

JANUARY 23, 2025

First Baptist Church of Eatonton Messenger

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST SHARING GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE WITH ALL



CHARGE TO THE CHURCH

Sunday, January 26, will culminate my eight and a half years with you, and just shy of sixty years of musical ministry in Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and in 37 other states and 37 countries. While I confess a light frost of sadness, it is quickly melted by the joy and thanksgiving for the opportunities God has provided me to witness and minister, musically and otherwise. The same God who called me into the ministry in 1965 is now calling me into Retirement 2.0, and will remain with me and you for whatever He has in store for us next.

One of my favorite parts of my ordination was the Charge to the Candidate, a loving blessing and exhortation for the days to come. I would like to leave with you an informal but no less heartfelt Charge to the Church.

This would be easiest if I simply shared with you selected scripture passages. But as a musical minister, perhaps you will allow me to share some memorable fragments of the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs we sing that are solidly based in scripture.

Be strong in the Lord, and be of good courage, for He is your guide and the victory is yours. He is your God of ages past and your hope for years to come. Stand up, stand up for Jesus, but lean in together on His everlasting arms in the sweet, sweet spirit of fellowship. In Christ alone your hope is found. He is your Way Maker, your Living Hope. He fills your every longing and keeps you singing as you go. So great is His faithfulness that all you have needed His hand has provided. Whatever your lot, He has taught you to simply, sincerely say, "It is well." How firm a foundation! What a blessed assurance!

You have 10,000 reasons to sing the mighty power of God like never before, to praise God from whom all blessings flow. He is your all in all. You know this, for the Bible tells you so! Let your hearts open like flowers before the warmth of the Son, melting the clouds of sin and sadness, driving the dark of doubt away. You are never alone. He walks and talks with you in the garden and in this very room.

Never keep Him to yourself. People need the Lord. They'll know you are Christians by your love for Him, and for them. Rescue the perishing. Care for the dying. Sing of your Redeemer and His wondrous love for them. Share His love. Speak the name of Jesus. Don't wait until we all get to heaven to sing and shout the victory. Let your songs abound and every tear be dry, for though our sins they are many, His mercy is more. Jesus' amazing grace has paid it all, and sometimes it calls for songs of loudest praise. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

Because He lives, we can face whatever tomorrow brings, so until He returns or calls us home, here in the power of Christ may we stand!

John

FROM THE PASTOR

There are so many ideas provoked by the Biblical phrase, “Here am I.” I remember it distinctly from Isaiah’s call recorded in the sixth chapter of the book of Isaiah. But versions of it are found all over the scripture. We traditionally equate saying “Here am I” with volunteering to do something or to go somewhere.

Henri Nouwen makes an even more necessary application as he writes about the kind of praying asked of us. He writes, “*I really want to ask you to practice prayer as a practice of the presence of God. You don’t have to say many words. You don’t have to have deep thoughts. You don’t have to worry about how to think. You can just be where you are and say, “I love you. I love you. I know you love me and I love you. I don’t have any big things to say. I don’t have any profound words to express, but I am here and I want you to be with me and I want to be with you.” It is that simple. It is a very simple thing. Prayer is not complicated. It is not difficult. If people ask you how you pray just tell them, “Sit down and say, ‘Lord, here I am.’”*”

This way of praying brings us to the flames of God with nothing more than to stoke the flames with our breath, and to be warmed by the flame that ignites us in the ways of Christ.

We honor one this weekend who has prayed “Here am I” for six decades as a minister of God’s church. But his “Here am I” has always been rooted in a submissive stance before the call of God to orient his life around the worship of God. I am grateful for his ministry to the church, who too often can want God to serve them and worship them, instead of being the church that serves and worships God. It’s too easy to get this so significant matter reversed. John Cotten has stood faithfully Sunday after Sunday, calling people to get it correct, to serve and worship God. I am grateful for his leadership to me and the church at large. I am grateful for his partnership to study, hear and follow God in the way of Jesus Christ.

As he goes forward I offer a blessing from John O’Donohue’s *To Bless the Space Between Us*.

*“This is where your life has arrived,
After all the years of effort and toil;
Look back with graciousness and thanks
On all your great and quiet achievements.*

*You stand on the shore of new invitation
To open your life to what is left undone;
Let your heart enjoy a different rhythm
When drawn to the wonder of other horizons.*

*Have the courage for a new approach to time;
Allow it to slow until you find freedom
To draw alongside the mystery you hold
And befriend your own beauty of soul.*

*Now is the time to (continue to) enjoy your heart’s desire,
To live the dreams you’ve waited for,
To awaken the depths beyond your work
And enter into your infinite source.”*

*Grace,
Craig*

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

As January draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on the faithfulness of God. This past month has been a testament to His goodness and the hope we have in Him as we embark on a new year. Psalm 145:9 reminds us, “The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made.” What a comforting truth to carry with us as we move forward together.

This month has been filled with moments of connection, growth, and service. From the warmth of our fellowship gatherings to times of prayer, and receiving a new member through Baptism, it’s evident that God is at work among us. I am especially encouraged by how many of you have stepped up to serve, whether through Sunday School leadership, our Children’s programs, or simply by extending a hand of friendship to someone in need.

As we look ahead, I want to encourage us to embrace this season with hearts open to God’s leading. There are so many ways we can grow deeper in our faith and share His love with those around us. Here are a few ways to stay engaged in the coming weeks:

- **Sunday Morning Worship:** Join us as we gather for Worship at 10:50am each Sunday morning.
- **Serve Opportunities:** Consider volunteering in one of our ministry areas. Whether it’s helping in children’s ministry, joining the choir, or serving behind the scenes, your gifts can make a difference.
- **Small Groups:** Our small groups are an excellent way to dive deeper into God’s Word and build relationships within our church family. Sunday Morning at 9:45am, Ladies Monday Night Bible Study, Men’s Prayer Meeting on Thursday Morning at 8:00am, or Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting at 6:15pm.

Let’s also remember to lift one another in prayer as we journey through the year. Pray for wisdom, strength, and unity as we seek to be a light in our community. Let us be a church that reflects the love and compassion of Christ in all we do.

As we close out this month and prepare to enter February, may we do so with renewed hearts and a steadfast trust in God’s plans. Thank you for being a part of this incredible church family. Your faith, love, and commitment inspire me daily, and I am excited to see what God has in store for us in the days ahead.

*Blessings,
Dylan*

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

WELCOMING FOR JANUARY

Jim and Vicki Hall

WELCOMING FOR FEBRUARY

Mike and Sherry Lyons

USHERS FOR JANUARY

Cary Walton, David Giddens, Scott Joris,
Ben Leverette, Jesse McMillen, Charles Patten

USHERS FOR FEBRUARY

Mike Lyons, Brandon Cardwell, Howell Cardwell,
Mike Faulk, Ed Self, Frank Thompson

DEACON FOR JANUARY 26

Chad Davis

DEACON FAMILIES

Steve Culberson Family, Charlotte Green,
Luceil Harrison, Mike Reagin Family, Jim Ryan,
Steve Tubbs Family, Sonny Turner Family

DEACON FOR FEBRUARY 2

Susan Davis

DEACON FAMILIES

James Cheney Family, Edge Farley Family,
Mabel Hicks, Guerry Key Family,
Jesse McMillen Family, Peggy McMillen, Betty Sills

WORSHIP REPORT

<u>Sunday, January 05</u>	<u>160</u>
<u>Sunday, January 12</u>	<u>99</u>
<u>Sunday, January 19</u>	<u>100</u>

FINANCIAL REPORT

DECEMBER 15, 2024

<u>Budget Needs</u>	<u>\$10,200.56</u>
<u>Budget Receipts</u>	<u>\$11,994.00</u>
<u>Budget Needs YTD</u>	<u>\$510,028.01</u>
<u>Budget Receipts YTD</u>	<u>\$502,457.20</u>

DECEMBER 22, 2024

<u>Budget Needs</u>	<u>\$10,200.56</u>
<u>Budget Receipts</u>	<u>\$13,697.00</u>
<u>Budget Needs YTD</u>	<u>\$520,228.57</u>
<u>Budget Receipts YTD</u>	<u>\$516,154.20</u>

DECEMBER 29, 2024

<u>Budget Needs</u>	<u>\$10,200.56</u>
<u>Budget Receipts</u>	<u>\$41,415.41</u>
<u>Budget Needs YTD</u>	<u>\$530,429.13</u>
<u>Budget Receipts YTD</u>	<u>\$557,569.61</u>

BIRTHDAYS

01/23 - McKenzie Cardwell, Carl Haizlip,
Reagan Prance
01/24 - Ronald Harley
01/27 - Janice Turner
01/29 - Gwen Ralston, Davis McMillen
01/30 - David Giddens
01/31 - Mollie Harvey
02/01 - Jimmy Williams
02/03 - Steve Culberson

ANNIVERSARIES

02/04 - Mike and Sherry Lyons
02/05 - Daryl and Connie Covington

STEPPING STONES IS HIRING

STEPPING STONES LEARNING CENTER

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICANTS

INFANT ROOM POSITION

We are seeking an individual who is prepared to provide exceptional care, love, and share the teachings of Jesus in our infant rooms!

OUR MISSION

Since 1999, we have dedicated ourselves to serving our community by offering a ministry that enables children aged 6 weeks to 10 years to learn the teachings of the Lord while having fun playing with their peers.

SUBMIT AN APPLICATION NOW!

Applications are accepted online only; no physical copies will be distributed.



Currently, we are only accepting applications for the infant room position. Should any other positions open up, we will provide an updated list of available roles.

115 North Madison Ave
Eatonton, Ga 31024
steppingstones@firstbaptisteatonton.org
706-485-0690

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR OUR

Valentine's Banquet

FEBRUARY 12 AT 6:30PM

RSVP TO THE CHURCH OFFICE
MORE DETAILS COMING SOON!

First Baptist Church
P.O. Box 3400
Eatonton, GA 31024
Return Service Requested

HAPPY RETIREMENT



**Celebrating 8.5 years
as Music Minister at
First Baptist Church
Eatonton.**

**Join us as we honor Rev. John Cotten
on Sunday, January 26 at 10:50am
Following the service, we will have Pot Roast, Carrots,
Rice, Beans, Rolls, Desserts, and Drinks catered by
Dorothy Farley in the Fellowship Hall.**

