

# *The Outlook*

## **First Baptist Church Clayton**

Show • Tell  
Grow • Serve

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## **Cultivate your spiritual life**

By Dr. Len Keever

Looking out my back window this morning I see I have a lot of work to do. Weeds that are growing in the flower beds mock me. My inattention to the raised bed is present for anyone to see. I've never had the "Yard of the Month" sign placed in my lawn, but I have prided myself on keeping the grass mowed and the shrubs trimmed.

It doesn't take long for inattention to be evident. If I am not careful, my yard might begin to look like 1313 Mockingbird Lane. I have work to do.

Teresa of Avila once used an untended garden as a metaphor for one's spiritual life. She taught that when we do not attend to our heart, the place where the Holy Spirit dwells, weeds and undergrowth can quickly appear choking out the fruit of the Spirit that is forming in us. I like that image.

A few years ago, the field behind our house was fallow, meaning that nothing was done to it for over a year. Weeds grew tall. Small trees began to grow. The once tilled earth began to erode. It was obvious that if nothing was done to reclaim it as a place to grow corn and soybeans, it wouldn't take long before it would become a difficult place to farm.

Fortunately, a new owner arrived who took the time to recultivate the field. Equipment came to spray the weeds. The ground was tilled and raked. Fertilizer was spread. New rows were plowed. This summer we watched with amazement as cotton began to grow. In the late fall it looked as if snow had fallen. The field that for a time was untended became a place of beauty.

Tending to our heart is a constant work. Developing the habit of practicing disciplines requires a willfulness on our part to nurture our desire to grow in faith. Like pulling weeds, we must pay attention to our prayer life, reading the Bible, and coming together in worship. When we do not do our part to keep our hearts focused on Jesus, other voices plant seeds that choke out the seeds of faith much like in Matthew 13

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## Spiritual life

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where someone came while the farmer was sleeping and planted weeds in the wheat field.

I have a friend who is a farmer. Last summer he remarked to me that it bothers him that others don't understand how he can't take time away from the fields in the summer to go to the beach or the mountains. He said one week away, even three days gone, can negatively impact the crop, his income, the way he cares for his family. He told me, "You have to watch it every day!"

As winter gives way to spring, what do we need to do so that our hearts are ready to receive the seeds Jesus will plant in us this year? What do we need to do so that our hearts bear the fruit of the Spirit just in time for the harvest? As the Lenten season arrives, what can we do now in cultivating a receptive heart for faith to grow deeper within us.



The First Baptist Youth Performers

## Church youth entertain seniors with music and comedy at the Grand Ole Opry

The First Baptist Youth performed a number of country music classics and Hee Haw comedy routines at the Senior Adult Banquet on February 4. "The food was great, the table service was excellent, and the show was outstanding," said Senior Adult Pastor Stephen Nance.

## Missions Opportunity - With Love From Jesus

The With Love From Jesus Ministry is seeking volunteers on the fourth Sunday of each month (Feb. 25) to help with sorting clothes, food items, donated supplies, prepare personal hygiene bags, and show the love of Jesus and tell the Good News.

If you are interested and willing to help, please call or text Rudy Oliver at 919-271-1178, or email him at reo-holston@gmail.com.

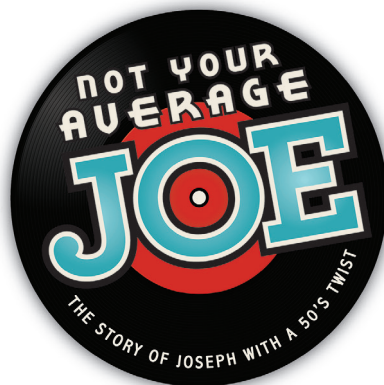
## Heck-Jones Offering focus week ends Sunday

There is still time to give to the Heck-Jones offering to support missions and ministries of WMU of North Carolina.

Fannie E.S. Heck and Sallie Bailey Jones were founders and beloved leaders of WMU (Women's Missionary Union) of North Carolina.

Heck and Jones spent most of their lives serving God through the missions and ministries of WMU.

Please consider a gift this Lenten season. There are envelopes in the pews or you may give through Realm.



## FBC3M Spring Musical set for Sunday, March 10

Please join our children as they share the Old Testament story of Joseph retold with a 50s twist. It's surfer beats, leather jackets, and surfboards, but the truth remains the same. "Joe" trusted God, and God worked in all things for good. Come and see our children bring this message to life on Sunday, March 10 at 6 pm in the sanctuary. Invite someone to join you; this is a great opportunity for outreach for friends of all ages!

## 2024 Weekly Reports

Baptisms this year.....3	New Members.....2
<b>Worship Attendance</b>	
Sunday, Feb. 11.....160	Sunday, Feb. 4.....235
<b>Sunday School Attendance</b>	
Sunday, Feb. 11.....171	Sunday, Feb. 4.....165
<b>General Fund Giving</b>	
Sunday, Feb. 11.....\$9,891	Sunday, Feb. 4.....\$22,777
Weekly Needs.....\$14,860	

## New Bible Study series begins February 21

Rev. Stephen Nance will begin a new Bible Study series on Wednesday, Feb. 21 from 9:30 to 11 a.m. in the SALT classroom or via Zoom. The series, "In the Footsteps of the Savior: Following Jesus through the Holy Land," will continue each week through March 27. Join us as we follow Max Lucado on an inspirational journey through the hills, the dust, and the homes of the Holy Land! Discover, with new eyes, God's heart for his people and his deep love for you. Study Guides are \$10. Sign up in the church office.

### *Memorials and Honorariums*

#### **WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE GENERAL FUND**

##### **In Memory of**

Carolyn Allen by Doug and Rebecca Mudd  
 Carolyn Allen by Brandon and Vicky Andrews  
 Frances Reams and Carolyn Allen by Bucky Coats  
 Carolyn Allen by Anne Abene  
 Frances Reams by Joe and Linda Hester  
 Carolyn Allen by Jack and Judy Coats  
 Carolyn Allen by Lexene Lee  
 Carolyn Allen and Frances Reams by Jiles and Kim Harrell  
 Carolyn Allen by Helen Ellerbe  
 Carolyn Allen and Frances Reams by Donna Brown  
 Carolyn Allen by Billy Parrish  
 Carolyn Allen by Carol Gilbert  
 Carolyn Allen by Nancy Blinson  
 Carolyn Allen by Ramona Cash  
 Carolyn Allen by Jean Bryant  
 Carolyn Allen by Ayden and Betty Lee  
 Carolyn Allen by Hometowne Realty Group  
 Carolyn Allen by Candy Pope

#### **WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE ORGAN FUND**

##### **In Memory of**

Carolyn Allen by Kenny and Vickie Adams  
 Carolyn Allen by Gerald and Glenda Toler  
 Frances Reams and Carolyn Allen by Tom, Emily and Jay Vinson

##### **In Honor of**

Curtis and Elaine Moore by Fred and Texie Lee

#### **WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE YOUTH FUND**

In Honor of Youth Leaders and Parents by Bucky Coats

#### **WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE MUSIC FUND**

In Memory of Carolyn Allen by Jim and Judy Nappier

#### **WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE MISSION FUND**

In Memory of Carolyn Allen by Chris and Diane Pearce

#### **WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE CDC FUND**

In Memory of Frances Reams by Rudy and Edwina Oliver