

The Outlook

First Baptist Church Clayton

Show • Tell
Grow • Serve

January 26, 2025

Volume 48 Number 3

Jesus comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable

By Dr. Len Keever
Senior Pastor

As I write this article, they are calling for snow. There is excitement in the air as we await those first few snowflakes to fall. How much will we get? How long will it last?

Of course, the adult in me wonders how it will affect the commute and if we will need to cancel activities, do we need any groceries, but the child in me rejoices at the thought of snow. I love to watch it fall. Everything seems so clean, even the air smells refreshed when it snows. When I was a child, my brother and sister and I would keep vigil looking out the living room window at the streetlight in front of the house watching for the first flakes of a storm.

I think too of the Magi who looked at the stars seeking signs of cosmic activity. They believed something was about to occur. The star alerted them that a king had been born. It eventually led them to Bethlehem. It is with this same sense of anticipation and wonder that we approach scripture.

In Luke 4:14-21 we read what would be Jesus' inaugural sermon. Prior to this, he was baptized by John, spent 40 days in the wilderness, and was tempted by Satan. Scripture tells us that he returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.

Having read about his birth, we can sense the anticipation. We know that something wonderful is about to happen.

Jesus' words in Luke tell us what his priorities are, what he plans to do. He quotes the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recover of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

These words were welcomed by those who were poor, oppressed and blind. They were hopeful for those who felt trapped and who had lost their family's inheritance because they had to sell the farm to pay their bills after a bad crop. However, the ones who were rich did not like it.

Those who needed indentured people to work their land, or who'd enlarged their vineyards by taking advantage of someone else's misfortune were not very happy with the



Comforts

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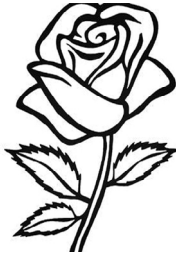
sermon. They liked their places of power. Jesus challenged their way of life. God's fairness didn't seem very fair to them.

I am reminded of the saying that Jesus comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable. In Luke 4:14-21 there is so much to ponder. Jesus' inaugural sermon is powerful. Everything he will do during his time on earth falls within the words of Isaiah's prophecy. If you stop to think about it, we are there too! What Jesus did for them, Jesus was doing for us. Jesus' ministry offers us all the hope of new beginnings,

Isaiah 1:18 says, "If your sins are like scarlet, will they become like snow? If they are red like crimson, will they become like wool?" Like a fresh snowfall, Jesus makes us clean. Perhaps that is why deep down inside I love to see snow; it reminds me of God's promise of forgiveness and being made new.

Note of Thanks

Thank you for your generous support in helping our families during the holiday season.



Your kindness has truly made a difference.

Sincerely,
Ms. Kirks
School Counselor
Cooper Academy



The Children, Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren of

Blondell Isehour Johnson

Invite You to Join Us for An

Afternoon Tea

In Celebration of her 90th Birthday

Sunday, February 9 | Two O'Clock to Four O'Clock in the Afternoon

1618 Little Creek Church Road - Clayton

Kindly RSVP by February 1 to Kaitlin at 919-810-6684

A Message from the Budget and Finance Committee

Thank you all for your generosity in 2024. Because of your financial commitment, giving to the General Fund exceeded expenses by nearly \$156,000. These surplus funds will help us tremendously over the next few months as we pay for the installment of a new chiller for the heating and air conditioning system.

While there was much to celebrate in 2024, let's not forget that most of 2025 lies ahead.

This year's budget increased about 11 percent to \$866,652 and weekly needs increased from \$14,860 to \$16,659.

Thanks again for your contributions and prayerful support of our mission to Show God's Love, Tell the Good News, Grow Spiritually and Serve Others.



Keevers join our family

Dr. Len and Cathy Kever officially joined First Baptist Church this past Sunday by transfer of letter from Dunn Baptist Church. The Keevers started attending First Baptist when he was hired as interim pastor in December 2023.

Dr. Kever was officially called as Senior Pastor on January 12.

First Baptist Church Clayton is extremely happy and honored to welcome the Keevers into our church family.

We look forward to sharing with them our mission to Show God's Love, Tell the Good News, Grow Spiritually and Serve Others in our Community and World.



Cheetahs show support for Noelle

The First Baptist Church Clayton youth basketball team came together to support Noelle Franklin in prayer for her upcoming surgery and treatments. All players wear a Noelle Strong symbol on their jerseys this year.

Pictured from left are (front) Kazmier Sampson, Jacob Wise, Shaun Sedei, Caden Barbour, Noelle Franklin, Lucas Suggs, Braxton Andrews, Connor Pearson and Cole Ramsey; (back) Brandon Andrews, coach; Zach Sedei, manager; and Chris Pearson, coach.

Memorials and Honorariums

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE

General Fund in Memory of

Ella Jean Flowers by John and Dolores Bagley
 Ella Jean Flowers and Carol Bartlett by Ayden and Betty Lee
 Sarah Jolivette, Carol Bartlett and Ella Jean Flowers by Candy Pope
 Sarah Jolivette and Ella Jean Flowers by Tom and Ida Mayes
 Ella Jean Flowers by Paul and Bronna Greer
 Ella Jean Flowers by Joe and Linda Hester
 Ella Jean Flowers by Joe and Bucky Coats
 Ella Jean Flowers by Joe and Ricky and Elizabeth Waddell

General Fund in Honor of

Dr. and Mrs. Len Keever by John and Dolores Bagley
 Dr. and Mrs. Len Keever by Candy Pope

Youth Mission Trip in Memory of

Chuck Turlington by Jiles and Kim Harrell
 Chuck Turlington by Gerald and Glenda Toler

Organ Fund in Memory of

Ella Jean Flowers by Walter and Jill Rasor
 Ella Jean Flowers by the Chancel Choir
 Ron Earp, Ella Jean Flowers and Sarah Jolivetter by Earl and Hope Johnson



Weekly Reports

Baptisms this Year.....0	New Members.....2
Worship Attendance	
Sunday, January 19.....184	Sunday, January 12.....250
Sunday School Attendance	
Sunday, January 19.....111*	Sunday, January 12.....149
*Not all classes reported attendance	
General Fund Giving	
Sunday, January 19.....\$16,538	Sunday, January 12.....\$14,391
Weekly Needs.....\$16,659	