



signposts

a spiritually progressive community of faith

5811 Sardis Road / Charlotte, NC 28270 / 704.362.0811

SardisBaptistCharlotte.org

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday @ 9:45 AM
Study Group

Sunday @ 11:00 AM
Morning Worship

BRIEF PRIMER ON BAPTIST POLITY

One of my favorite bands is Mumford and Sons. The English rock band is known for their folksy sound and deep lyrics influenced by Shakespeare, Plato, Bob Dylan, and John Steinbeck with subtle notes of Christian spiritualism. One of my favorite of their songs is entitled *Awake My Soul*. One line in particular says, "But your soul you must keep, totally free..." This line, among many others, resonates with me deeply.

One of the most attractive parts of being Baptist, in my opinion, is that we are totally free from external influence or guidance when it comes to how the local church operates. This, like many things in this life, is a double-edged sword. This freedom gives us the opportunity to operate and make decisions at the local level—as Sardis Baptist Church alone—without going through a local Bishop or Presbytery. This offers us the chance to more quickly make decisions and participate in ministry opportunities within the larger community with greater speed.

On the other hand, this freedom does limit our capabilities to some degree. Most glaringly is our isolation when it comes to financial resources. We are totally dependent upon our own membership and utilizing our property or other resources with wisdom and discernment to make ends meet. This is why we are so appreciative to each person who gives of their own resources. Large or small, each donation makes a world of difference.

There are other freedoms, too. The freedom to interpret scripture, to wrestle openly with God. To sit in the same sanctuary with someone who may or may not subscribe to the same theory of atonement as ourselves. To get into more of the weeds in this setting would be folly as there have been tomes written, much ink spilled, and semesters worth of hours spent unpacking the four freedoms which Baptists at large enjoy and the challenges which accompany those freedoms. Feel free now to go and sample some Mumford and Sons or dive into an old, comfortable favorite.

~ Rev. Dr. Chris Hensley



WHERE THEOLOGY BEGINS Rev. Dr. Richard Hester

Sardis Academy — February 12TH
Dinner @ 5:45 PM, Program @ 6:30

Rev. Dr. Richard Hester will share with Sardis his lecture on "Where Theology Begins." He explains his thesis: "Our view of God, our theology, begins in the families we grew up in, and that theology emerges in two forms. One form is our formal theology taught in the church or religious organization of our family. The other form is our functional theology. That is the set of beliefs that are operative in the family—the ones that actually guide the behavior of family members. Sometimes the functional theology of the family is congruent with what is formally professed, and sometimes it is not. We will explore this dynamic and how it lives within us."

Dr. Hester is a professor of pastoral theology, retired, after more than twenty years of teaching. Those years encompassed classes on the campuses of Phillips Theological Seminary, Enid, Oklahoma (now located in Tulsa) and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. While at Southeastern, he led the faculty in organized opposition to a fundamentalist control of the school.

In the later years of his career, Richard moved from the field of education to the field of therapy. He was a senior therapist at Triangle Pastoral Counseling in Raleigh, North Carolina. While there, he established the Narrative Therapy Seminar which is now in its twenty-sixth year. In addition, he co-authored *Know Your Story and Lead with It: The Power of Narrative in Clergy Leadership*, published in 2009. In keeping with his interest in the efficacy of narrative therapy, Richard has begun support groups which use narrative as the basis of their interactions. One of these groups has been meeting at Sardis for more than 10 years.

He looks forward to the publishing of another book *Theological Education in a New Key: Narrative, Belonging, Diversity in May* of this year. The Cascade imprint of Wipf and Stock is the publisher.

~ Rev. Tillie Duncan ~

Church Conference - February 2nd @ Noon

In accordance with the bylaws of Sardis Baptist Church, adopted on September 22, 2024, members of the congregation will elect a church council to oversee the ongoing spiritual, missional, and administrative affairs and programs of the church, and to provide support to the staff in conducting the work of the church. The Sardis Council will replace the existing Boards (Trustees, Deacons, and Stewards). Following worship on the first Sunday of the month, February 2nd, we will have a church conference for the purpose of electing the initial officers of the Sardis Council. Several Sardis friends have been nominated and agreed to serve if elected: Joe Wall—President, Amy Wiebke—Secretary, and Jim Owen—Treasurer. Please plan to for the conference and to lend your voice to the important process of lending your voice to the formation of our church leadership team.

CHRIS' CORNER

February is a special month in Baptist circles, especially for those Baptists who wisely recognize the spiritual gifts of the women in their midst and choose to ordain to ministry those women who feel led to pursue such a vocation. February has been recognized as Baptist Women in Ministry's Month of Preaching. It is during this time that congregations who align themselves with the good work which the organization known as Baptist Women in Ministry, invite women behind the pulpit to exercise their voices and "bring a good word."

At Sardis, we recognize the power, giftedness, intelligence, and spiritual fortitude that many of the women in our midst have exhibited. In the spirit of the month, we have invited several of our own to fill the pulpit, to encourage and challenge us in our own spiritual journey and to give voice to issues which may exist on the periphery or beyond the scope of my own recognition, understanding, and experience as a man.

I am excited to yield the pulpit to Revs. Tillie Duncan, Kathryn Kreutzer, Hilary Kearns McIntyre, and Debbie Kidd throughout the month of February. I look forward to what February worship experiences at Sardis will bring.

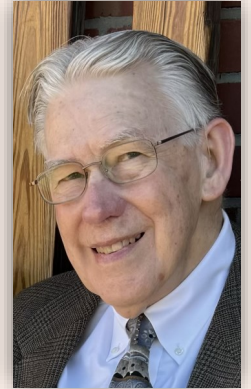
~ Rev. Dr. Chris Hensley



BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY
OF NORTH CAROLINA

Sardis Friends: Rev. Dr. Richard Hester

Richard Hester is a vigorous supporter of using narrative, not only in therapy, but also in support groups. One of the support groups he meets with began 50 years ago in the Raleigh, NC area. Through the years the men who belong to this group have moved to other cities and states, but they continue to meet via Zoom. Another group that he helped start and helps sustain meets on the Sardis campus. The men and women who make up this group have varied over the ten years that it has, appreciatively, met at Sardis. At present, the group is made up of eight people. Two members of the group "belong" to Sardis, Becky Proctor and Tillie Duncan. Another member is Anne Eidson, wife of former associate pastor Jonathan Eidson. The members of this group are connected to church in some way, as seminary professors, pastors, denominational positions, professional music personnel.



Dick grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, as an only child. He graduated from Baylor University (Waco, TX) and received two degrees—BD (Bachelor of Divinity) and PhD—from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, KY). As a professor of pastoral theology, he taught at Phillips in Oklahoma and at Southeastern in North Carolina. Other career choices include being executive director of the Georgia Association for Pastoral Care, conducting therapy at a pastoral counseling center, and pastoring a church in Gainesville, FL.

Today Dick teaches a class at St. John's Baptist Church where he is a member, writes poetry on Substack (<https://rhester2608.substack.com>) and has published articles in Baptist News Global. He is married to Beverly (64 years and counting). They have two children and four grandchildren. One of his greatest pleasures is spending narrative time (mainly electronically) with the grandchildren.

~ Rev. Tillie Duncan

GIVING STATEMENTS

We offer our sincere gratitude for the contributions made in 2023. Every offering given has made a difference in the life of Sardis Baptist Church, and by extension, in the world around us! Your generosity gives hope for where God will lead us in the year ahead and in the years to come. 2024 Giving Statements are currently being processed and will be mailed out in mid-February. Please email the church office if you do not receive yours by the end of the month.



awab
Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists

Following approval of our ministry plan in 2024, which approved support of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (AWAB),

Sardis Baptist Church submitted an application to become an official member of the Association. The AWAB board met in January and affirmed our application! For more than 30 years, AWAB has been supporting churches in welcoming and affirming all people regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. AWAB works with individuals, congregations, regional as well as national groups to advance the radical welcome and love of God through being a ministry of reconciliation and building up the beloved community where all will be one. Learn more at their website: awab.org.

MUSICAL MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose....
Feel your stomach expand....
Hold that breath in while you count to three slowly....
Release your breath slowly through your mouth with an audible sigh....
Pause at the end of that exhale for a second....
Repeat....

This is a variation of box breathing – a technique for relaxation that can help relieve anxiety and depression. It is also a useful technique for learning to control your breath for singing or physical exertion. For me personally, with the state of the world right now, it has become a necessity. There are many ways that music can help alleviate stress, and I would like to share a few with you this month, just in case you, like me, are feeling overwhelmed.

Besides box breathing, there are many breathing techniques that can calm your nerves, as well as others that can energize and invigorate. Let's try one of those next:

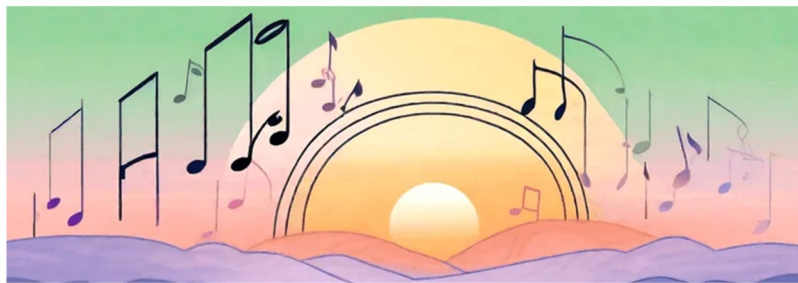
Breath in deeply through your nose....
Open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue, pointing it toward the floor....
Forcefully blow out your air with a loud "ha"....
Repeat several times....
Cool down with a long, slow deep breath....

This is a lion's breath, a type of yogic breathing. I find this one helpful if I'm feeling sleepy while driving, or if I'm feeling depressed and lethargic. It's also great for engaging your diaphragm before singing.

Beyond breathing, listening to music is probably the most obvious and most beneficial form of stress relief. I have a feeling that most of you have had the experience of listening to a favorite song on a down day and having your mood immediately lift. Here are some tips I learned from music theory courses in college that might enhance or deepen this experience for you.

First, pick a song that you love, or that speaks to the mood you want to create. Are you feeling stressed? Pick something calming or uplifting. Need some suggestions? Search for French Impressionists, like Chopin or Debussy, or start a conversation with someone and make a combined list of your go-to happy songs. I always like listening to songs I can sing along with, especially ones that I loved while growing up. "Rock Lobster" and "Love Shack," for example, always put me in a good mood. If you have Spotify, you can even start a collaborative playlist with your friends and combine your favorites into one place. Just ask and I'll give you a tutorial any time!

Next, once you know what you are going to listen to, here are some steps to listen mindfully. *Disclaimer: Do not practice mindful music listening while operating heavy machinery, like driving a car.* Press play. Begin by closing your eyes or softening your gaze (pick a spot in front of you and let your eyes go out of focus). Listen for any specific instruments or voices that you can identify. For example, if I chose "Hey Jude," not a particularly happy song, but beautiful and one of my favorites, (continued on back page)



pray

CONDOLENCES

Our condolences are with the Duncan and Gragg families who are grieving the death of Larry Gragg; as well as the Kreutzer and Stokes families for the death of Pat Stokes.

TRAVELING MERCIES

- Askins Family (Rebecca, Jourdan, Joey, Brady, Samuel, Reece, Keely)
 - Liliana Fisher
- Karen, friend of Amanda Lewis

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Doloras Abdow, mother-in-law of Sandra
- Clemmer Allison, friend of Alcie Kreutzer
 - Melissa Bowlin, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Richard (Nick) Bowlin, uncle of Melissa
 - Maria Byrd, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Dee Christman, sister of Shannon Duncan
 - Murphy Clark, relative of Robin Rowland
 - Tyler Criss, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Tracey Danley, friend of Sarah Criss
 - Betsy Cadle DePaul, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Rachael Duvall, friend of Susan & Tillie
 - Amelia Eidson, Jonathan's mother
 - David Faircloth, extended family of the Phillips
 - Melissa Galloway, friend of Luther Fisher
 - Lena Gillebo, sister of Irena Hramenkova
 - Bill Guerrant, uncle of Kathryn Kreutzer
 - Mary Moon Guerrant, mother of Kathryn K.
 - Jenna Hardister, friend of Hilary McIntyre
 - The Henkel-Lewis Family (George)
 - Andy Kirk, friend of Ed Gash
 - Robert Marshall, grandson of Janette Grassi
 - Barbara Mosley, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Barbara Newman, mother of Kris Hawkins
 - Rex Nordeen, cousin of Tillie Duncan
 - Pamela Duncan Owens, widow of Eric Duncan
 - Mike Parker, extended family of the Phillips
 - Vadim Pateshkin and Family, relatives of Billie H.
 - Rachel Phipps and Family, friends of Betty Gunz
 - Pam Poston, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Bob Rowland, Robin Rowland's father
 - Jackson Stewart, grandson of Kristin Parker
 - John Simpson, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Amy Stirens, friend of Hilary McIntyre
 - Wanda Stitt, Sardis friend from Hope Chapel
 - Vanessa Wieland, cousin of Jonathan Eidson
 - Katie Wiebke, daughter of Mark and Amy
 - Hannah Willard, cousin of Hilary McIntyre
 - Kelly Wise, friend of Melissa Bowlin



SARDIS MINISTERS THROUGH THE AGES

2025 Ministers: Chris Hensley, Hilary McIntyre, Irena Hramenkova, Kathryn Kreutzer, and Tillie Duncan
Through the Years: Tim Moore, Pam Greenwood, Mandy England Cole, Rodney Sadler, Joanie Williams, Jonathan Eidson, Daynette Snead Perez, and Bob Stillerman



MUSICAL MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

(Continued from page 3) I might start out listening for the piano. Try to isolate your chosen instrument in the mix and follow it as the song progresses. Is it in the forefront? Does it fade in and out? Is it playing low, high, both? If that instrument stops or you lose it in the mix, pick another. This will force you to hear the song in a new way.

If you know a little bit of theory, or have some experience playing music yourself, try listening for the chord progression. Does it follow a fixed pattern? Does it change constantly? Does it do what you expect or does it surprise you? If the song has words, try and listen to them carefully, try to memorize them. If you already know them by heart, listen for backing vocals, are they repeating text or singing their own words? Are they just humming or “ooh-ing” and “aah-ing”? Music is made of layers, try splitting them apart.

If you don't enjoy this, focus instead on how the different sounds make you feel. Do the words match what the instruments are doing, or are they creating a contrast? If you're listening to a song for the first time, do you like it? Does it sound good to you? Why? Is it the instruments, the vocals, the way the chords sound? There are times when I find I love a song for its tune, but the words are not for me, like “Nothing But the Blood of Jesus.” In that case, you can look up instrumentals and still enjoy a piece.

Music is as varied a thing as the people who make and listen to it, and it can have many different effects on us, emotional, physical and spiritual. Take some time, sit down with it, and let it act as a balm during these, and any, tough times. It can be a distraction, but it can also be a respite that re-energizes you for the living of these days.

~ Rev. Hilary McIntyre

dates
to Remember

- February 2nd @ 11 AMRev. Tillie Duncan Proclaiming
- February 2nd @ 12:00 PM.....Church Conference
- February 2nd @ 12:30 PM.....Worship Development Team
- February 9th @ 11 AM.....Rev. Kathryn Kreutzer Proclaiming
- February 11th @ 7 PM.....iNaturalist—Charlotte Wildlife Stewards
- February 12th @ 5:45 PM.....Fellowship Dinner
- February 12th @ 6:30 PM.....Where Theology Begins
- February 14th — All Day!.....Happy Valentine's Day!
- February 16th—@ 11 AM..... Rev. Hilary McIntyre Proclaiming
- February 16th @ Noon..... G4 Lunch
- February 17th — All Day.....Presidents' Day
- February 17th @ 1 PM to 4 PM..... Hope Chapel Service Project
- February 19th @ 6:15 PM.....Bingo
- February 23rd @ 11 AM.....Rev. Debbie Kidd Proclaiming