

# sardis signposts

baptist church

a spiritually progressive community of faith

5811 Sardis Road / Charlotte, NC 28270 / 704.362.0811  
[SardisBaptistCharlotte.org](http://SardisBaptistCharlotte.org)

## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday at 9:45 AM  
Sunday School

Sunday at 11:00 AM  
Morning Worship

## IRENA HRAMENKOVA ~ 30 YEARS OF SERVICE ~

*A tribute by Hilary McIntyre, Minister of Music*

January 18, 2023 marked the 30th Anniversary of Irena Hramenkova joining the Sardis Baptist Church staff. When Irena joined in 1993, the Sardis congregation was meeting in the cafeteria of Providence Day School and our current church building and grounds were just a twinkle in the eye of the then members. Although most of those founding members have moved on, the heart and soul of Sardis remain, in large part thanks to Irena.

Irena was born and grew up in Russia, then the Soviet Union. Irena took piano lessons from her mother, another exceptionally talented pianist and extraordinary woman. In her young adulthood, Irena became the accompanist for the Soviet National Gymnastics Team. She composed music for the team's floor exercises that was then recognized and subsequently used by the World Gymnastics Federation as a whole.

In December of 1991, Irena was in Washington, D.C., visiting a friend in Washington — this was three days before the collapse of the Soviet Union. A year earlier, in 1990, Irena had lost her husband and two years before that, in 1988, she lost her father. With all of this upheaval in mind, she called her mother in Moscow and asked for her advice — should she stay in the United States? Could she afford to? Her mother was encouraging so she started making plans.

Later, a friend brought Irena to Charlotte, where she met Anne Farin, a local pianist and educator who was a member of the Charlotte Piano Teachers Forum. On January 5, 1993, Irena, who still did not speak much English, visited the Forum and asked Anne and the other members to help her find work in the Charlotte-area — they all put their heads together and learned through the grapevine that a woman named Bestelle Hill, a member of a new church named Sardis, needed help. Their pianist had just left the previous Sunday and they needed someone to fill in the following week. Irena met with Bestelle, who asked her to play a few hymns as a sort of audition, and she was asked to accompany the service that week. After that first worship experience, the members of Sardis agreed that Irena fit the bill and she was asked to stay. Douglas Aldrich, the pastor of Sardis Baptist Church at that time, and Bestelle Hill would sponsor Irena in getting her work visa. From here, in 1996, Irena joined the Southern Park Music School as a piano teacher.

Irena's work visa was set to expire in 2000, so she began the process of becoming a United States citizen. It can be hard to gain citizenship as someone who only works part-time, but Irena was able to use her connections in the gymnastics world to petition the government and she quickly received her green card as a person of "Extraordinary Ability" — don't we know it!

Through the years, Irena has played for us, worshipped with us, she founded her own private lesson studio — the Sardis Piano Academy — in 2008, and all the while she has stuck with us here at Sardis. She is a world-class pianist, an exceptional teacher, an indispensable partner in worship, but most of all, she is family. We love her.

*Thank you for 30 years Irena, here's to as many more as possible!*



## A SEASON OF DISCOVERY

As 2023 begins, our congregation is making a concerted effort to imagine our vision for the future, and specifically, how Sardis Baptist Church will "be / do church" in a post-COVID-19 environment. To that end, we have engaged Rev. Dr. David Brown of the Pinnacle Leadership Team.

David and his team are vision-shapers — they help congregations articulate who they are, and how they hope to live out their calling, and create action plans for making calling a reality.

In February, David will work with our Sardis Discovery Team (seven congregants and pastor) to design a scope of work: what are the questions we want to answer; what's the roadmap for answering those questions; what's the cost and timing of such an engagement.

At the conclusion of the discovery process (we hope late spring or early summer), the Sardis Discovery Team will present its findings to the congregation. And then, together, we as Sardis will determine our next steps.

We are grateful to Ellen Dillard, Rachel Faulk, Luther Fisher, Jean Lawrence, Jim Owen, Shannon Roberts, and Amy Wiebke for their willingness to serve Sardis in this meaningful way. We ask you to pray for the success of their work, and ultimately, for the transformative things their work will provoke at Sardis in the years to come.

Bob's sermon from January 15th provides additional context for this engagement: [sardisbaptistcharlotte.org/sermon/walking-again/](http://sardisbaptistcharlotte.org/sermon/walking-again/)



## I LIFT UP MINE EYES...

Rev. Bob Stillerman

123...

### Sardis by the Numbers:

**10** There are 10 columns in our colonnade. There were also 10 commandments and 10 signs and wonders in *Exodus*. [Biblestudy.org](https://www.biblestudy.org) also lets us know that there are 10 women in the Bible that cause the death of another (I would assume a mere fraction of their male counterparts!). But for all you fans of murder podcasts, this [link's](#) for you!

There are 11 doors (three sets of double doors) on the buildings of the Sardis campus. Did you know that John saw 11 things in connection with the final Judgment in *Revelation*, not to mention that the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 11 caves, and there are 11 books in the New Testament that do not directly quote the Old Testament. Coincidence? Yes, absolutely! And if it's not, please direct all inquiries to Tim Moore!

**90** The exact number of chairs in the meetinghouse as of this writing. 90 CE was also the year of the Council of Jamnia which canonized the Old Testament. In *Genesis*, Sarah was 90 when she gave birth to Isaac.

335 This is for Melissa Bowlin. The number of days as of this writing left until Christmas.

**0811** Last four digits of our phone number, not to be confused with 8-1-1, the number you call before you dig. But fun fact, did you know we have a neighbor whose hobby is metal detecting, and he's done some digging at Sardis? He even found and returned a high school class ring from the 1960s, and a dime from 1942, which Marge Fowler claimed as a keepsake (her birth year!). And yes, she did pay him \$.10!

1500, 1500, and 4,500 The estimated number of anthems, offertories, and hymns Irena Hramenkova has played in her 30 years at Sardis. Happy Anniversary! What a joy and gift you are to this congregation!

**1988** 1988 Speaking of birth years, the Sardis birth year is 1988, also the birth year of Lizzo and Steph Curry. Jacqueline Stillerman, too!

5811 Yes, it's our street address. But ifate.com tells us it's even more than that: "The 4-digit number '5811' gives off an aura of humanitarianism, romance and empathy. It's also a number that represents a measurable amount of emotional sensitivity — showing an innate empathic capacity combined with a deep connection to others. Its root essence, which is considered caring — also has a well-mannered or protective feeling to it. (Sounds pretty Sardisy to me!)"

**10000** 10,000 The number of years John Newton (*Amazing Grace*) tells us we can be here and have no less reason, time, or days to sing God's praise. May it always be so!

## Sardis People:

### Jonas Richard Mata



Barely three weeks old (born January 11, 2023), and already Jonas Mata is making a difference in the world. He is the source of much joy to his family of origin and his extended family. The extension of family goes even further as the Sardis church family gets to participate in the joyfulness of a new baby in its membership. (The third over the last half year!) And Julian has spread the joy to his preschool classmates and teachers as he shares his excitement of being a big brother.

Jonas looks "so much like" Julian did as his age according to the witness of photographs. It will be interesting to see whether the likeness continues as Jonas' face begins to change. Perhaps it will be helpful to identify photos of each so that they can tell who is who in twenty years' time. Of course there are differences. Jonas is relaxed and enjoys taking naps whereas Julian was continually active, not liking to be still. Jonas has much more hair, whereas Julian was almost bald with just a little wisp of dark hair, which soon turned blond. Julian is still an active big brother and can hardly wait to come home from school to help in taking care of Jonas — feeding, bathing, holding.

Mom and Dad, Kate and Jose Mata, are both on parental leave. Jose is Senior Diversity Strategist (Latinx program) for Vanguard; Kate works for the Mom project as a Partner Success Manager. (Mom project is a digital talent marketplace, connecting women with world class companies.) Their jobs indicate how passionate they are about inclusivity and diversity in the business world.

Both parents graduated from the University of South Carolina where they were involved in sports programs. Kate was a competitive cheerleader; Jose was a pitcher on the 2010 College World Series winning baseball team. The family enjoys watching the SC Gamecocks play ball and they also cheer for the Miami Dolphins. In addition they like to listen to music and spend lots of time outdoors.





## CELEBRATIONS

We joyfully announce the arrival of Jonas Richard Mata!  
Congratulations to the Mata Family!

## HEALTH & WELL-BEING

**Please join us in prayers for the health and well-being  
of the following friends of Sardis Baptist:**

- Charles Almond, grandfather of Jacqueline Stillerman
- Holly Almond, aunt of Jacqueline Stillerman • Melissa Bowlin
- Maria Byrd • Elzene Corbett, Janet Beltzhoover's mother
- Nancy Darnell • Rae Deicke, friend of Jean Lawrence
- Ron Demme • Dusty Dettmerman, daughter of June Ross
- Amelia Eidson, mother of Jonathan • Krissa Gaston, friend of the Phillips family • Larry Gragg, cousin of Tillie Duncan
- Mildred Gragg, mother of Billie Hutchison • Janette Grassi
- Mary Moon Guerrant, mother of Kathryn Kreutzer • Janie Harris • Kathie & Marvin Jean • Ann Macguire, sister of Rev. Ruth Gouldbourne (Grove Lane) • Alan Markham, brother of Jean Lawrence • Maria Marshall, daughter of Janette Grassi
- Robert Marshall, grandson of Janette Grassi • Frank Phillips, brother of Danny Phillips • Vicki Phillips, niece of Shannon Duncan • Rachel, Kendarius, & Mekhi Phipps, friends of Betty Gunz • Pam Poston • Becky Proctor • Mala Reynolds
- June Ross • Bob Rowland, Robin's father • Pamela Schwartz, former staff of St. Stephen UMC • Tanya Stevensen, daughter of June Ross • Deannie Tiddy, Jo's mother-in-law
- Kelly Wise, friend of Melissa Bowlin

## TRAVELING MERCIES

- Askins Family (Rebecca, Jourdan, Joey, Brady, Samuel, Reece, Keely) • Karen, friend of Amanda Lewis • Katie Wiebke, daughter of Mark & Amy



## CALLED CHURCH CONFERENCE

### FEBRUARY 5th @ NOON

The Sardis Baptist Board of Trustees presented a 2023 budget proposal several weeks ago. A summary is included below. We encourage you to review the proposal and consider any questions you may have. We will convene for a conference following worship on the first Sunday in February (2/5). You will have an opportunity to ask board members questions before we vote on the budget's approval.

#### Revenue:

Operations	\$196,705
Rental of Leased Space	\$24,000

#### Expense:

Fixed - Personnel	\$133,380
Variable -	
Missions	\$10,000
Education	\$7,400
Music	\$1,500
Worship	\$3,000
Office	\$14,750
Building Maintenance	\$8,750
Equipment Maintenance	\$6,000
Grounds Maintenance	\$9,575
Utilities	\$15,000
Insurance	\$6,800
Consultation	\$2,000
Miscellaneous	\$2,550

**Total: \$220,705**










## TITHES & OFFERINGS

Giving statements for 2022 were mailed in January. Please contact the church office if your statement has not arrived via US Mail: [info@SardisBaptistCharlotte.org](mailto:info@SardisBaptistCharlotte.org), or call (704) 362-0811.



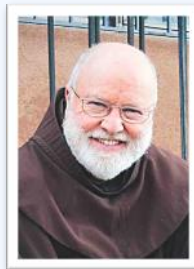


# February

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 The Garden Preschool — 9:15 AM to 1:15 PM Sardis Piano Academy — 3:15 PM to 8:45 PM 4:00 PM Staff Meeting 6-7:30 PM Sardis Discovery Team 7:30 PM Choir Practice	2 Charlotte Wildlife Stewards Leadership Team 	3 Clergy Group Meeting	4
5 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany 9:45 AM Sunday School Love Is the Way 11:00 AM Worship 	6	7 The Garden Preschool — 9:15 AM to 1:15 PM Sardis Piano Academy — 3:15 PM to 8:45 PM	8 4:00 PM Staff Meeting 6-7:30 PM Sardis Discovery Team 7:30 PM Choir Practice 	9	10	11
12 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany 9:45 AM Sunday School Things Hidden 11:00 AM Worship	13 	14 The Garden Preschool — 9:15 AM to 1:15 PM Sardis Piano Academy — 3:15 PM to 8:45 PM Valentine's Day 7-8:30 PM Wilderness First Aid Charlotte Wildlife 	15 4:00 PM Staff Meeting 7:30 PM Choir Practice	16	17 Clergy Group Meeting 	18
19 Transfiguration Sunday 9:45 AM Sunday School Things Hidden 11:00 AM Worship	20 President's Day 	21 The Garden Preschool — 9:15 AM to 1:15 PM Sardis Piano Academy — 3:15 PM to 8:45 PM 6:00 PM Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper featuring Queen City Groove	22 7:00 PM Ash Wednesday Community Worship Service at Sardis Presbyterian	23 	24	25
26 First Sunday of Lent 9:45 AM Sunday School Things Hidden 11:00 AM Worship 	27	28 The Garden Preschool — 9:15 AM to 1:15 PM Sardis Piano Academy — 3:15 PM to 8:45 PM				

## THINGS HIDDEN: scripture as spirituality

The Sardis book group will begin discussing *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality*, by Richard Rohr, on Sunday, February 12th (overview below). We meet in the large class space of the Education Building at 9:45 AM on Sunday morning. Anyone is welcome to join our formative discussions! Please email the church office if you need technical or financial assistance in procuring your copy of the book: [info@SardisBaptistCharlotte.org](mailto:info@SardisBaptistCharlotte.org).



**OVERVIEW**— There are a number of misconceptions about the Bible. Many look at it as information only, but what they are missing is the key – the Bible is about transformation. Friar Richard Rohr invites you to revisit the Bible to experience the Scripture as spirituality. This can help your relationship with God evolve into something more meaningful and fulfilling. This book will help you discover how reading the Bible and understanding it in a new way can change your life.

*“Only when the two come together, inner and outer authority, do we have true spiritual wisdom. We have for too long insisted on outer authority alone, without any teachings of prayer, inner journey and maturing consciousness. The results for the world and for religion have been disastrous...I offer these reflections to again unite what never should have been separated: Sacred Scripture and Christian Spirituality.”* – from the introduction.

This spiritual companion unearths the Bible's take on morality, power, wisdom, and the generosity of God in a way that demands a

life-changing response from believers. It illustrates the Biblical God as full of grace and abundance, and who calls us to be fully alive in a world full of scarcity, judgement, and fear. Rohr's intention is to revitalize your relationship with the Bible and leave you feeling hopeful, fulfilled, and better able to embody a Christ-based spirituality. This in turn will help you to change how you treat yourself, others, and the world.



## SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER

Shrove Tuesday is traditionally a night of feasting and celebrating, and that is exactly what we'll do here at Sardis! Pancakes and all the fixin's will be served on Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup> at 6 PM. Good food will be followed by even better entertainment—Queen City Groove! This a cappella group performs crowd favorites from many genres including pop, rock, jazz, and country. They will bring original arrangements of favorite songs, reimagined with only the human voice.

*Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023  
6:00 PM @ Sardis Baptist Meetinghouse*



## ASH WEDNESDAY

*“FOR DUST YOU ARE, AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN.”*  
GENESIS 3:19B

Sardis Baptist Church will join Sardis Presbyterian Church for a community service at 7:00 PM on Ash Wednesday (February 22<sup>nd</sup>). Worship will be held in the sanctuary of Sardis Presbyterian (6100 Sardis Road). The Sardis Baptist Choir and Staff will collaborate with Sardis Presbyterian to honor traditions of both churches.







## A CREATIVE EXERCISE FOR TRANSFIGURATION

*"God became human, so that humans could become God."*

*~ Iraneus, 3rd Century ~*

Transfiguration Sunday is February 19th. This is the day we remember the mountaintop story of Jesus's transfiguration before Peter, James, and John. This story teaches us something important about the character of God: if you want to know what divinity looks like in human form, look at Jesus and you will see God. And if we want to know who and what Jesus is, we too must prepare to be transfigured.

1. Write a short list of words or phrases that describe the core of your character.
2. Ask people in your inner circle to tell you three words or phrases that describe your character. Record their answers.
3. What are commonalities between the lists?
4. Create something using those key characteristics — a drawing, a painting, word art, music, a story. The possibilities are endless!
5. Share it with loved ones in your circle. If your creation is visual, post it somewhere you'll see everyday as a reminder. Use your creation as inspiration for the challenge below.
6. Challenge yourself to transfiguration — to embody the characteristics you most wish to exemplify.
7. Manifest your transfiguration by committing to an action (or a few) to take during Lent.

