



The Outlook

First Baptist Church Clayton

Show • Tell
Grow • Serve

January 19, 2025

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Dr. Keever called as Senior Pastor

First Baptist Church Clayton called Dr. Len Keever to be its Senior Pastor on Sunday, January 12. Dr. Keever, who served as interim pastor since December 2023, becomes the 23rd Senior Pastor of First Baptist in its 213-year history.

For over two years, the Pastor Search Committee worked tirelessly reviewing applications, conducting interviews, listening to sermons, and meeting nearly weekly to fill the position. It turned out God had His own plan for He had already found the right man.

Since he was hired as interim, Dr. Keever has served our church well. He quickly formed close relationships with members and has ministered to many families in the congregation. He and his wife, Cathy, certainly became a vital part of our congregation.

“I’ve grown into it,” Dr. Keever said. “When I came here, I would have never thought that I would lead a church again. This past year has shown me that God is calling me to this. I love this church. I feel like I’m at home. Since the very beginning Cathy and I have felt like this is where we’re supposed to be.”

“I feel rejuvenated,” he added. “It’s a unique situation when an interim becomes senior pastor. From all that the church has been through, it’s been fulfilling as we developed a trust. We’re known quantities. I know who the church is. I know its character and the quality of its leadership. That’s extremely attractive to me. When the pastor search committee asked me if I would be interested in becoming Senior Pastor, I would not have entertained the possibility had I not already fallen in love with the church.”

Dr. Keever received his bachelor’s degree from Gardner-Webb College, a Master of Divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a Doctor of Ministry from Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va. He is a native of Black Mountain. He and Cathy, who currently live in Dunn, have three children, Seth, Lauren and Jared, and four grandchildren.

Dr. Keever’s office hours are Tuesday – Thursday 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. He will work remotely on Mondays, and will also be available for meetings and appointments as scheduled. He issues an open invitation for phone calls and visits at any time.

First Baptist had been without a Senior Pastor since September 2021.

– By Stewart McLeod



First Baptist Church feels like home

By Dr. Len Keever
Senior Pastor

Cathy and I want to thank you for allowing us to serve you at First Baptist Church of Clayton. We have been impressed with the church, its staff, leadership and ministries during the time I served as Interim Pastor.

We look forward to where God is leading us. Our sense of being called is strong; First Baptist Church Clayton has already become a place that feels like home.

A foundational verse of Scripture for me is Romans 1:12. In the Good-News Bible it reads, "Both you and I will be helped at the same time, you by my faith and I by yours." This verse is important because it speaks of mutual encouragement, learning from one another, sharing faith and nurturing each other's journey. I have certainly experienced this in the welcome and friendships we have enjoyed over the last year. My faith has grown in your presence; and God has further shaped me as I have gotten to walk beside you as we each grow in Christ.

Henry Blackaby, in the [Experiencing God](#) study, teaches that if you want to know where you are going, look to see where God has already led you. This last year has been wonderful. God has led us together. As we help each other by faith, may we discover the richness of the path God has set before us.

Thank you for calling me to serve as Pastor alongside Keeley, Stephanie and Stephen. Cathy and I are excited to join you as we experience God growing closer to Christ together.

Recap of 2024; exciting start to 2025

2024 was a great year for First Baptist Church Clayton. We welcomed 31 new members to our fellowship and enjoyed the company of many others who regularly attended worship services, Sunday School, Wednesday night activities and mission-related events and meetings.

As faithful believers, what's most spiritually fulfilling are the 18 Baptisms conducted throughout the year. Rev. Stephanie Parker, who officiated at each one, said that as she looks back on last year, "I remember the excitement surrounding the celebration of that marker in their faith journey."

New members who joined First Baptist via Baptism were Collin Lee, Eason Pope, Jim Chanco, Aubrey Payton, Phia Parker, Emily Lajoie, Ann Matchett Cox, Spencer Long, Kelsy Temesy, Brynlee Temesy, Dylan Franklin, Toni Franklin, Noelle Franklin, Charlie Senarian, Tara Senarian, Kseniya Senarian and Harper Riddick. Longtime member Sarah Brooks was also baptized.

Other new members are Matt Phillips, Terri Phillips and Swade Hardee (awaiting Baptism on Feb. 16); Matt Temesy, Lura Temesy and Grace Papanko (statement of faith); and James Chanco, Robin Wyzkowski, Braelynne Wyzkowski, Lou Elia, Vickie Elia, Steve Sowah and Eunice Papanko (transfer of letter).

Twelve members were welcomed into God's Heavenly Gates, and 18 members requested to be removed from the roll or moved to another church.

We started charting Sunday Morning Worship attendance in 2024. Over the course of the year, the 9:30 a.m. worship service averaged 185. December 1 drew the largest crowd of 381. On March 31, attendance was 270. The next highest attendance was 250 on March 17. Estimated attendance for the Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service was 450.

Sunday School average attendance was 130. Top Sundays were January 28 and February 11 with 171 attending each time followed by 166 on March 17.

We're off to an exciting start in 2025. Attendance is up, the Holy Spirit is present and we're learning more about God's Word. We hope to see you every Sunday as we seek to Show God's Love, Tell the Good News, Grow Spiritually and Serve Others in our Community and World.

What? Jessica Collins wins Chili Cook-Off with delicious turkey soup with rice

Jessica Collins was the inaugural winner of the First Baptist Church Chili Cook-Off on Wednesday, January 8.

Only it was an instant pot recipe for turkey soup that won over the dinner guests/voters.

"I have to admit, I feel like I do not deserve this honor since I didn't even make chili," she exclaimed. "But I guess the people have spoken."

Elaine Johnson, one of the many members of the Basic Sunday School Class who organized the contest, presented Jessica with a prize gift bag for winning first place.

Here's the recipe for Jessica's Creamy Instant Pot Turkey Soup with Rice:



Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 yellow onion diced
 3 medium carrots sliced
 1 yellow or orange bell pepper chopped
 2 celery stalks diced
 1 box + 1 can chicken or turkey broth
 1 chicken bullion cube
 1 box Rice-a-Roni Long Grain and Wild Rice
 1/2 cup sour cream
 2 cups turkey, diced or shredded (turkey can be cooked, uncooked or cooked & frozen)

Instructions

Set the Instant Pot to Saute and add the olive oil. Let it heat for a couple of minutes.
 Add the onions and cook for 3 minutes.
 Add the carrots, bell pepper and celery and saute for another 2 minutes.

Turn off the Instant Pot.

Stir in the chicken broth and deglaze the Instant Pot. Stir with a wooden spoon to loosen any vegetables stuck to the bottom. Then add the box of rice and seasonings.

If you are using uncooked turkey or frozen cooked turkey, stir it in now. If you are using leftover cooked turkey that isn't frozen, don't add it yet.

Put the lid on, lock it and put it on the Manual setting. Set the time for 5 minutes for white rice, 12 minutes for wild rice or 25 minutes for brown rice.

When the Instant Pot is finished let the pressure release naturally for 10 minutes. Then manually release the pressure. Add the sour cream and shredded cooked turkey to the pot, and stir. Put the lid back on and let the soup sit for 5-10 minutes. Serve and Enjoy.

Date Change: Join us Sunday at With Love From Jesus

Thank God for our opportunity to restart our service at the With Love From Jesus house.

We had originally planned to serve on January 26, but that date conflicted with the Senior Adult Banquet so we're serving this Sunday afternoon, January 19. If you would like to volunteer, please be there by 4 p.m. for sign-in and instructions. 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. Their most urgent needs are winter coats, gloves, socks, hats and blankets.

The WLFJ house is located at the southeast corner of West 2nd and South 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.

Baptist Men invite all to breakfast on Baptist Men's Day

Baptist Men's Day is Sunday, January 26. The day kicks off with an 8 a.m. breakfast prepared by the Baptist Men. The entire church family is invited. Breakfast will be followed by an update from Minister Uche Godswill Onokalahon from the U.S. African Outreach Foundation. Uche has been in Clayton for six or seven years on a mission to help the people of Nigeria. In 2022, First Baptist volunteers collected and shipped 18 drums of clothes to Nigeria in October 2022.

The morning worship service will be led by the Baptist Men. They will also fill the chancel for the Anthem. The message will be delivered by Kelvin Gurley with Hope Center Ministries.

If you would like to sing in the Men's Choir, please come to the choir room at 8:45 a.m. for rehearsal.

Memorials and Honorariums

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE

General Fund in Memory of

- Sarah Jolivet and Ella Jean Flowers by Jiles and Kim Harrell
 James Edward Pearce, Sarah Jolivet and Ella Jean Flowers by Carol Gilbert
 Sarah Jolivet and Ella Jean Flowers by Judy Wood
 Ella Jean Flowers by JoAnn Hardee
 Ella Jean Flowers by Joe and Linda Hester
 Sarah Jolivet by Gerald and Glenda Toler
 Ella Jean Flowers by Donna Brown
 Sarah Jolivet and Ella Jean Flowers by Andy and Gloria Pleasant
 Sarah Jolivet by Jeff and Jackie Tarkington
 Ella Jean Flowers by Vivi Perry
 Ella Jean Flowers and Sarah Jolivet by Jay and Kathy Woodard
 Sarah Jolivet by Bucky Coats

General Fund in Honor of

- Lois Weeks, Dr. Len and Cathy Keever and the Pastor Search Committee
 by Andy and Gloria Pleasant

Organ Fund in Memory of

- Ron Earp by Ricky and Sherry Smith
 Ella Jean Flowers by Gerald and Glenda Toler
 Carol Bartlett and Ella Jean Flowers by Tom, Emily and Jay Vinson

Organ Fund in Honor of

- Jackie Smith by Ricky and Sherry Smith

Music Fund in Memory of

- Ella Jean Flowers by Jeff and Jackie Tarkington

Weekly Reports

Worship Attendance

Sunday, January 12.....250 Sunday, January 5.....197

Sunday School Attendance

Sunday, January 12.....149 Sunday, January 5.....146

General Fund Giving

Sunday, January 12.....\$14,391 Sunday, January 5.....\$27,170
 Weekly Needs.....\$16,659