

sardis signposts

baptist church

a spiritually progressive community of faith

5811 Sardis Road / Charlotte, NC 28270 / 704.362.0811
SardisBaptistCharlotte.org

VIRTUAL WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday at 9:45 AM
Virtual Sunday School

Sunday at 11:00 AM
Virtual Morning Worship

Wednesday at 7:00 PM
Virtual Sardis Academy

REOPENING THE MEETINGHOUSE - SAFETY FIRST

We are anxious to return to the Sardis Meetinghouse! It has been emotionally difficult to be physically separated from our church family for such a long time, but the difficulty of separation pales in comparison to the difficulties we would face if a decision to reopen too soon led to illness of a Sardis friend. We believe slow and steady is a wiser adage than fast and furious, and we will err on the side of caution and safety.

Given the circumstances, we feel we have been able to provide meaningful worship and virtual gatherings using technology available to us. Worship over Zoom is not perfect, but it has allowed most of us to stay connected to one another. Sardis staff, deacons, and trustees gathered together at the end of May, and developed a plan for deeper connection with Sardis friends unable to participate in virtual worship and events. We also discussed the possibility of having staff members gather together to broadcast worship from the sanctuary. Amanda Lewis shared a sobering story about a sister church who did so. One of their staff members was unknowingly infected with the coronavirus at the time, causing a great deal of turmoil for their congregation. Deacons and trustees agreed that for the time being, Sardis staff members will continue to bring worship to you from their homes. This decision will be reevaluated at the end of June.

We know this pandemic has robbed us of many comfortable ways our Sardis community operates, and we recognize that Sardis will not feel like we want Sardis to feel for quite some time. Medical experts expect it will be 12-24 months before a vaccine is available for Covid-19. When the time comes to open our meetinghouse doors, many Sardis friends may not feel comfortable attending services.

We will move forward during this time of transition one step at a time, all the while considering what is best for the greater good.

Staff, deacons, and trustees appreciate your patience and participation in our efforts. We welcome your input into the process. Staff is planning an opportunity for a churchwide forum to discuss these matters on Wednesday, June 24th. Stay tuned to your Sardis emails for more information.



She knew where she wanted to go
and came to trust that steps,
rather than speed,
were the way she wanted to get there.

JUNE VIRTUAL GATHERINGS

Regular virtual events will continue in June: Morning Worship, Sunday School, Friday Prayers, Weekly Devotions, and Sardis Tunes. In addition, we have several special events to note.

June 7th @ 11: Graduate Recognition Sunday
There will be a special time during our worship service to recognize members of the class of 2020. See page 4 for details.

June 10th @ 7: Virtual Communion Gathering
Bring bread and wine to your laptop table to join in community with Sardis friends. We will have a brief time of communion worship, followed by conversation starters to help us stay connected.

June 14th @ Noon: Worship Development
The Worship Development Team will meet virtually following worship. We will evaluate virtual worship and events, as well as discuss ways to incorporate lay voices.

June 17th @ 7: Confederate Monuments
Ryan Andrew Newson, classmate of Bob from Divinity School, will join us virtually to discuss his new book, *Cut in Stone: Confederate Monuments and Theological Disruption*. In the book, Newson contends that we cannot fully understand or disrupt confederate monuments without attending to the convictions that give them their power.

June 24th @ 7: Virtual Conference and Forum
Our last conference was cancelled due to the necessity of social distancing. We've rescheduled a virtual conference in order to bring you up-to-date on church work happening behind the scenes. The primary item on the agenda is Covid-19 and Church Operations. We invite and encourage you to share feedback and ideas.



I LIFT UP MINE EYES...

Rev. Bob Stillerman

Some thoughts from a pastor in quarantine:

Prayers: One of the things I've missed during our virtual worship services is the ability to participate in extemporaneous prayer – we share our joys and concerns in real time. To me, there's nothing more special than creating sacred, safe spaces where our congregation can share things that are happening in our lives, and never feel as if those things are too trivial or too weighty to voice aloud. In the interim, a small group of us have been participating in virtual Friday prayers. We've shared our joys and concerns, not to mention making art and paper airplanes, singing hymns, and laughing a lot. We want you to know there's plenty of space for all to take part.

Being Baptist: We spent the month of May exploring our denominational roots in a Wednesday evening study. When I planned this discussion, I imagined a lot of conversation around the what and how of our congregation: sacraments, polity, theology, etc. What I discovered is that you are much more interested in the why and who of our congregation: the expression of our community's spirit and the mindset of each individual in relation to the whole. I think that's what makes us *Sardis Baptist*: we're not a community of procedures, we're a community of neighbors discerning the call of God's spirit in our lives, both individually and collectively.

Ahmaud Arbery: Last week, Ruthye shared an article with me from the Bitter Southerner by Jim Barger. We both noted his connection to Furman (Go Paladins!), but more so, we were moved by Barger's poignant, raw, and challenging words. Barger explores the community Ahmaud Arbery was a part of, and he invites us to consider the systematic injustices that led to Arbery's tragic death. This is not an easy read, in fact it's quite painful. But I think it's a helpful one as we seek to discern how we might be an expression of God's love and justice in our community.

bittersoutherner.com/2020/ahmaud-arbery-holds-us-accountable

Wow!!! We have a pretty remarkable staff, Sardis Baptist Church! Kathryn has been amazing, keeping us connected with wonderful content, and steering us through new technologies. Hilary and Irena have managed to share their musical gifts with consistency and grace, showing us that God's spirit is Zoom-certified. Jonathan continues to ease our hearts and minds on Mondays with thoughtful devotions and much needed humor. Tillie keeps fostering a spirit of dialogue for our Adult Sunday School class. And all of these five wonderful people have worked hard to produce a style of intentional worship that is SO authentic and thoughtful. And this is to say nothing of Chris and Jim, who have kept our finances humming, our trustees who have kept our grounds maintained, and Doris who has kept our building clean. What a team!!!

Stay safe and be well, everyone!
Bob

#dearquarantinediary



Sardis People: Donna Barger

Donna Barger had a hard time letting go of her job as Southeast Director of Clinical Services for **We Care TLC**. She built clinics from the ground up and poured her elan vital into the management of them. **We Care** brings medical services directly to patients and has care centers on-site (or near site) of the patient's workplace or facility and is funded by the employer. Government, colleges, and private industry are clients of **We Care**. One of Donna's responsibilities was to manage the medical department of the Troup County, Georgia jail. Retirement has not abated her concern for the health of inmates during this time of Covid crisis. Hence the difficulty in the letting go of a job which had become high anxiety.

Donna grew up in Asheville with four younger brothers and graduated from A. C. Reynolds High School where she was a member of the Rocket's band. She received her R.N. degree from Cabarrus School of Nursing and has worked at both CMC and Mercy Hospitals (currently designated Atrium).

Retirement has given Donna the "remarkable gift of peace, time to be and take a breath." In conjunction with the stay-at-home directive, she now has more time to do the things she enjoys most: Working out. Walking four beagles and a chihuahua. Managing the space in her yard, which is so rejuvenating to her that she considers it spiritual work. That includes laying down stone pathways and managing a pond with 6 goldfish. Reading. Currently, she is re-reading Vanity Fair and perusing Dying of Whiteness (how racial resentment is tearing America apart).

Donna has been married to David Garrison for nineteen years. Between them, they have five children and two grandchildren. They have found Sardis, "too good to be true," but are savoring that it is.

WE WANT TO SAY A BIG
THANK
YOU

It takes many hands, feet, hearts and minds to do the work of Sardis Baptist Church. We are grateful to all of you for the various ways you support the ministries of this special church!

Thanks to Bennett Henkel and Amanda Lewis for hosting another successful night of virtual trivia! The competition was stiff, but once the points were tallied the Stillerman family came out on top once again! Congratulations!

We appreciate those who have taken loving care of the Lenten Roses recently transferred from Mary Jane's garden to ours: Donna Barger, Jonathan Eidson, David Garrison, Billie Hutchison, Debbie Kidd, Alcie Kreutzer, Kathryn Kreutzer, Jamaury Linen, Susan Phillips, & Bob Stillerman.

We are grateful to those able to make our intercontinental conversation with Grove Lane Baptist Church a possibility. Thank you Melissa Bowlin, Amanda Lewis, Howell Peterson, Susan Phillips, and Bob Stillerman,

Sardis friends have truly enjoyed regular songs sung and posted by members of the Sardis Baptist Choir. Thank you: Melissa Bowlin, Ruthye Cooley, Debbie Kidd, Hilary McIntyre, and Kristin Parker.

We are thankful to all Sardis friends who have helped us stay connected during this time apart: Tillie Duncan, Jonathan Eidson, Irena Hramenkova, Kathryn Kreutzer, Hilary McIntyre, Bob Stillerman — and not just our staff members, but each of you who have participated in various ways to keep our church family vibrant!

We work hard to acknowledge all those who give their time, talents, and tithes to the ministries of Sardis. You are a generous congregation! Sometimes we fail to offer proper gratitude to the persons who deserve it most. We offer special thanks for those whose gifts have gone unnoticed. We are grateful!

Prayers of Sardis Friends

Fay Alderman ▪ Jourdan Askins, son-in-law of Jo Tiddy
▪ Gaye Booth, friend of Ellen Dillard and Marge Fowler
▪ Jim Bowlin, Melissa's father ▪ Melissa Bowlin ▪ Sarah Bowlin Criss ▪ Margaret Branton, Amanda Lewis' grandmother
▪ Don Brunton, father of Mark ▪ Maria Byrd ▪ "Coach", friend of Marge Fowler ▪ Sonny Cole, Marge Fowler's brother
▪ Ben Cooley, Ruthye's husband ▪ Elzene Corbett, Janet Beltzhoover's mother ▪ Nancy Darnell ▪ Mollie Gilmore, granddaughter of Jim & Becky Owen ▪ Shell Green, niece of Doris Waiters ▪ Janie Harris ▪ Gennelle Hall, Mother of Jessica Wallace (Bullies 2 the Rescue) ▪ Eric, Peyton, and Ted, nephews of Janie Harris ▪ Joanne Henkel, Bennett's grand-mother ▪ Don Hill ▪ Eugene Hill, Don's son
▪ Harvie Hill, Kathryn Kreutzer's father ▪ Karen—CBF North Africa Field Personnel ▪ Vicki Lewis, Amanda's aunt ▪ Bobbie, Katie Mata's grandmother ▪ Family and friends of Sandra Miller, relative of Jonathan Eidson
▪ Rachael Phipps, friend of Betty Gunz Cheryl Raugh, friend of Kristin Parker ▪ Mala Reynolds ▪ Bob Rowland, Robin's father ▪ John Simpson ▪ Catherine (Kitty) Tate, sister of Becky Proctor ▪ Family and friends of Susan Tuttle, friend of Phillips ▪ Heather Robinson Weir, friend of Susan Phillips ▪ Katie Wiebke, daughter of Mark & Amy



HAPPY WORKIVERSARY!

June 1st – Tillie Duncan – 21 Years

June 1st – Kathryn Kreutzer – 5 Years

June 19th – Hilary McIntyre – 4 Years

Congratulations!

*Congratulations to Magay Shepard!
She was included in the Forbes 2020 List of Top Women Wealth Advisors in the United States.
Join us in celebrating her accomplishments!
[Forbes.com/top-women-advisors](https://www.forbes.com/top-women-advisors)*



GRADUATION CELEBRATION - INSTRUCTIONS FOR PASTOR JONATHAN

Are you ready to give our graduates a celebration! They've had to give up so much. Prom! Graduation! Graduation Worship! While we can't celebrate them the way we'd like to, we can give them something no other class at Sardis has ever had.

Here's the plan: Pastor Bob has procured some 2020 glasses for two purposes. First, we'd like you to wear the spectacles and record a video "well wish" for the graduates. This year's graduates are Joey Askins (Southwest Onslow), Lauren Clark (NC State), Matthew Mosley-Mair (East Meck), and Reid Sigmon (Providence). Second, we would like for everyone to put them on when we recognize our graduates during worship Sunday, June 7th.

We also have beachballs available if you'd like to use one in your video. Families might be able to toss them around like we did in the old ice breaker game. Someone throws the ball to you and when you catch it, you say something - in this case, about the graduates. The spectacles and beachballs are available at the meetinghouse. Let us know if you'd like us to leave some in a safe place for you to pickup. We can also deliver them to you if needed. Together, we can make this a celebration our graduates will remember! This is one of those situations when numbers make a difference. Wouldn't it be a great statement for our graduates to see our Zoom screen displaying Sardis members donned with Class of 2020 glasses? Let's show them what they mean to us!

INTRODUCING SARDIS STORYTIME

Our special Zoom gatherings have been geared mostly towards the adults among us. This month, we're adding an additional event for the youngest of our Sardis friends. Pastor Jonathan is coordinating *Sardis Storytime*. Kids of all ages are invited to join us on Zoom. The date, time and login information will be shared in an upcoming email.



While we are physically distanced from each other, Sardis kids are growing up fast! Sardis friends, young and old, want to be involved in that growing up process. It is not easy for our little church buddies to cultivate relationships when they can't congregate for playtime, but we think this is a way to bring our kids together virtually and enjoy some online time with interested intergenerational friends too.

Reading aloud to children has been shown to improve reading, writing and communication skills, logical thinking and concentration, and general academic aptitude, as well as inspire a lifelong love of reading. If you would like to read a children's book during Sardis Storytime, please let Jonathan know and he will make it happen.

FUN FACTS WITH SARDIS FRIENDS

How well do we REALLY know each other? Did you know Melissa Bowlin auditioned as a clown at the Ringling Brothers Circus (and was accepted!)? Melissa is collecting interesting, unique, or funny facts about friends of Sardis Baptist Church. She will compile an anonymous list for distribution and ask you to guess who they are about. A few days later, she will share the answers. How many can you guess correctly. This will be a fun way for us to learn some new things about one another while we remain physically distant. Thanks to Melissa Bowlin for organizing a fun way to connect our church family! **Email your facts to her before June 15th: melbowlin315@gmail.com.**



Election season is upon us, and elections matter! Five months from now we will select representatives for federal, state, and local offices: US President. US and NC House and Senate Representatives, Governor, Judges, School Boards, and others. Sardis Baptist has no opinion on who you vote for; we just encourage you to do so.

Although NC is moving forward slowly with plans to reopen our state, we know there are people in the Covid-19 high risk category who may not feel comfortable converging in crowded precincts on November 3rd. The Mecklenburg County Board of Elections provides a safe way for you to exercise your right to vote from home. Any voter registered in Mecklenburg County can request an absentee ballot from now until mid-October. Requests are expected to be greater than usual this year; you are encouraged to request now so the staff can process requests in a timely manner. **[Click here for a printable absentee ballot form](#)**, or call the Board of Elections to request one by mail (704-336.2133). Requesting an absentee ballot does not obligate you to vote by mail. Absentee ballots will be mailed out beginning September 4th.



A HOLY TRINITY



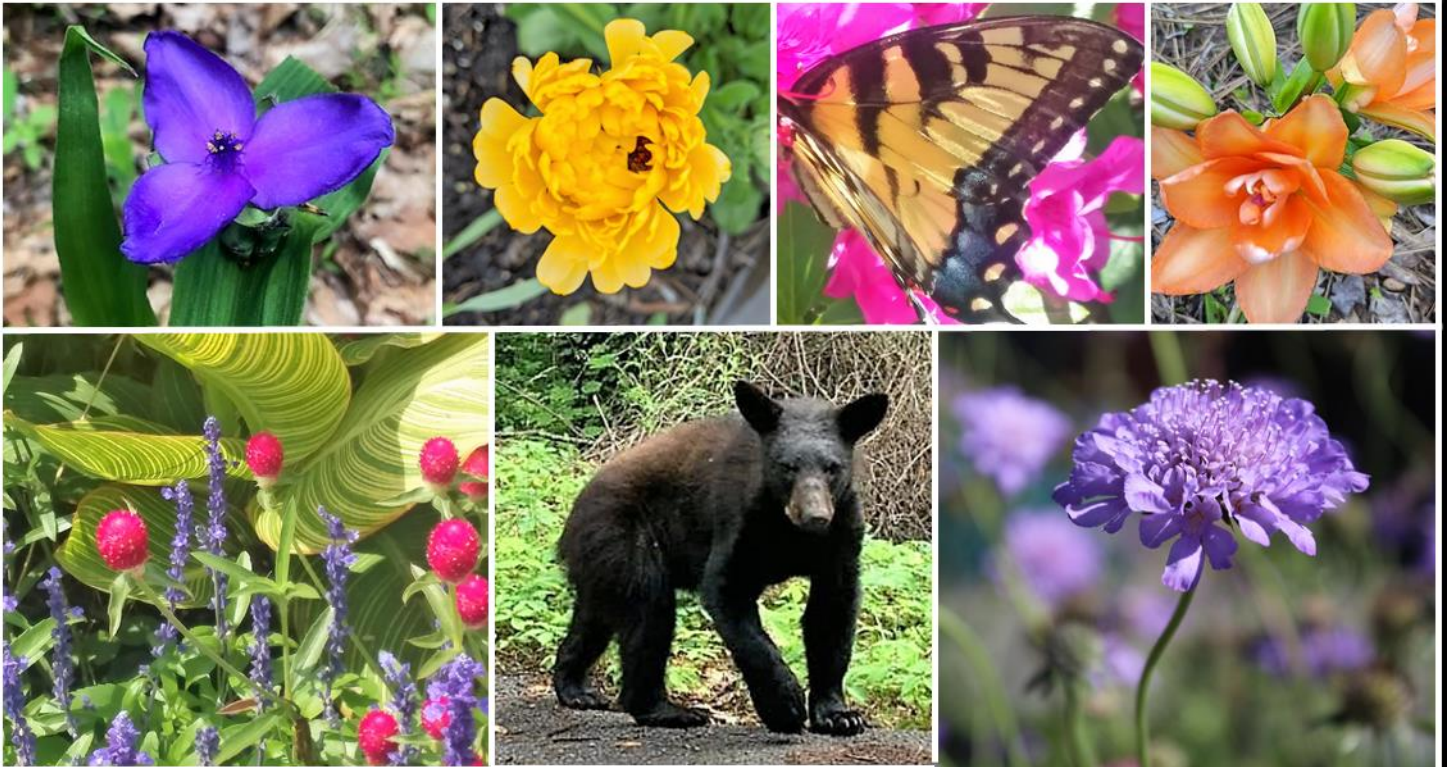
June 7th is the day the Church celebrates the doctrine of the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. One God, three persons—this is what the church of my childhood taught me. Does this make sense to you? I didn't understand then, and truthfully, this is language I don't understand now. Historical context is helpful and gives me some needed perspective, but is not enough to enlighten me.

The trinitarian doctrine was adopted in response to debate over the nature of God. The monotheistic Church was accused of worshipping multiple Gods, and its purpose was to explain the oneness of God/Jesus/Holy Spirit. The creeds provided a statement of orthodoxy, or right beliefs, for adherents to the religion. It's a theological construct that was devised more for the purpose of political power than spiritual understanding. The doctrine was codified in the fourth century with the Nicene Creed which was adopted in 325 AD and amended in 381 AD. It continues to be recited regularly in many churches today.

Despite the political reasoning behind the original intent, the Church has held onto the doctrine of the trinity for almost 1700 years, indicating its value in the religious experience of many people over long periods of time. My personal difficulty with the language of the trinity, as it was taught to me, is not surprising. I often struggle with traditional religious language. Seeking new words for old ideas helps me understand the essence of what I may have misunderstood or overlooked because of my perspective in a different period of time, place and culture than those who developed the idea.

A few years ago I came across an article about the trinity with words that spoke to my ever-changing experience of God, and somewhat enlightened my personal understanding of the great mystery: God Beyond Us, God Between Us, God Within Us, [ProgressiveChristianity.org/resources/god-beyond-god-between-god-within-a-trinity](https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/god-beyond-god-between-god-within-a-trinity). The Trinity has been debated since its inception. The nature of God is a mystery, and by definition, that means God cannot be explained. My hope and my prayer is that we never stop trying!

Kathryn Kreutzer



We began #SardisSpring2020 on Earth Day to celebrate creation. You shared a beautiful collection of photographs which we displayed during virtual worship each Sunday of the Easter season. Our photo campaign concluded on May 31st. Above is a sampling of the photos you shared.



AN INTERCONTINENTAL CONVERSATION

Rev. Dr. Ruth Gouldbourne, friend of Bob's from seminary days, is currently pastor of Grove Lane Baptist Church outside of Manchester, England. Knowing the desire of Sardis folks to be connected to our worldwide community, Bob has encouraged relationship between Sardis Baptist and Grove Lane over the last several years. You may remember sharing World Communion greetings with Grove Lane last year.

Bob contacted Ruth in April to see if her congregation would be interested in a transatlantic sharing of how COVID-19 has affected congregational life. Bob and Ruth agreed they would each interview several congregants via Zoom and share responses with their congregations. Several weeks ago, Bob facilitated a conversation with Susan Phillips, Melissa Bowlin, Howell Peterson, and Amanda Lewis. The discussion has been shared with Grove Lane, and video links are included below for you to watch as well. We are looking forward to hearing back from Grove Lane, and will share their responses when we do.

[Part 1: Who We Are](#)

[Part 2: Life Before COVID-19](#)

[Part 3: What Have You Missed?](#)

[Part 4: What Has Surprised You?](#)

[Part 5: Where Do You See Hope?](#)

[Part 6: What Is Church?](#)