



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

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

Dear Church Family,

During our Stewardship season, we explored what it means to be the CHURCH TOGETHER. We watched each week, as our visual representation of who we are as a church grew - naming the roles we play, the roles others have played in our lives, and the team work that happens here together.

**“Present yourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life.”
- 1 Peter 2:5**

Our community is **vibrant with life!** We had 23 volunteers make it possible for us to host the Overnight Rotating Shelter last month. We just wrapped up a new Bible Study offering this semester. Clara Jean Laidlaw’s baby dedication was on November 16. The youngish adult small group gathered - 20 adults and kids - for a Friendsgiving at the Mills’ home. Seven members of our church family are meeting weekly as they search for our next pastor. On Sunday, 75 people attended our annual Advent Event and this coming Friday, Ad Libitum will have its 13th Christmas concert.

You are the building stones. Our community is made possible because of your presence in it and your financial contributions to it. This is especially true as we continue in a season of transition.

Here are the updated numbers of the pledge campaign:

- **Total Amount Pledged:** \$435,977.00 (73.52% of goal)
- **# of Pledgers:** 66 (83.54% of pledgers from current year)
- **Average Pledge Amount:** \$6,411.43 (up from \$5,757 current year)

- **Total One-time Gifts:** \$11,900
- **Needed to reach our goal:** \$145,123
- **Pledges received for this year that have not yet been made for 2026:** \$54,421.76
- Other information of interest:
 - 47 households increased their pledge
 - Of those, 22 households increased 22%
 - 9 households kept their pledge the same
 - 5 households decreased their pledge
 - 5 first-time pledges
 - 1 household who moved over 7 years ago has wrapped up their giving

This coming Friday, the Stewardship Team will share the final pledged amount with the Budget Committee. If you haven't had a chance to pledge or make a one-time gift, you can do so here:

[Make Your 2026 Pledge Here](#)

[Make Your One-Time Donations Here](#)

The following are the next steps:

- Remaining pledges are made by this Friday, December 5
- Stewardship Team gives the Budget Committee the pledged total for 2026 ministry
- Budget committee meets in early December to adjust budget as needed
- Budget committee shares updates with church boards
- Boards modify proposed budgets as needed
- Updated proposed 2026 budget is shared with congregation in January
- Congregation votes on 2026 budget at annual financial meeting on February 1

It has been an honor to serve you as your Stewardship Team. For those of you who are interested in serving on this team in the future, please let our moderator, [Mary Davis](#) know.

We are the church together,
Stewardship Team

(Toni Burton, Martin Magers, Xan Morgan, Amanda Shutko, and Robbie Stapleton)

Upcoming Change from Unity FI Solutions. We have been using a legacy platform on the church website for making credit card payments to the church, including recurring payments. It is being shut down. On December 16th, a new link will be updated to 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. You can access your existing account until December 16th and delete your old account if you choose. Otherwise, the information is securely archived for a certain amount of time then destroyed. Reach out to [Kat](#) if any questions or concerns. Thank you.



The Pastoral Search Committee met on Monday, Nov. 10. We discussed recent virtual interviews and some additional initial screenings of potential candidates. Some candidates will be moving to the next level and we continue to prepare for those in-person interviews. We also prepared to share updates with the congregation at the meeting today. God is leading us well and we're excited about how candidates are progressing through the process. Thank you for your continued prayers and support!



AD LIBITUM
CONCERT SERIES
Celebrating its 13th year, 2025-2026 / IV
Free Concerts and Open to the Public



Christmas Organ Music

from Germany and France

Bach, Bruhns, Buxtehude, Reger,
Daquin, Guilmant and Dupré

Shin-Ae Chun, organ



December 5, 2025
Friday at Noon

Our AD LIBITUM Concert Series presents "Christmas Organ Music from Germany and France" on Friday, December 5 at noon. Celebrating the Advent and Christmas season, Shin-Ae Chun will perform on our Robert Noehren organ chorale preludes by J.S. Bach, Bruhns, J.M. Bach and Buxtehude, Wiehnachten by Reger, Noël by Daquin, Prière et Berceuse by Guilmant and Dupré's famous Variations sur un Noël. Come and join us in celebrating this beautiful season through music. Bring your friends and neighbors. This is a free concert and open to all.



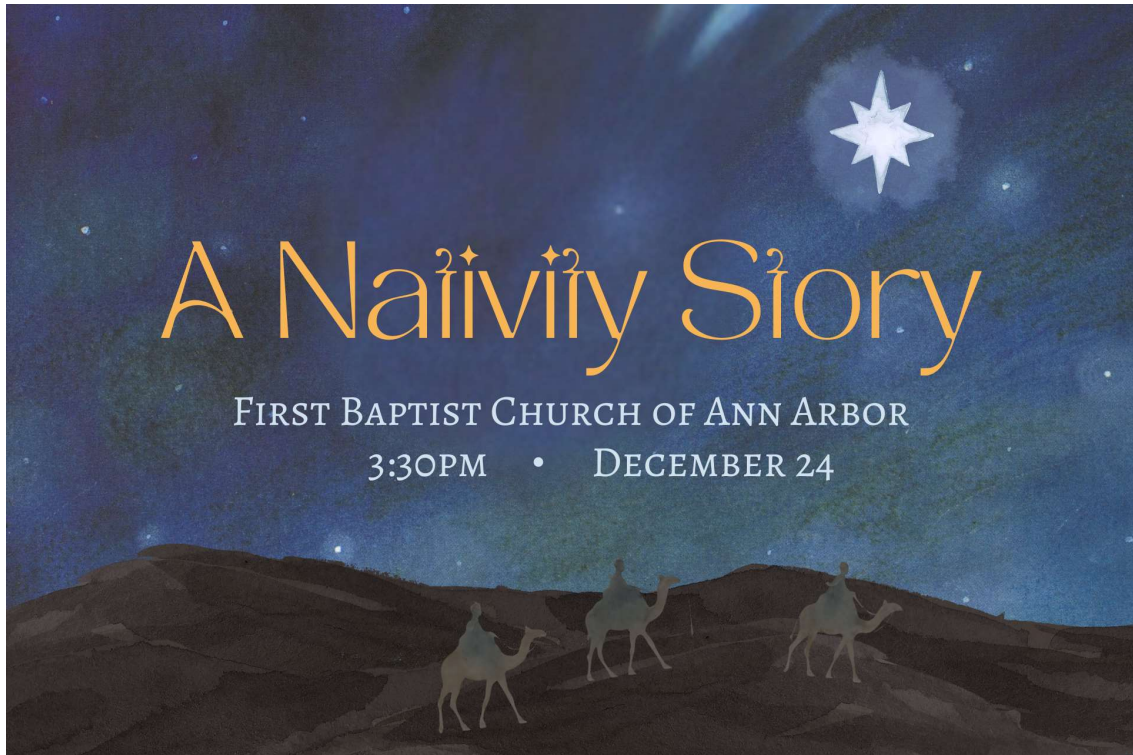
Holiday Collection for the Hikone Community. For over 15 years we have collected food, health, and household supplies for our friends in the Hikone housing community, one of the sites of Community Action Network. Thank you to all who have already donated food and financial gifts! But we have gathered only half of the amount of financial donations we received the last two years and very few food items. **This Sunday, December 7** is the last day we can receive food or financial donations. There will be a basket by the ministry stations on Sunday. You may also donate by check (made out to Sue Ellen with a Hikone designation and placed in the offering) or cash. We would love to have you join us on Tuesday, December 9, starting at the church at 10:30 as we sort the donations, pack everything in boxes, then transport things to Hikone and unload and carry things into the Community Center. We will be done by 12:15.



ABWM BAKE SALE - DATE CHANGE! We are planning on a Bake Sale December 14th to help support our ABWM mission projects for the year! If you are willing and able, please let [Carolyn Grapentine](#) know if you would like to bring something! Our Bake Sale is based on donations, so no need to price your items. If you are looking to pick up some goodies for December - make sure you are here on December 14th!!



Poinsettias for Christmas Eve. Each year we decorate the Sanctuary with poinsettias in honor/memory of those we love for the Christmas season. Poinsettias are \$21.00 each. The deadline to order is Monday, Dec 15. You are welcome to take your poinsettia home with you after the Festival of Lessons & Carols service on Christmas Eve. Poinsettias can be ordered online [here](#).



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.



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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

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](#).

Adult Formation Class. For the next three Sundays, the second hour in the

MEMORIAL ROOM will be discussing Advent from a variety of perspectives.

This Sunday's class is titled *Watching and Waiting*, led by Grace VanderVliet. Advent is a time of waiting -- waiting for a special gathering of family or friends, waiting for gifts, waiting for Christmas Day. We can feel the build up. As Christians, we have been called to look for signs of God's presence around us as we wait. During this week's Second Hour session, we'll consider images of people waiting. We'll practice looking closely, we'll imagine, and we'll wonder together about God's incarnation and what we're watching for in the meantime.

The following Sunday, on December 14, Phil Christman will lead the class *For the Time Being: Advent Auden*. We will read and discuss selections from "For the Time Being," a long Christmas oratorio by the greatest English-language twentieth-century Christian poet after Eliot: W. H. Auden.

CONGREGATIONAL NOTES



So You Were Wondering

This is the newsletter item in which I've found answers to questions submitted by the FBC family about being/doing church. Please send your questions to me at madrad@umich.edu.

Here's the first one:

A couple of people have asked recently why we group our staff salaries in the budget document instead of listing individual salaries and benefits. Over the years we have done it both ways. Trustees have also checked with other churches and found there's not a universal agreement on the best plan. What a surprise! The Trustees voted to continue this practice along with presenting the

salary breakdown annually to Trustees, EC, and Budget Committee to facilitate their efforts as they prepare for Stewardship. For the present, the detailed numbers are available by request. Kat has a multi-year document all made up. The salary and benefit packages for individuals can be a bit confusing at first glance as we have several part-time employees and independent contractors, and also the church benefits from some staff not needing health insurance coverage. Please feel free to contact a Trustee with your thoughts.

The FBC Ladies' Book Club. Our next FBC Ladies' Book Club is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 16th**, 6:30pm at Maryann Bowen's house. We discuss *Clear* by Carys Davies. Our first title of 2026 will then be *This Is How It Always Is* by Laurie Frankel. Please connect with Mary Gregg or Janice Stumpf if you have any questions. Hope to see you there!



Thank you to everyone who came and who volunteered at the Advent Event! Christina and Xan are especially grateful for Julia Cooper who helped plan the event.



Wicked: For Good Youth Group outing. The Youth Group will continue our Wicked viewing tradition and will meet at the movie theater to see Wicked: For

Good next Saturday, December 6, at 3:00pm.

[RSVP here!](#) Note: this is the 3-D version of the movie.

Please try to RSVP by Friday so I can buy tickets in advance! We will meet in the movie theater lobby (Cinemark Ann Arbor 20 at Carpenter and Ellsworth) at 3pm. The movie starts at 3:20. Please email or text Jillian with any questions!

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



Cooking for our Guests! On Sunday, November 23, our kids, teens, and their families cooked a meal for our Overnight Rotating Shelter guests. Big thanks to Amanda Shutko and Grace VanderVliet who made this opportunity possible.



Update from Mary Davis on the November 16 Congregational Gathering
We had some serious moments and some laughter, so it was a good gathering. Along with a presentation from the Pastoral Search Committee about their process including a question/answer time, we heard a bit about worship planning and pastoral care. We also reflected a bit on what we have learned about being/doing church over the past year. Those gathered were asked to

write one thing they learned this year. Some items were read aloud, and all were posted. All of the responses are below (unedited, though it's hard for me not to edit...)Committee work can genuinely be fulfilling-and so necessary to our shared life.

- We're better when we lean on one another.
- The joy of seeing young families and their precious kiddos up front during children's message.
- I learned how important traditional and rooted modes of worship are to me. That we need to fight for what's beautiful and time honored whilst acknowledging issues which arise when they arise and not just ignore them.
- Many hands make light work. And we don't have many hands.
- How strong our church community is.
- How much of our leadership doesn't have a Baptist background.
- Who we are at FBCA2 is distinct and important to preserve-grounded in truth, faith, room for doubt, but also true care.
- Communication is important. It's a 2 way street. You have to be willing to speak AND listen.
- It's wonderful to see we have the people to fill the gaps in this time of transition-and doing so with grace :).
- Grief +change is hard.
- How important to stay connected.
- Better when more people are in service.
- Love with an edge.
- Trust the membership. If it's broken, tellu, and trust us to rise to it. BUT ALSO. Whe should have noticed. I should have noticed. And the next time I feel the urge to pull back and isolate to self-preserve, I'll lean in instead.
- FBCA@ is still on the journey of grieving.
- The church family is resilient and can make it through hard times.
- The church family is as important as the pastor.
- I have learned that I would like to be part of a church that cares more about justice than hymn choices.
- How difficult it is to coordinate committee meeting times...
- Did not vet interim pastor well enough.
- It's important to trust and embrace change.
- Need pastor that can collaborate , work with others.
- It's a messy business-the substitute teacher is never liked.
- How important community is.
- I have learned what I truly miss about our worship services and what I feel is important for me to worship the Living God.
- Our church is strong and resilient because it is full of kind, dedicated,

talented and loyal people.



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.

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, December 18. Deadline for submissions is Tuesday, December 16.

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