

# CHURCH PROFILE

*Prepared by the Interim Arrangements Committee  
March 2022*



## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH



230 South Fifth Street  
Williamsburg, Kentucky 40769  
606-549-0280  
[www.fbcwky.org](http://www.fbcwky.org)

# Profile of First Baptist Church, Williamsburg, KY

In the mountains of southeast Kentucky nestled between the Cumberland River, the railroad tracks, and Interstate 75, you will find the building of the First Baptist Church located at 230 South Fifth Street, Williamsburg, KY. The Church has remained at the same location since its formation despite a major fire in 1925 which destroyed the building. The first two buildings are gone, but the Church has continued to serve God and to share His message with the four corners of the earth.

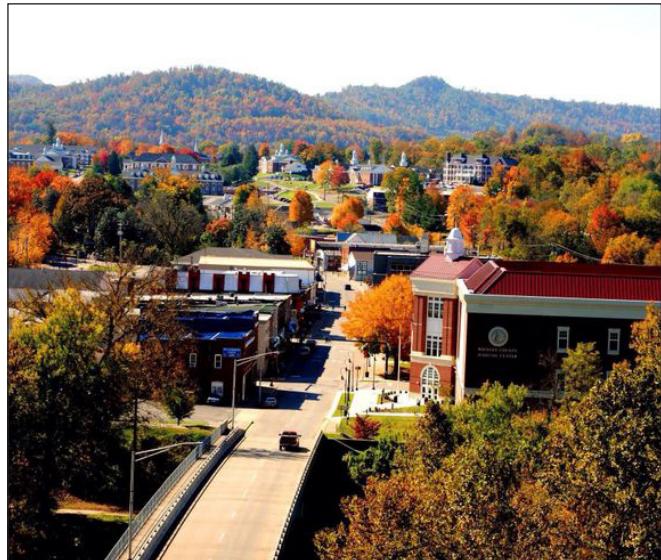
Welcome to First Baptist Church, Williamsburg, a community of believers and seekers, with a common desire to nurture community, connect with God, and discover how our lives can make a difference. People coming to FBCW will find friendship, love, and support. We minister to each other and to our neighbors, both in our community and the wider world. First Baptist Church is family-friendly and provides a variety of Sunday school classes, study groups, youth programs, a nursery, and a food pantry that helps families in need. Members and visitors can also see that music plays a vital part in our worship services and is another part of our identity. Our services include a blend of the great hymns of faith, along with worship and praise choruses. As a church, we strive to make a lasting difference in the lives of people, our community, and the world.

The purpose of this profile is to share who we are as a congregation, where we have been in the past, what we do as a Church today, and where we want to go in the days ahead.



## Who We Are

### *Our Community and Town*



FBC is located in the heart of Williamsburg, Kentucky, bordered by our downtown, residential neighborhoods, and the University of the Cumberlands. It is within easy walking distance of City Hall, the Dayspring Medical Clinic, and UC. Nearby is Bill Woods Park, where the Whitley County Public Library shows free movies and the city sponsors street dances on Friday nights in the summertime. Many people have come to "the Burg" expecting to stay only for a short season but have remained long-term because "it feels like home."

Williamsburg has over 5,000 residents. It is the county seat of Whitley County, which has a population of over 18,000 people. Our town is approximately two hours south of Lexington, KY and one and one-half hours north of Knoxville, TN on the I-75 Corridor.

### *Our Congregation*

FBC has 237 resident members. As with most congregations, we have been seriously challenged over the past two years. Due to Covid-19, we discontinued in-person Sunday school and Worship services during much of 2020. In the midst of this disruption, our church rose to the challenge of meeting the spiritual needs of our people by

learning to transmit weekly Sunday worship services and Wednesday night devotional presentations via Facebook and YouTube. Children's Sunday school and one adult Bible study class continued via Zoom.

Presently, we are averaging about 52 people in Sunday school, out of 150 people being enrolled. Our in-person service attendance has averaged 88 persons per Sunday from September 2021 to January 2022. Some are choosing to stay connected virtually until they feel safe in returning to the building. We look forward to a decrease in Covid cases and an increase in church attendance.

## Where Have We Been and What Are Our Affiliations

### *FBC Williamsburg Mission Statement*

In 2007, FBC adopted a mission statement. The statement was developed with the assistance and guidance of Pastor Ed Talley. The statement is as follows:

*Being the presence of Christ in the world by  
Celebrating the worship of God  
Connecting people to people  
Caring for others*

This mission is reflected in the following brief history of our Church and partnerships:

Throughout its history, FBC Williamsburg has been a Southern Baptist Church. Green Clay Smith, pastor of the Somerset Baptist Church, preached a revival, which resulted in the organization of the Church on September 19, 1883.

Members of our Church were concerned about improving the education of young people in Whitley County. In 1885, the Church started a Sunday school. In March 1888, the Mt. Zion Baptist Association, led by members of our Church, founded Cumberland College, and members of our Church were named the first Trustees. The first day of class was January 3, 1889.

During the financial crises of the early twentieth century, many KY Baptists were concerned that the Baptist schools were in need of more financial support. In 1908, the Kentucky Baptist Education Society was organized under the leadership of Dr. Ancil Gatliff of Williamsburg, who pledged \$100,000.

After seven years of financial support through the Kentucky Baptist Education Society, the General Association of Baptists of KY, meeting in 1915 at the First Baptist Church of Jellico, TN, adopted the budget plan which provided funding for all programs and institutions in KY. Later in 1925, this was the model for the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention.

For 23 years, the Church was known as the Williamsburg Baptist Church. In 1906, the name was changed to First Baptist Church of Williamsburg. It has associated itself with other Southern Baptist churches locally, across Kentucky, throughout the United States, and around the world.



### **Locally- South Union Mount Zion Baptist Association**

Locally, FBC was part of the South Union Mount Zion Baptist Association and remained in good (and strong)

fellowship with the other churches in the Association until the early 1990s. Following a study of Scriptures (especially the teachings of the New Testament), members of FBC became convinced that the Scriptures did not prohibit women from serving as deacons. Consequently, they elected Jo Florence Cordell as their first woman deacon in 1989.

Other churches in the Association disagreed with this understanding of New Testament teachings, and in 1990, FBC was “dis-fellowshipped” and has not been part of a Baptist association since that time.

## **Statewide – Kentucky Baptist Convention (KBC)**

Since its earliest days, FBC has participated with other Southern Baptist churches across Kentucky, helping to support several Baptist colleges/universities (including the University of the Cumberlands here in Williamsburg), as well as missions efforts and other Baptist causes in Kentucky. Three members of FBC (A.T. Siler; Eugene E. Siler, Sr., and Eugene E. Siler, Jr.) have served as moderator/president of the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky (which became the Kentucky Baptist Convention in 1961.)

Additionally, other members have served in various positions with the KBC, including service on the KBC Executive Board; secretary for statewide BSU work; arrangements committee for the 2003 KBC meeting; and various other KBC committees. One of our members served on the search committee that resulted in the election of the current state WMU director.



## **Statewide – Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Kentucky (CBF-KY)**

In the 1980s, as a result of trends occurring in the Southern Baptist Convention, a number of churches in various states met together and formed the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Subsequently, churches in a number of states (including Kentucky) formed a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship network of churches within their respective states. FBC began to support the organization known as CBF-Kentucky. This support included financial support, as well as personnel support, as some members of FBC became active in the CBF-Kentucky organization. Several have served on the CBF-Kentucky Coordinating Council.

In about 2016/2017, the national CBF organization made a significant change in personnel hiring practices. It began to consider for non-missionary, non-ordained positions, individuals who identified themselves as homosexual. While CBF-Kentucky does not endorse this position, the KBC went on record as opposing this decision. In 2018, the KBC Executive Board voted not to accept funds from any KBC-affiliated church that supported the CBF-Kentucky. This action was endorsed later that year when the KBC met for its annual meeting.

As a result of this and other actions, FBC continues to support the CBF-Kentucky and its ministries, but no longer supports the KBC.

## **Nationally – Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)**

Financially, FBC continues to support the SBC, though it has been many years since FBC Williamsburg has elected and sent any messengers to the annual SBC meeting.

## Worldwide – Baptist World Alliance (BWA)

FBC has been involved with the Baptist World Alliance almost from its beginnings. A former pastor of FBC, John Prestridge, moved from Williamsburg to Louisville, KY in 1897, to publish *The Baptist Argus*; a publication dedicated to sharing information about activities of Baptists from missionary appointments to pastoral changes to major actions of statewide Baptist organizations.

In 1905, Prestridge led in the formation of the Baptist World Alliance, an international organization of Baptists with 245 member bodies in 128 countries and territories. He was the International Executive Director for the first six years. The 2021 membership was estimated at 47 million members, accounting for about half the Baptists in the world. The BWA was organized and first met in London, England.

Through the years, several members of FBC Williamsburg have attended BWA meetings.

Members of our Church have been involved in mission work around the globe. Two members have gone out to serve on foreign mission fields. Rose Marlow, a member of our Church, served in China from 1921-49, and in Japan from 1949-56. Ethel Harmon, who grew up close to Williamsburg, served in Nigeria from 1938-71. The list of church members who have served in two-year assignments, summer missions, and short-term mission projects are numerous.

The best words to describe our Church are **Autonomous** and **Cooperating**. The Church cooperates with other Baptist churches, non-Baptist churches, and other worthy causes. The Church is autonomous and members are willing to stand alone when necessary.

*(The information above concerning our Church history and our Church affiliations has been provided by Dr. George Ramey and Dr. Kirby Clark. More information may be found in our FBC Church library. To Win the Prize was written by Dr. Chester Young. Dr. George Ramey wrote an update for the church's 125 Year Celebration.)*

## What We Do

Individuals in the church are encouraged to use their gifts to share God's love in their own way. Several work with college students in small group Bible study. Others make lap quilts/busy blankets for dementia patients in the local care facility and for young children in the local schools. Listed below are some programs that are offered at FBC Williamsburg.

### *Worship*



First Baptist Church meets on Sunday mornings in our sanctuary for in-person worship, which is currently led by our Interim Pastor, Dr. John Lepper. The services are recorded and re-broadcast the following week on the Church Facebook page as well as on the FBC YouTube Channel. Weekly Wednesday night devotionals are also posted. Recordings of worship services are burned onto disks and available to be given to people who do not have access to the internet.

Music is a very important part of FBC's identity. Our worship team, "Praise First," under the direction of Brian Logan, leads the congregation in praise songs as well as traditional songs from our hymnal. "Praise First" usually performs an inspirational song during the worship service. The Sanctuary Choir rehearses on Wednesday nights and often

presents an anthem to the congregation. Piano, guitar, and drums accompany the musicians on a regular basis, with the pipe organ joining on some occasions. During the Easter and Christmas seasons, our worship experience is enhanced by the Handbell Choir.

## Ministries

Our congregation reaches out to others in many ways and has developed a reputation for caring about the poor.

**Benevolence:** Since we live in a poverty-stricken area, FBC attempts to assist families struggling with utility bills. The Benevolence Ministry seeks to help families break a cycle of unpaid utility bills by meeting needs, so they can start at “ground zero.”

**Bereavement:** Taking time to provide a meal for a bereaved family, while demonstrating comfort and respect for their needs, is a hallmark of this ministry. It is one of the most locally well-known ministries of FBC and is one that other churches have used as a pattern for their aid to the bereft.

**\*Candyland:** Serving popcorn, hot chocolate, and candy, church members take children and their families through the plan of salvation on Halloween night. Literally hundreds of people walk through our Christian Life Center during the two hours allotted for “Trick-or-Treat” in our town.



**Deacon-Led Ministry Teams:** Active and Inactive Deacons, as well as church members, are invited to take part in at least one of the following Ministry Teams:

**In-reach** – ministry to members of the congregation

**Outreach** – ministry to people outside of the congregation

**Prayer** – ministry through activities that promote prayer

**Digital** – ministry to the church through the use of electronics



**Food Pantry:** Prior to the pandemic, the church met the needs of 40-70 families each month providing a minimum of 5-7 days of groceries. Working through Tri-Can and God’s Pantry of Lexington, we are also able to document needs and provide more services for these families in desperate need. The church supplements food items with a variety of other things, such as hygiene items, laundry detergent, and diapers. The church provides numerous volunteers and ample funds to assist in this ministry. We are considering expanding this ministry to home delivery for homebound people and a possible ministry working with God’s Pantry to do a monthly distribution for over one hundred families a month.

**\*G.E.M. (Greet, Eat and Meet):** Senior citizens meet in the Christian Life Center once a month for a time of fellowship with a meal.



**\*Local Missions Projects:** Repairing the homes of those unable to do so themselves has been an ongoing project of FBC. Funds for these projects have been raised through yard sales and local donations. Over the years, prior to the pandemic, a large number of church members enjoyed a day of fellowship and ministry several times a year building handicap ramps, putting in insulation, painting houses, doing minor building repairs, and repairing roofs. Some members have sponsored book fairs, art fairs, and have collected supplies for the schools. Others have sponsored coat drives, shoe giveaways,

and other ministry projects as ways to serve our community. Following a recent flood in Williamsburg, church members collected both laundry detergent and funds to assist families that had to rewash all of their belongings at a local laundromat. Members keep their eyes open for needs and respond accordingly.

**Olive Tree Shoe Box Ministry:** Working with CBF missionary Scarlette Jasper, we prepare 40-50 shoe boxes for children in McCreary, Pulaski, and Wayne County, Kentucky, and Scott County, Tennessee. Shoe boxes contain toys, winter outerwear, and school supplies for kids who face some of the greatest needs in our country. Our missions committee takes the lead in this project.



**Prayer Cards:** Each week members of the church are invited to write out prayer cards to those hospitalized, bereaved, in care facilities, or at home and struggling with health or other issues. Cards are provided on Sunday morning and are mailed by the church office administrator weekly.

**Prayer Chain:** A prayer chain, via your cell phone, is up and running through the Remind App. Facebook has also been actively used to pass along prayer concerns.



**\*Upward Basketball and Cheerleading:** FBC works with Main Street Baptist Church to provide an opportunity to teach both sports skills and God's Word to children (and their families) throughout the Williamsburg and Whitley County area.

**\*Vacation Bible School:** Children from age 4 through 6th grade (with youth serving as workers) participate in VBS at FBC. Held late in the summer, our VBS reaches out to children from all over the community, both churched and un-churched. This past year, backpacks of school supplies were handed out to assist families at this expensive time of year.

***\*All ministries with this symbol are on-hold or down-sized due to the pandemic and will resume at such a time as is deemed safe.***

## Missions

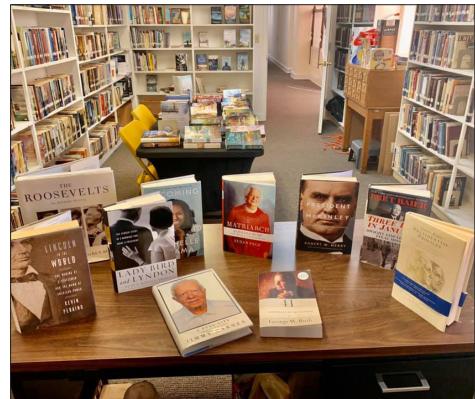
**Missionary Support:** We support both SBC and CBF mission offerings throughout the year. The church is less interested in the "brand" as it is in giving to missionaries throughout the world.

**Missions Committee:** An active missions committee has led in a wide variety of outreach. They spearhead the annual Annie Armstrong Mission Offering for North American Missions, the Eliza Broadus Offering for Kentucky Missions, and the International Mission Offerings for both the SBC and the CBF. They encouraged members to donate laundry detergent and hygiene items to be given away at Food Pantry. They led in the giving of backpacks of school supplies for VBS attendees. In the past (before the pandemic) the Missions Committee supported other groups in the church which gathered coats and shoes to be distributed on Food Pantry nights. They provided food as well as man (and woman) power to help with home repair projects. They have kept missions and service before the eyes of the church.



## *Discipleship*

**Library:** The church lending-library provides reading and video material for church members and is a resource for Bible study and Sunday school teachers.



**Sunday Bible Study:** A variety of classes for adults, youth, and children provide opportunities to increase Bible knowledge and to contemplate real-world applications to these studies. Classes vary in content using quarterlies from Smyth & Helwys, LifeWay, and individual book studies.

## *Fellowship*

**Christian Life Center Usage:** University of the Cumberlands, Williamsburg City School, and Whitley County Schools' sports teams frequently request to use the CLC for practices, as do Home School Co-op groups. The CLC was the place to be during Upward Basketball season! First Baptist, prior to the pandemic, opened their kitchen and CLC for international students at UC to prepare and serve meals.



**Fellowship Times:** The Church and Sunday school classes find ample opportunities to gather together for fun, movies, and food! Whether it's a Men's Bible Class Breakfast, a showing of "Fireproof," or a dessert tasting fair, FBC members love spending time with one another.

*(The information above concerning what we do has been provided by Mrs. Norma Dunston.)*

## Where We Want to Go

In December 2021, 45 members and regular attendees responded to a questionnaire (also referred to as “survey” below) from the Interim Arrangements Committee. That survey provided the primary input regarding where we are as a congregation and where we want to go. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions were posed in the survey. The Interim Arrangements Committee has closely examined the answers.

### *Demographics of the Survey*

The survey responses came from a range of ages within our congregation, though predominately from people who are 50+, as shown in Figure 1 below. Respondents were nearly equally divided between male and female.

Question 14: Age		
Response	Percentage	Number
Under 20	0%	0
20-29	0%	0
30-39	5%	2
40-49	7%	3
50-59	25%	11
60-69	30%	14
70-79	20%	9
80+	14%	6

Figure 1: Age of questionnaire respondents

It was interesting to note the responses to Question 11: How long have you been a member or regular attender at FBC Williamsburg?

- 52% - have been members 30+ years
- 16% - have been members 20-29 years
- 14% - have been members 10-19 years
- 11% - have been members 5-9 years

Also interesting were the responses to Question 12: On average, about how many times have you attended, participated virtually in, or been involved with FBC's worship services in the past 12 months?

- 73% - four or more times a month
- 23% - two or three times a month
- 2% - about once a month
- 2% - about once or twice every three months

It would appear that those who participated in the survey are truly invested in FBC Williamsburg, both in number of years as members and in recent worship attendance.

## ***How do we feel about our Church?***

In the questionnaire, we asked the congregation to rate their agreement or disagreement with this statement: "I have a strong sense of belonging to this Church." We found that 36% of the respondents agreed, with 53% agreeing strongly, for a total of 89% feeling a strong sense of belonging. Additionally, as seen in Figure 2 below, 80% of respondents cited "my relationships with people in the congregation" and 69% noted "my love for this Church" as primary reasons why they keep coming back. Thirty-one percent listed "other FBC ministries/programs," such as our music ministry, choir, youth program, and food ministry as reasons they come back.

Question 3: What are the reasons you keep coming back?		
Response	Percentage	Number
My relationships with people in the congregation	80%	36
My love for this church	69%	31
My family	51%	23
Other FBC ministries / programs	31%	14
A FBC minister / staff	13%	6
FBC's website or social media	2%	1

Figure 2: Why I keep coming to FBCW: The percentages total well above 100% because respondents could identify all that apply.

Further, the survey respondents were asked an open-ended question where they were to "describe the current identity of First Baptist Church Williamsburg." Forty people wrote responses, some of which included words such as "accepting," "welcoming," "caring," and "community-minded." There was also mention of "rich heritage" and "strong Baptist faith." In describing the environment at FBC some expressed that they found "a sense of belonging," a "beautiful place to worship," "a place where they were able to celebrate Christ through good music." Individuals said that we are a "diverse body of Christians" who "serve the Lord and the community."

The Word Cloud on the following page illustrates the words used when the respondents were asked in Question 1, "What is ONE word you would use to describe FBC Williamsburg?"



Figure 3: Words used to describe FBC

## *What challenges do we see facing our church?*

As shown in Figure 4 below, the three most significant challenges identified by the respondents were:

- 91% - Decreasing attendance and participation
  - 89% - Aging congregation
  - 45% - Need for more volunteer support

Question 7: What are the most significant challenges that you see FBC Williamsburg facing over the next 3-5 years?		
Response	Percentage	Number
Decreasing attendance and participation	91%	40
Aging congregation	89%	39
Volunteer support	45%	20
Lay leadership	30%	13
Changing national and local culture	27%	12
Lack of diversity / ministerial leadership	20%	9
Financial resources	14%	6
Congregational conflict	7%	3
Facilities challenges	5%	2

Figure 4: Challenges to FBCW: The percentages total well above 100% because respondents could identify as many as four.

*What opportunities do we see ahead for our church?*

Most of the respondents to the survey mentioned six of these possibilities:

- 77% - Developing and maintaining a strong ministry to families with preschoolers, children, and youth
  - 41% - Reaching the influx of new families moving into the Williamsburg area
  - 39% - Re-imagining new ways to help those in need in our congregation and our community
  - 32% - Employing innovative uses of technology to communicate with people inside and outside our congregation
  - 32% - Adding a wider range of worship opportunities
  - 29% - Offering our campus grounds as a place where people in the neighborhood can gather for service opportunities and fellowship

Additionally, the respondents spoke through the survey about whether FBC places the right amount of emphasis, too much emphasis, or too little in 12 aspects of FBCW's engagement.

Five aspects that at least 49% of respondents listed as needing more emphasis are listed in Figure 5 below, along with the level of satisfaction with all 12 areas.

- 62% - Sharing the good news of the gospel with the unchurched and the unsaved
- 60% - Helping the congregation discover and use their spiritual gifts
- 54% - Providing Christian education and spiritual formation for children and youth
- 51% - Helping the congregation become stronger disciples of Jesus
- 49% - Providing Christian education and spiritual formation for adults

Question 6: Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the current amount of emphasis FBCW places on each of the following?				
Response	Satisfied	Needs more emphasis	Too much emphasis	No Opinion
Offering worship that provides a meaningful experience in a traditional manner.	67%	13%	16%	4%
Offering worship that provides an experience in a contemporary manner.	53%	29%	11%	7%
Providing Christian education and spiritual formation for children and youth.	36%	55%	0%	9%
Providing Christian education and spiritual formation for adults.	47%	49%	0%	4%
Helping the congregation become stronger disciples of Jesus.	49%	51%	0%	0%
Sharing the good news of the gospel with the unchurched and the unsaved.	29%	62%	2%	7%
Engaging in ministry and service to people in our congregation who are in need.	64%	36%	0%	0%
Engaging in ministry and service to people in our community who are in need.	67%	31%	2%	0%
Providing fellowship opportunities for the congregation.	53%	40%	0%	7%
Helping the congregation discover and use their spiritual gifts.	29%	60%	0%	11%
Supporting the global mission of FBC and the Christian faith.	66%	20%	7%	7%
Addressing social and racial injustice issues in the community.	30%	34%	7%	30%

Figure 5: Opportunities available to FBCW

Respondents were asked "What specific changes do you hope FBC will make over the next 3-5 years?"

Over one-third expressed a need for consistent outreach to young families, young adults, and local college students. An emphasis should also be placed on visiting those within the congregation who are sick, in nursing homes, and those who no longer attend. A balance should be kept between supporting an aging demographic and reaching younger people. (Several respondents felt that the Child Day Care program should be reestablished in order to reach younger working families.)

Some respondents felt that the church should invest in a greater presence on social media, using live streaming on Sundays and considering logo changes to establish better “branding” within the surrounding community. Cosmetic improvements to our aging facilities would promote a less formal, more inviting presence.

Besides finding a new pastor, a few felt there is a need for additional full-time staff – specifically a Youth Minister and an Associate Pastor.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to answer the question, “What specific things do you hope will be unchanged at FBC over the next 3-5 years?”

There were 36 answers to this question. In looking at the responses, we see them falling into the following headings:

**Current (blended) worship:** nearly 30% like the blended approach to the music FBC uses in its worship. They like the current level of contemporary music, and don’t want it to become more contemporary. Another 10% preferred a more traditional worship style.

**Outreach to Community/Caring for Others:** nearly 30% emphasized FBC’s outreach into the community and its various local ministries. These respondents also appreciate the way in which people are cared for and made to feel welcomed whether they are visitors or members.

**Acceptance of Others:** Nearly one-fourth emphasized the “nourishing and accepting environment” present at FBC. Respondents mentioned the diversity of groups within FBC yet “each group remains respectful to the others” or “love and support for each other.”

**Friendliness:** *Note: This might seem like a duplication of “Acceptance of Others” but in looking at the responses, these two headings seemed different enough to warrant two different headings.* If this category were combined with Acceptance of Others, the combined category would account for nearly 40% of responses. Respondents used the words “friendly” and “friendliness,” and hope this will continue to describe FBC.

**Leadership:** Nearly 14% of the respondents included the idea of shared pastoral/ministerial and lay leadership, as well as male and female leaders.

## In Conclusion

First Baptist Church of Williamsburg still desires to be the presence of Christ in the world by  
*continuing to celebrate the worship of God* through meaningful in-person worship services as well as through social media presentation;  
*connecting people to people* through small group Bible studies and discipleship-building activities as well as ministry projects that touch people locally and globally;  
*caring for others* through meeting the needs of young families as well as aging congregants.

We eagerly look forward to meeting the person who will become our next pastor and walk with us on mission.

### Interim Arrangements Committee

Kirby Clark                    Philip Johnson  
Terresa Etter - Chair        Jane Whitaker

John Lepper, Interim  
Pastor

(Special Thanks to Stacy Manning for editing  
and Rebecca Conn for design / layout)