



125 Sedgefield Street  
BRISTOL, VIRGINIA 24201

## THE FIRST WORD

January 2023

First Baptist Family,

Happy New Year! I hope that your Advent and Christmas seasons were restful and recharging. As a church, they were great seasons for us. In fact, 2022 was a great year for us. I think it's the best year we've had as a church since I've had the privilege of serving as your pastor. Once our final 2022 numbers are available, I'm going to share those with you, along with some additional reflections and observations about them. Now, though, I want us to look forward. And I must admit to you – I am terribly excited about 2023.

One of the things that excites me about 2023 is the opportunity it provides, the opportunity for a fresh start. The beginning of any new year is a natural time for people to think about fresh starts. After all, that's why New Year's Resolutions are a thing. Fresh starts aren't just for individuals, though. They're also for churches. As you're thinking about making resolutions for yourself, I also want you to think about the church and your role in it. I want you to think about your faith and how it might grow in the new year. Everything seems to be changing now, and that's true for churches, too. One of the most notable changes in church life is church attendance patterns. People used to consider themselves regular church attenders if they attended every week or close to it. Now people consider themselves regular church attenders if they attend once a month or once every six weeks! If you're someone who is here every Sunday or close to it, then keep up the good work! If you aren't though, perhaps you might resolve to attend church more regularly. Like I say every week, things aren't the same when you aren't here. Your presence is a gift. It will be good for the entire church if you are more regular in your attendance. And increased numbers due to more regular attendance is something that would get everyone excited. Is your prayer life or devotional life consistent? If not, I would encourage you to resolve to make those spiritual practices a daily occurrence. Do you have an idea for a ministry or mission in the church? Perhaps you might resolve to take a leadership role in seeing your idea become a reality. As you think about resolutions for the new year, be sure to think about your spiritual life because there are lots of exciting possibilities there, too.

Another thing that excites me about 2023 is our theme for the year – Putting Hands and Feet to Hope. You hear me say that we're called to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world a lot. You also hear me say that we have a hope in Christ that the world desperately needs. It's time for us to put those two things together more intentionally. Churches everywhere have been in rebuild mode for the past year or so because of COVID, and that's certainly been the case for us. I believe now is the time for us to do more than rebuild, though. I believe now is the time for us to do new things, to explore new missions and ministries, for us to, in new ways, put hands and feet to the hope we have in Jesus Christ. You're going to be hearing more about some of the ideas that I have in the coming weeks and months. More importantly, though, I want to encourage you to think and reflect. And I want to hear from you! Where do your deep passions lie? One of my favorite quotes is from Frederick Buechner. He writes, "The place where God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." What deep hungers do you see in this community? Is it related to addiction?

Homelessness? Food insecurity? Broken families? Something else? What would you consider this church's deep gladness ministerially? Do we have congregational energy and excitement around food ministry or addiction ministry? Ministry to the unhoused or to troubled families? Something else? Wherever our congregational gladness and communal hungers meet, those are the places we can put hands and feet to hope. In fact, I would argue that those are the places God is calling us to put hands and feet to hope. God has planted us where we are - on the corner of State Street and Sedgefield Street, right behind the sign in downtown Bristol – to do Kingdom work. God has planted us here to put love into action, to grow in faith, to put hands and feet to hope. And I can think of no better time for us to renew our efforts than right now. As always, it is a joy to be your pastor.

Grace and Peace,

Kris

# Christmas Dinner



# NOTES from Leigh...

We've celebrated a wonderful Advent season at FBC!  
What a blessing to serve and worship here every week!

Mark and I look forward to another year  
of serving together with all of you.

Our Wednesday night Book study will be:  
"Bad Girls of the Bible" by Liz Curtis Higgs.  
We will begin discussions on January 18.  
Get your book now and plan to join us!  
Everyone is welcome!!

Happy New Year!



## LOVE PACKAGES

We are beginning a recycling project of Christian materials.

Please bring any items listed below to the copier room and place in the boxes near the rack. The material will be sent to nations such as Kenya and India where English is taught.

If you have any questions please contact  
Bev Bowers.  
276-466-8107  
[bevbowers@gmail.com](mailto:bevbowers@gmail.com)

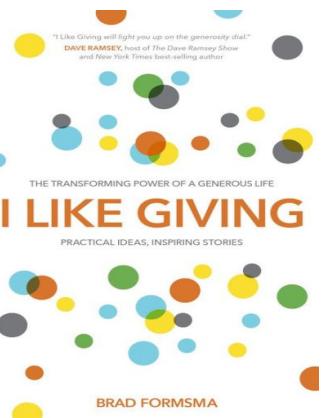
### ITEMS NEEDED FOR LOVE PACKAGES:

- \*Children's ministry tools (visuals, games, Nativity sets, Bible games, Puzzles, etc)
- \*New and used Bibles, New Testaments, Gospel portions
- \*Bible reference and teaching materials
- \*Non-fiction Christian books
- \*Christian magazines and devotional material
  - \*Sunday School materials
- \*CD's, DVD's, and BluRay Christian music, and resources
  - \*Bible tracts



*I Like Giving: the transforming power of a generous life* by Brad Formsma is about experiencing the joy of giving. Giving goes beyond money or things. It can be a listening ear, a touch, or the gift of time-- "Giving is Living." When you choose to live a generous life, something incredible happens: you move from awareness to action. As you make giving a lifestyle, your life begins to love more, and you're creating a more generous world for all of us. ***I Like Giving*** is rich with inspiring stories and practical suggestions.

It helps you create a lifestyle of generosity. You'll find that giving is something you get to do, and you don't have to be a millionaire to make a difference. It also helps you raise kids with a sensitivity to others' needs.



## First Baptist Church of Bristol Staff

Dr. Kris Aaron.....Senior Pastor  
Rev. Ben Ondrak.....Associate Pastor  
Rev. Leigh Clark.....Minister of Music  
Mrs. Jackie Burnette.....Pianist  
Mrs. Andrea Pennington .....Organist

Mrs. Marcine Robinette.....Parish Nurse  
Ms. Terri Thomas .....Church Administrator  
and Financial Secretary  
Ms. Niki Judy.....Administrative Assistant



### Contact Information:

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**Website:** [www.fbcbristol.org](http://www.fbcbristol.org)

You can also find us on  
Facebook.



## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

125 Sedgefield Street  
Bristol, VA 24201

## Deacon of the Week for January

Deacon Chair 2023 - Jennifer Rouse

Dec. 31 & Jan 01	Roberta Yowell
January 07 & 08	Jennifer Rouse
January 14 & 15	Mike Browder
January 21 & 22	Jamie Barger
January 21 & 22	David Hicks

## January FBC Minister On-Call Schedule

Dec. 31 & Jan 01	Rev. Ben Ondrak	(423) 217-8934
January 07 & 08	Dr. Kris Aaron	(803) 225-0795
January 14 & 15	Rev. Ben Ondrak	(423) 217-8934
January 21 & 22	Dr. Kris Aaron	(803) 225-0795
January 21 & 22	Terri Thomas	(423) 963-7576