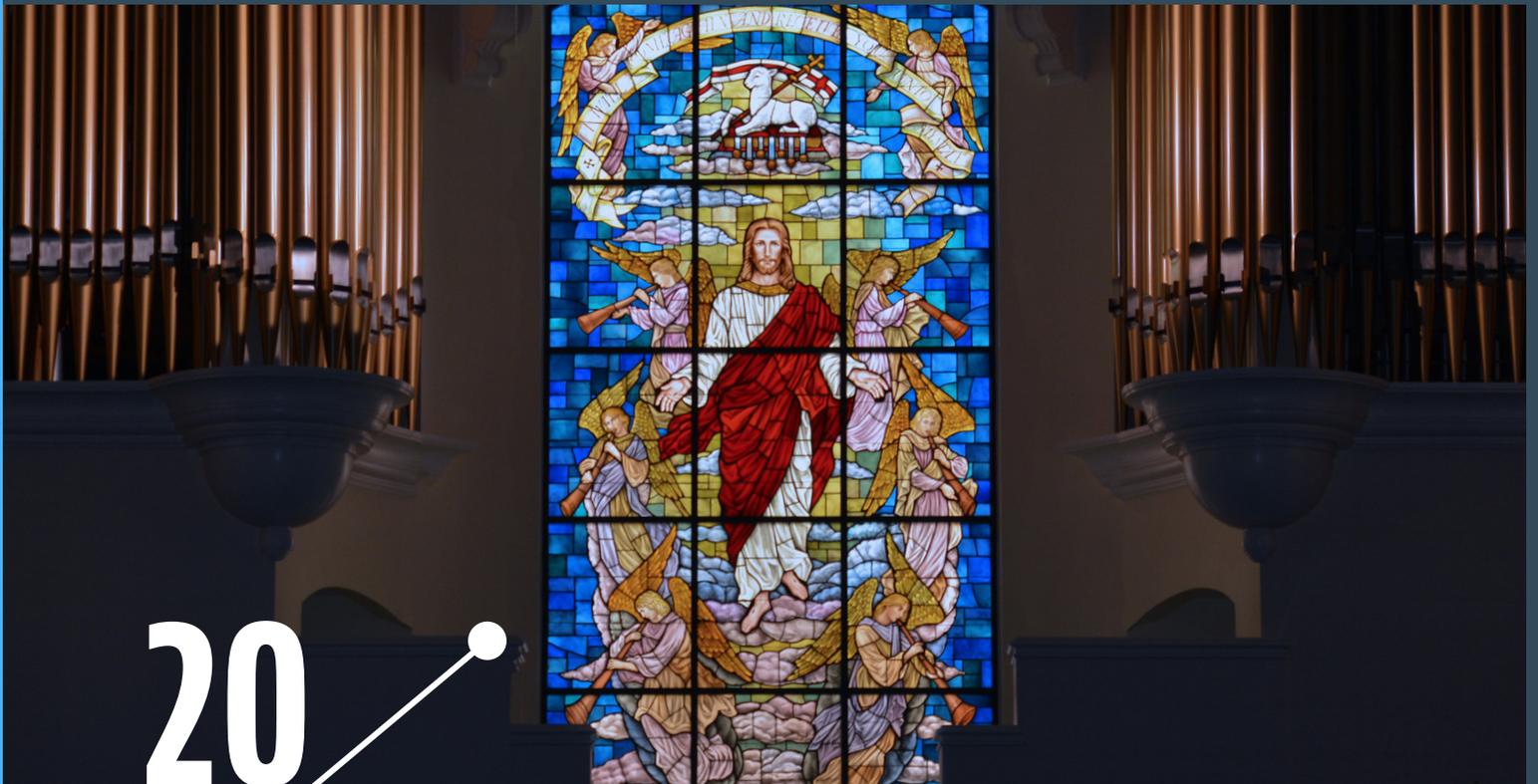


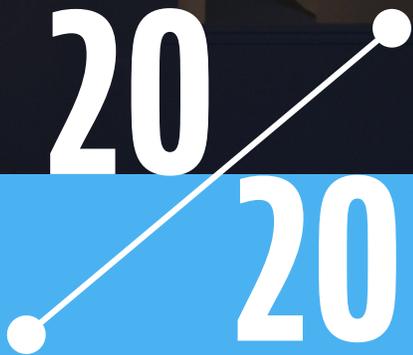
STATE OF THE CHURCH

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First Baptist Church
montgomery





The State of God's Church

As you already know, 2020 presented one of the most unique years that we've experienced together. In the midst of so much unusual activity, the Lord worked through our faith family, staff, and volunteers in new ways to reach people with the life-changing and eternity-altering news of Jesus.

I continue to be grateful for the smooth transition of our beloved Pastor Emeritus, Jay Wolf, into retirement and a new season of ministry. We thank the Lord for his steadfast and faithful commitment to the Lord through First Baptist Church, and I cannot thank Jay enough for helping through this transition in such an unusual time. We look forward to properly celebrating Jay in the future.

At the onset of the pandemic, our newly renovated broadcast equipment sprang to life with a host of passionate volunteers to take Sunday morning services across Montgomery, Alabama, and even the nations. Each week, we received numerous calls asking for help in following Jesus, recommitting their life to Jesus, or needing prayer. We'll never know the full extent of our broadcast ministry on the thousands of households that receive it each week, but it is likely astounding.

Each day appeared to be full of uncertainty, but our faith family continued to be faithful to give of their time, talents, and treasure to God's Kingdom expansion. You gave an incredible \$7,237,296 to the work and ministry of FBC, which was an overage of our budget by \$332,296. This is remarkable! Not only that, but you also sacrificially gave \$281,958 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and \$88,750 to Annie Armstrong Easter Offering! Our aggregate spending for missions in 2020 exceeded two million dollars. The gospel continued going forward through your commitment and faithfulness. I cannot say thank you enough!

I'm also encouraged that we still see more than a thousand people each week engage in Bible Fellowship, hundreds engage in discipleship classes, and so many others encouraged by the digital opportunities we've been able to provide. The Living Christmas Tree had more than 70,000 views on social media and thousands more through television broadcasts. We reached more people with the 40th annual presentation of the Living Christmas Tree than any year before.

FBC continued to reach people each day with the gospel. Community Ministries aided 4,000 families and 6,000 individuals this year! The International Ministry served 336 international friends that live both locally and in 12 different countries via Zoom. Through hospital outreaches, prayer calls, worship nights, youth camp, virtual discipleship, numerous Zoom calls, outdoor fellowships, front porch drop-offs, personal evangelism efforts, virtual Vacation Bible School, and countless other ways, ministry and outreach kept going forward.

Thank you for your continued investment in First Baptist Church. 2021 looks to be a year ripe with opportunity for us to shine bright gospel lights as individuals and as a church. Let's pull together to make this a seminal year of ministry in this 191-year-old church in the middle of downtown Montgomery.

Praying for you and looking forward to what the Lord has in store for 2021!



Mark Bethea
Senior Pastor

Only time will tell the complete story of what we experienced together in 2020. Nonetheless, what is written on the following pages is a testimony to the Lord's goodness and faithfulness to our church in such a unique time. It tells of the faithfulness of God's people to continue taking the gospel to the lost and sacrificially giving for the life-changing and eternity-altering good news to go forth. Each section represents just a portion of the measurables we can see, but also is a reminder of the incredible things we'll never know, see, or hear about that our faith family does to follow Jesus in their everyday life.

To God be the glory!

Membership + Evangelism

Our church membership grew to **6,379 precious souls** and Bible Fellowship **enrollment stands at 5,027**. We received 112 new members with 53 of these treasured friends requesting to be baptized. Even during the pandemic, evangelistic harvest endeavors continued with many people coming to Christ through the Living Christmas Tree, Vacation Bible School, our television and online broadcasts, prison ministry, and a multitude of mission partnerships.

Financial

God has given us a culture of generosity and enabled us to **surpass our budget of \$6,905,000 with budget gifts of \$7,237,296 – an overage of \$332,296!** Since much of the year involved online only worship services, we are rejoicing in this miracle from God and in your willingness to give to the Lord through First Baptist Church.

Simultaneously, God blessed us with more than **\$886,605 to our Building Fund!** Giving to our missions offerings held strong with the **Lottie Moon Offering for International Missions** bringing in **\$281,958**, and the **Annie Armstrong Offering for North American Missions** totaling **\$88,031**. Support of Community Ministries was more than \$206,000, and the India Church Building Fund received \$78,750. Total gifts to Children's Hope from FBC members and other partners totaled more than \$1.2 million. Our aggregate spending for mission endeavors exceeded \$2 million!

Discipleship

In response to the uncertainty of COVID-19, our **Bible Fellowship Groups** quickly made the switch to meeting virtually. From March to the end of the year, 31 of our adult groups met weekly for prayer, fellowship, and Bible study. Others had access to recorded Bible studies each week and continued successfully ministering to one another. Before COVID-19, the 2019-2020 average weekly Bible Fellowship attendance was 1636. The final average was 1100. We ended the year with **5,027 enrolled in a Bible Fellowship Group** and **152 new members enrolled**. Members were disciplined through Sunday evening and weekday discipleship classes. In the winter and spring, thirteen classes were offered, and many transitioned to virtual. In the fall, seven virtual classes were offered, with combined participation of 300-400 adults.

Preschool Ministry

We were blessed to have Mission Friends and Preschool Choir on campus from January through mid-March. Mission Friends studied missionary families around the world as well as across the United States. They were able to learn about many differences in these countries compared to where we live. **The average attendance for Mission Friends was 65**, with 11 volunteers each week. The Preschool Choirs learned various songs, rhythms with instruments, movement, and time in music. **The average attendance in Preschool Choirs was 47**, with 11 volunteers each week.

On February 14, we held our **Parent's Night Out with 35 children** enjoying a fun time with dinner, playtime, a Valentine's activity, and more while their parents enjoyed a date night. In March, we used the unique idea, ***You've Been Egged***, to provide outreach to neighbors, friends, and others that did not have a church home. Each of our families received a dozen plastic eggs with instructions on how to deliver the eggs, along with information on our Good Friday, Palm Sunday, and Easter services. Beginning twelve days before Easter, **the Resurrection Story was told on our social media channels**. During April, our preschoolers made cards to send to our senior adults living in John Knox Manor, Oak Grove, and some individuals requested by family members. In May and June, we planned and developed our **Vacation Bible School, which took place virtually on July 27-31**. Each day included Bible lessons, memory verses, music, snacks, crafts, a family challenge activity, and a missions activity. The daily videos aired on our website, and the event was a tremendous success!

Children's Ministry

In February, our **Young Worshiper's Club** continued with children reading God's Word and praying in our morning worship services. **Bible Drill** was a great success with more than 50 participants. Each week, our children came with God's Word memorized and key passages ready to recite. The **Global Missions Celebration** allowed us to minister to 17 missionary children as they participated with First Baptist children in various activities. COVID-19 did not stop the children's ministry as more than 50 first through sixth graders joined **Zoom Bible Fellowship** each week, and **Vacation Bible School** included more than 280 children participating in our first-ever virtual format. God was ultimately praised in 2020, as we saw **20 children make decisions to follow Jesus!**

Student Ministry

Our annual **Disciple Now** event kicked off the year with 240 students and 40 leaders participating in this worship and discipleship experience. Weeks after this event, COVID-19 hit, but we praise God that ministry could continue with our students through creative means. **Bible Fellowship** and **Powerhouse**, our Wednesday night youth worship service, continued to meet virtually via Zoom. We kept the students engaged by switching things up regularly.

We were unable to have our normal **Graduate Recognition** service in May, so we organized **Driveway Drop-offs**. Our Student Ministry Team visited each graduate and presented them with a special Class of 2020 t-shirt and a potted plant. The High School Seniors then delivered the potted plants to FBC Senior Adults in a new ministry opportunity called **Senior-to-Senior**. The Graduate Recognition Service was held for graduates and their families at the end of the summer in the main sanctuary. This was a HUGE BLESSING for those involved.

During the summer, we moved **Bible Fellowship outdoors** to the Buddy Watson Baseball Fields on Sunday nights, where students divided into their classes and gathered in big circles to

fellowship and study God's Word. We went from having 40 students/teachers to having 100-150! By mid-summer, we moved Powerhouse into a local school gymnasium where students could spread out. We went from 20 people meeting virtually to 75-100 students meeting in person.

Student missions continued with multiple youth service opportunities such as working in the The Master's Garden, serving at the Caring Center, and feeding and sharing the Gospel weekly with the Lanier Football and Basketball Teams.

After much prayer and planning, we moved forward with **Youth Camp**. Rather than a one-week camp at Shocco Springs with all students, we held two half-week camps — one for middle school and one for high school. Students were able to have worship, Bible Study, games, and fellowship, but with more room to spread out. There were 50 middle school students and 100 high school students that participated.

When the school year began in August, we moved **Powerhouse into Stakely Sanctuary**, and **Bible Fellowship back into the classrooms at First Baptist**. Cameras were set up in each class to allow students to join virtually via Zoom. Despite the crazy year, several students gave their lives to Christ, several joined the church, several were baptized, and countless students grew in their faith!

College Ministry

Our College Ministry began the year at the **Passion Conference** in Atlanta, Georgia, with 50 students attending! In February, we participated in the annual **Pursue Conference**, which took place at First Baptist during the Global Missions Celebration. Hundreds of college students from across our state joined us for this event. During the spring semester, we started the **Elevate College Worship Service**. Once the pandemic began, we moved the worship service to an online platform. Together, we walked through a study of Genesis, and our praise band led worship through these in-person and online platforms to fully engage our students.

Our **College Bible Fellowship Group became virtual** and met via Zoom from March to September. In the summer, a new venture was **Summer Hangouts**. These times were intentionally designed to gather in a safe, socially-distanced way. We gathered outside in backyards for fellowship, games, and discipleship. During the fall semester, we began a new way of conducting discipleship through **Gospel Communities** — small groups that took place in different homes of church members. There were two Gospel Community Groups, one for freshmen and sophomores and one for juniors and seniors. Participants shared a meal, heard a short message, and had a time of discussion and prayer.

Single Adult Ministry

In 2020, Kathy Cooper accepted the call to serve as our Caring Center Director, and Ryan Gray took on the responsibilities of serving as our Single Adult Minister. During COVID-19, our single

adults met virtually for Bible Fellowship via Zoom. Our singles also provided support to the Nehemiah Center by collecting and distributing **190 backpacks filled with school supplies for children in the Chisholm community**. At Christmas, they served faithfully by greening the Living Christmas Tree.

A new ministry, **Young Adult Worship Nights**, was created in the fall. This monthly event provided a special time of worship for our singles and others in our faith family.

Senior Adult Ministry

Our Senior Adult Ministry started normally with **January Bible Study** and **JOY Singers rehearsals**. However, all that changed with COVID-19, and by Friday, March 13, the Senior Adult Ministry transitioned and discovered new ways to minister during a pandemic. **Senior Adult Bible Fellowship Groups learned how to meet via Zoom** and in a video-driven format with great success. **Vacation Bible School** met through social media platforms with record-breaking attendance. Ministry to our **In-Home members** continued with a personal touch while maintaining social distance. We stayed in contact with each other using telephone call lists, emails, cards, and letters. We have grown stronger together during these difficult days and understand now more than ever we need Jesus and each other!

Music Ministry

2020 was a year of significant adaptation in practically every aspect of our Music Ministry. The entire music leadership team and volunteers have been extremely positive, Christ-like, and on-task to make sure our **worship services** remained focused on magnifying our Lord.

Many staff changes occurred during the year:

- Our organist, **Sara Jo Bagley**, retired in September after 35 years, and Gwen Keene filled in for the remainder of the year.
- Our Associate Minister of Music, **Josh Jacobs**, transitioned to Central Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama.
- **Kerry Palmer** transitioned to a new role at Troy University and resigned from his orchestra director position.
- **Greg Steele** was added to the music staff as the orchestra director and conductor of the One Heart Junior High Choir.

Because of COVID-19, our **preschool and children's choirs went virtual**. Jenny Renner, along with Doug Rogers (and others), created music lesson videos for our children. Jenny and "Billy" spent countless hours providing a fun, insightful, and creative time of learning for our children.

We also presented the **Living Christmas Tree in December for the 40th year**. Our teams, along with our Music Ministry assistant, Denise Holland, did a tremendous job fulfilling their roles.

Through prayer and preparation, 70 sanctuary choir members, a full orchestra of 34 members, and 20-30 young ladies from our youth choirs participated. To God's glory, four programs were presented, and congregants attended in-person with social distancing. The unique aspect of the LCT was the vast number of views the video had on social media. The most recent counts approach 70,000 views on multiple platforms!

Outreach + Evangelism Ministry

When Mark Bethea transitioned to his new role as Senior Pastor, **Jay Spivey assumed the Pastoral Intern position** along with his Student Ministry responsibilities. One part of Jay's duties includes **Outreach and Evangelism**. During this past year, our visitation adapted and provided many church members the opportunity to make visits to prospects throughout the week. As our church transitioned into a larger online presence, we encouraged our **participants to call or text their needs and desires for connection with Christ**. Many have recommitted their life to Christ, and many others followed Jesus for the first time. Still, many others called for prayer each week during our broadcast. In the fall, we offered the **ABCs of Evangelism** class via Zoom for the first time. During this class, we were able to encourage each other even more through stories of personal evangelism throughout the week. Follow-up continued weekly from our broadcast services and special events such as the Living Christmas Tree, Vacation Bible School, and our Trunk-or-Treat. We were even able to provide counselors for the River Regions' first-ever Hip-Hop Revival.

Missions Ministry

The year began with our triennial **Global Missions Celebration**. For this special event, we hosted 45 Missionaries (with 17 missionary kids) from the United States and the ends of the earth. During this five-day event, we heard from seven guest speakers and had wonderful times of worship and study of our purpose in God's work and our role in missions around the world. When the conference concluded on Sunday, February 23, more than 700 commitments were made to be involved in missions through prayer, giving, going, and even answering the call to full-time vocational missions.

We continue to support **Church Planters around the world** both financially and through prayer. In the fall, Alonza Lewis was sent from our congregation to New York City as a church planter, bringing the total number of church planters that FBC supports to 32. The following church planters, who were part of FBC, continue to serve in their respective assignments: Thomas & Elizabeth West in London, Wesley & Ashley Costello in New York, Blakeley Winslow in Colorado, and Sarah Cearley in Nashville.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, our church continued with mission endeavors. Here are a few highlights:

- **Operation Christmas Child collected over 1,230 boxes collected** through our relay center at FBC Montgomery in honor of Mark and Brittany Bethea.

- Virtual prayer walks took place through Zoom, allowing our members to participate from a distance in praying for God's work taking place around the world.
- Our church was also able to provide funding for **special mission projects** in Las Vegas, Canada, Cuba, Brazil, Senegal, and China. In Brazil, Bill Lambert participated in the church building project remotely by joining a daily Zoom call where he was given updates and input into the work being done.
- The year ended with a visit from **Dr. Paul Chitwood**, President of the International Mission Board. Dr. Chitwood shared an encouraging message with our church to give sacrificially to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

Perhaps most importantly, we saw a mighty increase in the prayer movement of our church. A **nightly prayer call** began in April and has continued meeting every night as we pray together for each other, our church, state, nation, and the world. God's work has been evident as this group has prayed and seen remarkable results of God's working in response to the prayers being offered.

Communications Ministry

Our **Broadcast Ministry** stepped up and showed off in 2020. After completing a total upgrade to broadcast, audio, and lighting in 2019, we were prepared to share our worship services outside the walls of our church when the pandemic began. Each week, our Sunday service was broadcast on WSFA, Frazer, and our website, as well as our Facebook, YouTube, and Vimeo channels.

Our **Communications Ministry** used social media, email marketing, the Beacon, and our website to keep members informed about the latest news and events happening at First Baptist. We creatively used videos to help us continue to grow spiritually and to encourage us during the pandemic. Our website (**montgomeryfbc.org**) became a hub of information to help navigate being at home in 2020 with activities, videos, and articles for the whole family.

Community Ministries

Community Ministries serves as a beacon of hope and light to thousands in the Montgomery area, and the COVID-19 crisis enabled us "to meet human needs in the name of Jesus" in real and meaningful ways that were essential during 2020.

In July, the **Caring Center** welcomed a new director, Kathy Cooper, as Jessie Jacobs relocated to Decatur, Alabama. Traditional methods for providing food, clothing, and financial assistance were redesigned to meet clients' needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Together we served more than 4,000 families, 6,000 individuals and provided over 47,595 pounds of food to clients.** We provided \$52,270 in financial assistance. We also recognized a significant increase in financial contributions and received COVID-19 Relief Grant funds from the Central Alabama Community Foundation, the United Way, and other local organizations.

The **Children's Learning Center (CLC) provided care for 134 children.** Despite closures due to COVID-19, no workers went without pay, and since the CLC reopened in June, enrollment has steadily climbed. The average weekly attendance for the year was 68, and scholarships totaling \$38,983 were provided to families enabling parents to work.

The International Ministry served 336 international friends living locally and in 12 countries around the world as our English classes and Bible Fellowship Groups moved from in-person meetings to Zoom sessions for most of the year.

The Tutoring Program provided 46 students with one-on-one tutoring through March. It then provided monthly deliveries to students, including Bible Stories and activities through the end of the 2019-2020 school year. The program was facilitated by 66 volunteers and staff. A two-day Santa's Workshop was held for tutoring students to shop for their families at Christmas.

The Prison Ministry welcomed a new director, Charles "Chuck" Latham, who took over from former director Carl Fisher. In February, a **Prison Ministry Summit** was hosted, which gathered 65 attendees from across the region. In partnership with Prison Fellowship, 100 First Baptist members helped provide **131 children** with Christmas gifts as part of the **Angel Tree ministry.** In collaboration with Vaughn Forest Church, we helped to provide 600 hygiene kits, hand sanitizer, and PPE supplies to prison facilities to help fight the spread of COVID-19.

The Nehemiah Center in Chisholm immediately put ministry opportunities in place to "meet human needs in the name of Jesus." Some of the fantastic work implemented throughout the year included:

- developing and recording COVID-19-related public service announcements in English and Spanish;
- serving 1,500 meals to families in the community by **creating a drive-thru hot meal ministry;**
- picking up and delivering **34,000 breakfasts and lunches to Nehemiah children** and other community children, and more than **300 Meals on Wheels** to seniors in the community;
- providing an outdoor Nehemiah Kids Summer Camp serving 26 children;
- accommodating up to 15-20 students through the **Nehemiah Learning Academy;**
- conducting ESL classes, Moms and Mentors classes, and GED classes;
- building an **outdoor Cultural Arts Stage** for special events and activities and completing the construction of the Lydia House.

Other outdoor events included the annual Nehemiah Kids and FBC Youth Christmas Party, and presenting the first **Nehemiah Center Live Nativity** for the Chisholm community.

The Master's Garden in Chisholm continued to thrive. The Garden opened to community gardeners on May 1, and volunteers worked the garden throughout the spring and summer seasons. A few highlights from the year include:

- **78 garden plots** provided to community gardeners;

- plants donated by Bonnie Plant Farms;
- volunteers planted various types of fruits and vegetables;
- fruits and vegetables provided to the community gardeners and weekly deliveries to the Caring Center and the Friendship Mission;
- volunteers planted **1,500 commercial strawberry plants**.

Tim Cearley transitioned back into retirement in November, and Viki Brant assumed the Director of Community Ministries role.

Children's Hope

Despite the significant challenges in Haiti in 2020 from both COVID-19 and political insecurity, the Lord continued to work through **Children's Hope to care for orphaned and vulnerable children** and serve communities in Jesus' name. We are so grateful to all of our giving partners who gave generously to fuel our programs in Haiti and to make an earthly and eternal impact. Currently, **52 children are under our care** at our children's home in Jacmel, Haiti. We have opened our girls' transition home (with our two oldest girls moving there in the fall) to begin preparing for their next stage of life. Our medical clinic provides quality healthcare and a Christian witness to over **6,000 community members**, with our staff now including three doctors and a dentist. We have three schools that offer **quality education to 600 students**. We partnered with dozens of Haitian churches and established a new church plant in the mountains of Haiti. Children's Hope provides **full-time employment to 136 Haitian staff**, giving them critical income for their families and meaningful work.

First Baptist Foundation

Our **First Baptist Foundation managed over \$9.4 million during 2020** and received gifts that will yield a massive eternal dividend. We **distributed \$300,000 to help fuel God's work through ministries at FBC**, including assistance to Community Ministries, a parenting seminar, marriage conference, and supported our church plant in the San Francisco area. In addition, we provided funds to support mission endeavors from our neighborhoods to the nations. We also offered assistance to individuals and families through Pathways Professional Counseling. We made a significant contribution of \$53,000 for the educational advancement of over **50 scholarship recipients**. Our Foundation continues to partner with the Baptist Foundation of Alabama to provide **legacy planning services to our church members with anticipated gifts of more than \$32 million**.

Meet Our Team

Alexis Aday

Church Hostess

Tiffany Alewine

Ministry Assistant

Mark Bethea

Senior Pastor

Barry Bledsoe

First Baptist Foundation

Viki Brant

Director of
Community Ministries

Joy Brown

Organist

Carolyn Bryan

Ministry Assistant

Robin Caddell

Master's Garden Director

Shirley Case

Receptionist

Charlotte Cearley

English as a Second Language

Ed Cleveland

Minister of Music

Kathy Cooper

Caring Center Director

Mary Virginia Crum

Ministry Assistant

Beth DeBardeleben

Ministry Assistant

Brian Gay

Minister of Missions

Ryan Gray

Minister to College Students +
Single Adults

Kim Herbert

Children's Learning Center Director

Kenny Hoomes

Associate Pastor for Spiritual
Maturity/Senior Adults

Denise Holland

Ministry Assistant

Jill Johnson-Leach

Bookkeeper

Gwen Keene

Bookkeeper

Mike Kyser

Broadcast Director

Scott Lamb

Security Director

Chuck Latham

Prison Ministry Director

Justin Law

Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Glen Leathers

Minister to Children

Jared McCrory

Children's Hope Director

Russell McCrory

Minister to Students

Ruth McKinney

English as a Second Language

Nancie McQueen

Minister to Preschool

Alissa Parrish

Foundation Stewardship
Coordinator

Jenny Renner

Children's Choirs Director

Patti Shoemaker

Church Administrator

Amanda Smith

Communications Director

Jay Spivey

Associate Minister to Students

Greg Steele

Orchestra Director

Mike Talley

Property Manager

Jackie Thomas

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