



The Outlook

First Baptist Church Clayton

Show • Tell
Grow • Serve

December 14, 2025

Volume 48 Number 47

Little surprises can help us grow closer in our relationship with God

By Dr. Len Keever
Pastor

I love surprises, especially the ones that alert me to God's presence. Last night, standing in the live nativity as Joseph (at my age I think it would be more appropriate to be Zachariah or Simeon), I had one of those moments.

Looking down on baby Jesus lying in the manger, I was reminded that I'd been there before, a little more than 60 years ago. I suddenly remembered standing on the stage in the fellowship hall at First Baptist Church in Black Mountain dressed in my flannel bathrobe, playing the part of Joseph at the Sunday School Christmas party.

I'd progressed from the role of shepherd, through the ranks of being a wise man (I never got to be an angel, thus letting me know my teachers knew who wasn't always paying attention in class), to finally arrive in the exalted position of Joseph. This was the last year I'd be in that department, my final chance to reach the high status of standing next to Mary, gazing down at a manger made from an old orange crate, filled with straw that had seen better days, snuggling an old baby doll wrapped in someone's dis-

carded sewing scraps.

This memory came to me last Thursday night as I stood looking down at the doll that signified Jesus' sleeping peacefully after the hard journey from divine to human, zygote to breathing on his own, to be born of Mary. I stood there thinking of how much Jesus has come to mean to me.

I thought of my own journey from primary department to pastor, from innocent child to born-again believer struggling to grasp that deeper meaning of what it means to breathe in the breath of the Holy Spirit; to know more fully the life God is calling me to grow into. It was a wonderful moment, standing in stillness, aware of the blessings that surround me, thinking of how far God has brought me on this journey.

Of course I was not alone at the nativity. Cathy was there as Mary, God's gift to share this adventure with me. There were wise folks present whose faithfulness we can all depend on. Around the corner were shepherds, those who journey with us, encour



See Little Surprises, page 2



Please consider serving in the Sunday morning Nursery



As one year is ending soon and a new one is rapidly approaching, please consider marking your new calendars for a couple of Sundays in the 2026 nursery rotation. Even if all you have to offer is one or two weeks, that is one or two weeks that our young parents can count on for loving arms being present to welcome our youngest churchgoers on a Sunday morning.

New dates are available in the Signup Genius link below, awaiting your partnership in this important ministry to families and children:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090E4CAEA82FA3FF2-fbcc>

Little Surprises

Continued from page 1

aging us and letting us know that the fellowship and friendship of fellow believers is such a wonderful gift.

Beyond them were the animals, they too are God's creation, sacred and special for no other reason than that God called them into being and said that they are good. Then there were angels present, reminding us that there is always more going on than we can see – God is always watching over us, waiting for us to discover surprises, waiting on us to know just how much He loves us. Waiting on us to believe in Jesus all over again as we experience the wonder of his birth again this year, and in doing so, grow deeper in our relationship with God.

New Wednesday Morning Bible Study begins Jan. 7

On Wednesday, January 7, 2026, a new Wednesday Morning Bible Study led by Rev. Stephen Nance will begin. The Bible Study meets in the SALT classroom from 9:30 to 11 a.m. A Zoom option is available.

The study, entitled "Death and Resurrection of the Messiah: Bringing God's Shalom to a World in Chaos," is a video presentation by Ray Vander Laan. Being a follower of Jesus does not mean staying away from evil. It means confronting it – face to face – just like Jesus did every single day up through the Resurrection. In this fourth volume of *That The World May Know*, learn how confronting evil can be loudly proclaiming the name of Jesus or quietly caring for someone in need.

Sign up in the church office for the 10-session study: Jan. 7, 14, 21, 28, Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, March 4, 11. Student Discovery Guides are \$10 and will be available soon.



Shine Choir

Lily Tarkington,
Madelynn Skillman and
Saylor Johnson sang a
joyful tune to the Lord
this past Sunday during
the morning worship.
The Shine Choir is
directed by Elaine Moore
and Susan Parker.



Join us for a Joint Sunday School



Celebrate Christmas **COVERED DISH BRUNCH**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025

After the 9:30am worship service, we will gather
in the Fellowship Hall to enjoy a Christmas
brunch together! Please bring a dish to share-
you may bring it before or after the service.



Memorials and Honorariums

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE

General Fund in Memory of

Judy Cox by John and Lynn Gibson
 Judy Cox by Ricky and Elizabeth Waddell
 Judy Cox by Jay and Kathy Woodard
 Helen Ellerbe by the Faith Sunday School Class
 Dottie Brezeale by John and Dolores Bagley
 Dottie Brezeale by Carol Gilbert

General Fund in Honor of

Dean Temple by the Faith Sunday School Class

Organ Fund in Memory of

Judy Cox by Teresa Ann Calton
 Judy Cox by Jeff and Jackie Tarkington
 Dottie Brezeale and Dean Grattidge by Chris and Diane Pearce

Organ Fund in Honor of

FBCC Music Programs and Leaders by Joe and Linda Hester

Child Development Center in Memory of

Dottie Brezeale by Rudy and Edwina Oliver

Youth Ministry Fund in Memory of

Dean Grattidge by Rudy and Edwina Oliver
 Judy Cox by Lowell and Dorothy Harris

Senior Adult Fun in Memory of

Dottie Brezeale by Lowell and Dorothy Harris
 Dottie Brezeale by the Salt Sunday School Class

Heck Jones Fund in Memory of

Dean Grattidge by Lois Weeks Circle

Heck Jones Fund in Honor of

Linda Hester by Neil and Mary Marche Byrd

With Love From Jesus in Honor of

Rudy and Edwina Oliver by Joe and Linda Hester

Weekly Reports

Baptisms this Year.....10	New Members.....22
Worship Attendance	
Sunday, December 7.....174	Sunday, November 30.....197
Sunday School Attendance	
Sunday, December 7.....132	Sunday, November 30.....138
General Fund Giving	
Sunday, December 7.....\$14,589	Sunday, November 30.....\$13,834
Weekly Needs.....\$16,659	