

WEDNESDAYS@FIRST

January 29

Adults@First Options

MidWeek Classic: Exploring Heaven,
Pondering Hell Part 2 (Fellowship
Hall) with Carol McEntyre

Journaling (Media Center) with Ken
Kraft

Intro to Weightlifting (AYMC) with
Dante Gliatta

Make reservations at [https://
firstbaptistgreenville.com/wednesdays-
at-first/](https://firstbaptistgreenville.com/wednesdays-at-first/)

WORSHIP

February 2

10:30am

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Foundation Sunday

Proclaimer: Carol McEntyre

Scripture: Luke 7:1-17

Sermon: Redefining Reality: A Kin-dom
Perspective—Significant and Wonderful

If you would like to provide flowers for
this or one of our future services, email
kimberly.coates@firstbaptistgreenville.com
or call 864-233-2527, ext. 128.

Called Church Conference
Sunday, February 9

Sanctuary, immediately following
Worship

The agenda includes the approval of
the 2025 Committee on Committees
list. Paper copies of the list are
available at the Reception Desk.

March 7-9, 2025
Churchwide Retreat

[https://firstbaptistgreenville.com/
church-retreat-2024-creation-calls-
and-i-must-go/](https://firstbaptistgreenville.com/church-retreat-2024-creation-calls-and-i-must-go/)



From the Senior Minister

CAROL MCENTYRE

On February 11, First Baptist Greenville (FBG) will host Amanda Tyler, Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (BJC) and author of *How to End Christian Nationalism*. The BJC is a longstanding FBG ministry partner. Supported by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Alliance of Baptists, the BJC works to protect religious freedom for all and uphold every American's right to follow their spiritual beliefs.

Baptists have long championed the separation of church and state and advocated for religious liberty. This commitment grew out of our spiritual ancestors' own experiences of persecution—first in England, where the first Baptist church was established, and later in colonial America. In colonial Virginia, where the Church of England was the official church, dissenters were discriminated against; Baptists were whipped, jailed and fined for their beliefs. In a 10-year period, 42 Baptist ministers were imprisoned simply for preaching the gospel! In the 1600s, Baptist leader Roger Williams was expelled from Massachusetts for his controversial beliefs about religious freedom. In response, he founded the colony of Rhode Island, a haven that embraced religious liberty. This

new colony allowed people to worship according to their conscience without interference from the state. Williams' ideas had a lasting impact, and his writings later influenced policy in the United States, including his assertion that there should be a "hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world." After the Revolutionary War, as the United States debated what kind of nation we would become, Baptist pastor John Leland played a pivotal role in securing the First Amendment. A close friend of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, Leland strongly urged them to champion the cause of religious liberty. Through fiery sermons, he passionately argued for the separation of religion and government, condemning state-sponsored churches as "spiritual tyranny." Leland's relentless advocacy, alongside the efforts of others, ultimately paid off. In 1785, the passage of the Bill of Rights ensured protections for religious freedom, culminating in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The First Amendment declares, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." With this amendment, two complementary protections were established:

1. The Establishment Clause: This ensures that the government does not favor religion over non-religion

Foundation Sunday

On Sunday, February 2, our congregation will celebrate The First Baptist Church of Greenville Foundation during a special worship service. We will share how the Foundation supports missions and ministries as well as hear from Foundation fund recipients who will be worshipping with us. Prior to the service, there will be a reception in the Fellowship Hall during the Sunday School hour for donors, recipients, committee members and anyone interested in learning more. Please stop by and say hello!

The FBG Foundation was first established in 1992 as the Faith Fund, an effort to support the missions programs of First Baptist in perpetuity. The Fund expanded in 2004 and now manages five distinct funds:

- The Faith Fund for local, state, national and international missions
- The General Fund for ministries and special projects
- The Leadership Development Fund for the education, training or skills development of the laity and clergy
- The Property Fund for major maintenance or capital needs of the church property and facilities

- The Tithes Fund for support of the operating budget of the Church now and in the future

Designed to receive gifts over and above a donor's annual giving, the Foundation allows donors to make current or planned gifts that can support the church's local, national and global missions as well as the ministries budget for years to come. It has disbursed more than \$3 million since its beginning.

If you would like to learn how you can make a planned gift through your will, a trust or an IRA bequest, please contact the church office. Other members

of the congregation have made such plans and by doing so have ensured that their giving will continue to support the church's outreach for generations to come.

We look forward to this time of celebrating new beginnings, learning more about the Foundation and sharing gratitude to our partners in mission and ministry.

A total of \$207,414 was distributed from the Foundation in 2024. You can give to the Foundation on the church website.

—Matt Rollins, Partnerships and Affiliations Committee Staff Liaison

From the Senior Minister, continued from page 1

or give preference to one faith over others. It prohibits the establishment of an official religion in the United States.

2. The Free Exercise Clause: This guarantees the right to believe and practice one's faith—or not—without government interference.

Baptists helped secure these rights! Our Baptists ancestors championed the idea that faith must be a matter of personal conviction, grounded in the understanding that love and worship of God can never be coerced; it must come freely from the heart.

Today, the greatest threat to religious liberty in America is Christian Nationalism. This cultural framework seeks to merge Christianity with American civic life, promoting the idea that the United States has always been—and should remain—a distinctively "Christian" nation. Christian Nationalists believe it is the government's role to ensure this vision is upheld. While those who promote Christian Nationalist ideas may not always identify with that label or operate under a unified strategy, their policies consistently reveal their agenda. They advocate for things like reinstating prayer in public schools and revising

school curricula to include Biblical education. They also push for displaying Christian symbols, such as the Ten Commandments or crosses, on public property. Additionally, they are promoting the hiring of Christian chaplains for public schools and advocating for school voucher programs that divert public funds to religious schools. These policies may seem harmless or even positive to Christians at first glance, but they threaten religious freedom. By giving preferential treatment to one faith over others, it creates an environment where people of other religions—or no religion at all—are marginalized. True religious freedom means that all people, regardless of their beliefs, have to right to follow their conscience without fear of discrimination or coercion. If you're interested in learning more about Christian Nationalism and how we can honor the legacy of our spiritual ancestors who fought for religious liberty for all, we invite you to join us for a special evening with Amanda Tyler. This event promises to be an enlightening and meaningful opportunity to explore these important topics. For more information, please visit firstbaptistgreenville.com/amanda-tyler. You may also visit the BJC website: bjconline.org. —Carol

Support for Every Leaning Side

Yes, the first priority of the church is worship, but the second, and the fruit of worship, is service. That's where things get complicated: no church can meet all the needs in its community. What to do?

The answer is partnerships! By finding common cause with non-profits in our area, what we cannot do with expertise, we can do by providing facilities. What we can't provide in facilities, we can provide with volunteers. What we can't provide in volunteers, we can provide in funds, and where funds are not available, we can provide that other most-valued commodity: advocacy.

On Friday, January 17, we hosted the first meeting of **GAPS: Greenville Area Parkinson's Society** and had a wonderful gathering of members and guests who shared their experiences and found warm support and professional training, all free of charge! Turns out, our AYMC walking track is ideal for people needing to practice their walking under supervision,

and our Media Center is ideal for caregivers to meet and encourage one another. Expert instruction was provided by Rock Steady Boxing, walking poles and snacks were provided, and new friendships blossomed!

If you know someone dealing with Parkinson's or a related condition, register your interest with Jennifer Darst at jennifer@gapsonline.org (<https://www.gapsonline.org>) and join us in the Fellowship Hall every third Friday of the month!

Also, on Friday, January 24, we hosted another partner: **Neighborhood Cancer Connection**. Director Katie Bennett came to tell us more about their good work, and a plan was created for when and where to have gatherings for those who have been given a diagnosis of some kind of cancer and those eager to support them. Please spread the word about that initiative, too, and send my way anyone interested in more information!

First Baptist cannot do it all, but through partnerships we can provide support "on every leaning side."

—Kyle Matthews, Minister of Pastoral Care

Happy Birthday!

Please remember these FBG members celebrating birthdays in February who are not always able to be with us in worship.

February 3: Janet Huskey

February 10: Annie Mae Clark

February 19: Theresa Swan



Focus on Missions in February

Throughout February, our church will collect the following frequently needed items for Jasmine Road:

- USPS forever stamps
- Gift cards—Target, Wal-Mart, QT, Amazon, etc.
- Paper Products—toilet paper, paper towels
- Hygiene Products—shampoo and conditioner (including types specific for Black hair), razors, body wash, face wash, tampons (all sizes), deodorant, etc.
- Cleaning Supplies—laundry detergent (regular and sensitive), Lysol® All Purpose Cleaner, Swiffer® Wet Jet Pads, Swiffer® Wet Jet Wood refills
- Copy/printer paper

Please bring donations to the Reception Area of the church. Thank you for your generous support!

Jasmine Road is South Carolina's first two-year residential program for adult women survivors of human trafficking, prostitution and addiction. Through community partnerships, they work together to address the healing needs of each woman from an evidence-based holistic perspective. They do this by providing sustainable employment, personal and

educational development opportunities, stable housing, and long-term support after graduation. One of their programs is Jasmine Kitchen, a lunch café which provides job training, employment and career building opportunities. For more information about Jasmine Road, please go to <https://jasmineroad.org> to see all the wonderful work that they are doing in our community.

—Nancy Schleppehorst, Missions Committee

Upcoming Events

WATCH indicates worship experiences broadcast via Vimeo and Facebook Live.

- 1/29 7:00am Wednesday Morning Men's Bible Study Group (AYMC Terrace Level)
Wednesdays@First Activities
 6:00pm *Adults@First* Opportunities
 MidWeek Classic: Exploring Heaven, Pondering Hell, Part 2 (Fellowship Hall) with Carol McEntyre
 Journaling (Media Center) with Ken Kraft
 Intro to Weightlifting (AYMC) with Dante Gliatta
- 1/31-2/2 Youth Winter Retreat
- 2/2 **WATCH** 10:30am Foundation Sunday Worship Service (Sanctuary) with Proclaimer Carol McEntyre
- 2/5 7:00am Wednesday Morning Men's Bible Study Group (AYMC Terrace Level)
Wednesdays@First Activities
 6:00pm *Adults@First* Opportunities (See 1/29 for details)
- 2/7 10:30am-1:00pm Friday Lunch & More (Media Center, Fellowship Hall)
- 2/9 **WATCH** 10:30am Worship Service (Sanctuary) with Proclaimer Camille Loomis Rehnberg, including Family Dedication and Souper Bowl of Caring
 11:30am Vocare Rehearsal (Choir Room)
 5:00-8:30pm Youth Super Bowl® Party (AYMC)
- 2/11 6:30pm Amanda Tyler Book Tour (Sanctuary)
The evening will include a reading from her 2024 book, How to End Christian Nationalism; a conversation with Carol McEntyre; facilitated Q&A; and a book signing with books available for purchase. The free event requires registration: firstbaptistgreenville.com/amanda-tyler

GOAL Q&A Session

The Greenville Organized for Accountable Leadership team will hold an in-person Q&A session on Sunday, February 2, after church in the Sanctuary and a Zoom session on Wednesday, February 5, at noon. Use this link to join: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85732750245?pwd=QnpvRitPeWlJS0VobzhBTXZSbDFkZz09>

Wednesdays@First Schedule

Exceptions and details noted in calendar

- 4:00-7:00pm *Youth@First*: Youth Hang Time (AYMC Terrace Level)
 5:00-6:00pm Supper and Prayer Time (Fellowship Hall)
Children@First
 5:30-7:00pm Childcare for Ages 3 & Under (C208, C214)
 5:45-7:00pm K4 & K5 Co-Creator Block & Playtime (B422)
 5:45-6:10pm 1st-5th Grades Choir (B423) Gathering Time (Media Center)
 6:15-7:00pm Co-Creator Block (B424)
 6:00-6:50pm *Adults@First* (MidWeek Classic & Other Adult Education Offerings) (Fellowship Hall)
 7:00-8:30pm Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal (Choir Room)



Wednesday Night Supper

Please make reservations by noon on Monday at <https://firstbaptistgreenville.com/wednesdays-at-first/>

January 29

Adult: Fish Filet, Dirty Rice, Spinach, Salad, Fruit, Roll, Dessert
Child: Fish Sticks, French Fries

February 5

Adult: Lasagna, Zucchini & Squash, Salad, Fruit, Italian Bread, Dessert
Child: Pizza Bread

Congratulations!

...to Catherine and Natasha Houston on the birth of a son, Landon James Houston, born December 20, 2024. Proud grandparents in our congregation are Jan and Mike Houston.

Sympathy

...to Bill and Nancy Brantley in the death of their grandson.
 ...Jennifer Restine and family in the death of her niece.
 ...to Doris Clanton and Tom DeVenny and their families in the death of their sister.
 ...to Will Livingston in the death of his grandmother.
 ...to Rhonda Girvin and family in the death of her father.


 First Baptist
 Greenville
 847 Cleveland Street,
 Greenville, South Carolina 29601-4495
 (864) 233-2527 www.firstbaptistgreenville.com

THE BRANCH (USPS No. 597060) is published weekly January thru December (except one week in July and December). Periodicals postage paid at Greenville, SC 29602. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE BRANCH, 847 Cleveland Street Greenville, SC 29601. (Phone 864-233-2527). Kimberly Coates, Editor.

Vol. LXVI January 27, 2025 No. 4

Revenue Report

12/31/2024 Final: \$2,964,671
 12/31/2023 Actual: \$3,040,582
 12/31/2024 Budget: \$2,935,000



Scan here to support the financial needs of First Baptist Greenville.

For After Hours Pastoral Care Emergencies, please

call the Church Office, 864-233-2527, leave a message by pressing the number "2" for "Pastoral Care Emergencies" or email pastoral.care@firstbaptistgreenville.com. One of our staff ministers will respond to your message.