

The Outlook

First Baptist Church Clayton

Show • Tell
Grow • Serve

March 8, 2026

Volume 49 Number 9

Look to God for guidance

By Dr. Len Keever
Pastor

Imagine looking at a long, beautiful, well-traveled path lying before you. This path is clearly marked with resting places along the way. Flowers and trees line the path. There is no evidence of litter. A single set of footprints is clearly visible.



Now, imagine the same path marked with detours, short cuts branching out on every side for as far as you can see. They seem so clear and worn, so tempting and easy, there are many sets of prints going off in every direction.

With all these alternatives, the original path is hard to recognize; overgrown, less traveled, marked with potholes and neglect. What once seemed easy to follow now looks like a maze, a confusing puzzle designed to get us lost. And what makes it worse are all the signs and people professing that they know the way – when they don't – but they sound so convincing.

This image came to me as I thought about what I see each day, people trying to find security on their own, taking short cuts on

faith's journey, surrendering their Christian duty, or should we say opportunity, to others. Everything God gave to Jesus God provided because of his long obedience in the same direction.

Thinking back to the Temptation story, Jesus did not spend one day in the wilderness, one afternoon, not one lone hour in prayer and then suddenly he was at the end of the path, knowing it all, skipping the cross and the borrowed grave. Jesus' time in those 40 days set the tone for his ministry; it developed his character. His trials were not over at the beginning but just starting.

In those 40 days, he decided, he resolved to trust in God, not to take short-cuts or to compartmentalize his faith only for Sabbath. He decided that when temptations came along, he would look to God for guidance.

His example is inspiring. The work is hard, but the reward is great. I think of Robert Frost's poem [The Road Not Taken](#), "I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." Following Jesus makes all the difference.

There is a tune in my head, background music as I write, "I have decided, to follow Jesus. I have decided, to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back." Do you hear it too?



Barrett Long and Emily Carole Farmer (pictured with FBCC Minister of Music Keeley Tarkington) participated in a worship concert at Wake Forest Baptist Church last Saturday, February 28. They worked hard over the past month to learn five choral pieces to share with the community through their participation in a new Community Youth Choir for churches. The link to the video of the worship concert can be found on First Baptist Church Clayton's Facebook page. Be sure to check it out.

Mission Moment†



The Hospital Visitation Ministry team is one of eight ministry teams that functions under the auspices of the Deacons with the primary goal to love and serve our church family. Members of the hospital team visit, send cards and/or make telephone calls to church members who have been hospitalized. They also connect with people in rehabilitation facilities. Team members serve on weekly rotations. When a team member is on call, it is his or her responsibility to find out who is in the hospital by calling the church office, checking the board or contacting the Prayer Ministry team for prayer requests.

If you are interested in serving on this dedicated and impactful ministry team, please contact leader Kim Harrell at 919-264-9832.



Youth plugged in to Christ at Elevation

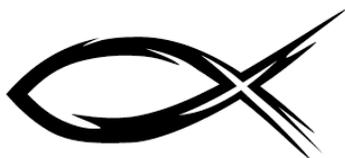
First Baptist Church Clayton Youth Ministry's Elevation 2026 was held February 20-22. The theme this year was "Plugged In" and the verse was John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

50 youth and 40 volunteers plugged in to make the weekend a stunning success. John Perdue delivered the spiritual message on both Friday and Saturday evenings. The FBCC Praise and Worship band kept the energy high with the music Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday morning during worship.

Elevation weekend was filled with small group lessons, games, a scavenger hunt, cleaning the church, good food, surprise outings, host home fun and memories that will last for a long time through. It was exciting to see our youth put down their phones and plug into the Word of God.

The weekend concluded with Youth Sunday where the youth lead the congregation in worship. They stepped out of their comfort zones, sang, prayed, read scripture and spoke from their hearts. The message was on how our youth are plugged into Bible study, outreach, fun and fellowship, and service. First Baptist is blessed to have such a wonderful bunch of young people.

*On Wednesdays at 12 noon during Lent,
and each day during Holy Week
(March 30-April 3), Dr. Keever will be live-streaming
a short midday devotion. These devotions will be
streamed the same as our Sunday Morning services.
Please make plans to join us as we
journey toward Easter together.*



Fundraiser for Able to Serve set for March 23

For the second year in a row, Able to Serve, First Baptist Church Clayton and Angie's Restaurant



McCallum at 919-553-4161, Jackie Tarkington at 919-264-8404 or Cathy Paschal at 919-

in Garner have joined forces on a fundraiser to help support adults with disabilities. On Sunday, March 22, join us for a barbecue chicken lunch (1/2 chicken, white or dark meat, potatoes, green beans, roll and dessert) in the Fellowship Hall.

Plates are \$15 each and must be purchased in advance by this Sunday, March 12. Money must be received to reserve your plate. No extra plates will be ordered. The lunches will be delivered to the Fellowship Hall by 11:45 a.m. Eat in or take out.

You may purchase tickets by calling Terry

369-6025. Please make checks payable to Able to Serve.

Able to Serve is a faith-based non-profit organization that provides day programs for adults with disabilities. Their mission is to equip adults with disabilities the means to be independent, and to connect them with opportunities to serve others in their community.

Notably, First Baptist Clayton is also host to an annual Able to Serve dance in October and many church members have served as volunteers.

Memorials and Honorariums

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR GIFTS TO THE

General Fund in Memory of

- Bobbie Sue Batts, Ricky Dean Barbour, Betty Matthews, Jean Lee and Jackie Fussell by Judy Wood
- Jean Lee by Butch and Rhonda Bailey
- Jackie Fussell and Ricky Dean Barbour by Earl and Hope Johnson
- Helen Ellerbe by Al and Valerie Carpenter
- Betty Matthews by Cecil and Donna Lee

General Fund in Honor of

FBCC Youth - Elevation Weekend 2026

Organ Fund in Memory of

- Jean Lee by Earl and Hope Johnson
- Betty Matthews by Candy Pope

Organ Fund in Honor of

Lexene Lee's 93rd birthday by Jay Vinson

Baptist Men's Fund in Memory of

Betty Matthews by Earl and Hope Johnson

Youth Ministry Fund in Honor of

- Vicky Andrews, youth parents and volunteers by Chris and Diane Pearce

WMU Mission Action Fund in Memory of

- Jackie Fussell by Patrick Smith
- Jean Wheeler by Al and Valerie Carpenter

Weekly Reports

Baptisms this Year.....	0	New Members.....	5
Worship Attendance			
Sunday, March 1.....	226	Sunday, February 22.....	248
Sunday School Attendance			
Sunday, March 1.....	152	Sunday, February 22.....	165
General Fund Giving			
Sunday, March 1.....	\$12,821	Sunday, February 22.....	\$10,732
2026 Weekly Needs.....	\$17,470		