



# First Baptist Church

Dover, Delaware

FIRST BAPTIST OF DOVER  
301 WALKER ROAD  
DOVER, DELAWARE 19904  
(302)674-1980

SEARCH COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Fred Corazza  
203 Grace Lane  
Smyrna, De. 19977  
(302)653-9028 or (302)612-1903  
[Frederick.Corazza@icloud.com](mailto:Frederick.Corazza@icloud.com)

K. Sue Moore  
4585 Halltown Road  
Hartly, Delaware 19953  
(302)670-2626 or (302)492-0440  
[Moore.kats@gmail.com](mailto:Moore.kats@gmail.com)

Other team members

Chris Cottrell  
Lois Glading  
Gerri Lee  
Veronica Manno  
Percy Navarro-alternate

Ed Gilman  
Lorraine Leavel  
Milda Limson  
Agnes Robinson  
Margaret Steinhoff-alternate

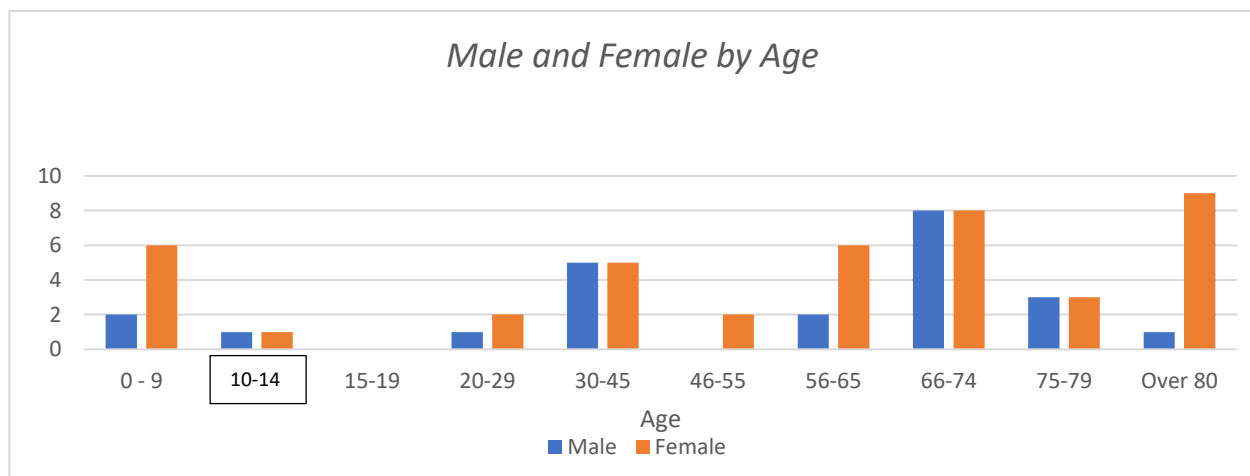
Rev. Mark Mahserjian-Smith  
Acting Regional Executive Pastor  
1523 Smokey Corners RD.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570)435-2001  
[msmsmail@abcpad.com](mailto:msmsmail@abcpad.com)

Rev. Dr. Patricia Hernandez  
Associate General Secretary  
ABCUSA  
PO Box 851  
Valley Forge, PA 19482

## The Demographics of First Baptist Church of Dover

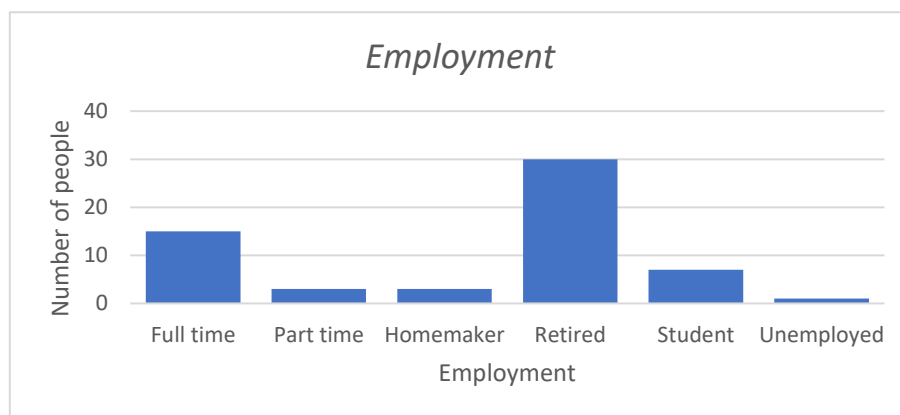
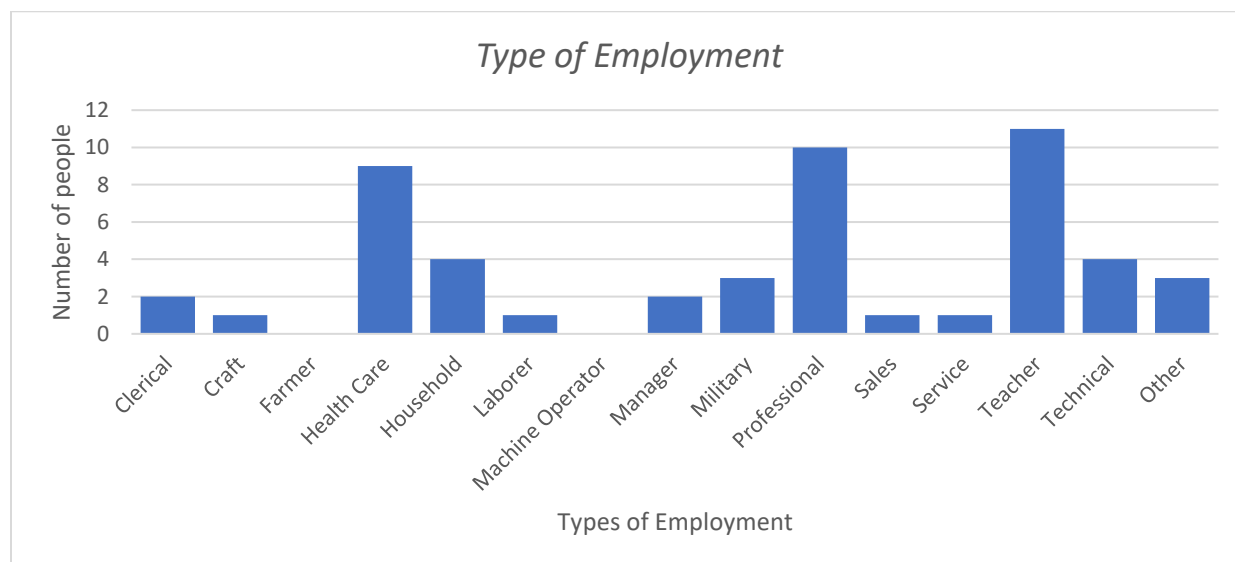
The first things people see when they enter the Sanctuary doors are a group of three ladies sitting at a table filled with different signup sheets for various activities that the church will be having during the week. These three ladies began sitting there when Covid started in 2020. We were first used to take temperatures and furnish masks if needed. We also took attendance. We greeted each person, checking to see if they needed anything that we could supply or pick up at the grocery store for them. In this way we got to know each member and visitor quickly and showed we cared for them. As time went on, we started making calls to people who didn't show up on Sunday to see if they were feeling okay. If they came down with Covid or any illness, they were put on our Prayer Chain. When it was safe again to remove masks, they'd see us smile and even give and receive hugs. Since the members seemed to like this arrangement, we've kept this Welcome Table, changing it a bit with the needs of our church. One little boy, aged two, used to fly into the church. Now he stops and gets his hug, not just from us but from other members as well. In the year since he started, he has matured tremendously. Everyone looks forward to his beautiful smile. The three ladies still take attendance and make sure everyone has the opportunity to sign up for activities they enjoy, especially the dinners.

As we see from our graph, we have an elderly congregation. More than half of our members are over 50. We even have two ladies looking forward to their

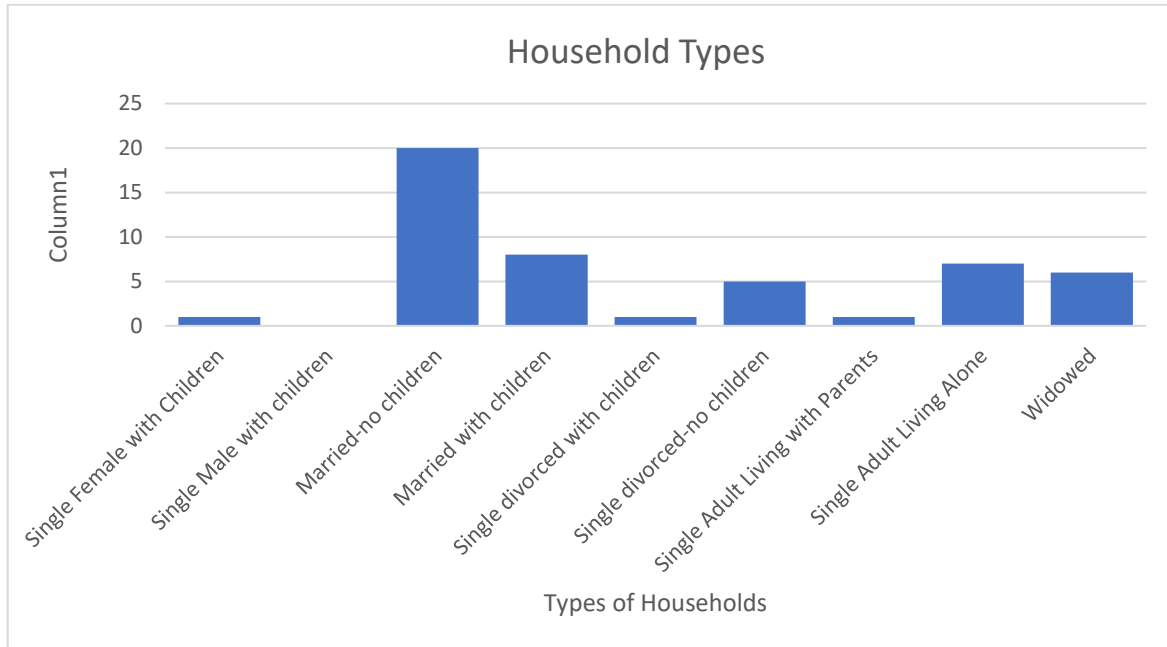


100<sup>th</sup> birthday in the next year. We have lost several members to death but God has also led many new members to FBC. Currently we average between 80 to 100 people per Sunday, even with various pastors filling the pulpit. As our graph shows, we have quite a few widows in our membership with a majority of members in the 65-74 age bracket. As one can see, our young married with children age group is considerably lower than the older, retired aged members.

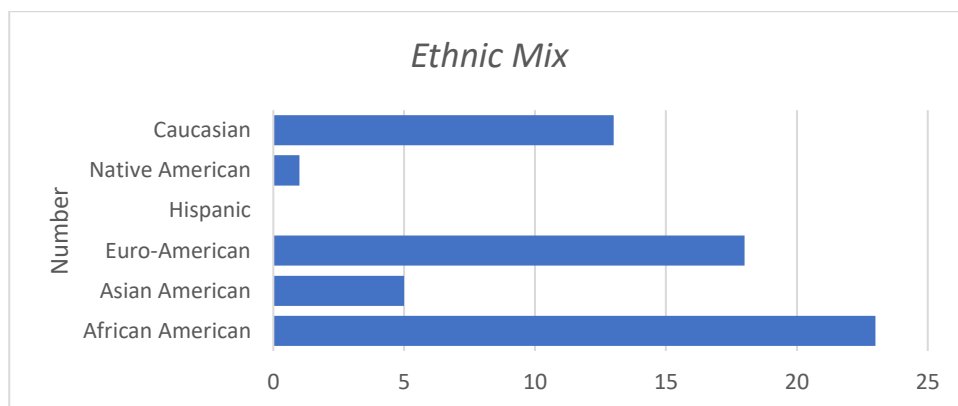
Most of our congregation falls into the professional employment category: teacher, health care and other professions. Most of these have college degrees or higher. Most of the others have jobs which include specialized training of some sort: sales and service, clerical, technical, and home employment. As one can tell by the types of jobs, most of the congregation is city-based rather than country-based. Most live within 15 to 20 miles of the church.



Most of our membership consists of married couples, with or without children living at home. Unfortunately, we have fewer couples married with children. This is an area in which we'd like to grow. Many of our widows also do not drive at night or don't drive at all. Therefore, many of our church activities are geared toward a time with which they are comfortable coming to said activities.



In the past ten years, we've had a wonderful development in our membership. We have at least twelve countries around the world represented in our membership, a great diversity in cultures. We have been blessed to learn innovative ideas, try new foods, and most of all, have the chance to show love and acceptance of all races. When one walks into First Baptist, the friendliness and love of each other and our God is evident.





## OUR HISTORY

When George and Jane Parris moved to Dover in 1832, they were unable to find a Baptist Church where they might worship. They found another Baptist couple, Jonathan and Mary Stites, who also longed to worship with a group of like-minded believers. The four, we are told, “were intelligent Christians who adorned by their walk and talk the Christian life.”

An appeal to the American Baptist Home Mission Society brought Rev. John P Thompson and other workers who labored in the area, stirring up an interest in the new venture. Finally, in 1847, The Rev. John P Walter agreed to serve as pastor of the proposed church. Land was bought facing The Dover Green. The cornerstone for the first building was laid on September 9, 1850, and on January 8, 1852, the church was constituted with eight charter members.

By 1893, the growing membership required a larger building. The lovely first building was sold to the Dover Century Club, which still owns it. Land was purchased for a new building on the corner of Division and Bradford Streets. With God’s blessing, the congregation served the community from that location for



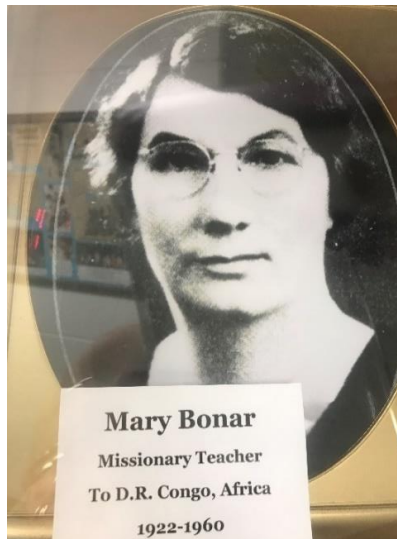
nearly one hundred years. During those years, a three-floor annex was added to the Division Street building and a three floor Christian Education building was built on Bradford Street.



In 1972, land was purchased on Walker Road for future expansion. This land was part of the Richardson farm and consisted of a farmhouse, a barn for cows and one for horses, and other outbuildings. In June 1988, the Division and Bradford Street property was sold to Wesley College, now part of the Downtown Campus of Delaware State University. With the groundbreaking ceremony for the new church building later that year, construction began on the third home of the First Baptist Church of Dover. By intentional design, the new building connected to both the cow and horse barns. "Built to the Glory of God," the congregation moved in on July 15, 1990. In March 2014, the mortgage was paid in full.



“Missions” and sharing the story of Jesus in a variety of ways has always been an important part of the life of First Baptist. Through the years we have sponsored mission trips to Mexico, Kentucky, New Mexico, Oklahoma, New Windsor, MD, and other locations. We have a Food Pantry to serve the needs of families in our area. We have had a weekday nursery school program, and our men have been involved in a local prison ministry. Our church was instrumental in starting Christ Memorial Baptist Church, located in south Dover, as well as assisting with the start-up of other American Baptist churches in our area. We participate in community ministries, such as the Dover Interfaith Mission for Housing which serves homeless people in the Dover area and has had an after-school Good News Club at Fairview Elementary School.



One of our finest hours was in the early 1980's when we sponsored a refugee “boat” family from Vietnam. The eleven member Ly family consisted of a mother, father, eight children ranging in age from 5 to 16 years, and a brother-in-law. The family was housed on the second floor of the Walker Road farmhouse. Church members assisted the family with learning English, tutoring, transportation, and all that was needed to help them to adjust to living in America. After several years, the family moved to warmer climates in Florida and California.

Through the years we have had Sunday School classes for all ages and a variety of Christian Education programs, including camping and many other children and youth activities. Vacation Bible School has sometimes been a cooperative venture with other nearby churches. Presently, during the Sunday morning worship hour,



children are dismissed and offered a learning opportunity, Kids Konnection, along with choir.

First Baptist is a racially and culturally diverse congregation. We have families from China/Taiwan, the Philippines, Liberia, Puerto Rico, and all parts of the United States. Some families are in Dover temporarily because of employment at Dover Air Force Base.

Our last two pastors have each served First Baptist for ten years. Rev. Bud Russell served from 2002-2012 and Rev. Dan Taylor from 2012-January 2023 with each retiring from active ministry from this church. Under Pastor Bud we developed a very active lay visitation program to first-time visitors to FB. Under Pastor Dan, and because of the pandemic, we now live stream our Sunday morning worship service on You Tube, as well as having it posted on Face Book and the church's website for later viewing.



Our congregation is growing older, although we do have several younger families with children who attend regularly. For them we offer Kids Konnection during worship, a monthly Saturday activity, and Vacation Bible School. We have a few youth, but do not presently offer youth programming. Many of our activities, such as the annual Christmas Tea, church picnics, etc. are enjoyed by all ages.

First Baptist has an ardent desire to reach out to younger families and have them become a part of our congregation. We also continue to look for ways to serve our community and to share the witness of Jesus Christ with others.

## Congregational Style Indicator

In looking over the results of the congregational style indicator, one can see definite patterns for our church. The membership found this was a difficult form to fill out, making it hard to compile.

- The church feels the pastor should take leadership in the church, but also seek assistance and guidance from the congregation.
- Even though the membership tries to avoid conflict, they will try to resolve it peacefully with as little harm to all parties involved. Lots of prayer will be involved seeking God's guidance.
- Our church is over 150 years old. History and traditions always tend to be considered. However, we do try to consider modern ideas and trends.
- Most people want to learn about social issues; however, they will let individuals act on them as they see fit.
- Ethical decisions seemed very evenly distributed, although they tended to be leaning toward having absolute standards.
- We look to ABCOPAD for assistance when necessary and are interested in what is happening nationally and internationally.
- We find it very necessary to help those in our community who are in need. We are involved in many community support efforts.
- Our church's constitution provides an organized network of making decisions. It is led by four major boards and many committees. They in turn have one member on a large committee that oversees the church. We also have quarterly business meetings where the entire congregation may participate in making these important decisions.
- Major changes are always discussed in our board meetings and quarterly business meetings. All members are allowed to attend any of these meetings.
- We have a thorough network to get news to our congregation about many notable events or decisions that are made. We have a prayer chain, specific prayer gatherings, announcements, internet communication, and newsletters monthly.
- We have four major mission campaigns each year. We also have ABWM ladies who are active in missions, sending monies and supplies to various missionaries and campaigns internationally.

On the following page are the figures provided by the congregation.

# CONGREGATIONAL STYLE INDICATOR

◆ Tends VERY strongly    ■ = Definitely Tends    ● = Somewhat Tends

Following are 11 continuums.

Please mark **ONCE** on each line indicating which way your church tends.

	1	2	3	1	2	3	
1. Our church expects our pastor to take leadership.	13	12	3	8	6	4	1. Our church expects the pastor to share in leadership.
2. Our church makes use of conflict and confrontation.	6	3	3	12	7	1	2. Our church seeks to avoid conflict and confrontation.
3. Our church is influenced by history and tradition.	18	11	5	3	7	3	3. Our church is influenced by contemporary ideas and trends.
4. Our church's approach to social issues is basically educational, leaving any action to individual conscience.	15	7	8	1	4	6	4. Our church's approach to issues is decidedly activist. We have a proven history of taking a stand on social issues as a congregation.
5. Our church feels ethical decisions should be based on absolute standards.	11	10	8	7	5	5	5. Our church feels ethical decisions should be made in light of circumstances.
6. Our church emphasizes ABC relationships locally, nationally and internationally.	23	8	5	4	5	1	6. Our church minimizes ABC relationships locally, nationally and internationally.
7. Our church is often involved in community affairs.	15	11	9	5	3	3	7. Our church is seldom involved in community affairs.
8. Our church's ideas and plans are made by an informal network.	3	10	3	16	7	9	8. Our church's ideas and plans are made by the responsible board, committee or task force.
9. In making decisions our church is governed by boards.	18	7	4	9	7	3	9. In making decisions our church is governed by the congregation.
10. Decisions are communicated formally through worship, bulletins and newsletter.	23	10	2	5	4	2	10. Decisions are communicated informally by bulletin boards, posters, grapevine or other informal network.
11. Our church places much emphasis on giving to ABC national and world mission	25	11	7	5	2		11. Our church places little emphasis on giving to ABC national and world mission.

## Our Vision for Ministry

We asked the congregation to fill out a survey with four questions to see how they felt about our church and its ministry. Only twenty-five members responded. In looking over the responses, they seem to be common to the majority of the entire congregation.

### 1. What are the strengths of our church?

Racial and cultural diversity along with friendliness was expressed by seventeen members. The welcoming acceptance and caring atmosphere are extended to members and visitors alike. First Baptist appears to be like a “little United Nations.” Other strengths mentioned were the love of God for its people, active women’s groups, prayer shawl ministry, unity, enthusiasm, and generosity.



**PRAYER SHAWLS  
ready to be taken  
to Kent General  
Hospital’s cancer  
center.**

### 2. What are the needs of our church?

Overwhelmingly was the need to grow our church by bringing in young families with children, for they are the future. Twenty-four responses were recorded here. Also mentioned were developing family and youth engaging activities and modernizing more upbeat music in addition to our traditional hymns.

3. What do we do well?

Twenty-three responses listed the wonderful feeling of being welcomed, the embracing of diversity of cultures, our outreach ministries, organized services, Kid's Konnection, VBS, and holiday celebrations. We communicate well with each other through streaming services, emails, bulletins, prayer chains, and the Beacon, our newsletter.

4. What do our neighbors need from us?

They need to see that First Baptist is a church of doers of community involvement, showing love and kindness by reaching out and going into the community where the people are. In addition to providing food to the food pantry, we assist with Code Purple, prepare meals at shelters, invite friends and neighbors to holiday services, concerts, and other special activities. We have gone to the local elementary school to provide an afterschool program about God. We also use the media to keep everyone informed. We are also home for the Community Bible Study group.

5. What are the present ministries of this church as you perceive and/or experience them?

Kids Konnection, Food Pantry, Missions, Annual Missions Offerings, Prayer Chain, ABWM Regional Projects, Overseas Support/Contributions, Shoebox Ministries, Prayer Shawl Ministries

**Shoe Box  
Ministry boxes  
all set to be  
shipped for  
those abroad.**





6. What new opportunities do you see for your church?  
A venue for other churches or community groups to use our facilities.  
More home, hospital, and school visits when conditions are safer.
7. What are potential areas of growth for your church?  
Bringing more young people/families into our church.  
More upbeat music, expanding the choir.  
More neighborhood and community activities and events.



We love lots of  
music to praise  
our Lord!



## Church Life

At First Baptist Church of Dover, we gather for worship every Sunday at 11am. We also have an adult Sunday School class that meets at 9:30am every Sunday. Children have a combined Sunday School and Kids Church known as Kids Konnection during the adult worship service at 11am. Since Covid we have not had a specific nursery but instead have had Lullaby Lounge where the parents can watch over their youngest children and still see and participate in the worship service. It has a large window and speakers so they can hear and see what's going on in the service while their little ones can eat, nurse, be changed, play or rest without worry. We have an active membership of 80 to 100 people every Sunday with a total membership of 208. Every Wednesday, we have a Prayer Time where we join in prayer for all our members, friends, and nation. This time is in person, or one can call and be a part of the prayer time.



Downstairs we have a large Fellowship Hall with a full kitchen where we can prepare and have dinners and luncheons, VBS, meetings, and rent space for other groups. We try to have periodic get-togethers for a meal for the entire family.

On this level, we also have Sunday School rooms, offices for our pastor, secretary, food pantry, and custodian. We have a lift(elevator) for our elderly. We have many handicapped parking areas with depressions for wheelchairs.

Our church has a specific Constitution with by-laws that govern it. We have four main boards: Christian Education, Trustees, Deacons, and Mission. Under each of these are committees: Finance, Worship, Stewardship, Pastoral Relations, Staff

Relations, Nominating, and Constitution. Each of these Boards and Committees have a representative on a Coordinating Committee which meets monthly and is led by our church moderator. The pastor is included in every board and committee. We also have an active ABWM. Each of these boards and committees plans different activities in which the membership may participate like four annual mission offerings, Giving Tree, Love Gift, Prayer Shawl, Mimosa Ministry, Prayer Chain, Kids Saturday, Work Saturday, and many other holiday events.

Of course, we always strive to educate our members about our Savior and increase the membership of the church. Since we have a large elderly population, we try to do visits to those Seniors who are homebound and those in hospitals.



**CHRISTMAS  
AT  
FIRST BAPTIST**

## Worship Life

Here at First Baptist Church of Dover, we pride ourselves in having a Bible-based worship service. Our pastor and worship committee plan the worship service. Our children are included in this worship service before going to Kid's Konnection. Our lay leaders participate by giving the announcements, prayer concerns, and music leadership. Before church, everyone is greeted, first by the ladies at the welcome table and then by the ushers at the sanctuary doors. Prayer needs may be given orally or written and submitted to the lay leader. Responsive and unison readings are included. Communion is served the first Sunday of every month.

Currently, our worship service proceed as follows:

- Welcome and good morning!
- Announcements and remembrances
- Weekly calendar events
- Organ prelude
- Hymn and Call to Worship
- Lord's Prayer
- Offering and blessing
- Special Music
- Children leave for Kid's Konnection
- Prayers of the people
- Hymn
- Sermon
- Closing Hymn and Invitation
- Benediction and postlude
- Farewell by Pastor

Of course, this may be reorganized at any time by the pastor and worship committee.





**OUR LULLABYE LOUNGE**



**OUR FIRST ORGAN**



## First Baptist Church of Dover

We believe in what the Apostle's Creed says. We believe in God the Father, Jesus His Son, and the Holy Spirit. We hold the Bible as His word. We use these beliefs of the church to teach in today's society. We use our Christian faith to welcome all to our church with love, kindness, and compassion. We also believe in giving to charity and to missions worldwide for the betterment of those who have not heard of God's word so that they may grow in Christian knowledge. We believe in baptism by immersion, forgiveness of sins, and in respecting the pastor and his ministry. We also believe in teaching our youth about our beliefs and help them grow in their Christian faith.

We expect our pastor to affirm the same faith and beliefs to the church and to society. We believe the pastor is an overseer to help guide the church's boards and committees as well as missions locally and abroad. We expect our pastor to be a teacher and leader in our worship service. He should lead the worship service, guide us in outreach efforts, be loyal to the Baptist beliefs, work with civic and community leaders. S/He should also be competent in all areas of ministry. We feel the pastor should have freedom in the pulpit as God leads him in accordance with the scriptures. We promote a working relationship between the pastor and congregation. With all these beliefs and expectations, we believe the Holy Spirit will foster prosperity and growth of the church.



## Ministry Priorities

When someone thinks about a minister, they usually want to listen to the sermon to judge how good s/he is. To prepare for that sermon, it takes preparation time, research, background knowledge and information about the parishioners. Our congregation respects the pastor's presentation of God's words from the Bible in a timely fashion based on the Bible. (PS230) Tying it to people's lives makes it relevant for them. (PS130 and PS080)

We have had several wonderful pastors at First Baptist Church of Dover. However, they seemed to fall short in Pastoral Care. Even though each member is assigned to one of the Deacons, they still would like visits and phone calls from the pastor. They do not want to talk to deacons or a pastor's wife. They want the comfort only a pastor seems to bring. (PS210) We do have an elderly congregation which remembers the feelings a home visit produces. They want to talk about what lies ahead for them and be reassured of their beliefs. (PS300)

Our Boards and Committees often receive suggestions from the congregation on how the people can participate in the Worship Service and other church activities. These boards and committees then discuss them with the minister at our Coordinating Committee Meetings and Quarterly Business Meetings where we can vote on whether to implement the suggestions. Therefore, we'd like a minister who can share the worship service with the congregation. (PS310)

Every worship service, Bible study and Sunday School session teaches us new concepts about Jesus and Our Father. Organizing these classes help us to understand more about God and what He wants for us. (PS270)

One factor Covid showed many people whether they participated in church or not was the need for counseling. Changes were happening too fast. The fear of catching such a disease was frightening. Going through the disease gave many people PTSD. We need a pastor who will be available to talk to those who need help. Many young couples now have special venues for their weddings instead of using the church. Pre-marriage counseling is required. Our elderly need reassurance about the future. (PS060)

To be knowledgeable about God's Word, we would also expect our minister to be ordained with at least ten years of experience. We'd also appreciate if the pastor would have some musical background such as singing, playing an instrument, or able to read music. Our membership enjoys praising God through songs and music. Last, we'd like someone who relates well to youth. At one time we had a robust youth fellowship. Since Covid, we have no teens. We do have a good group of toddlers and elementary aged children who will soon need to have special consideration to keep them involved with the church.

We know that not all our priorities may be fulfilled. However, they have been listed above in the order of importance to the congregation of First Baptist Church.







### Our Search Committee

Front Row---Fred Corazza, K. Sue Moore, Lois Glading, Margaret Steinhoff, Gerri Lee, Chris Cottrell

Back Row---Milda Limson, Lorraine Leavel, Veronica Manno

Below---Percy Navarro, Ed Gilman, Agnes Robinson

