



First Baptist Church
---LaGrange---

2023
ANNUAL REPORT

**200 Church Street
P.O. Box 136
Lagrange, Ohio 44050
440-355-4015**

**Email: office@firstbaptistoflagrange.org
Website: www.firstbaptistoflagrange.org**

Dear Church Family,

Words cannot adequately communicate how much I love being your pastor. Paul's words to the Philippians church best communicated my heart.

"³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, ⁵ for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; ⁷ just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart..."

Philippians 1:3-7

It has been my joy to have served with you as your pastor for another year. Here is my year in review:

❖ Ministry Highlights:

- * 2 New Members Classes
- * Men's Golf Outing
- * Hebron Annual Meeting

❖ Guest and Missionary Speakers:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| * Bryan MacPhail-Fausey | BMM- Cameroon |
| * Stephen Muindi | BMM- Kenya |
| * Rob Whitty | BMM- Ghana |
| * Jonathan Kleis | ABWE- Italy |
| * Tyler Giesel | |
| * Joe Keim | Mission to Amish People |

❖ Preaching Schedule:

- * Book of Ephesians and John

❖ I was honored to participate and officiate at the following funerals:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| - Liz Rader | February 18 |
| - Paula Dunn | April 1 |
| - Nancy Cawley | June 7 |
| - Alanna Schnell | July 3 |
| - Betty McFadden | August 2 |
| - Lowell Snider | December 2 |

❖ I was privileged to officiate the following weddings:

- Ryan & Ashley Suvak

February 4

❖ Additional Ministries:

1. Senior Saints trips
2. Many hospital, nursing home, and at home visits.
3. Speaker at BMM Christmas dinner

Thank you for the privilege of being your pastor for another year. I look forward to serving you in 2024 should the Lord tarry.

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Noel M. Hack

I am once again profoundly grateful to the people of First Baptist Church for allowing me to serve as one of their Pastors. This year was another busy one, full of meetings and study, phone calls and visits, teaching and preaching. Through it all, the Lord has been faithful, and the church has been a good place to call home.

This year was a special one primarily because we were blessed with an incredible daughter, Phoebe Sarah, on August 1. She is a delight, and her siblings and parents love her to pieces.

This year was also special because we were able to enjoy the church's wonderful generosity on a trip to Washington D.C. this Spring, given as a gift for my ordination. We had a tremendous time and made many lifelong memories, and I must say thank you yet again.

As in years past, I have been blessed to participate in and give direction to our music, youth, and small group ministries. And once again, I am deeply grateful for the volunteer help that has come alongside me.

I have been encouraged and enriched in teaching youth Sunday School from the Sermon on the Mount with Adam Laskos. I have also filled in teaching the New Members class on occasion. Adam has also joined me in teaching James (in the Spring, with Logan Howard) and Psalms (in the Fall).

I was able to lead two different youth retreats (Banished at Camp Patmos, and the Hebron Youth retreat at Skyview) yet again this year, and both were very profitable. I also continue to organize the Hebron Youth Bible Conference at our church each Spring. This conference is always a lot of work, but very worth it, and this year was no different.

I have once again been able to join Pastor Hack in preaching our Sunday morning sermon series. This year that included finishing Ephesians, a short series on the seven sayings of Jesus from the Cross, and the first 8 chapters of the book of John. I have also continued to attend and enjoy Steve and Tara Ody's small group.

I believe the Lord has blessed in several counseling arrangements he lined up for me this year as well. I am grateful for the power of the Word to change lives, and receptive Christians who have been willing to open the Bible together and go forward following Jesus.

I am once again moderator of the Hebron Executive committee, planning our monthly pastors' fellowships and generally seeking the wellbeing of our churches. I also completed another year of serving on the board of Camp Patmos.

I am once again grateful to work with Pastor Hack and the officers of our church. They are wonderful men who love the Lord and me and my family. God has graciously decided to work through our church to build up the saints and to help some come to faith for the first time. We have many reasons to rejoice and give thanks!

In Christ,
Pastor Luke Williams

It was a blessing to serve as the chairman of the Deacon Board again in 2023. I enjoyed the time spent with my fellow deacons. Brothers Bob Butler, Dan Seres and I are back on the board for a second term. The year allowed us to grow closer together as a board and be able to enjoy the fellowship of each other. We had some challenging things to deal with in the past year. Through prayer, wisdom, and God's grace, we were able to work through them with unity on our deacon board.

2023 Deacon Board

Mark Abbott
Bob Butler
Russ Kime
Adam Laskos
Don Ody
Steve Ody
Joe Ramsey
Dan Seres
Don Whitesel

We continued to read and review some Christian books together. We are just finishing *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. There are some wonderful lessons to be learned in these books.

We were blessed to be able to help members of our body, our community, and friends or family of our members financially through the memberships giving to our Deacon Fund. We provided \$8,341.03 in financial assistance to others through the deacon fund in 2023. We thank all of you who contribute to our Deacon Fund. It allows us to help when needs do arise.

We were blessed in 2023 by hearing the testimonies of 15 new members who joined our church, 4 by baptism and 11 by Christian experience. Our main goal is help bring the lost to the saving grace of our Lord and Savior. I am excited to see what God has in store for us in the new year.

Yours in Christ,
Don Whitesel
Chairman

***“For we are labourers together with God:
Ye are God’s husbandry, Ye are God’s building.”
-1 Corinthians 3:9***

Trustee Board

The trustees met 11 times for regular monthly board meetings over the course of the year.

After having received what we thought was final approval to install a digital display sign, once again our efforts came to a standstill when the village council added regulations to be met which had not been communicated to us previously. Those plans are still on hold and will hopefully be able to be resumed this year.

A huge ‘Thank You’ to Brent and Michelle Howard, Kyle and Erin Russell, and the host of other volunteers who helped to make the carpet replacement project a reality this summer! Because we chose to do the work ourselves, we were able to expand the project to include not only the replacement of the carpet in our auditorium, entryways, and hallways but also the repainting of the auditorium walls and doorways, and re-carpeting the stairs to the hallways of the lower level and still stay within our budgeted amount!

The church secretary’s office had new flooring installed and both her office and Pastor Hack’s study have been repainted and redecorated.

Another big project was the replacement of the commercial size refrigerator in the church kitchen. Many thanks to all who helped to carry the old unit out for disposal and bring the new one in and get it ready to go.

The lighting above the baptistry has been updated and has already added a special charm to the aesthetics of our auditorium for our services.

This year saw us needing to replace two of the sump pumps in our lower level. We are thankful to have caught that need without having to deal with a flooded basement beforehand.

It was decided that it was time to part ways with the 15-passenger church van and so we bid it “farewell” (a fond one or otherwise).

Our parking lot on the north side of the building was resealed and designated parking slots for senior saints and individuals with a handicap were expanded/included.

We continue to make much needed improvements to our church sound system to improve the quality for those present in our services as well as for those who are listening via livestream and rebroadcast via the internet.

We added a project during the year by making arrangements to have the protective coverings of many of the stained-glass windows on the original building replaced. That work was completed in December and the windows are now visible once again. They look great! Stop by and check them out anytime, but especially when it is dark outside and the lights inside are lit up.

A big ‘Thank You’ to each of the dedicated men who serve as our trustees!

2023 Trustee Board

Ray Aneilski (Building)
Kenny Birdsall (Grounds)
Jose Guzman (Clerk)
Riley Howard (Building)
Dennis Marx (Chairman)
D.J. Saylor (Missionary Treasurer)
Barry Stephenson (Treasurer)
Jim Wilmoth (Financial Secretary)
Wayne Wolfe (Bus)

Respectfully Submitted by
Dennis Marx
Trustee Board Chairman



South Entryway and Foyer

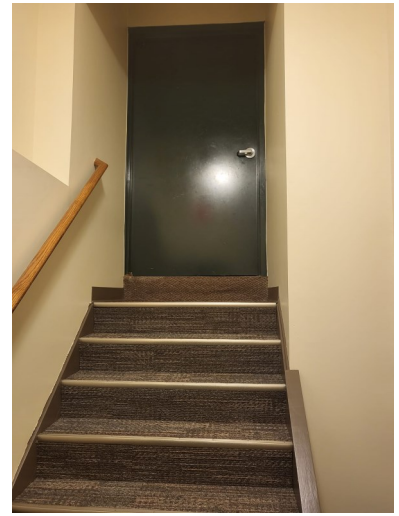


2023 Carpet Project
End of August—Early September

Project Leader: Kyle Russell
Assisted by Brent Howard
And many , many volunteers!!!

Sanctuary





North Entryway



Board Room

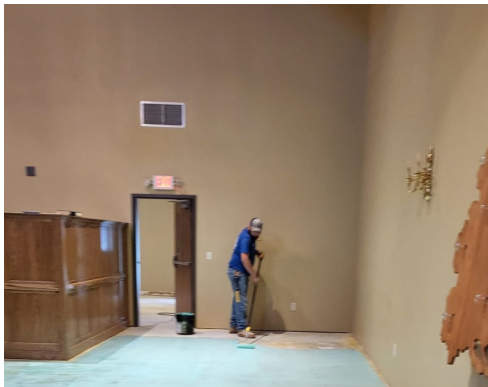
Project included:

Carpet in upper level
Entry areas
Foyer
Sanctuary

in lower level:
Hallway
Board Room
New baseboard trim

Vinyl treads on stairs
Painting of doors and trim to match
Sanctuary steps—carpet with wood accent

Volunteers



Church Membership— January 1, 2023 233

Gains in Membership:

By Baptism: 4

June 25: Joey Arthur	Parker Smith	3	
Ryan Suvak			
December 17: Jacob Willi		1	

By Christian Experience: 11

March 26: Cary Berthold	Emma Berthold	4	
Joe Berthold	Lila Berthold		
June 25: Joe Arthur	Tom Fink	4	
Kelly Butler	Jessica Smith		
August 27: Justin Opfer		1	
December 17: Ken Ulicny	Marlene Ulicny	2	

Total Gains 15

Losses in Membership:

By transfer/removal: 5

April 11: Cheryl Guzman	Joe Guzman	
Amber Laws	Zeke Laws	
Luke Wilson		

By Death: 2

April 26, 2023: Nancy Jane Cawley
November 16, 2023: Lowell Snider

Total Losses (7)

Total Membership—December 31, 2023 241

Marriages: Ashley Butler & Ryan Suvak February 4, 2023

Milestone Anniversary: Jim & Sandy Kettel October 5, 2023 60th

Submitted by
Bruce Howard / Jane Howard
Church Clerk

Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed

II Timothy 2:15

Mission statement of First Baptist AWANA Clubs:



It is our mission to work with parents in helping their children establish a solid, biblical foundation to build their lives upon, develop a faith that and in God's timing, will lead them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

AWANA Clubs

We ended the 2022/2023 Awana year with a bang! We held our annual Awana Awards. We were able to celebrate the hard work of our 55 Clubbers with a great time of songs, recognition, and a cookie fellowship. At the award ceremony we were also able to award 12 clubbers with a FREE week of camp. These clubbers work hard every year saying verses and finishing their books. It was so nice getting to connect with the clubbers and their families. The following week after our award ceremony, we held our annual Awana end of year celebration. This year we gathered at the church for some dodge ball fun, Gaga Ball games, bounce houses and of course food!

For the 2023/2024 club year we started with the same schedule from the prior year with a start time of 6:15 p.m. and ending at 7:45 p.m. Clubbers attendance so far has been in the upper 50's. Some of the highlights for the year include opening song time with Rachel Gell , bring a buddy night, popcorn with Pastor, Fall Festival, and celebrating Jesus' Birthday. We are looking forward to the rest of the club year and what God has in store for us.

As always the AWANA club would not be possible without the support of the members of the church. You have made this possible by donating your time and taking on responsibilities as Leaders and Directors as well as your donation of candy and goodies for our themed nights. Thank you for your dedication and commitment and for keeping the AWANA clubbers and leaders in your prayers.

In Christ,
Ricky Kluever
AWANA Commander

Summer Camp Program

Through AWANA, the church provides a way for children to earn an opportunity to go to summer camp, either at Skyview Ranch in Millersburg or Camp Patmos on Kelley's Island. The T&T (3rd-6th Grade) work hard throughout the year to finish their books to earn a full one week paid scholarship to camp. This year we were able to send 12 girls and boys to camp. It is such a privilege to see how hard the boys and girls work at finishing their books.

We are hoping to send more kids this coming year!



**2022-2023
AWANA Leadership**

Commander
Ricky Kluever

AWANA Secretary
Jenna Guzman

Cubbies (3 & 4 yrs. old)
Nanci Ceckiewicz

Sparks (K-2nd grade)
Steve & Tara Ody

T & T

Girls (3rd - 6th grades)
Jenny Kime

Boys (3rd - 6th grades)
Russ Kime

CHILDREN'S C H U R C H

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

2023 has been a year of change for the Children's Church ministry. After having 20 or more children in the ministry during the summer with limited volunteers we adjusted the age range to 3 years old to 1st grade while allowing the 2nd graders to finish the year out. We held an organizational meeting in August which included some training, and we picked up a few more volunteers. Samuel Butler programmed check-in software for us to use, which has been a huge help and will help us in the future. The software allows us to keep track of the children and any specific needs they may have. Over the past 10 weeks we have had a total of 131 children (average of about 13). Our largest week during that time frame was 21. Overall, 44 different children have been ministered to in the previous 10 weeks. We are using lanyards to help visually identify the leaders and their names. We have 23 adult leaders and 7 or more teen/youth helpers. These volunteers allow for about a 7-week rotation which helps to minimize the amount of time a teacher team is away from the morning service. Pastor Luke, Deanna and Adam Laskos work on the schedule for the volunteers. Jeanna Guzman puts together the video lessons and prints the materials from the Gospel Project. The Gospel Project curriculum went through the Gospels during the fall, and we are now covering the book of Acts. The children sing songs, pray, learn a bible lesson, have snacks, and have different activities (games, coloring, etc...). We are thankful for all the volunteers that put time into this ministry and the children that participate.



Looking forward to seeing how the Lord uses this ministry in 2024!

Submitted by,
Adam and Deanna Laskos

Mary-Martha Missionary Fellowship

Mary-Martha Missionary Women's Group has not been actively meeting since covid-19. We have greatly missed meeting together, reading our missionaries' letters for updates, praying for and undertaking projects to supply their needs. We contributed \$ 145.00 this year to the Hebron Women's Missionary Project (BCP Tires for Missionary Builders), closing our bank account.

Submitted by
Jane Howard



Audio/Video Ministry

It has been a great year for the audio and video ministry here at our church. We had a few changes but everything has really started to come together! With some help from some professionals, we were able to update and fix some settings on the sound quality and operation of the soundboard. We have also been trying to improve the quality of sound coming through the livestreams on Sunday Mornings. Every Sunday, there are livestreams of Sunday School and the Morning Services on Youtube and Facebook and also on the website. I have been adding each service to the website under the Sermon tab if anyone would like to go to listen or if you missed a day! As we go into the next year, we will be adding some new things to help with this. Audience mics will be added to help with the livestreaming sound and another project will be adding a TV to the foyer area in case someone needs to leave the auditorium. We will hopefully have it set up so that whatever is being played in the auditorium is what you will see on the TV.

I would like to thank everyone for their willingness and time given to our sound team. We try to make every service run smoothly and without many problems but without each of them, it would not run as well as it does so thank you all very much! If you are interested in learning more about the audio/video ministry, please talk to any of us! God Bless!

Submitted by
Josh Gell



***"Children are a gift from the Lord;
they are a reward from Him."
Psalm 127:3***

I praise God, this is how we view children. I praise God for the love our parents and church family have for children.

I praise God for the volunteers that give care with individuality and compassion. I praise God for their commitment and faithfulness, as well as the flexibility of those that will switch or step in at the last minute.

There are sixteen infants/toddlers on the roster. The number present any given Sunday can vary.

There are individuals, couples and teens that serve during the Sunday School, morning service and Awana (for the leaders' children). Two scheduled for Sunday School, 3-4 for the morning service (with sometimes needing a fifth person).

Please pray for our young families and the nursery volunteers. Please pray for guidance and protection of this ministry. We are always open for more help.

I would ask for assistance in one specific area. The nursery gets used at many different times and by different people. If you notice any item/furniture broken or damaged, please remove it and let me know.

Sincerely in Christ,
Kristi Marx

Lagrange Stitching Friends Quilt Club

Lagrange Stitching Friends had another Fun-filled, Sewing -filled year. We began a program of gifting fat quarters for birthdays of the group members. Our new Challenge of the year was to start a personal project that we were excited to begin and to complete a project that had been waiting to be finished. We encouraged each other and many were successful.



In March, we met in Sugarcreek, Ohio at the Dutch Host Inn for our annual Winter Retreat. Summer Camp in July was a Red, White and Blue affair. We always enjoy each other's company and even manage to get some sewing done!

Come and visit us! We meet in the Fellowship Hall on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month from 9am to 7pm.

Submitted by
Susan Howard



What a joy it is to serve the Lord through the Hospitality ministry.

This year was especially busy with the arrival of 9 babies. It was a joy getting to shower the families with baby showers and meals following their babies arrivals.

In 2023, the hospitality team put on many church pot-lucks and church family dinners. Some of those activities included Soup and Sandwiches, VBS decorating potluck, and our church family Thanksgiving Dinner. We were also able to help provide dinners for several of our church family members as well as several funeral dinners.

The Hospitality Committee helps in coordinating meals at the church for funerals and church functions. It takes many hands to help put on these church functions. If you are interested in helping out please let Jenna Guzman know. Many hands make for light work. We are so thankful for the willingness of our church family to provide food and serve in the kitchen.

If there is ever a need for meals that we should be aware of please let us know.



Many families from the community came out to enjoy some warm fall fun inside while “trunk” or treating, eating warm snacks, and jumping on not one but TWO bounce houses.

Thank you so much to the many people from the church family that purchased candy, prayed for those that were attending, and those that came that night and handed out candy and spent time connecting with many different families from the community. We had many families come to join us this year and are praying for the seeds that may have been planted.

Thank you so much and can't wait to do it again this year!

Community Spring Outreach



This was our first year doing a Community Easter Outreach. We were not really sure what to expect but were pleased when we had about 200 Children and their families come out. We enjoyed having an egg hunt as well as crafts, face painting, both jump houses, a movie that told about the true meaning of easter, as well as many other ways we shared the gospel during this event.

We are looking forward to reaching out into the community of Lagrange again this year with this outreach event.





*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen.*

Hebrews 11:1

This year at **Stompers & Chompers VBS**, the kids explored our world before the Flood, complete with fun-loving characters, lush jungle environments, and dino-sized experiences. Students earn ageless truths from the faith and failures of some of the first people in the Bible. They also discovered how they can, by faith, follow God's big plan for them today!

Rooted in Hebrews 11:1 as the core Bible verse, students build their faith in God's Word, in God's Design, in God's Grace, in God's Warning, and in God's Promise.

This years VBS had many hands that helped it to run very smoothly. Thank you to all that lent a helping hand in the operations/ running of VBS. A big thank you to Rachel Gell (Songs/ Open& Closing Director), Nanci Ciekiewicz (Registrations Director), Deanna Laskos (Teaching Director), Erin Russell (Craft Director), Joric Butler (Snacks Director), Samuel Butler (Games Director), Crystal Stambaugh (Decorations Director), Jenna Arthur (Puppet Director) Donna Picione (Meals). Without their help and the many other helpers VBS would not of been possible.

This years Vacation Bible School was the largest number of children that we have seen since COVID. There were many seeds that were planted and 1 child that accepted the gift of salvation. Please pray for that child and the many others that attended. We look forward to 2024s VBS (Twist and Turns) and teaching the children that following Jesus changes the game!!

Thank you for all of your support
Jenna Guzman

Offering
\$1,392.50

The Howards
**Build Church =
Building Lives**



BRONTOSAURUS




4TH OLD- KINDERGARTEN

Pre-Primary

Sunday	16
Monday	20
Tuesday	18
Wednesday	16
Thursday	20

Jenn Arthur
Jenna Arthur
Jillian Seabolt
Cindy Stromack
Lauren Ody
Jayla Guzman

STEGOSAURUS



1ST-2ND GRADE

Primary

Sunday	32
Monday	36
Tuesday	36
Wednesday	42
Thursday	41

Ashley Suvak
Denise Abbott
Marcee Stephenson
Crystal Stambaugh
Kyle Russell
Ella Love

Sunday	32
Monday	36
Tuesday	36
Wednesday	42
Thursday	41

TRICERATOPS



3RD-4TH GRADE

Middler

Sunday	19
Monday	23
Tuesday	17
Wednesday	18
Thursday	21

Jenny Kime
Debbie Seres
Tom Shellhorn
Ava Guzman

T-REX



5TH-6TH GRADE

Primary

Sunday	19
Monday	24
Tuesday	25
Wednesday	24
Thursday	24

Steve & Tara Ody
Don & Lynn Ody

Sunday	19
Monday	24
Tuesday	25
Wednesday	24
Thursday	24

- Snacks- Joric Butler
Shelly Whitesel
Elizabeth Butler
Linda Lennerth
Lila Berthold
- Crafts- Rachel Gell
Erin Russell
Deanna Laskos
Emma Berthold
Ella Butler

- Games- Samuel Butler
Adam Laskos
Degan Shepherd
Owen Joppeck
Caitlyn Minney
Bob Butler
- Nursery-
Gary & Susan Shellhorn

- Sound- Jose Guzman
Josh Gell
- Meals: Donna Picione
- Registration-
Nanci Ciekiewicz
Ellen Aiello
Dianna Hack
Jessica Joppeck
Silvia Hack





Hospitality: Jenna Guzman (440)382-7969

- ❖ Flower / Decorations
- ❖ Welcoming Ministry
- ❖ Planning/ Set up of Church picnics (June- August)
- ❖ Helping with Funeral Dinners
- ❖ Providing Meals for families (Surgeries, Pregnancies, Sicknesses)

Outreach:

- ❖ Planning/ Coming up with Outreach Events
- ❖ Help / Planning of Spring Outreach
- ❖ Help / Planning of Fall Fest
- ❖ Family Game Nights (Fall/ Winter)

Children's Ministry:

- ❖ VBS Department-Directors
- ❖ VBS Teacher/ Helper
- ❖ Nursery
- ❖ Children's Church
- ❖ AWANA

Other:

- ❖ Join a Small Group

Mondays at 6:00 PM:

Hosted by: **Don & Lynn Ody** (440) 506-1309

❖ Rotates between different group members' homes at times.

Tuesdays at 6:30 PM:

Hosted by: **Joe & Joann Ramsey** (440) 213-5965

❖ At the church

Tuesdays at 6:00 PM:

Hosted by: **Chuck & Judi Bodey** (440) 458-5355
and

Russ & Jenny Kime (440) 355-6979

❖ Rotates between different group members' homes at times.

Thursdays at 6:30 PM:

Hosted by: **Steve & Tara Ody** (440) 864-7590

❖ Rotates between different group members' homes at times.

**If you are interested in these ministries,
or if there is another area where you would like to serve,
please fill out a Ministry Opportunity flyer
and place it in the box (located on the Activities Table)**