

# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

## Dayton, Ohio



*To celebrate God's love as a community of believers in  
Jesus Christ, through worship, education,  
fellowship, and outreach to others.*



## Church Profile

First Baptist Church is a regional church in downtown Dayton, Ohio, which draws its membership from several metropolitan areas. Our members come from a sixty-mile radius. The church has a rich history of community involvement and consistently demonstrates

leadership in the American Baptist Churches (ABC) USA. First Baptist is a regional leader in progressive Christianity, social justice, and civil rights.

As a prominent ABC congregation in Dayton, we have made significant investments in program offerings, mission outreach, and financial resources. Our church currently has 462 registered members with 40% of that total actively involved in the church's life. The annual budget for 2015 was \$492,750. During the past year we had a successful capital campaign which raised nearly \$400,000 for needed renovations and refurbishments to our century-old building.



The congregation is diverse in points of view and open to change to fulfill our mission and vision for the future. Strategic planning has led to changes in programs, streamlining of the governance structure, and the beginning of growth initiatives to expand membership. Pastors are central to the church's life. In addition to excellence in preaching, the pastors are expected to lead worship, provide pastoral care, and work closely with lay leadership to nurture the spiritual health and growth of the congregation.



First Baptist Church is a warm and caring community of believers who regularly meet to pray, study, worship, and fellowship together. We are guided by our mission to celebrate God's love as a community of believers in Jesus Christ, through worship, education, fellowship, and outreach to others. We are a unique blend of people from various denominations and background. Liberals, moderates, and conservatives feel at home in our midst.

Our vision incorporates the love of God with heart and mind and we are a center of intellectual creativity, reaching out to a number of universities, colleges, and seminary in our region. This profile explores the various dimensions of our church including its history, programs and ministries, mission and outreach, and lay leadership.

# History

On the evening of May 29, 1824, at the home of William Huffman on the northwest corner of Third and Jefferson Streets in downtown Dayton, a small group of people met to form a Baptist congregation. Seventeen members comprised the newly formed church that was accepted into the Miami Association in September 1824. Our present church home (the fourth sanctuary since our founding), representing a Gothic architectural design with stained glass windows depicting Jesus and his apostles, was completed in 1915. From the very beginning, members of the congregation at First Baptist have been active participants in the life of Dayton. Many of our members have had significant roles in government, business, educational, and civic organizations in the area.



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First Baptist is responsible for establishing fourteen Dayton area American Baptist churches over the years, the most recent one in 1990. This significant outreach has been in the form of financial support and lay leadership. First Baptist was also instrumental in establishing the Dayton Christian Center and still actively supports this vital mission of ABC's national ministries.



In 1999 the congregation celebrated its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary with many activities throughout the year, including a Sunday morning presentation by Dr. Tony Campolo. In 2015 the congregation celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary at 111 West Monument Avenue, the location of our current sanctuary. First Baptist is committed to its historic downtown location. The congregation has a deep commitment to the inner city where we were founded over 190 years ago.

The heart and soul of our church is our Sunday worship. We follow the Christian year and are a liturgically-based congregation. First Baptist Church worships with passion and intelligence.

## Programs and Ministries

All members of the congregation assume certain responsibilities to fulfill the mission of our church. This mission stretches well beyond the sanctuary on Sunday mornings and into the daily lives of members who assume roles as family members, professionals, skilled workers, and students.

The pastoral staff, along with laypersons, is responsible for leading worship. Pastors are expected to consistently demonstrate an ability to deliver thoughtful, powerful messages that reflect real problems of contemporary living, as well as the tenets of the faith and vitality of Christ's teachings. Pastors called to First Baptist are expected to extend this tradition and to demonstrate excellence in preaching. The average Sunday morning worship attendance is 165. These Sunday services, which are somewhat formal, are characterized by a variety of liturgical forms with classical, as well as contemporary, musical offerings.

An Executive Council, several boards, and multiple committees govern First Baptist Church. The congregation is well educated, with an average age estimated around 55 and clear expectations for excellence in Sunday programming and worship leadership.

Sunday School is coordinated and led primarily by church members. A range of adult classes is offered, attended by approximately 20% percent of those who attend the worship service. In the children and youth classes and Baptist Youth Fellowship (BYF), teachers/leaders engage our young people in meaningful discussions about Scripture, faith, and life. Over the years, children and youth have participated in vocal choirs, youth musicals, and other drama opportunities, some of which are a part of the worship service. The BYF is organized around regular monthly gatherings, special evening/overnight events, ABC youth conferences, and other programming. Youth also assume roles in the worship services at least once a month.



The church sponsors programs with well known theologians, presidents of the University of Dayton and the United Theological Seminary, and their faculties. Regular social activities and church dinners are important parts of fellowship. People considering membership are encouraged to attend orientation meetings where they become acquainted with the pastors, lay leaders, and each other during discussions on faith issues, church programs, and Baptist beliefs and practices.

First Baptist has a long-standing commitment to service in the city and around the world. Within the church, there are a myriad of personal development opportunities in music ministry, Christian Education, American Baptist Women's Ministries, spiritual growth groups, support groups, and personal visitation.



The music ministry of First Baptist is highly regarded both in the church and in the community. Our Director of Music provides a high level of professional leadership. In addition to regular participation of the Chancel Choir in the worship service, special youth choirs, guest vocalists and instrumentalists



provide music, including brass and wind ensembles. Members of the Dayton Opera and the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra have participated in the music ministry in our church. On Music Sunday the entire worship service is dedicated to music ministry.



The church has a Casavant pipe organ that was installed in 1970 and has been carefully maintained. In 2001 the organ was renovated and upgraded digitally by the Rodgers Organ Company. A newsworthy dedication, with an overflowing audience, featured the internationally renowned concert performer, Hector Olivera.

The Director of Music and the Associate Pastor for Children & Youth continually seek new opportunities for our youth to express their faith musically. These opportunities also are provided to adult members at regular intervals. Music at First Baptist is an important means of community outreach in the greater Dayton area.



## Mission and Outreach

First Baptist Church is committed to a ministry of mission and outreach which includes personal involvement and financial support to local mission endeavors that match the church's concern for national and international missions.



Opportunities for volunteering exist with a variety of community agencies including the Dayton Christian Center, Habitat for Humanity, the Allen School Project, the Miami Valley Positives for Positives (HIV/AIDS advocacy group), and the Widows Home. The church has had active mission programs within the church, including overnight housing for the homeless and refugee resettlement. As part of its long-term plan, the Mission Board regularly explores projects to provide in-church service opportunities.

The Mission Board promotes the church's involvement in mission projects both within and outside the local community. It works with other church programs like the youth to support mission work such as mission trips to El Salvador, the Crop Walk, and others. A number of different local ministries are supported in the mission budget, and the Board maintains a contingency fund to address new and emerging concerns such as a local day care program for behaviorally challenged children.



Another function of the Mission Board is to coordinate congregational workdays on various local mission projects such as the Dayton Christian Center and Rebuilding Together Dayton. The Board recognizes the extensive work of church members by periodically highlighting and celebrating their work during morning worship services. Moments for Mission are oral presentations in worship which provide information and encouragement on mission opportunities.

The Mission Board and church are active in social justice issues such as LEAD, an organization of sixteen diverse congregations in the metropolitan area representing different faith traditions and economic and racial backgrounds. The member congregations covenant together to address shared values of human worth, dignity, and justice to address local concerns through education, training, dialogue, and action.

Our mission outreach is also demonstrated in the use of our church facilities for other community programs and activities. Our building is a resource which is open to the community as a sanctuary of hope. We provide a monthly Neighbors Lunch for the struggling and homeless in the community and monthly dinners for the HIV/AIDS community; we hosted a prayer vigil for the Bosnian peace talks; provided hourly prayers and an open church after September 11, 2001, housed practice sessions for civic music groups, and hosted a number of public assemblies and meetings for LEAD. At the June 2002 assembly over five hundred people met with community leaders to commit to working on justice issues related to education, crime hot spots, and a living wage.



We have had forums featuring the Director of the Dayton Christian Center, addressing faith and serving inner city families and youth; the Mayor of Dayton, speaking on being a good neighbor; the retiring President of the University of Dayton, a Marianist brother, speaking about community leadership and partnerships; and the President of the United Theological Seminary. The purpose of these events is to reach out into the community at large.

First Baptist maintains a strong level of giving to state, national, and world missions through the regular mission budget and four special offerings: World Mission, America for Christ, One Great Hour of Sharing, and the Retired Ministers and Missionaries. In 2015, \$14,000 was given through these offerings. In addition, the church adopts families at Christmas and provides Christmas boxes for children throughout the world through Samaritan's Purse. During the last fiscal year, nearly \$55,000 was given for all mission concerns. The church also encourages endowment giving and currently has an endowment fund totally more than \$2,100,000.



First Baptist Church has historically been a leading church in ABC/USA in financial stewardship to the denomination's mission programs.

## Lay Leadership

First Baptist Church is organized around a strong belief in lay initiative. Lay members make up the major boards and committee of the church and take leadership roles in the morning worship services. During a 2016 survey, members of the congregation agreed that what they valued most and sought to encourage in our next lead pastor was (1) strong pastoral skills which focused on a listening and caring relationship with each member; (2) strong Bible-based and academically sound preaching skills which relate the scripture to the world in which we live; and (3) strong leadership skills which use the staff and members in meaningful board and committee participation. In addition to these three prominent needs for the lead pastor, there was strong consensus around a critical need for the church to grow in membership and participation; to increase opportunities for Christian education; and to focus on attracting more families and youth.



The decision-making structure of the church places the ultimate authority in the congregation. The ongoing business of the church is handled by the Executive Council whose membership includes: the pastors as ex-officio members, the officers (Moderator, Clerk, and Treasurer), chairpersons of all the boards, chairperson of the Pastoral Relations Committee, a representative of the American Baptist Women Ministries, a representative of the Senior High Baptist Youth Fellowship, and five members elected at large. The church governance is also made up of six major boards: Deacons, Trustees, Mission, Christian Education, Evangelism & Church Growth, and Worship, Music, and the Arts. The primary responsibilities of each of these boards are described below.

*The Board of Deacons* attends to the spiritual welfare of the church members and other persons wishing to associate with First Baptist Church.

*The Board of Trustees* acts as stewards of the resources of the church, i.e., finances, buildings, and leadership. It has full power, when so authorized by the church, to sign legal documents.

*The Board of Missions* leads the congregation in the expression of the abundant life of Jesus Christ in a visible way through mission action, financial support, public witness, and awareness of the challenges of mission in our world.

*The Board of Christian Education* is responsible for the education ministry of the church.

*The Board of Evangelism & Church Growth* shall attend to the witness, promotion, advertisement, and growth of the congregation.

*The Board of Worship, Music, and the Arts* plans, develops, and implements the worship experience of our church with lay readers, acolytes, and full congregational participation. We have a “high church” liturgy with an eclectic approach to music, prayers, litanies, and readings.



For additional information, please refer to our website at [www.fbcd Dayton.org](http://www.fbcd Dayton.org).



## **The Covenant of the First Baptist Church of Dayton, Ohio**

God is the Creator of all things and has given us the person of Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of life everlasting. By grace, God offers us forgiveness and unconditional love.

We have been called together as the First Baptist Church of Dayton to do the will of God and to walk together in Jesus' way. Endeavoring to be faithful to Scripture, the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Baptist witness, and the Christian tradition, we covenant with God and with one another:

To allow God to be the center of our community through the practices of study, prayer, and ethical discipline;

To support our church faithfully through attendance and sacrificial giving of our energy, our money, and our time;

To become a welcoming, open, and inclusive community through extending Christian hospitality to all seeking persons;

To demonstrate Christian love and concern through remembering one another in prayer, reconciling our differences, and respecting diversity of belief as together we mature in Christian faith;

To call all people to Jesus Christ through sharing the gospel, demonstrating Christian compassion, and working for unity, justice, and peace in our unique places of ministry in our congregation, our region, and our world.

In these ways we shall strive to be steadfast and joyful Christians continually seeking to understand and proclaim God's unfolding Word.

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