathan indicated in his article. God provided us a way to continue to minister through the pandemic. And He has a way ahead for us. But what is that way? Come, let us discovery the pathway together.

Blessings!
Kathy Ham
Deacon Chair

First Baptist Church 500 Lincoln Drive Bloomfield, IN 47424 February 2021 Pastor's Cell: 812-381-4189 Church Office: 812-384-8459 FAXNo: 812-384-8982 Bright Beginnings Daycare: 812-384-0400 Bright Beginnings Preschool: 812-384-2647						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 6:30 Trustees	3 9:00 Bible Study	4 6:30 Deacons	5	6
7 Communion	8	9	10 9:00 Bible Study	11 6:30 Congregational Meeting	12	13
14	15	16	17 9:00 Bible Study	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 9:00 Bible Study	25	26	27
28						