

The Friendly Communicator

January 2026

A Word from the Pastor

As 2026 beings, we find ourselves at a meaningful threshold—living into the fullness of Christmastide while opening ourselves to all the possibilities of a new year. The light of Christmas does not simply switch off; it carries forward, guiding us into the months ahead with renewed hope and purpose. A new year invites reflection and recommitment, and I am grateful for the ways this congregation continues to make Christ known in loving, faithful, tangible ways.

In 2025, we completed our shared conversations about our six congregational values: Community, Worship, Music, Care for each other, Mission work, and Welcoming the stranger. These are not just words but practices we strive to embody together. Soon, banners will be displayed in the fellowship hall to serve as visible reminders of these values—signposts pointing us back to who we are and how we are called to live as the body of Christ.

January also brings several opportunities to learn and grow together:

- On **January 4th**, Rev. Kim will share about her fall mission trip to Tijuana—an opportunity to hear firsthand how our call to mission impacts those out beyond our walls.
- On **January 18th**, we will hold our congregational meeting following worship, an important moment for shared gratitude and decision-making. A delicious potluck luncheon will help to frame our time of fellowship together.
- And, on **January 25th**, we will begin the first of a two-part series exploring our Baptist identity, grounding us more deeply in the tradition that shapes our life together.

As we begin this new year, I want to offer heartfelt thanks to all the board and committee members who completed their service in 2025. Your dedication and leadership have been a blessing to this church. I am equally grateful to those who are stepping into new roles in 2026, offering their time, gifts, and faith to serve our congregation. May this year ahead be one marked by faithfulness, generosity, and joy as we continue walking together in Christ.

With gratitude,

Pastor Stephen

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November 2025 Financial Income Report

General Receipts

Envelopes	\$9,896.00
Loose Offerings	180.00
Birthday	0.00
Church School	85.00
Thanksgiving	30.00
Christmas	5.00
Total	\$10,196.00

Miscellaneous Receipts

Pow wow	50.00
MMCC	400.00
ABF-3 rd Qtr.	12,000.00
Total	\$12,450.00

Communion Offering

Hunger Task Force	0.00
Guest House	105.00
Total	\$105.00

Memorial Fund

	0.00
Total	\$0.00

Mission Offering

One Great Hour Sharing	20.00
World Mission	110.00
Grand Avenue Club	160.00
Milwaukee Community Crossroads	160.00
Total	\$450.00

Deposited Total **\$23,201.00**

Suggested items for the third Sunday (Jan. 18th) food and hygiene collection for the Milwaukee Community Crossroads are **pasta sauce & toilet paper**. Please place your donations in the bins inside the office door entrance.

January Birthdays

- 3 Sue Brown
- 4 Sarah Byleen
- 4 Pastor Stephen
- 8 William Thayer, Jr.
- 13 Jake Brophey
- 14 Karl Byleen
- 15 Heather Leitner
- 23 Ted Hertel, Jr.
- 27 Sarah Smith

If we have inadvertently missed your special day, please accept our apologies, and let the office know so we can change our records.

Learning with Kim Drost

Jan. 4th, 2026 – following worship.

Learn what God is doing at Deborah's house in Tijuana.

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What Goes Where?

Our commitment to mission work is very strong at First Baptist. Many of you regularly support various outreach ministries through the church. To help make sure everything gets where it belongs, I thought I would remind you that:

Milwaukee Crossroads Community:

Formerly known as Milwaukee Christian Center, donations for this ministry go in the tubs near the office entrance.

Street Angels:

Donations specifically for Street Angels can be dropped off outside the music office.

Clothing donations:

Clothing donations can be dropped off in the Sunday School office. These donations will be shared with Apostle Presbyterian's clothing bank and Street Angels

Please watch the announcements for any other projects or collections we may be facilitating. If you have any questions, just ask!



Fellowship Fund Offering

The Communion Offering for January is designated for the Fellowship Fund.

The name "Fellowship Fund" may be confusing. People associate the name with the fellowship time that follows Sunday worship in Fellowship Hall, and mistakenly think that the fund is used to buy coffee, cookies, and treats. But that's not it at all.

Instead, the Fellowship Fund, according to the Church Constitution, "is for the needy members of the Church and Community". One of the responsibilities of the Diaconate is to distribute money from the Fellowship Fund. Such disbursements are made discreetly and confidentially.

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THANK YOU!

A BIG “Thank You” to all the musicians – singers and ringers- and all of the worship leaders and readers - for all they did to enhance our worship during the Advent and Christmas season. It takes a lot of time, energy, dedication, and talent to make all the parts of worship happen.

I truly appreciate each and every one of you. We are all called to worship together – to bring our gifts and join them with every other gift. By doing that, we become a representation of the body of Christ – many gifts, one Spirit.

As we move forward into 2026, we will continue to work together to make our worship pleasing in God’s sight.

PS – a special “Thank You’ to the Jubilation Ringers for sharing your gifts with Library Square and Heritage West Allis residents.

Mary Schecher

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Back by popular demand! We will be having a SOCK TREE in January. Bring in a pair of warm socks and hang them on the tree. All socks are welcome – adult or children's sizes. All socks will go to Street Angels.



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“RING CHRISTMAS BELLS, SOUND FAR AND NEAR THE BIRTHDAY OF JESUS IS HERE!”

Our Jubilation Ringers previewed a bit of Christmas music for the congregation during worship on November 30 when they played *Savior of the Nations, Come*, using melodious chimes instead of bells. Then in December as they took their concert on the road to Library Square to play for the seniors living there. Our seven ringers, including director Mary Schecher, performed such solemn hymns as *We Three Kings* and *Silent Night*, as well as “silly” Christmas numbers like the classic *Chipmunk Song* and *Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer*, as well as many more



“COME ALL YOU PEOPLE, JOIN IN THE SINGING REPEAT THE STORY TOLD BY THE RINGING!”

The “sellout” crowd sang along as the bells played those songs, as well as other holiday tunes.



A week later the bell choir also took the half-hour concert to Heritage West Allis, the assisted living and memory care facility at 78th Street and National Avenue, where it was equally well-received by an enthusiastic audience. They even requested an encore so that they could sing *Stille Nacht auf Deutsch!* The Ringers were glad to oblige. (Photos courtesy of Barb Winski)



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Golden Guys and Gals (3Gs)

The 3Gs continued our long-time Christmas party tradition – but with a difference – at the final event of 2025. The difference? Twenty of us gathered at a new location for our party, namely Steak House 100 on Greenfield Avenue. We enjoyed having a huge sunlit room (a welcome relief from the very cold outdoors!) all to ourselves.

There was a choice of four entrees, ranging from tenderloin tips over noodles to rotisserie chicken to sirloin steak to fried cod! There were drawings for door prizes, as well as discussion about plans for 2026. We had plenty of time for fellowship and lots of fun! The food was good and the camaraderie was great! What a festive way to get the Christmas season started!



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2026 Annual Meeting

The 2026 Annual Congregational Meeting and Potluck will be held Sunday, January 18th after worship. Annual Report booklets, 2026 Church Directories, and financial statements will be distributed. Be sure to attend and make your voice heard!

Intergenerational Bible Study

Do other commitments make it impossible for you to attend the Tuesday morning Bible study led by Mary Schecher? If so, try this option.

The intergenerational Bible study meets from 9:00 to 10:00 am every Sunday in Fellowship Hall. Children and adults of all ages are invited.

In 2026, between Christmas and Easter, we will study the life of Jesus by reading Mark's gospel. After Easter, we will read the book of Acts and learn about Paul's adventures on his missionary journeys. In the fall, we will study the Old Testament.

Throughout the year we will make use of the book *Bible Drama: 136 Bible Stories to be read or acted as Plays* by Lawrence Waddy. And often there will be arts and crafts. We hope that you'll join us!

Pastor Stephen's Installation

At the October Quarterly Business Meeting, the congregation approved a Settled Pastor Agreement that called Pastor Stephen to serve as the Pastor of First Baptist Church effective November 1, 2025.

So that Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell, Executive Minister of the Wisconsin Region of American Baptist Churches, and other members of the clergy are able to participate, Pastor Stephen's formal installation service will be held in our church at 3:00 pm on Saturday, January 24, 2026.

It will be a time of celebration! We hope that all of our members will be able to attend this joyous, milestone event in the life of First Baptist Church of West Allis.