



The Outlook

First Baptist Church Clayton

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Grow • Serve

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Deeper faith requires practice

By Dr. Len Keever
Interim Pastor

I am loving the fruit of my earlier labors in the garden. Already this month Cathy has made me two tomato pies and I am anticipating another this evening. Our basil is growing tall. Our lettuce continues to grow. We discovered a new way to marinate cucumbers. Although I did not plant any this year, zucchini is plentiful and easy to find.

Two new recipes from Southern Living are quickly becoming favorites, one calls for sautéed zucchini mixed with pasta and an Alfredo sauce, the other mixes zucchini and corn in a skillet with parmesan cheese and Italian seasoning. Bottom line, these are not my momma's ways of eating summer vegetables!

Of course, every now and then I stew squash with onions and eat sliced tomatoes on a sandwich with bacon and lettuce. I have not completely forgotten where I come from. I still crave fried cornbread and those other summer delicacies from my childhood. I'm just thankful that with the abundance of vegetables this year, I have discovered other ways to enjoy them. Variety is not a bad thing.

Likewise, I am thankful that I have learned different ways to pray, newer disciplines to practice growing deeper in faith. As a child prayer was "Now I lay me down to sleep," followed by "God bless" everything from my grandparents to the neighbor's cat. These days prayer includes journaling, listening to quiet, being still and trying to not think, imagining the 'felt' anxiousness in my 'gut' being communion between the Spirit of God and my heart praying what I can't find words to say. Sometimes I change the pronouns in a psalm from 'us' to 'me' and imagine that I am praying an ancient prayer Jesus may have prayed using the same words (but in a different language) that David wrote. When that happens, I feel joined to those who went before me; ancient words become powerfully contemporary. I have come to enjoy exploring new ways to grow in my faith.

The point I'm trying to make is that it is good when we learn new ways to follow Christ. It is good when we learn that there is more to Bible study than just reading a Sunday school lesson on Saturday night. As we mature in faith we collect 'new recipes'

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WMU kickoff set for August 13

First Baptist Church Clayton's Women's Missionary Union (WMU) Kickoff Dinner will be held Tuesday, August 13 at 6 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

Woody Baker, who does mission work in Ahoskie, will be the guest speaker. Woody is the brother of church member and WMU veteran, Mary Marche Byrd.

The Baptist Men have volunteered to cook the meal. Donations will be accepted. If donations exceed costs, the money will be returned to WMU to support missions in the upcoming year.



Woody Baker

All women are invited. You do not have to be in a circle group to attend. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about WMU and the work they do. The First Baptist WMU is also collecting school supplies to be distributed next month in local schools to children and families in need.

If you would like to attend, please call Terry McCallum at 919-553-4161 or send an email to tmccallum@fbcclaytonnc.org by Friday, August 9.



NBC Luncheon is Monday, July 29

The NBC (New Beginners Club) Luncheon is scheduled for Monday, July 29 at 11:30 a.m. It will be catered. The cost is \$8. Please notify the church office no later than July 24 if: 1) you are on the permanent list but cannot attend or 2) you are not on the permanent list but plan to attend.

Growing in faith

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to practice spiritual disciplines. These ways can enhance our relationship with Jesus. How sad it would be if we never grew in our faith or only knew one hymn to sing.

Years ago, I read a story about a person who approached a spiritual mentor with a troubling question. It seems that they were feeling that their time with God had grown stale. They were contemplating giving up, taking a break from church. The mentor listened as the person expressed frustration and a sense of loneliness. Wisely they counseled, "Don't give up, go deeper."

If you feel that your spiritual life is bland, add a new recipe to your discipline. Go deeper with God. God is not absent. God is not abandoning us. God is calling us to grow, to mature, to experience more and more. This is a fruitful season for all of us. May we discover in greater measure how God is drawing us closer. May we come to enjoy the fruit of our spiritual labors.

With Love From Jesus needs more volunteers

This Sunday afternoon is First Baptist's once-monthly turn to serve at the With Love From Jesus house in Clayton. WLFJ has opened a new annex that accommodates additional space to better serve more people in need in our community. That means more volunteers are required. If you would like to volunteer, please be there by 4 p.m. for sign-in and instruction. We will be distributing food, clothing and sharing the Gospel until around 7 p.m. You can also bring any items you would like to donate to the ministry. They are currently in need of non-perishable items. The WLFJ house is located at the southeast corner of W. 2nd S. Robertson streets.



If you are willing to help, see Rudy Oliver at church or call 919-271-1178, or email him at reholston@gmail.com.

The Pastor Search Committee asks you to pray for God's guidance and wisdom as we evaluate the candidates and seek His will on who to call as our Senior Pastor.



2024 Mid-Year Report from Budget and Finance

Good news! First Baptist Church Clayton has met its General Fund budget for the first six months of 2024. General Fund giving (January 1 - June 30) totaled \$383,099. The church budgeted \$383,075 so actual giving exceeded budgeted giving by \$24.

Gifts to the General Fund exceeded actual expenses by \$76,856, which leaves us in a comfortable financial position. It must be noted, however, the surplus is primarily the result of the absence of a full-time Senior Pastor. The 2024 Budget included line items for a Senior Pastor's salary, housing, insurance, retirement and mileage. These budgeted funds, of course, have not been spent.

If a Senior Pastor had been in place, actual expenses would have closely matched budgeted expenses.

The Budget and Finance Committee is extremely pleased the church has stepped up to meet the budget the members adopted last fall. It is encouraging to know that we are positioning ourselves financially for a future with a full pastoral staff. We praise God!

Nonetheless, please know there is still work to be done. Giving is lagging behind the budget this month. Our weekly needs are \$14,860. Thus far in July, weekly General Fund giving has averaged \$11,719.



Memorials and Honorariums

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE GENERAL FUND

In Memory of

Gerald Brantley by Joyce Nixon
Janelle Sutton by Jerry and Diane Johnson
Hazel Marlow Strickland by Bucky Coats
Glenn Mayes and Joyce Vinson Lipscomb Canady by Valerie Carpenter

In Honor of

Sandy Stephenson by JoAnne Norris
Ronald Mooneyham by Jerry and Diane Johnson

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE ORGAN FUND

In Memory of

Donald Varner by Gerald and Glenda Toler
Donald Varner by Tom, Emily and Jay Vinson

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER FUND

In Memory of

Hazel Strickland by Rudy and Edwina Oliver

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE YOUTH MINISTRY FUND

In Memory of

Donald Varner by Curtis and Elaine Moore



2024 Weekly Reports

Baptisms this Year.....	11	New Members.....	17
Worship Attendance			
Sunday, July 21.....	155	Sunday, July 14.....	185
Sunday School Attendance			
Sunday, July 21.....	*94	Sunday, July 14.....	105
*Not all classes reported attendance			
General Fund Giving			
Sunday, July 21.....	\$7,793	Sunday, July 14.....	\$9,978
Weekly Needs.....	\$14,860		