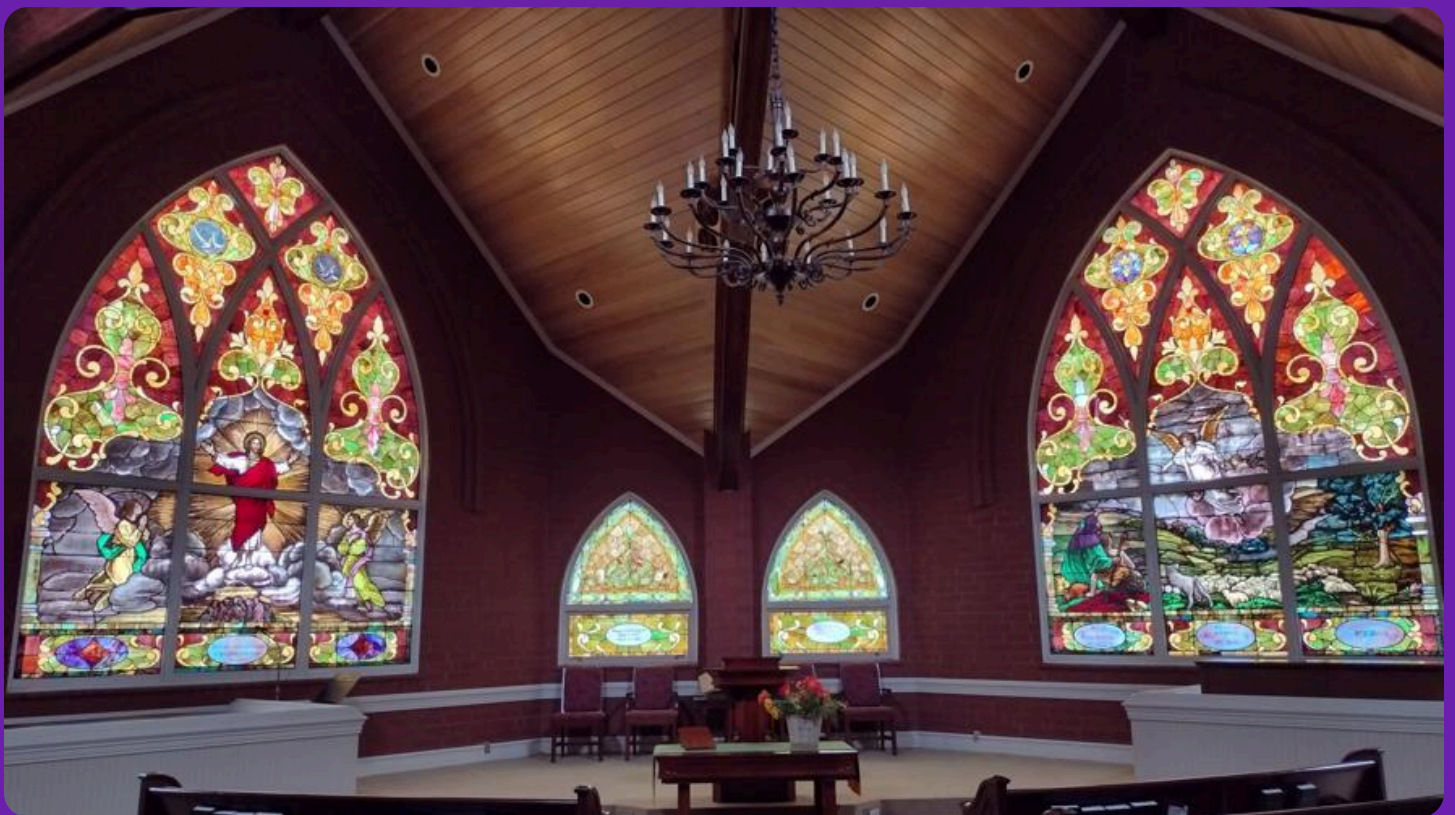


FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH WAYNESVILLE

Congregational Profile – 2025

“Making Disciples, United in Worship and Service”



100 South Main Street, Waynesville, NC 28786 - 828 456-9465

fbcwaynesville.org

Table of Contents



Welcome / Letter of Introduction.....	2
Our Identity, Beliefs, and Core Values.....	3
Our History.....	5
Our Community / Who We Serve.....	7
First Baptist Church by the Numbers.....	9
How We Work.....	13
Our Ministries.....	16
Our Missions.....	20
Our Future / Where God is Leading Us.....	23



Welcome / Letter of Introduction from the Lead Pastor Search Committee

On behalf of the Lead Pastor Search Committee, thank you for your interest in First Baptist Church of Waynesville and for taking the time to learn more about our congregation, our community, and the ministry God continues to shape among us.



Nestled in the Smoky Mountains, First Baptist Church has long been a gathering place for worship, service, and fellowship. For generations, our church family has been a place where faith, friendship, and service intertwine—where people come together to worship, to grow in discipleship, and to extend the love of Christ throughout Waynesville and beyond.

Our story is one of lasting faith and connection, strengthened through enduring relationships, meaningful ministries, and a mutual love for God and community.

We are a church that values being together—around the table, in the sanctuary, and out in the community. Our members bring a variety of gifts and experiences, sharing a deep commitment to caring for one another and serving Waynesville and Haywood County.

Through our ministries of music, missions, and outreach, and through programs for children, youth, and adults, we seek to live out our calling as the hands and feet of Christ.

Over the past year, our congregation has taken time to listen—to God and to one another. Through a series of honest and prayerful conversations, we have reflected on our identity, our strengths, and our calling. We heard deep appreciation for our worship and music ministries, our sense of community and belonging, and our ongoing commitment to outreach and missions. We also heard a desire to continue growing in discipleship, to strengthen ministries with youth and families, and to engage our wider community in meaningful ways.

This Congregational Profile is designed to share our story. It offers a window into our life together—who we are, where we have been, and where we believe God is leading us next. It reflects the voices, hopes, and faith of a congregation that loves its church, values its heritage, and looks forward with openness to what lies ahead.

We trust that the Holy Spirit is already at work—both here among us and within the heart of the pastor God is preparing to lead us forward. As you read, we invite you to pray with us for discernment and for the joy of recognizing God's hand in this process.

Thank you again for your interest in First Baptist Church of Waynesville. We look forward, with anticipation and faith, to the ways God will continue to move through this season of transition and into a new era of ministry together.

Lead Pastor Search Committee

Cory Causby

Allison Lee

Bill Teague

Jean Howell

John Ottinger

Faith Woods

Our Identity, Beliefs, and Core Values

Who We Are

We are a fellowship of believers, brought together by our shared conviction in the truth of God's word and His enduring love for humanity. Although we come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, we are united in our belief that Jesus Christ is the living Son of God. He was sent to us to save us from our sins. We hold that His word is both infallible and alive, serving as a guide for teaching, correcting, and training in righteousness. Through this, believers are equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:17)



What We Believe

The foundation of our faith and the way we practice it is rooted solely in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We recognize and affirm the freedom of each individual believer, led by God's Spirit and supported by the family of faith, to read and interpret Scripture. This process of understanding is informed by the historical interpretations of the Church and the most effective methods of Biblical study.

We uphold the freedom of the local church, under the authority of Jesus Christ, to determine its own life and mission. This includes the ability to select its own leadership and to ordain those whom the church recognizes as called by God and gifted for ministry.

Our beliefs extend to the broader Christian community, affirming the presence of Christ's body in various traditions. We value cooperation with believers everywhere as we seek to fully express the gospel.

Leadership within our church is understood as a servant role, modeled after Jesus, our Servant Lord. We believe in the full partnership of all God's people, working together in mission and ministry.

Our commitment is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, inviting all people to repentance and faith, and offering reconciliation and hope.

We affirm the two ordinances of the church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This act of obedience symbolizes the believer's faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience in which we remember Christ's sacrifice and look forward to His return.

We are dedicated to upholding religious liberty for all people, free from interference by the state. The separation of church and state is fundamental to ensuring religious liberty.

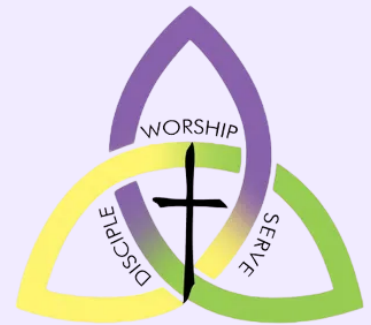
Our Core Values

- The authority of scriptures for our faith and practice.
- Obeying the Great Commandment by loving God with all that we are and loving our neighbors as ourselves.
- Fulfilling the Great Commission, making disciples of all nations through being Christ's presence in the world.
- Affirming unity in essentials, diversity in non-essentials, and love in everything.
- Worshiping in spirit and truth, drawing from both historic and contemporary worship forms.

Mission and Vision

**Our Mission: To make
disciples, united in
worship and service.**

**Our Vision: To embody
Christ, loving all
people and
introducing them to
the God we love.**

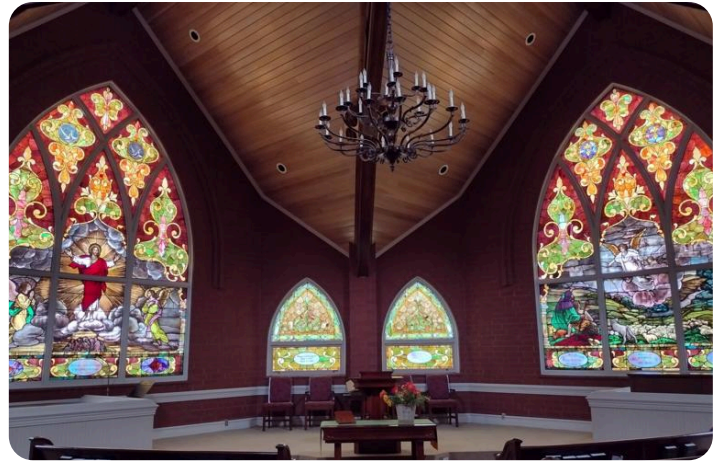


Our History

First Baptist Church of Waynesville was founded on **August 1, 1823**, by early settlers Humphrey Posey, Joseph and Adam Corn, and twenty-seven charter members. The first congregation gathered in a simple log structure on the east bank of Richland Creek, on land donated by Waynesville's founder, **Robert Love**.



As the community of Waynesville grew, so did its church. In the 1850s, the congregation moved to a new building on Church Street, and in 1905 dedicated its beautiful brick sanctuary at the corner of Main and Academy Streets. Known as *"The Church with the Beautiful Windows,"* its Tiffany stained glass became a lasting symbol of the congregation's faith and beauty.



Throughout its history, First Baptist has been a church of vision and resilience. It nurtured new congregations across Haywood County, supported a thriving Sunday School ministry, and doubled in membership between 1891 and 1916. Even during the Great Depression and world wars, the congregation's spirit of worship, generosity, and service remained steadfast.

In the years that followed, the church continued to adapt and grow. A new sanctuary was built in 1952, and an educational building in 1963. Later additions—including the Family Life Center, Memorial Chapel, and Ministry Activity Center—reflected the church's expanding ministries and outreach. The campus is now valued at \$14M.

As the congregation marked milestone anniversaries—its 100th in 1923, 150th in 1973, 175th in 1998, and 200th in 2023—it celebrated a legacy of faithfulness that continues today. In the 21st century, the church's ministry expanded beyond its walls through creative outreach, including the **Bethlehem Marketplace**, first held in 2010, and new commitments to inclusive leadership, such as the ordination of women deacons in 2014.

Even in challenging seasons, the church has remained faithful. During the COVID-19 pandemic, worship and fellowship moved online, keeping members connected in innovative ways. In 2023, the congregation discerned a new chapter by withdrawing from the Southern Baptist Convention in response to limitations on women in ministry. And in 2024, First Baptist became a vital hub for **Hurricane Helene relief**, serving as a gathering space for aid organizations and volunteers.

Now, as the church approaches its third century, its story continues to be one of faith, courage, and compassion—honoring the past while embracing the future God is unfolding.

For more historical details of First Baptist Church please reference our Red history book titled, “Faith of Fathers - Living Still,” by Mary Evelyn Underwood, Ph.D. and “ADDENDUM January 1981-June 2023,” by Larry Ammons, and “Historical Highlights 2024-2025” by Bill Teague.



Our Community / Who We Serve

First Baptist Church Waynesville sits in the heart of **downtown Waynesville, North Carolina**, the county seat of Haywood County.

Surrounded by the majestic Smoky Mountains, Waynesville is a charming mountain town known for its welcoming spirit, scenic beauty, and vibrant downtown filled with shops, restaurants, and local art galleries.

With a population of about **10,700 residents** (2024) and a countywide population of around **63,000**, Waynesville is both a close-knit community and a growing destination. The town is often described as “where small-town warmth meets mountain charm.”



About Our County

Founded in **1808**, Haywood County was named after John Haywood, a North Carolina state treasurer. The county borders Tennessee to the west and is traversed by Interstate 40, offering easy access to Asheville, Knoxville, and beyond.

Haywood is known as the **highest county east of the Mississippi River**, with a mean elevation of 3,597 feet. Nearly 40% of its land lies within the **Great Smoky Mountains National Park** and the **Pisgah National Forest**, making it a haven for hikers, sightseers, and nature lovers.

Though the county’s population remains predominantly White (95.5%), we are mindful of our call to build relationships across all racial, ethnic, and cultural boundaries—reflecting the diversity of God’s Kingdom and extending welcome to all.

A Vibrant and Growing Community



Waynesville’s downtown area offers an active calendar of **festivals, concerts, and street dances**, celebrating both local heritage and Appalachian culture. The famous arched sign across Main Street—visible from our church steps—proudly declares Waynesville as the “Gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains.”

During the summer, the town's population swells as seasonal residents return to enjoy cooler mountain air. Welcoming these part-time neighbors has become an important part of our ministry, as we embrace them as part of our church family each year.

The area continues to grow, with new neighborhoods, condominiums, and apartments being developed to accommodate those drawn to this special corner of western North Carolina. The county is projected to add over **5,800 residents by 2030**, a growth rate of nearly 10%.

Community and Connection



Just a few miles from downtown lies **Lake Junaluska**, a picturesque retreat center owned by the Southeast Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church.

It hosts year-round conferences, worship gatherings, and community events, drawing thousands of visitors annually.

Many of these guests find their way to Waynesville for worship or fellowship, and we are privileged to extend hospitality to them.

Thirty minutes east, **Asheville** offers cultural and economic connection, with its regional airport providing easy access to national and international destinations.

As our community expands, **First Baptist Church Waynesville** seeks to remain a welcoming and rooted presence. Our downtown location—where we have worshiped for more than 150 years—positions us at the crossroads of tradition and transformation. We are deeply invested in this place: its people, its rhythms, and its future.

We are proud to be a church that loves its neighbors, serves its community, and opens its doors to all who come seeking faith, fellowship, and belonging.



First Baptist Church by the Numbers

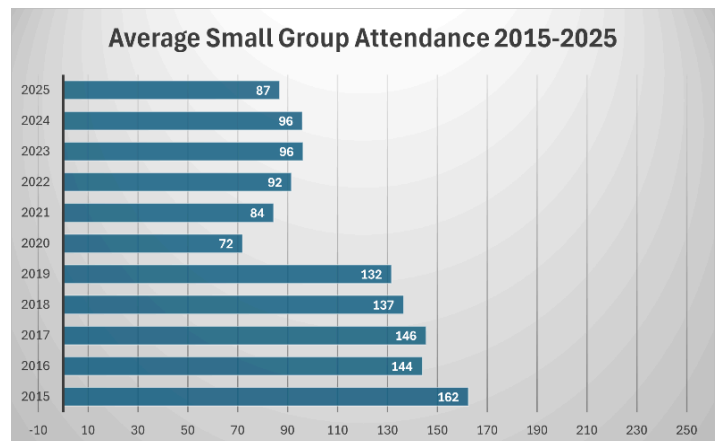
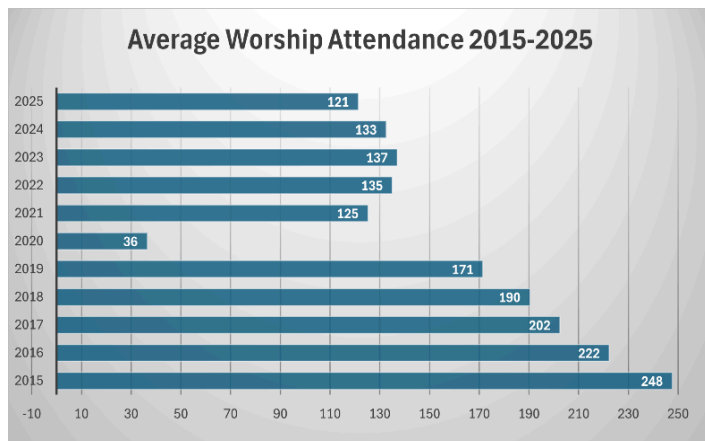
First Baptist Church of Waynesville is a welcoming community of believers who gather to worship Christ and serve Him in downtown Waynesville, throughout Haywood County, and beyond. While our congregation has experienced seasons of change, our faithfulness remains steady. We are a people defined less by numbers and more by connection—by the faces we see each week, the friendships we share, and the ministries that bring life to our church.

Our Membership and Worship Life

Our membership roll includes more than **1,200 resident members**, with an active database of approximately **1,800 names**. While this number reflects our extended family, our truly active membership is best represented by the **343 individuals** who have registered worship attendance since we began electronic tracking in 2021.

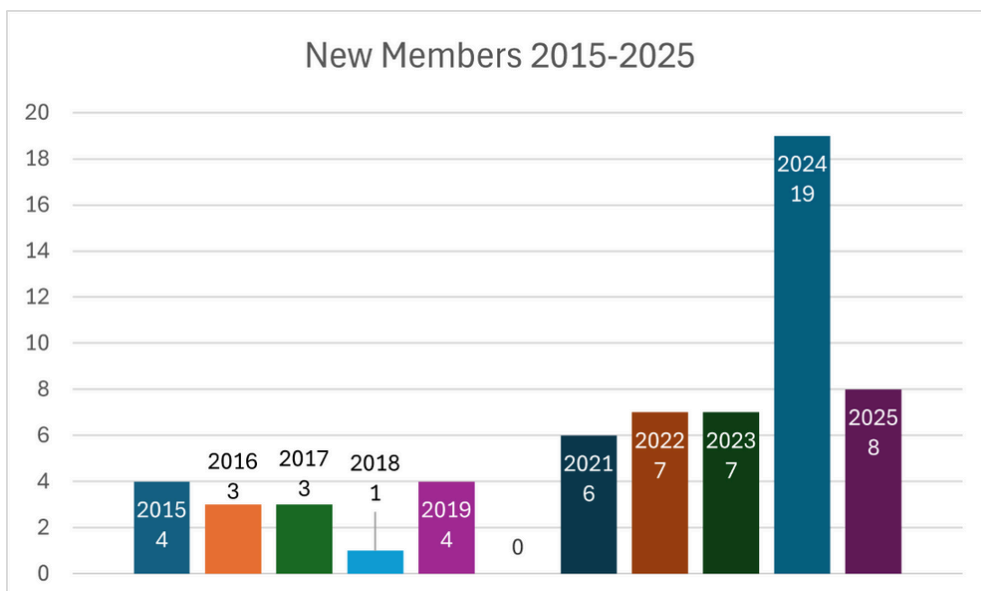
We currently average **121 in weekly worship** and **87 in small group participation**. Special services such as **Easter** draw over 160 people, and during our **Bicentennial celebration in 2023**, nearly **250 worshipers** gathered to celebrate God’s enduring faithfulness.

Though our attendance may be smaller than in years past, our spirit remains strong. We are a close-knit congregation that values quality relationships, meaningful worship, and the joy of serving together.



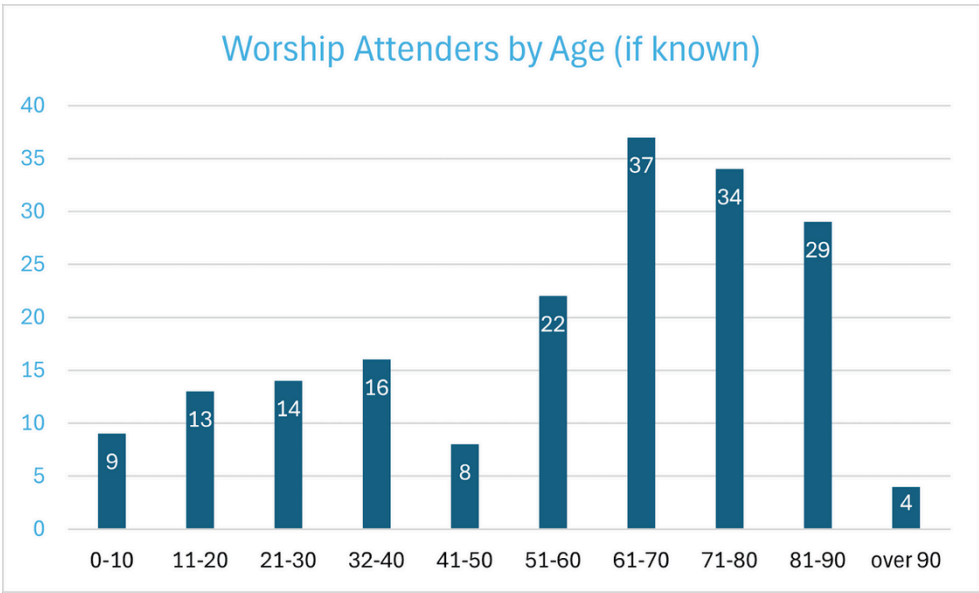
We welcome new members through baptism, profession of faith, or transfer of letter from another congregation. Each person who joins us is invited into the fellowship of faith—a family that celebrates together, learns together, and serves together.

This year, **eight new members** have joined our church family, each bringing unique gifts and stories that enrich our shared ministry.



Age and Demographics

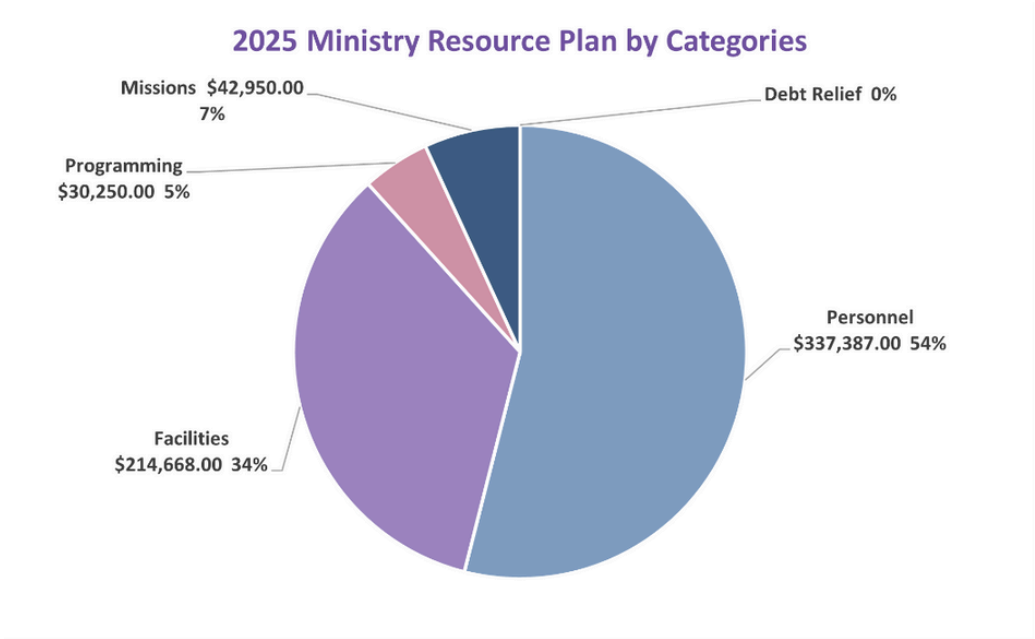
Our congregation is predominantly composed of middle-aged and senior adults, but we are joyfully investing in the next generation. Through creative ministries like **KidCREATE**, community outreach, and our “**Young Rebels**” small group, we are nurturing relationships with children, youth, and young families. We recognize that our future depends on growing younger—not just larger—and we are committed to establishing spaces where new generations can encounter God’s love.



Financial Stewardship and Faithful Giving

For more than two centuries, God has provided for the needs of First Baptist Church, and our members have responded with generous hearts. We see stewardship not simply as giving money, but as a sacred trust—a shared responsibility between giver, church, and God.

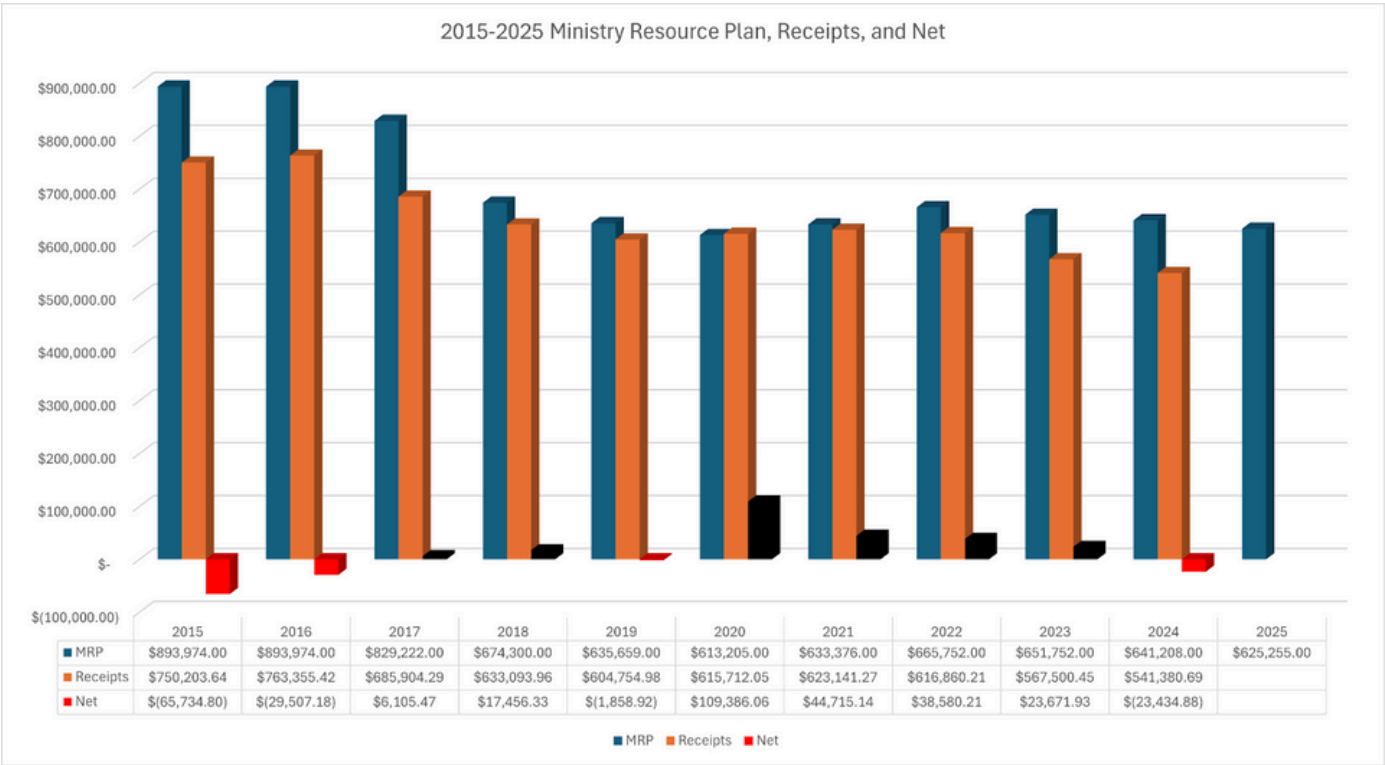
Our **Ministry Resource Plan (MRP)**—our term for the church budget—reflects that commitment. It is developed by the Finance Core Team of the Administrative Operations Team (AOT), in partnership with staff and ministry leaders. Once reviewed and discussed by the congregation, it is adopted through a church conference and congregational vote.



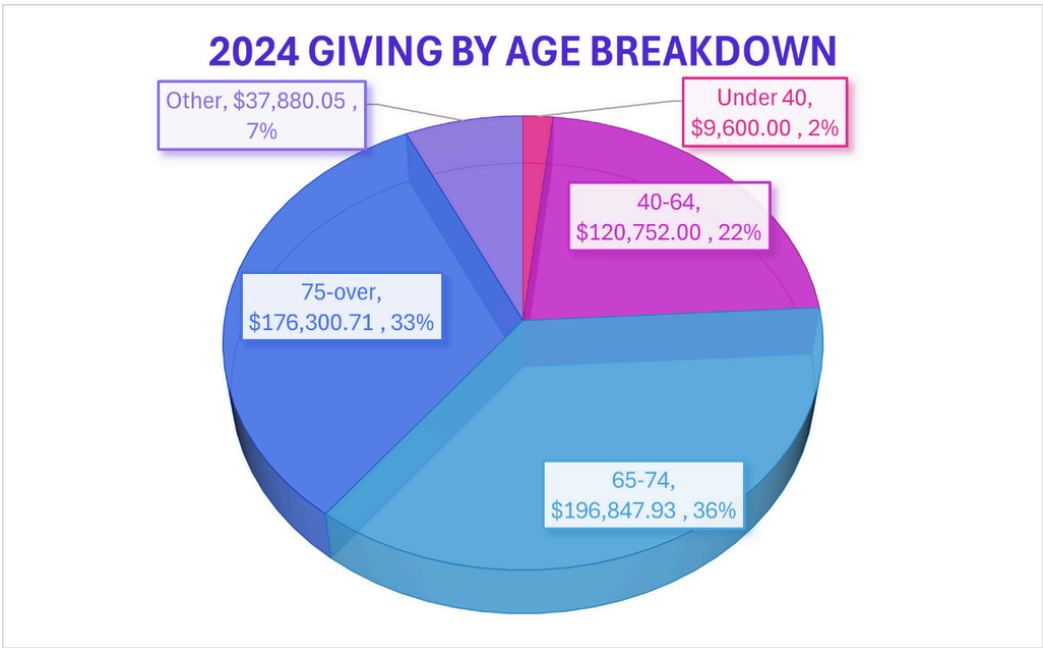
In **2025**, our Ministry Resource Plan allocates **54% for personnel**, **34% for facilities maintenance**, and the remainder for missions, ministry programs, and outreach. We are also grateful to report that **First Baptist Church is debt-free** and well-positioned for future ministry growth.

Trends in Giving

Over the past decade, our congregation has faced financial ups and downs, as many churches have. Yet, even in challenging times, God’s faithfulness has remained constant. In six of the last ten years, we have finished “in the black,” and during the pandemic—a season of great uncertainty—our church exceeded its annual goal by over \$2,000.



Our giving trends reflect our congregation’s demographics: our older members continue to be our strongest givers, while younger members represent an area of opportunity for discipleship and engagement. We are grateful for those who give sacrificially, understanding that every gift, large or small, sustains the life and mission of the church.



Special Funds and Blessings

In early **2025**, following the passing of Mrs. **Dorothy Wood**, our church received a remarkable gift of over **\$2 million** from her estate. This gift established two long-term resources: the **Cornerstone Fund** and the **Missions Fund**, both held at Bishop Financial. These funds will provide sustainable support for capital improvements and mission endeavors, allowing the ministries of First Baptist to flourish for generations to come.

We also maintain the **Housing Trust Fund** and **Garner Scholarship Fund** at the Western North Carolina Community Foundation. The Housing Trust assists with pastoral housing costs, while the Garner Scholarship supports members pursuing education at Baptist institutions.

Through God's provision and the generosity of His people, First Baptist Church Waynesville continues to live into its calling—to be a church that gives, serves, and blesses.



How We Work

At First Baptist Church Waynesville, our leadership and ministry structure are grounded in a simple conviction: the church belongs to Christ, and all we do should reflect His spirit of love, service, and shared responsibility. Our approach to governance balances faith and practicality, ensuring that ministry decisions are made prayerfully, collaboratively, and in the best interest of the congregation we serve.

A Spirit of Shared Leadership

Throughout our history, First Baptist Church has recognized that leadership is a gift meant to be shared. For generations, our **Deacons** provided both spiritual and administrative guidance. As our ministries grew, so did the need for a structure that could support them more effectively.

In **2012**, the congregation prayerfully reorganized its leadership framework, creating the **Administrative Operations Team (AOT)**. This structure allowed our deacons to focus primarily on spiritual care and unity within the church, while the AOT assumed responsibility for administrative, financial, and operational matters. The change reflected not just practicality, but also a deepening sense of calling—to empower more members to serve according to their gifts.



The Administrative Operations Team

The **AOT** is composed of twelve members who serve two-year terms, with six rotating off each year to ensure continuity and new perspectives. Members are nominated by the church's **Nominating Team** and approved by the congregation. The **Pastor** serves as an ex-officio member, providing spiritual and organizational insight while ensuring that decisions remain aligned with the church's mission.

To carry out its work, the AOT functions through **four Core Teams**, each focused on a vital area of church life:

- **Administrative Core** – Oversees bylaws, policies, and procedures.
- **Finance Core** – Guides stewardship, budget planning, and financial accountability.
- **Personnel Core** – Supports staff and oversees personnel matters with care and fairness.
- **Physical Plant Core** – Maintains facilities, equipment, and campus improvements to ensure a welcoming and safe environment for ministry.

This collaborative model ensures that decisions are transparent, prayerfully considered, and shaped by the diverse expertise within the congregation.

The Ministry of Deacons

Our **Deacons** remain at the heart of congregational care. Their ministry centers on prayer, presence, and service—reflecting Christ's call to love one another. Each deacon maintains contact with a group of church families, offering support in times of illness, crisis, or joy. Together, they form a network of encouragement and connection across generations.

Deacons also lead practical ministries such as **Helping Hands**, providing home repairs, yard work, and accessibility ramps for members and neighbors in need. Through these simple acts of service, they model the servant leadership that defines our church's character.

Working Together for God's Glory

At its best, our structure is more than a system—it's a reflection of who we are: a family of faith learning to lead, serve, and grow together. Each team, committee, and individual serves with a shared purpose: to nurture a healthy, Christ-centered church where ministry flourishes, relationships deepen, and every member finds a place to belong. As we move forward, we continue to refine and renew the ways we work—listening to God's Spirit, trusting one another, and leading with humility. For us, governance is not about control; it's about stewardship. It's about ensuring that all we do honors Christ and supports the mission He has entrusted to us.

Our Staff Leadership



Pastor Kenneth Lance: Interim Senior Pastor

Pastor Lance brings more than 35 years of faithful pastoral experience to his ministry, having served congregations across North and South Carolina following his ordination in 1982. Called to ministry at a young age, he is deeply committed to attentive shepherding and to proclaiming God's Word with integrity, clarity, and conviction. After retiring from full-time pastoral ministry, Pastor Lance now focuses on interim and transitional ministry, helping churches navigate seasons of change with wisdom and care. He holds a BA from Wingate College, a MDiv from Southeastern Baptist Seminary, and a DM from Erskine Theological Seminary.



Rev. Johnathan Sumner: Pastor for Worship Ministries

Johnathan comes from California by way of Texas. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Music from Concordia University, Irvine (CA) before continuing to Baylor and Truett Seminary (Waco, TX) to earn his Master of Divinity and Master of Music. He serves as Pastor for Worship Ministries leading worship as well as directing or overseeing our dedicated and talented music ensembles and worship teams. When not in his office he is out enjoying the beauty of Western North Carolina, reading, or writing.



Rev. Seth Wright: Pastor of Next Gen Ministries

Seth is a native of South Carolina and has earned a Doctorate in Pastoral Theology from Andersonville Theological Seminary. He is passionate about helping families grow in faith together and guiding the next generation to know and follow Christ. He has over a decade in ministry that includes leading youth and planting a church. He has a wonderful wife named Summer and two kids, Max who is 5 and Wrenly, who is four months old. This includes a five-year-old Sulcata Tortoise named Rosie, a 10 year old dog named Stella, and a two-year-old cat named Jiji. This little family loves to spend time together exploring the mountains of NC.



Rev. Nina Atwood: Director of Facility Stewardship and Pastor for Community Engagement

Nina Atwood is the Director of Facility Stewardship. She also serves on a voluntary basis as the Pastor of Community Engagement. Nina graduated from Southern Evangelical Seminary in 2023, earning an MDiv. Nina was ordained to the gospel ministry by First Baptist Church in Waynesville. She enjoys teaching Sunday School and being involved in missions. Nina and her husband, Toby, sing in the choir.



Faith Woods: Financial Secretary & Office Administration

Faith Woods is a Haywood County native who has been a member of FBCW since she was 11! She earned a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from UNC-Greensboro and taught high school math in both public and private schools before settling in as an accountant. Faith serves as Finance and Office Administrator in addition to her volunteer church roles teaching Sunday School and serving with children. Faith and her husband Brian have two grown children, Gracie and Jonathan, and they reside in Canton.



Mary Ann Cooper: Organist/Pianist

Mary Ann Cooper has served First Baptist Church as Organist/Accompanist since 1998. Originally from Texas, she holds both Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in organ performance from Hardin Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, and has done post graduate work in organ at the University of Texas at San Antonio. In addition to her work at First Baptist she is one of the accompanist for Voice in the Laurel choirs. In her spare time Mary Ann enjoys composing and arranging and has several pieces that are published or are pending publication. Mary Ann and her husband, Robert, have two grown daughters, Amy and Kristen. They are also the proud grandparents of Evan and Charlotte King, children of Kristen and her husband, Dustin.



Myra Clemmons: CDC Coordinator

Myra Clemmons is a retired teacher and has been a member of First Baptist Church for 36 years. She serves as the liaison to the Child Development Center, as well as volunteering with children's ministry, singing in the sanctuary choir, and playing in the handbell choir.



Our Ministries

At First Baptist Church Waynesville, ministry is not confined to programs or committees—it is the way we live our faith together. Every gathering, every act of service, and every word of encouragement reflects our shared desire to love God and neighbor. Our ministries are how we embody that calling: worshiping with joy, growing in faith, caring for one another, and serving our community.

Worship and Music

Worship lies at the heart of our life together. Each **Sunday at 10:00 a.m.**, our congregation gathers in the sanctuary to lift voices and hearts in praise. Our worship blends the richness of tradition with the freshness of contemporary expression—hymns and praise songs, choir and band, organ and guitar—all woven together to honor the diversity of gifts within our congregation.



Our **Music Ministry** is one of our most beloved expressions of faith. The **Sanctuary Choir**, contemporary **worship band**, **handbell choir**, and **senior adult choir** serve faithfully to inspire and lead our congregation in song. The historic **Reuter organ**, installed in the 1950s, remains a cherished part of our worship heritage, recently restored to ensure that future generations will continue to experience its beauty.

Through music and worship, we seek to create sacred moments—spaces where people encounter God's presence and find strength for the journey.



Discipleship and Faith Formation

We believe that discipleship is a lifelong journey, and we offer opportunities for learning and growth for every age and stage of life. Our **Connect Groups** meet each Sunday following worship, providing Bible study, fellowship, and prayer in smaller, more personal settings.

Children and youth learn through age-appropriate teaching and activities led by caring volunteers and our **NextGen Pastor**.

Adults can choose from a variety of studies that nurture faith and encourage spiritual conversation.

Whether gathered around Scripture or serving side-by-side in mission, we learn best when we learn together.



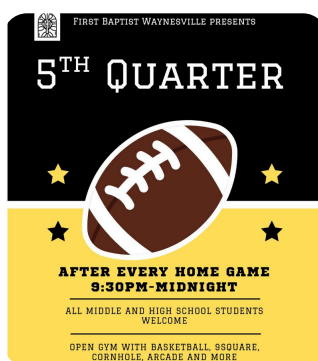
Programs like **KidCREATE** and **Vacation Bible School** bring the joy of faith to our youngest members. KidCREATE, offered during the school year, provides after-school pickup, Bible study, music, mission education, and recreation—connecting children’s faith with fun and friendship. Vacation Bible School in July gathers children from across the community for evenings of creativity, learning, and laughter.



Youth and NextGen Ministries

Our **NextGen Ministry** invites youth to grow in faith through meaningful relationships and shared experiences. From Sunday gatherings and retreats to service projects and summer missions, our youth ministry helps students see their faith as active, real, and relevant.

Events like “**5th Quarter**” gatherings after local football games offer safe, welcoming spaces for young people in the community. These simple moments of connection often become the starting point for deeper conversations about faith and belonging.



Child Development Center

The **First Baptist Church Child Development Center (CDC)** is one of the few programs in Haywood County that offers care for infants through preschoolers. With **16 staff members** serving **56 children**, the CDC provides a loving, faith-based environment where children are nurtured in body, mind, and spirit. It stands as one of our most visible ministries to the community—an everyday expression of Christ’s welcome.

Fellowship and Community Life

We believe that fellowship is sacred. Whether gathered around the table or serving side-by-side, we experience God’s love most clearly when we are together. Our church family enjoys **cookouts, covered-dish**

meals, and Supper Clubs, where members share food and friendship. These simple acts of gathering strengthen the bonds that hold us together as one body in Christ.

Even our workdays—when members come together to clean, repair, or beautify our facilities—become moments of fellowship and joy. Through shared laughter, prayer, and purpose, we grow closer not only to one another but also to the God who calls us into community.



Partnerships and Outreach

Our ministry extends beyond the church walls through community partnerships that express our care for Waynesville and Haywood County. We collaborate with the **Downtown Waynesville Commission**, **Waynesville Middle School**, and the **Pigeon Community Multicultural Development Center (PCMDC)** to meet tangible needs and foster unity.

Our annual **Bethlehem Marketplace** transforms downtown into a living nativity, inviting thousands of residents and visitors to experience the story of Christ's birth. Another beloved event, **Keyboards After Christmas**, gathers pianists from across the county for a joyful concert that celebrates music and community.



Deacon Ministry

The **Deacon Ministry** serves as a vital bridge of care within our congregation. Each deacon shepherds a group of church families, offering prayer, support, and encouragement during times of joy and hardship. Through the **Helping Hands Ministry**, deacons and volunteers provide practical assistance—yard work, home repairs, and accessibility ramps—to members and neighbors in need.



At the heart of all these ministries is one purpose: to live out Christ's commandment to love one another. Whether through song or service, study or fellowship, the people of First Baptist Church Waynesville are united by a shared calling—to be the presence of Christ in this community.



Our Missions

At First Baptist Church Waynesville, missions are not a program—they are a way of life. We believe every act of service, whether across the street or across the globe, is a reflection of Christ's love. From meeting needs in our own community to supporting global partners on other continents, our congregation seeks to live out the words of Jesus: *"As the Father has sent me, so I send you."*

A Legacy of Service and Sending

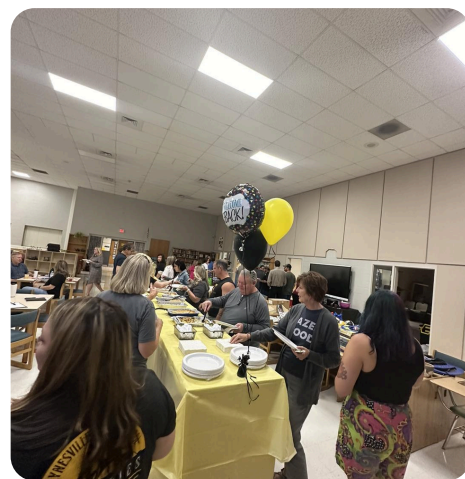
For more than two centuries, our church has expressed the gospel through compassionate action. We believe that mission begins where we are and extends to wherever God calls us. That call has led our members into local classrooms, across state lines, and around the world.

Our commitment to missions is visible in both our giving and our going. Each year, we participate in special offerings such as the **Lottie Moon Christmas Offering**, **Annie Armstrong Offering**, and the **Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) Global Missions Offering**. We also support the **Heck Jones Offering** for the North Carolina Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), ensuring that women and families across the state are cared for and equipped for ministry.

The women of our congregation have long carried the banner of mission engagement. Through active **WMU circles**—including the **Sharon Peddicord Group**, **COME Missions Group**, and **Women's Prayer Fellowship**—they promote mission education, coordinate service projects, and cultivate prayer support for local and international needs. Whether assembling **Red Box Ministry** gifts for women in correctional facilities or providing supplies to local families, their work embodies faith in action.

Missions Close to Home

Our community partnerships reflect our desire to meet needs right here in Haywood County. We partner regularly with the **Pigeon Community Multicultural Development Center (PCMDC)**, **Waynesville Middle School**, and the **Haywood County School System** to provide meals, mentoring, and support for students and families.



We host **Red Cross blood drives**, serve meals at the **Pathways Center** homeless shelter, and offer encouragement to school staff and bus drivers through notes, gifts, and appreciation events. In every effort, we seek not only to meet physical needs but also to build relationships and share hope.

Extending Our Reach

Beyond Waynesville, our members have traveled to serve in places as near as **Coeburn, Virginia**, and as far as **Segera, Kenya**. In partnership with **Higher Ground Baptist Church** in South Dakota, we support ministries among the Lakota Tribe. Mission teams have led **Vacation Bible Schools**, built accessibility ramps, repaired homes, and provided leadership training for pastors.

We have also supported mission work in **Vermont**, the **Bahamas**, and throughout Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. Members have served on teams in **China, Ukraine, Honduras, Armenia, and Mozambique**, offering compassion and encouragement to brothers and sisters around the world.



Our partnership in **Kenya** has been especially meaningful. Through relationships with missionaries **Jay and Sumter Brantley**, our church has helped fund clean water wells, purchase vehicles for rural ministry, and support leadership development.

These efforts are more than projects - they are friendships that remind us the Church is one family, no matter where we gather.

A Missional Heartbeat

Everything we do as a church begins and ends with mission. From the children who collect coins for global hunger to the adults who volunteer in relief efforts, we are learning to see service as worship.

Our congregation's recent response to **Hurricane Helene relief** demonstrated that spirit of readiness. Within days, our campus became a hub for disaster aid and volunteer coordination. This experience reminded us that mission often begins with simply saying, *"Yes, Lord—here we are."*



As we look to the future, we continue to ask how God might use us next. We envision deeper local partnerships, renewed engagement in cross-cultural service, and creative ways to share the good news of Christ.

Our mission is not confined to one ministry team or season—it is woven into the heart of who we are. Wherever there is need, we go. Wherever there is hope to share, we speak. And wherever there is love to give, we give it freely, for the glory of God and the good of all people.





Our Future / Where God is Leading Us

As we look to the future, we do so with gratitude for God's faithfulness and hope for where he is leading next. Over the past several months, our congregation has taken time to listen deeply—to God, to one another, and to the needs of our community. Through prayer, conversation, and reflection, we have discerned both the strengths that define us and the opportunities that call us forward.

These insights—gathered through our “Congregational Conversations” and “Small Group” feedback sessions—paint a picture of a church that is both rooted and ready, faithful, and flexible, united in purpose and open to God's leading. Overall, the feedback collected through this process affirms a congregation with vibrant strengths, honest challenges, and hopeful opportunities for growth and renewal.

Strengths that Define Us

When members were asked what fills them with pride about First Baptist, four themes rose clearly to the surface: **our exceptional worship and music, our welcoming and caring spirit, our passion for service, and our openness to growth and change.**

Our **music and worship** ministry stands as a defining strength, weaving together traditional and contemporary styles in ways that inspire, uplift, and unify. The beauty and excellence of our music remind us that worship is not only what we do but who we are—a people gathered to celebrate God's goodness with joy and creativity.



We are also deeply proud of our **welcoming community and family atmosphere.** Over and over, members described First Baptist as a place where people are known, cared for, and accepted without judgment. Whether someone is returning after time away or walking in for the first time, they encounter genuine warmth, compassion, and belonging.

Our church's **commitment to outreach, missions, and volunteer service** is another defining mark. From supporting local ministries in Haywood County to engaging in broader mission work, our people live out their faith through tangible acts of love. Service, for us, is both a calling and a joy—a way to love God by loving our neighbors.

Finally, we celebrate our **openness, acceptance, and adaptability.** Our willingness to ask hard questions and to make courageous decisions—such as our departure from the Southern Baptist Convention—reflects a living faith that grows with the times while remaining grounded in Christ.



In addition to these strengths, we cherish the practices that root us: our **blended worship, our Bible-centered teaching and small groups, our core beliefs and congregational governance, and the traditions and community gatherings** that have shaped generations. These are not barriers to change, but anchors that steady us as we move forward.

Our Challenges and Honest Conversations

We also recognize that faithfulness requires honesty. Our church has not shied away from naming the sensitive or difficult issues that affect our life together.

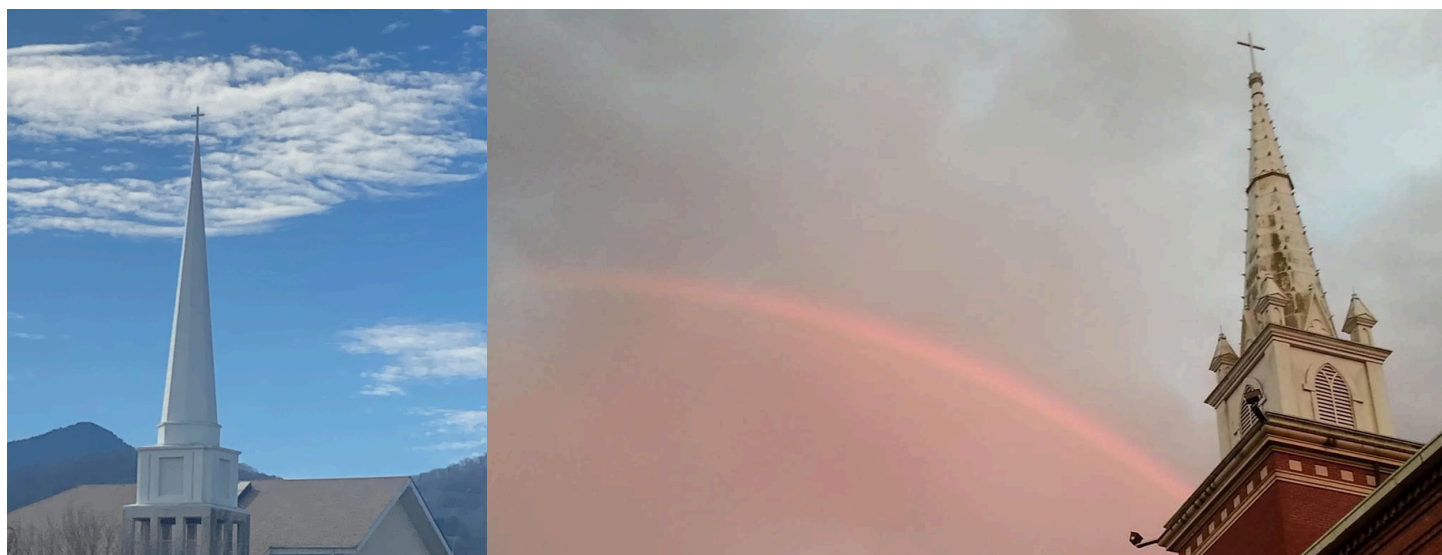
Members have expressed the need for **open dialogue around cultural and social issues**, with a shared desire to navigate these conversations with grace and honesty, while utilizing the truth of God's Word and reflecting the spirit of Christ in our words and actions.

We have also acknowledged ongoing **questions of identity and affiliation** following our departure from the Southern Baptist Convention. While our Baptist roots remain critically important and deeply meaningful, some feel that our future may invite us to explore a wider expression of faith – one that reflects our shared identity in Christ above any particular affiliation.

Other challenges include **declining youth and family participation** and the **maintenance of our facilities**, both of which present opportunities for renewal and stewardship. Beneath these concerns lies a shared conviction: we want to grow younger, not just larger, by investing in the next generation.

When asked what needs to change for the church to thrive, the message was clear. We must release old mindsets and patterns that no longer serve our mission. Letting go of **resistance to change**, rethinking **outdated programs**, and addressing **physical and organizational constraints** will allow us to become nimbler and more responsive to God's call.

And yet, in naming these challenges, our church also named our distractions. Fear, busyness, financial strain, and worry over numbers can easily divert our focus. The Spirit is reminding us to trust God's provision, to prioritize discipleship over metrics, and to move forward in faith rather than fear.



Our Future: Where God Is Leading Us

Even as we have reflected on what to preserve and what to release, the clearest theme to emerge is **hope**. When asked to share their “nest eggs”—the dreams and ideas that give life to our future—nearly half of our members spoke of a renewed focus on **youth, children, and young families**. This shared vision unites us: to create a church where the next generation encounters Christ through worship, teaching, relationships, and service.

Alongside this, we long to strengthen our **fellowship and community engagement**, deepening relationships within our congregation and extending hospitality beyond our walls. We want to be a church that listens well, partners with our community, and embodies Christ's love in visible ways.

We also envision renewed **growth in membership, participation, and spiritual formation**—not as an end in itself, but as a reflection of health and vitality. Our hope is for every person, from long-time members to first-time visitors, to find a place to belong, to serve, and to grow in faith.

Our “Congregational Conversations” also revealed a desire for a future with a slightly stronger **external focus**, a renewed sense of **stability** after a decade of transition, **balanced lay and pastoral leadership** given mixed experiences with past leadership, and an emphasis on **spiritual transformation** while maintaining our welcoming spirit. These shifts point toward a maturing congregation—one learning to hold tradition and change, unity and diversity, stability, and growth in healthy tension.

Moving Forward Together

First Baptist Church of Waynesville stands today at a hopeful crossroads. We are a congregation of deep faith, rich history, and enduring love for one another. We are also a congregation ready to move forward—to embrace God’s call to renewal, to open our doors wider, and to nurture the next generation of disciples.

As we look to the future, we do so with gratitude and expectation. God has brought us through seasons of change and challenge, and we trust that He is not finished with us yet. Together, we are becoming the church God is calling us to be: worshipful, welcoming, outward-focused, and rooted in grace.

“For I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” — Isaiah 43:19

We believe God is indeed doing something new among us, and together, we are ready to follow where He leads.





100 South Main Street,
Waynesville, NC 28786
828 456-9465
fbcwaynesville.org