



The Outlook

First Baptist Church Clayton

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Grow • Serve

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God's laws keep creation together

By Dr. Len Keever
Pastor

Several months ago, we began an experiment during the Sunday school hour called Echo. Young adults gather with me in the fellowship hall after worship to answer one basic question: What did you hear in the sermon you'd like to talk about.

Sipping coffee, we let the Spirit lead the discussion. We talk about things that we hear during worship. Sometimes we get off track believing that God speaks to all our conversations.

This last Sunday we took a moment to discuss the floods in Texas, wondering why God permits certain disasters to occur. Truthfully, we didn't come up with an answer; these are the things only God knows, but it did lead me to recall a time when I asked my pastor a similar question many years ago.

Mr. Ferrell told me that when God created the heavens and the earth, even before humans were created, God set up laws to hold creation together, to keep it going. To illustrate this, he used the example of the law of gravity.

Without this law, things would float away. Other laws exist too, like those that



dictate weather patterns. There are laws that set the earth in motion and direct the seasons. Another instills in animals the instinct to care for their young, nudge them to walk or fly, and teach them how to survive. These laws provide balance, help to recreate, and sometimes, when we get in their way, they can cause disaster.

My pastor taught me that these laws are good because God made them to protect and keep creation going. There is order in creation. God made it that way.

When we plant tomato seeds we grow tomatoes not squash. When heated to 212 degrees Fahrenheit, water boils. And when a tropical depression forms over warm water, a hurricane can form. When the steering currents in the upper atmosphere move a certain way, storms are carried along like a boat in a river. All of this is a part of God's creative design.

His explanation continues to make sense to me. The laws of nature are there to provide security. Looking at the Commandments, the Beatitudes, Jesus' teachings, I see the same thing. God has given these to us to protect us and keep us safe. God gave us these instructions to sustain us in our re

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Ministry teams seek servants

At First Baptist Church Clayton there are eight Ministry Teams dedicated to loving and supporting our church family. These teams function under the auspices of the Deacon Ministry and are led by active Deacons. They are Prayer, Bereavement, Casserole, Celebration, Homebound, Hospital Visitation, Transportation and Visitor/New Member.

The role of the deacon is that of spiritual leadership through service to God, the church body and the lost. These eight ministry teams made up of lay people within the church embody that same role. Over the next several weeks, we will focus on these ministries.

These teams are not committees and members are not elected by the church. To participate, all you have to do is volunteer. And you do not have to be an official member of our church to serve on a ministry team. For more information about the Deacon Ministry, contact chairman Tim Matthews at 919-906-2225 or centrallube1@gmail.com, or vice-chair Ann Austin at 919-333-6791 or dddhd@aol.com.



Prayer Ministry Team

This week our focus is on the Prayer Ministry Team. They are First Baptist Church's prayer warriors. In Matthew 18:19-20 Jesus said, "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them." The Prayer team knows the awesome power of united prayer and understands that God is always listening and waiting to comfort, heal, protect and guide.

Rudy Oliver, Prayer team leader, sends prayer request updates by email on a regular basis. The team is made up of all ordained Deacons and many others who are ready to pray. Please call or email Rudy if you would like to join this team, or if you know someone in need of prayer. He can be reached at 919-271-1178 and reoholston@gmail.com.

Next week, we will focus on the Bereavement Ministry Team.

Join us Sunday, July 27 at WLFJ

The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." – Matthew 25:40

On Sunday afternoon, July 27, First Baptist Clayton will take its once-monthly turn to serve at the With Love From Jesus house in Clayton.

If you would like to volunteer, let Rudy Oliver know you're coming by Thursday, July 24. Please be at WLFJ at 4 p.m. on Sunday 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 nonperishable items.

WLFJ often has over 80 guests come for food and clothing items.

The WLFJ house is located at the southeast corner of West 2nd and South Robertson streets. Rudy can be reached at 919-271-1178, or email him at reoholston@gmail.com.

Joint WMU Kickoff set for August 5

Ladies at First Baptist Church Clayton of all ages, including the Acteens and GAs are invited to the Joint WMU Kick-Off meeting on Tuesday, August 5 at 6 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. If you're not in a WMU Group, this is a great time to get involved.

Randa Gay of the Isaiah 117 House in Selma will be the guest speaker. Isaiah House provides a comforting home for children who have been removed from their families by child protective services out of concern for their safety.

Normally children are taken to child welfare services to await placement in a foster home. This can take several hours, but sometimes it takes many days. These children are often scared, lonely and hungry and often have nothing but the clothes on their back.

The Isaiah House is a safe place with friendly and loving volunteers who provide

*Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of
the fatherless; plead the
case of the widow. – Isaiah 1:17*

clean clothes, toys, warm blankets, care and love. Their mission is to reduce trauma for children awaiting placement in a foster home, lighten the load for child welfare services and ease the transition for foster families.

The WMU will be collecting school supplies to be distributed to children/families in need at the August 5 meeting. Donated items may be placed in totes that will be at the dinner. Donation totes will also be located outside the church office.

The Baptist Men will prepare a chicken casserole dinner. Call the church office at 919-553-4161 to get your name on the list.

More details to follow next week.

Midyear update from Budget and Finance

The first six months of 2025 are behind us. To date, General Fund revenues have exceeded expenses by \$42,046. That's good news. Give credit to the staff and committee leaders for their prudence in spending the church's dollars.

Giving to the General Fund, however, is far short of the Budget the church body adopted for 2025. As of June 30, General Fund giving totaled \$396,504. The Budget is \$433,126 so midyear, we're \$36,630 short of our giving goal.

On a positive note, giving in the month of June was more than it's been in five years. Also giving over the first half of 2025 exceeded giving during the same period in 2024.

With help from Tommy Bedford and Samara Batts on the Financial Administrative team, the Budget and Finance Committee has been working to streamline and improve our accounting system by combining several bank accounts into an interest-bearing account. Also, several restricted funds that have not been active in many years have been cleaned up.

The goal of these steps is to provide more transparency and to make the monthly financial report more easily understandable for church members. If you ever have any questions regarding the budget or financial reports, please contact Budget and Finance chairman Stewart McLeod at 919-669-7542 or wstewartmcleod@gmail.com.



God’s laws

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lationships with Him and with each other.
Just as natural laws keep nature balanced, so God’s laws are to keep us in harmony with each other and with God. I don’t see these laws as being restrictive but as protective, providing an ethic of mutual love and respect. As gravity holds us to the earth, so love, the greatest virtue, keeps us connected to Christ and to one another.
God’s laws are not meant to bind us, but to hold us together. They provide freedom, not restriction.
The next time you watch a leaf float to the earth, remember that it is obeying God’s law of gravity. Take a moment to think of all the ways God takes care of us. God is truly awesome!

Memorials and Honorariums

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE General Fund in Memory of

Johnny Elmore by John and Cathy Paschal
Tom Medlin by Jerry and Sharon Poole

Baptist Men’s Fund in Memory of Lin Shehdan by Earl and Hope Johnson

Organ Fund in Memory of Tom Medlin by Pat Zullo Tom Medlin by Bill and Faye Brooks

Organ Fund in Honor of Nancy Turlington and Mary Baker by Emory and Jo Howard

Youth Fund in Honor of Vickie Andrews, youth leaders and the youth who went on the mission trip to Asheville by Nancy Blinson



Weekly Reports

Baptisms this Year.....6	New Members.....17
Worship Attendance	
Sunday, July 6.....128	Sunday, June 29.....250
Sunday School Attendance	
Sunday, July 6.....97	Sunday, June 29.....147
General Fund Giving	
Sunday, July 6.....\$17,654	Sunday, June 29.....\$16,754
Weekly Needs.....\$16,659	