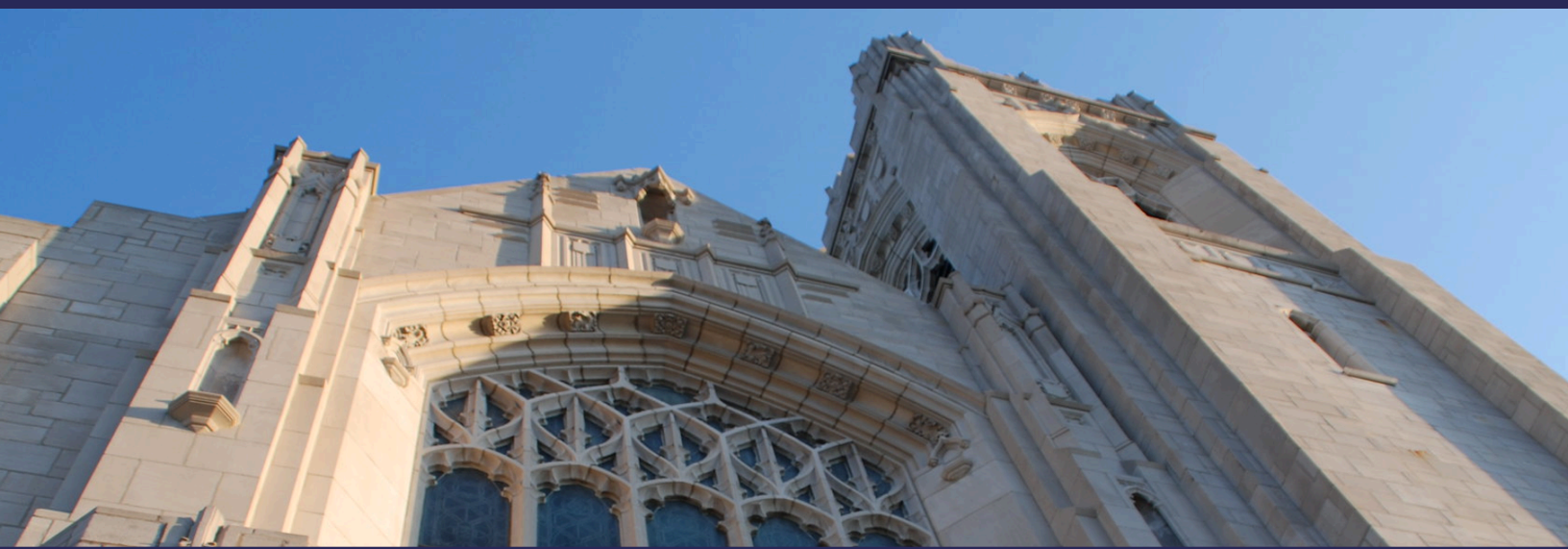


# THE VISITOR



## *Lent Leads into Easter, the Most Important Day in Our Christian Year*



We are just beginning the Lenten season. These forty days mirror Christ's time in the wilderness, which was after his baptism by John and before his three-year public ministry. For Christ, this was a time of fasting and temptation as he readied himself for preaching,

healing, discipling, leading, and eventually dying in obedience to the Father.

Lent begins on the Wednesday forty days before Easter, which is traditionally known as Ash Wednesday. This year, that date is March 5. Generally, the purpose of Lent is to spiritually prepare a person for observing and celebrating Easter. How the preparation occurs varies by denomination, church, and individual. Though traditions vary, spiritual practices like prayer, Bible study, and self-sacrifice are frequent.

Some believers end Lent on the Thursday before Easter Sunday, a day called Maundy Thursday. Others continue their observation until Saturday, the day before Easter.

Catholics partake in the Stations of the Cross ritual, remove celebratory features in the church (such as flowers), and centralize crucifixes to draw attention to Christ's dying on the cross to take away our sins. In addition, they often refrain from certain foods, drinks, and behaviors during Lent.

The end of our Lenten season at FBCM will be Good Friday. Christian Ministries will use our building to host a service at noon on Friday, April 18. Those present will be able to practice by donating a love offering to those in need who are served at Christian Ministries. Later that evening, at 7:00 p.m., our church will gather as a family to remember Christ's suffering and death during our annual Service of Shadows.

On Sunday, April 20, we celebrate Jesus's victory over death. Without his resurrection, we are lost. Our day centers on celebrating our Savior, Jesus Christ. Because he lives, we live!



*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.*

1 Corinthians 15:17  
(NIV)

# *Lent: A Time to Listen and Respond to God*

By Clif Davis, Worship Arts Pastor



During Lent, we have forty days to focus on new habits and rhythms of life that help us prepare for the season of celebrating the life-changing resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This year at FBC-Muncie we will be taking time in the Sunday morning service to practice praying using a passage of Scripture to frame our interaction with God. Each week we will listen to a Scripture, pause for some directed reflection, and then hear the Scripture again. We are allowing Lent to guide us to slow down and savor the truth of God's Word. Instrumental music will support us as we pause to breathe in God's Word and breathe out our responses to God.

What if each of us took time to listen with our hearts as we prayed? We can join with many of our Christian sisters and brothers this Lenten season in a simple yet significant posture of prayer. We can use godly imagination to listen and see—and perhaps even taste and touch—the reality described in Scripture so that we encounter the living God through prayer. Join us each Sunday of Lent (Ash Wednesday through Good Friday) to invigorate our conversations with God. This Lent, don't just give up something; join us as we grow in gaining a deeper friendship with God. 🏛️

## *Updated Livestream Offers New Features*



Great is Thy faithfulness,  
O God, my Father;  
There is no shadow  
Of turning with Thee.



Bible verses, sermon notes, worship song lyrics, and multiple camera angles can be shown during the updated livestream video of worship service.

The livestream camera for FBCM services was first purchased during the pandemic time period and was initially used for services when the church was closed for in-person worship. Early on, only a small group of people were in the building, providing music along with then-pastor Dr. Wade Allen, who was preaching to people who were in their homes. The livestream has always been much appreciated by shut-ins and also valued by people who have to miss in-person attendance at the Sunday morning services.

**Aaron Smith**, a congregant who has an audiovisual background, advised the church in purchasing new equipment, including a motorized camera that pans, tilts, and zooms to help viewers see what is going on all across the church platform. In addition to this camera, a video switcher was purchased, allowing for multiple cameras to be used so that the viewer can see sections of the service that were not visible in the past. As well as the multiple cameras being switched for different views, the lyrics and sermon notes are displayed on the screen as well.

Aaron put the entire system together with assistance from Co-Pastor **Jonathan Balmer** and member **Chris Wright**. Three volunteers are soon beginning training on the system, and Aaron hopes more camera operators will step forward to help with the weekly task. 🏛️

## Get to Know: Bill Eidson

Most people in the FBCM family know **Bill Eidson**. After all, he has been a part of the church for fifty-nine years. Newer people also begin to get to know him as he moves around the church on Sunday mornings welcoming people.

Bill grew up an only child in Alton, Illinois, and after high school attended and graduated from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. He lived there four years in the Baptist dorm and became a very active member of the Baptist Foundation, serving in several leadership roles and even traveling to Hawaii one summer to work as a missionary for the organization.

His face lights up when he talks about meeting his wife, Barb, at SIU. He spotted her at the bowling alley, they met, went on a date, and fell in love. Once they were married, Bill says that she became a major supporter of his educational journey and his studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville (Bachelor of Divinity), Vanderbilt University in Nashville (PhD in history with a specialty in nineteenth-century US History), and back at SIU. During that time, Barb finished her degree and then taught music to keep the home fires burning. “We almost made it to 67 years of marriage,” he said. Barb died in August of last year.



**Bill Eidson**

After Bill became Dr. Eidson, his title helped bring him to Ball State University to teach. During his thirty-five-year tenure, he was chair of the history department and associate dean of the College of Sciences and Humanities.

All his life, Bill has been a big baseball lover and a Cardinals baseball fan. He played third baseman on his high school team and describes himself as “a good team member.” Since then, he has coached softball and baseball teams with members that range from twelve-year-olds and fifteen-year-olds to women and men. Bill served as a First Baptist team coach for several years and authored a book about high school baseball, *The Final Four in Indiana Baseball*, that was published in 1991.

Long has Bill been a master gardener with a specific love for roses, and he has a deep love for Civil War history. He is also an Abraham Lincoln specialist and even has a room in the house that houses books, photos, and statues that he affectionately calls the “Lincoln Room.”

When they first arrived in Muncie, the Eidsons needed to find a church and eventually came to FBCM. At that time, Barb wondered if it might be too large a church to fit into, but she ended up quickly becoming part of the music department. At her busiest time, she led seven groups—five choral and two handbells—with a weekly rehearsal for most of those groups.



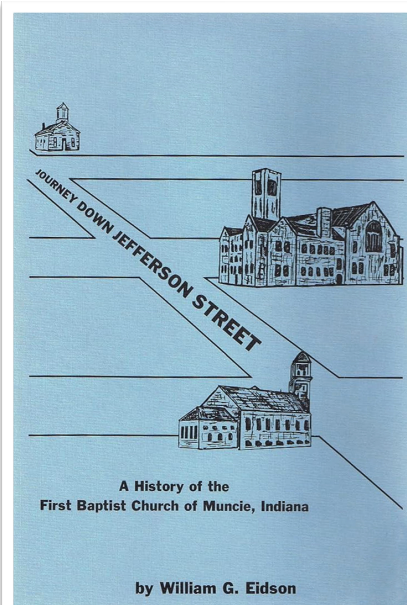
**Bill and Barb Eidson**

She was the paid choir director for much of their tenure at the church. Perhaps the most memorable role she held was directing the Good News Singers, a teen folk group that sang in the '70s and '80s.

When Barb passed away last year, more than fifty members of the group came from all over to attend the calling hours and memorial service. As Bill recalled her role at the church, he said, "Barb was able to relate to all age groups: older adults, young children, and everyone in between."

Bill has done his share of working as a volunteer at the church. He has been a Sunday School teacher of young adults and in the junior department. He was moderator, chairman of the deacons' board, and a member of a pastoral search committee. He has been in the pulpit many times. In the '80s, he was engaged for a while serving as an interim pastor at Summitville Baptist Church.

Today Bill is a member of the nominating committee, helping to find candidates for church leadership positions. He also teaches youth Sunday School as part of a rotation.



**Journey Down Jefferson Street**

Bill is FBCM's church historian and maintains the church archives. He authored a church history book, *Journey Down Jefferson Street* in 1987. With that expertise, he was a skilled chair in 2009 for the Anniversary Committee during the 150<sup>th</sup> year celebration of the church's founding.

In the community, he has served on the Christian Ministries Board and was presented a Faith in God Award at the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast.

Bill has three children: Missy, Rob, and Shannon. Missy lives in Indianapolis with her family, which now includes a new grandson—the first great-grandchild for Bill.

Son Rob and his family are in Maryland, and Shannon and his family live in Wisconsin. In total, Bill's three children have given him eight grandchildren: five girls and three boys. Bill recalls fondly how much Barb enjoyed the weddings of two of those grandchildren in 2023.

Bill speaks softly when sharing about the long, slow journey from vibrancy to dementia. After a difficult year of keeping her at home, he and the family had to decide about having her go to a memory care facility. It turned out to be a good move. She was comfortable there, had great care, and enjoyed the opportunity to play the piano. The playing was not at the level of her earlier proficiency, but it gave her a sense of accomplishment and was a blessing to other residents. It was a blessing to Bill, too, who visited every day of the two and a half years she was there!

The thing most people in the FBCM family know is that Bill picked up Barb from the memory care facility and brought her to church until the last six months of her life when she experienced a bad fall and could no longer get out. Barb loved to recognize faces and smiled at everyone who greeted her—especially those who shared in a big hug.

During one sermon Bill delivered during that time, he was thanking God for many blessings. He said, "I thank God that he brought Barb and me together." First Baptist is grateful that God brought Bill and Barb Eidson into our family. 🏛️



# LENT & EASTER ACTIVITY LIST

## March 5 - Ash Wednesday

You are encouraged to attend an Ash Wednesday worship service of your choice on Ash Wednesday.. Daniel Harris, American Baptist campus ministry coordinator, will lead a service at 6:30 p.m. at Riverside Avenue Baptist Church. FBCM co-pastors will attend and assist with a service at High Street United Methodist Church at 7:00 p.m.

## March 8, 9:00 a.m.–noon - Serve Your City Day

Traditionally, almsgiving and self-denial are key parts of the Lenten season as we meditate on our need for Christ in our everyday lives. As we live out our church’s current watchword (“Not to be served, but to serve”), FBCM will kick off this Lent with a special all-church service day. Everyone is encouraged to serve on one of four teams that will be helping our community partners around Muncie.

## Family Discipleship

Advent Boxes were such a hit, we are bringing them back for Lent! But this time, with a twist! Join us in worship on Sunday, March 9, to collect your family’s Lenten Discipleship Bingo card!

## Men’s Lenten Breakfasts

Join men (age 13+) throughout the Northeast Region of ABC IN/KY for breakfast fellowship and worship each Saturday of Lent, March 15 through April 12, 9:00 a.m., at various locations. FBCM will be hosting the final breakfast on April 12. The theme for this series is “Men Answering the Call to Serve God in Our Own Generation,” based on Acts 13:36a. The breakfasts are free, but you will need to RSVP to [adult@fbcmuncie.org](mailto:adult@fbcmuncie.org) one week before each that you plan to attend. A special offering will be collected each week to benefit Indian Creek Baptist Camp.

## Christian Ministries Lenten Series

Christian Ministries will be hosting community Lenten services weekly on Wednesdays at noon at FBCM, from March 12 until April 16. They will be concluding the series with a Community Good Friday service on April 18 at noon.



## March 23–26 - Randolph County

Many of us remember the destructive tornadoes that ripped through Winchester in March 2024. Another service opportunity this Lent is to join the continuing rebuilding efforts alongside volunteers from throughout our denomination. If you cannot do the physical labor, there will be opportunities to help welcome volunteers and to prepare or serve food to this mission team.



## April 5 - Fresh Brewed Life

Women (13+) are invited for a relaxing breakfast and fellowship. Taylor University student Kaia Mills will be the speaker.

## April 13 - Palm Sunday

Join us for a special worship as we follow the children with their palm branches into Holy Week.

## April 18 - Good Friday

On Friday, April 18, First Baptist Church family and guests will gather at 7:00 p.m. for our traditional Service of Shadows.

## April 20 - Easter Sunday

Sunrise prayer in the park, celebration breakfasts, egg hunts, and more! Check the Wednesday Weekly for more details on how you can celebrate our risen Lord together!

## April 26 - Easter Open House @ the Pastors’ House

Everyone is invited to the third annual Pastors’ Open House as we continue to celebrate Easter together. Sign up for a time slot to visit between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m.! 🏠



# Spring: A Time to Give Sacrificially to Our Community



By Co-Pastor Kendall Ellis

**“Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”-Jesus in Matthew 25:45 (NIV)**

Think back to when you were a student. What do you remember about the fall versus the spring semester?

Social things aside, I remember the fall as the time of listening and taking in new information. But the spring was the time of freedom. Each spring, my teachers assigned open-ended projects. Essentially, everything we worked for in the fall culminated into the opportunity to apply our learning into something meaningful in the spring.

Our ministry year runs parallel to the academic calendar. We have been proud of how FBCM embraced our watchword last fall: *not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45)*. Together, we have

- baptized six people (we'll baptize four more on Easter) as they committed their lives to serve Christ and his church
- learned what FBCM's ministry teams are, who leads them, and how to stay informed about ministry opportunities at August's Vision Lunch
- identified our spiritual gifts during November's All-Church Discipleship
- wrestled with Jesus's Sermon on the Mount as we planted "seeds of service" throughout Epiphany worship

Praise God, seeds of service are taking root at FBCM! We are all seeking and finding opportunities to love and serve others. The Holy Spirit is moving in our community. And it's only the beginning!

Like some school curricula, our church is shifting from learning to doing this spring. Make plans to **serve the community** with us for

- **Serve Your City Day** (March 8)
- **Randolph County Mission Trip** (March 23–26)
- **Community Egg Hunt** (check the Wednesday Weekly for details)
- **Youth Summer Serve** (Tuesdays in June & July)

The coming of the spring semester also brings the liturgical season of Lent. Lent is the forty days the church spends getting ready for the mystery of Easter. During Lent, the church dedicates itself to prayer, repentance, giving, and self-sacrifice. What a perfect time for us *not to be served, but to serve!*

As always, it's our greatest joy to serve alongside you. Let's give sacrificially of our time and resources to our fellow Muncie folk, just as we would unto Jesus. 🏰



# Readership Survey Coming in Early May

By Molly Flodder, Editor, *The Visitor*

A few weeks ago, a church friend commented that she sure wished we had a *Visitor* like we had in the old days so she would know what was going on. I hesitated a moment trying to discover if she was talking about the newsy yet “quick and dirty” black-and-white version many of us received in the mail on a monthly basis for several years. She admitted that she sometimes reads the *Wednesday Weekly*, an up-to-the-minute publication that comes via email each week where one can get sermon blogs, news, updates, a prayer list, and birthdays.



I pulled her back to the comments about *The Visitor*. We are currently starting the fourth year of the quarterly feature publication duplicated in color, containing a variety of stories and photographs, and made available by email to every active member and attendee of our church. A mailed version goes to approximately twenty homebound members.

She had never seen it. I puzzled over whether she had never opened it on her computer or didn't realize what she was looking at in emails coming from church. I asked if she ever opened the church website (she didn't) where it is also available. I queried if she had the Church Center App (she didn't) and why she wasn't seeing the publication. I even wondered if somehow her name was not on the list of emailed recipients—not likely, since she sees other information via email.

It was impossible to ask if she liked it or what it needed to be better.

**Enter:** A READERSHIP SURVEY to measure whether church family members are receiving both the *Wednesday Weekly* and *The Visitor* publications, opening them, reading them, and reaping any benefits from them.

The pastors and publication staff members (**Michelle Heimlich, Julie Davis**, and I) will be preparing surveys and distributing them in early May.

We are looking for two to four volunteers who will serve on an ad hoc committee to help us distribute the survey and analyze the findings during May. (Let me, the pastors, or Julie know of your interest.)

This is an exercise that can be anonymous if you want it to be. You can make as many constructively critical remarks as you feel you need to and don't have to sign your name. And don't forget to tell us your favorite sections and articles so that we know to keep them up!

We hope to glean the impact of our publications and the effectiveness of their communications to our church congregants. This is how we grow and improve. This is how the publications can be not only informative but become tools for our church family to use in sharing with family, friends, coworkers, and others when they talk about their church and invite people to come.

If the most serious issues are in the distribution of the publications, perhaps we can find a better way to distribute them. (We likely will not be mailing more than a hundred six-to-eight page newsletters at 73 cents each, but perhaps we can alter distribution methods to make the publications more accessible.)

Be prepared to receive a survey and prayerfully participate in sharing information and evaluative remarks. We will share the findings in the June issue of the publication and even make available a short meeting during which you can learn what we discover.



The sanctuary was decorated for the Christmas season. Worshipers lit candles and sang together during Christmas Eve service and also took part in communion.



## ***New Members of the Church Coordination Team***

New members of the Church Coordination Team began their terms in January. We thank God for their willingness to faithfully serve our church family in their leadership roles. 🏰



Outreach–**Dana Davis**  
 Adult Ministries–**Cheryl Flaherty**  
 Youth Ministries–**Leslie Pannell**  
 Property–**Joe Songer**  
 At Large–**Ed Brzak**  
 Treasurer–**Sandy Brzak**

**Senior Co-Pastors**  
**Rev. Kendall Ellis**  
 kendall@fbcmuncie.org

**Rev. Jonathan Balmer**  
 jonathan@fbcmuncie.org

**Worship Arts Pastor**  
**Dr. Clifton Davis**  
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*The Visitor* is a quarterly publication of ©First Baptist Church Muncie  
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