



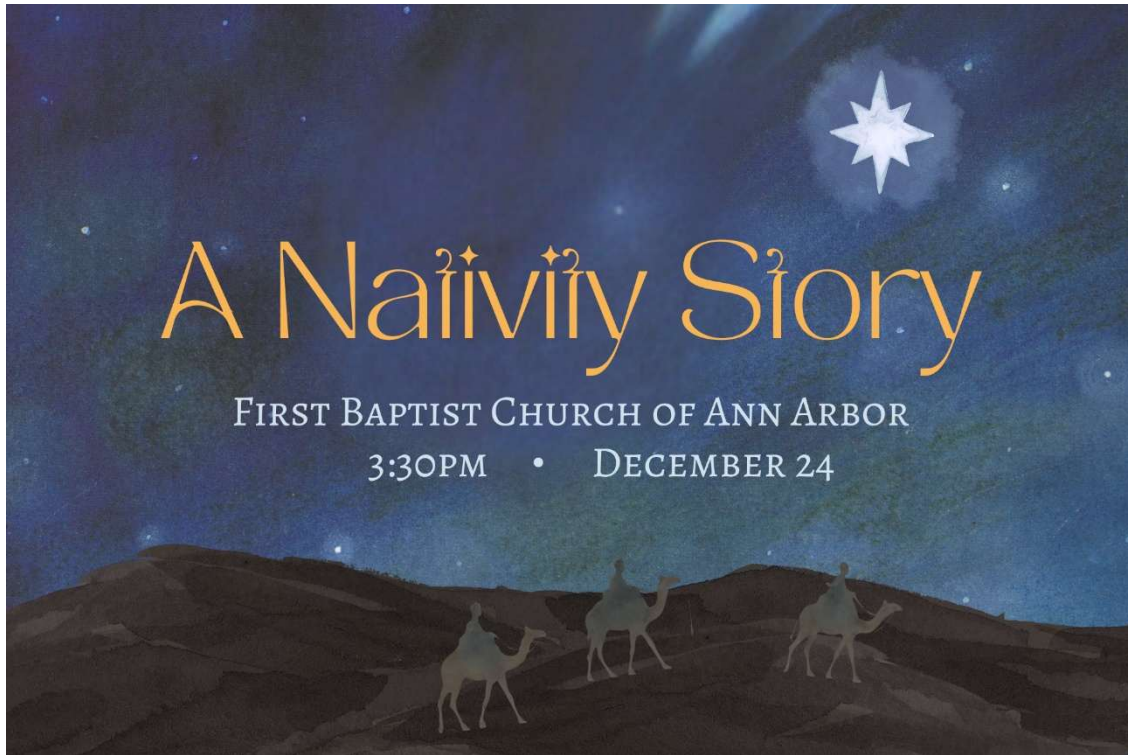
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

DO JUSTICE. LOVE KINDNESS. WALK HUMBLY WITH GOD.
—MICAH 6:8

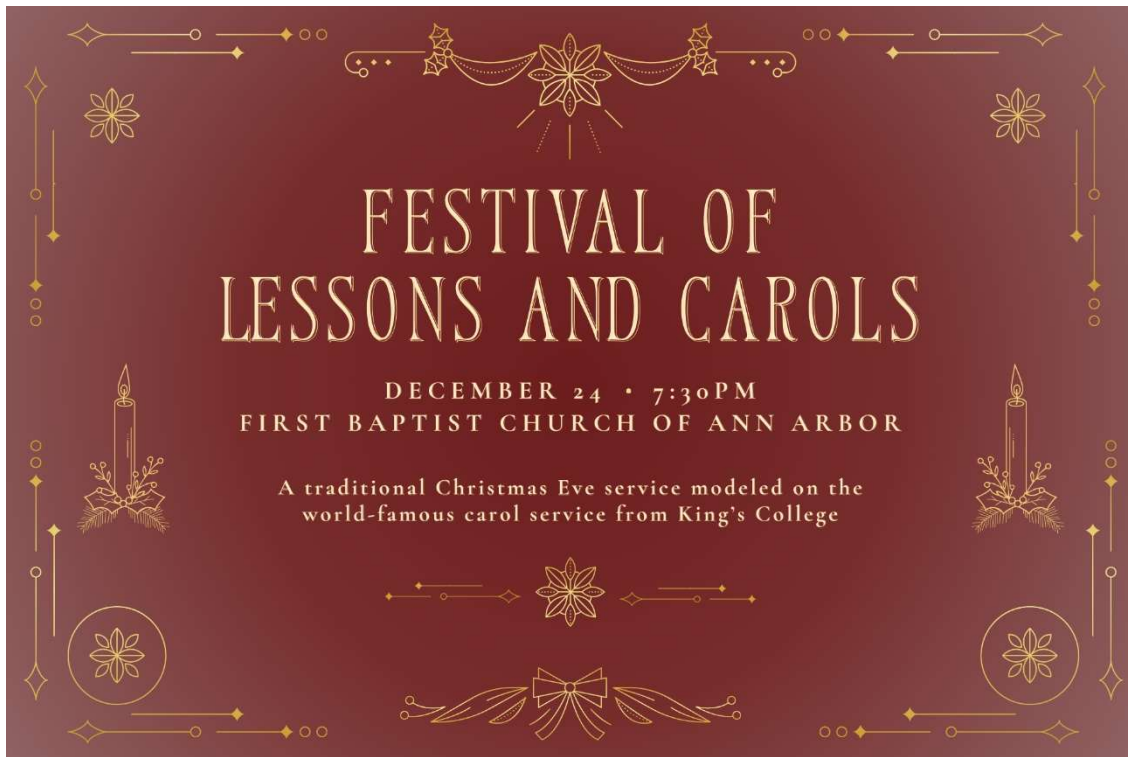
Waiting, but it's here already too.

Lately, we've, appropriately, been talking/hearing a lot about waiting, this being Advent. We wait for the celebration of Christ's birth. We wait to sing the carols and hear the magnificent and even the sappy Christmas music. We wait for the reincarnation. Maybe we can only wait for the light to find us because we don't have what it takes to seek the Light. Sometimes the light indeed finds you when you aren't looking. On Communion Sundays, the 2nd-5th graders have Stay in Service Sunday. As I was a communion server, I was up front during the passing of the peace. Each of the several kiddos who were up there responded with "also with you" or put out a hand or smiled. It took me out of task mode and brought me into the Light. A holy moment for me. We wait, but it's also already God with us. May we be open to both!

Grace and Peace to you all
Mary Davis, Moderator



Christmas Eve at 3:30p (note new time!): A Nativity Story. Come as you are to this simple, informal, family-friendly service. We'll sing carols and listen to the Christmas story with special music from our Children's Choir. The service will last less than an hour.



Christmas Eve at 7:30p: A Festival of Lessons & Carols. First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor presents a Festival of Lessons and Carols, modeled on the world-famous carol service from King's College in Cambridge, England. Come hear the Christmas story, join in singing beloved Christmas carols, and enjoy beautiful music from our choir and organist.



The Pastoral Search Committee met on Monday, December 15. We spent our time developing an itinerary for in-person interviews and doing a very deep dive on

writing interview questions that represent what the congregation finds important. Over the next two weeks we will be working on interview feedback forms and on finalizing interview questions. We will take a break for Christmas and meet again on December 29. This is an exciting time as we get closer to calling our next Pastor. Thank you for your prayers as we walk through this Advent season and this search season of expectant waiting.

Schedule of Upcoming Preachers:



December 21: David Suell (he/him)

David Thomas Suell has been a member of First Baptist since 2019, having moved with his wife, Meg, and two (now three!) children to Ann Arbor to complete a PhD in Political Science at the University of Michigan. He graduated in 2024 and is now an assistant professor in political theory and international affairs at Eastern Michigan University. David's work focuses on African political thought and the various crises of "modernity"—colonialism, capitalism, racism, technological change, and climate catastrophe. Philosophically, he engages these problems through the lens of temporality, that is, how people understand time and their relationship to it. His research has appeared formally in multiple scholarly venues, and informally in regular conversations with incredibly patient fellow congregants. David's work at the intersection of African thought, modernity, and time informs today's talk on prophecy as a persistent feature of human religious experience and a particular challenge for our own moment.

December 28: Rev. Matt Ackerman (he/him)

Matt Ackerman serves as pastor at the Campus Chapel, a campus ministry at UM in the Reformed tradition. He's a graduate of Calvin University and Princeton Theological Seminary and has been involved in campus ministry in some capacity for most of his life. His hometown is Seattle, Washington, though he spent many of his formative years in State College, Pennsylvania. He's married to Marianne, a special education teacher originally from Cleveland, Ohio, and they're parents of two young daughters.



January 4: Rev. Beth Foster (she/her)

Beth Foster is a retired American Baptist minister and chaplain. Most of her career was spent in long term care and hospice chaplaincy. She and her husband, Bill, have been members of FBCA2 for 23 years. She enjoys spending time with grandchildren, reading, and exercising. She's a native of North Carolina.



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**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED FOR
FELLOWSHIP TIME!**
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Volunteers Needed for Fellowship Time. Hosting fellowship time is a fun, low-pressure way for families and individuals to serve the church! If it is your first time, we are more than happy to pair you with someone as you learn the ropes. Sign up [here](#) and email [Christine Hwang](#) if you have any questions.

ADULT FORMATION

Adult Formation Class. The second hour in the Memorial Room will be discussing Advent from a variety of perspectives. This Sunday's class is the last class in this series, and is titled Rosa Mystica. Join us to listen to and discuss Advent music where Mary appears as a rose. We will explore the symbolism of Mary the Mystical Rose through beloved musical works by Benjamin Britten, Hugo Distler, and Herbert Howells.

Sunday Young-Ish Adult Gathering. If you consider yourself to be a young-ish adult (roughly 20s - 40s), there's a new small group gathering for you in the Campus Center (office wing) on the first and third (and sometimes fifth) Sundays of the month after Fellowship time (11:30a). We'll plan to attend congregational meetings. Come share about your week and what's happening in your life, discuss current events, or just relax and listen. On the first Sunday of the month, we plan to share a meal together. Questions? Contact [Meg Suell](#), [Valerie Francia](#), or [LJ Brazier](#).

CONGREGATIONAL NOTES

Paraments Update. As we approach Christmas Day and Epiphany, you'll notice some new white and gold banners in the sanctuary. These paraments, decorative cloth that change with liturgical seasons, were recently updated because the former set was displaying wear and stains. That former set has been kept.

A task committee comprised of: Julie Smith, Heather Reed, Kristin Reynolds, and Grace VanderVliet, investigated options for classic contemporary designs. Artist Jeff Wunro specializes in custom paraments, and he was able to complete the first white set in time for the Christmas season. Multiple FBC committees approved the purchase, and we are excited to install them this year!





Thank you once more for your amazing generosity to the families at Hikone!

On a cold and snowy December 9, we sorted and boxed all of your bags of delicious, healthy food. And along with a box of books, 2 boxes of school supplies, plus over **\$2000-worth** of household and health supplies, we filled a large pick-up truck as well as 6 cars, then delivered it all to the Hikone community. Director Torey Madula was **very** excited and grateful, saying that this is the happiest day of the year for her because it means so much to the thirty families living there. There is no way I can guess the number of individuals and families who donated food but thank you all! And thanks also to the families/individuals who gave financial donations of over \$1300! I am so grateful for this congregation's long-standing commitment to this annual holiday collection!

These are the dedicated volunteers who show up year after year to sort, pack, deliver, and haul all of things into the Hikone Community Center: Elli Barron, David Bowen, Toni Burton, Stephen Gutierrez, Nancy Paul, and David Robbins, plus first-timer Sue Johnson. Our gratitude also to staff members Lee Foley and Kat Becker for their efforts to make our work easier. And we send big wishes for a quick recovery to Dee Drake who has been a consistent volunteer EVERY previous year, and thanks for his donation and delivery of 100 pounds of flour to church a couple of weeks ago!

- Sue Ellen







Thanks from Community Action Network.

Dear First Baptist Church,

Thank you for helping to create brighter futures for children, youth, and families in under-resourced Washtenaw County neighborhoods. CAN envisions the closing of socio-economic gaps by providing educational and enrichment programs for children and teens, supportive services for families who are under-resourced, and challenging systems rooted in racism and inequality. Your donation of gift cards, household, hygiene and food items for Hikone will support CAN's high-impact, year-round programs that focus on Education, Stabilization, and Community Building.

Sincerely,

Your friends at CAN

I wanted to take a moment and thank you for your congregation's generosity. Our families were OVER THE MOON with the items you gave them. It will go a long way in helping get through the holiday season.

- Torey Mandula

Thanks from Joyce Robbins. I would like to thank my church family for all the cards, phone calls, and visits during my recent health issue. You all have been such a blessing that I truly appreciate!

Thank you,
Joyce Robbins

Update on the AB Women's Ministries Bake Sale. A big THANK YOU to our bakers and those who made donations to our ABWM group for our great tasting treats. We collected \$510 towards our mission projects! If there is anyone who would still like to make a donation just let me know. -[Carolyn Grapentine](#)

THANK YOU, CHARLIE! Charlie Duke has been a part of a congregation for a very long time - his whole life, in fact! Most recently he has been one of our Children's Choir directors; a student leader of The Gathering, our campus ministry; and a sexton who lives here at church, making so much possible! And now he is on to a new adventure as he transfers to Berklee College of Music in Boston this winter term! We have been blessed by his presence in our community and by the leadership roles he has had here. Let's send him off with all the love and support we can! If you would like to make a monetary contribution towards the gift from our church family, please do so through Venmo (@Xan-Morgan-1) or PayPal (@xanmorgan923) to Xan Morgan. You can also give cash or a check to Robbie Stapleton this Sunday.







WELCOME, ISAAC! We are delighted to have Isaac Thompson filling Charlie Duke's spot as a director of Children's Choir. Big thanks, Isaac!

Isaac Thompson has been a lifetime member of the FBCA2 church family. He is a graduate student in mathematics at the University of Toledo, but is currently discerning a call to ministry and an education in theology; he hopes to make that transition in the coming year. He is most excited to begin collaborating with Michelle Ding in directing the children's choir. He has been a long time member of the bass section of the FBCA2 Sanctuary choir.



So You Were Wondering

What's the Executive Council? What do they do?

The Executive Council is the primary leadership group at FBCA2. It's composed of a representative from each board (most often the chair), 3 at large members, the church clerk, the Moderator, and Pastor. The Executive Council appoints several committees such as budget and recruiting. They must approve the budget before it goes to the congregation. One of the more important roles of the EC is to facilitate communication among the boards. Presently the EC meets every other month and as needed for church business.

According to our Constitution, the Executive Council is “subject to the supreme authority of the church membership.” Also, special meetings of the EC can be convened “at the written request of at least ten (10) active church members acting jointly and stating the purpose of the request.”

[Send in your questions!](#)

Mary Davis, Moderator

The Youth Group will have their annual Christmas party on Sunday, December 21 during their normal Youth Group time (11:30-12:30) in the Youth Room. They will be having a Secret Santa gift exchange! If your youth would like to participate, email Jillian or look out for a link in this week’s Youth Group Updates email.



The theme for RMMO 2025 is: Worthy of Love. As illustrated in this year’s campaign materials, We Remember the pastors, missionaries and leaders who have served ABCUSA churches and ministries. Each of those who have celebrated the wondrous works of Christ will be remembered in the form of a thank you check – a tangible expression of our enduring gratitude for their service. We will receive contributions towards this offering in throughout December. Please give generously.

Upcoming Change from Unity FI Solutions. The legacy platform that was on the church website for making credit card payments to the church, including recurring payments, has been shut down. A new link has been added to access the new

platform. If you have used the old link, you will need to create a new account and set up a new recurring payment. Reach out to [Kat](#) if any questions or concerns.

PRAYER REQUESTS. Praying together is a core element of our life together. Each Sunday during worship (10:00a on our [Facebook page](#), [YouTube channel](#), and in person), we pray for those we know to pray for by name during the Prayers of the People. You are invited to share prayer requests/praises using [this form](#).

NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE AND DEADLINE. The next newsletter will be Thursday, January 1, 2026! Deadline for submissions is Tuesday, December 30.

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