First Baptist Church of West Allis
1576 S 78th St, West Allis, WI 53214
e-mail: firstbaptistwestallis@gmail.com
website: www.firstbaptistwestallis.org

Who We Are

We are a community of followers of Jesus Christ, seeking to be an example to all of the faith and fellowship to which God has called His people. We are located in West Allis, an increasingly diverse suburb of Milwaukee, in a slowly growing metropolitan area of 1.5 million. There are approximately 100 people who are either active members of the church or active participants in church life. We value the friendly, diverse, intergenerational, family atmosphere of our church.

We celebrate a long and rich history, dating from the founding of the church in 1841. We like our traditions: the annual Holiday Bazaar, the Christmas Eve Candle Lighting Service, the annual Bike Ride along the Hank Aaron State Trail, the annual Corn Roast on the church lawn, potluck meals before business meetings. But we were flexible enough to cope with a coronavirus pandemic by offering online worship services, holding outdoor worship on the church lawn, and conducting business, Bible study, and Sunday School via Zoom.

We are affiliated with the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin and ABC-USA.

A Brief History

Early settlers voted on May 1, 1841 to dissolve the Milwaukee Baptist Church, which had been founded in the Walker’s Point section of Milwaukee, for the purpose of reorganizing in North Greenfield (now West Allis). The first church met in the home of Eber Cornwall, whose farm was about half a mile west of the current church building.

Today’s building incorporates the original building. That first structure was built in 1869 near what is now S 83rd St and W National Ave, and moved twice to arrive at its current location, inside our South Wing. The sanctuary was constructed in 1929 and the Educational Wing was dedicated in 1960.

Several projects have improved the building. The interior of the South Wing was renovated in the 1990s, an accessibility project which expanded bathrooms and installed an elevator was completed in 2007, and a multi-year project to restore our stained glass windows is nearing completion.

The church has a heart for welcoming refugees to the Milwaukee area. In the 1970s, the church helped to sponsor two Vietnamese refugees. From 2008 to 2015, the church hosted a congregation of refugees from Myanmar. Refugee parents sent their children to our Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. Even today, many children from refugee families attend our church on Sunday mornings.
On December 12, 2021, the church celebrated the ministry of Rev. Mark Weisser with presentations and gifts at the end of the worship service. Pastor Mark had the longest tenure of any pastor of the church, serving from 1992 until his retirement at the end of 2021.

**Church Life**

Sunday School for children and adults is offered throughout the year on Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. During the coronavirus pandemic, there was a single intergenerational class that met by Zoom.

Our members and friends gather at 10:15 a.m. for Sunday morning worship. Congregational singing consists of a blend of praise songs and traditional hymns. A children’s story, told by a lay person, special music by one of the choirs, a time of prayer, the morning scripture, and the sermon are normal components of the service. The church is blessed to have an accomplished musician, Mary Schecher, who serves as Music Director, Minister of Worship, organist, and pianist. She directs the Chancel Choir, the hand bell choirs, and, as if that were not enough, educates and inspires the congregation with her articles in *Monday News and Announcements* (weekly email) and *The Friendly Communicator* (monthly newsletter).

Following the Sunday morning service, we greet each other downstairs in Fellowship Hall, where we enjoy coffee or juice and other treats.

On Tuesdays, a work group gathers at church to take care of maintenance tasks and enjoy fellowship over coffee and doughnuts. Bell choir and Chancel Choir rehearsals take place on Wednesday evenings.

The Church Constitution has served us well. The three boards (Diaconate, Trustees, and Christian Education) meet at 7 p.m. on the second Monday of the month. The Church Council meets at 8 p.m. on that same Monday. Congregational meetings are held on the third Sundays of January, April, and October, following worship, and normally following a potluck meal.

When members or friends request prayer, they are lifted up by an active Prayer Chain.

The Board of Christian Education normally conducts a summer Vacation Bible School, held for four or five consecutive evenings. The Board encourages children and youth to take advantage of the ABC of Wisconsin camping program by covering 75% of their camping fees. In 2021, fifteen of our children and youth went to Camp Tamarack.

An active ABWomen’s Ministries group meets monthly and raises funds for missions by sponsoring the Annual Holiday Bazaar and other events. An ABMen’s group meets occasionally for breakfast and sponsors several recreational or work activities each year. The Golden Guys and Gals group (3 G’s) provides social activities for members and friends who are 50 years old or older (ID’s are not checked!).
Our members have a variety of opinions on political, social, and theological issues, but we agree on basic Baptist principles such as soul liberty and the priesthood of all believers. Those principles help us to get along well with each other and to work together productively.

**Looking Outward**

Mission giving is a priority at First Baptist. Four ABC-USA offerings (America for Christ, One Great Hour of Sharing, World Mission Offering, and Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering) are well supported, and 8.5% of the unified budget goes to missions. We take a special interest in ABC missionaries Jeni Pedzinski and Eric and Yuree Lembke, who serve in Thailand.

Locally, we have connections with several non-profit organizations. We employ a custodian through the Grand Avenue Club, which provides opportunities for adults who have experienced mental illness; we collect food items to give to the pantry at the Milwaukee Christian Center; we help to prepare and serve the meal for the homeless at St. Benedicts; we collect clothing to donate to the Guest House of Milwaukee; we prepare gift bags for students at Dottke High School; several of our members volunteer at the Myanmar Learning Center, which provides citizenship classes and educational support for refugee families; and we host a recovery group that meets at the church on Thursday evenings.

**The Role of the Pastor**

The pastor is the spiritual leader of the congregation. He or she should have a genuine enthusiasm for a calling to serve the congregation as a guide and fellow traveler on a journey of faith. He or she should meet all ABC-USA requirements for ordination.

At this point in the life of the church, we are looking for an energetic pastor who can:

1. Preach sermons that challenge and inspire the congregation in their daily lives;
2. Make connections with church members and friends in their homes or other settings;
3. Oversee the online presence of the church, the weekly email, and monthly newsletter;
4. Seek to lead people to make decisions for Christ and join the church;
5. Play a leading role in a youth ministry for teens;
6. Motivate people to discover and use their gifts for ministry in their daily lives.
7. Provide counseling or referrals to those going through difficult times; and
8. Develop relationships with neighbors, local churches, and community organizations.

Compensation includes salary, housing, medical insurance, pension, and social security offset. Continuing education is encouraged and funds are provided for that purpose. Four weeks of paid vacation per year are given for rest and renewal.
The West Allis Community

West Allis is a city of 60,000 that is adjacent to Milwaukee, the largest city in Wisconsin. Downtown Milwaukee is 6 miles east of the church. Chicago is 100 miles to our south and Madison, the capital of Wisconsin, is 70 miles west. Both Milwaukee and Chicago are ports on Lake Michigan. The Wisconsin State Fair is held each year in West Allis—State Fair Park is just two blocks from the church. The popular West Allis Farmers’ Market is one mile away.

A campus of the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) is located in West Allis. Marquette University, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Alverno College, and Concordia University are just a few of the colleges and universities in the metropolitan area.

Our church members like their sports teams, and root for the Milwaukee Brewers, Milwaukee Bucks, Green Bay Packers, Wisconsin Badgers, and Marquette Golden Eagles. The Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, and the Milwaukee Ballet Company are among the many performing arts organizations in the area. And don’t forget about the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Milwaukee Public Museum, and the Milwaukee County Zoo.

Outdoor enthusiasts appreciate the fishing in Lake Michigan and many other lakes in the area. The Ice Age Trail, a thousand-mile hiking trail that winds through the landscapes left by the glaciers, passes within 20 miles of West Allis. Golf courses abound. Wisconsin has a great system of State Parks. In the winter, cross-country and downhill skiing are nearby, weather permitting.