

The Senior Pastor Search Committee

Nominees



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH ♦ ABILENE

FROM THE COMMITTEE:

Dear Church Family,

It is with humility and prayerful consideration that the Committee on Committees nominates these nine church members as the Senior Pastor Search Committee. As mandated by the church bylaws, we began to work on this task in late June, just two days after Dr. Christopher announced his impending retirement. Since then we have spent more than 10 hours meeting together deliberating over the 252 different people you nominated for the search committee, in addition to countless hours of prayer and contemplation in our homes, offices, gardens, and other quiet places of reflection. We knew from the beginning that the Lord was faithful and would lead us to the committee he would have come together to seek the next senior pastor to lead this great church. It has been a labor of love and a time of real spiritual growth.

We are pleased to introduce these nine servant leaders to you and pray that you will consider them carefully before you vote.

There are challenging days ahead of us and we believe this is the start of the process that will bring to First Baptist, Abilene the Senior Pastor the Lord has for us. Thank you for trusting us with this responsibility.

Barry Moak, Chairman

Committee on Committees

Delena Caspell

Rob Fink

Libby Gibson

Tom Martin

Kelley Messer

Barry Moak

Tracy Patterson

Wayne Roy

D'Anna Smith

David Spruiell

Holly Winfrey

DEBBY BROWN

FBC has been an important part of Debby's life over the past 40 plus years—as a young stay-at-home mother, working mom, and now retired grandmother. The FBC family has helped her grow in her relationship with Christ, has prayed for her in times of crisis, and challenged her to serve in new ways. A native of Hugoton, Kansas, Debby graduated from Ponca City High School in Ponca City, Oklahoma in 1969 and Oklahoma Baptist University in 1973. She is a retired kindergarten teacher. She and her husband, Phil, celebrated their 50th Anniversary this past June. They have 2 grown children and seven wonderful grandchildren. "I love nature, reading, walking, and spending time with friends and family. I feel called to be a good neighbor in my neighborhood." A member since 1978, she is a part of the Journey Sunday school class and is active in the Bereavement Ministry and Missions Committee.



BOB ELLIS

"My roots go deep in FBC, and I am grateful for the church's very significant role in shaping who I am as a person. It is a privilege to be nominated to be part of this very important committee, and if chosen I will serve as faithfully as I can." Bob has been a part of the church from 1966-77, 84-86, and now since moving back to Abilene to join the Hardin-Simmons University faculty in 1996. Born in Fort Worth, he moved to Abilene in 1957 at the age of 2 when his father, Dr. Ray Ellis, became a Bible professor at HSU. Bob graduated from Abilene High and Hardin-Simmons before receiving degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Teresa, have two daughters, Katherine, who is married to Chris Palmer, and Laura. Bob taught Old Testament and Hebrew at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth from 1986-1996, and then at Logsdon Seminary from 1996-2021, serving as Dean from 2018-2020. While at FBC, he has been a deacon, also serving as the chair, a Sunday School teacher, chair of the 125th Anniversary Committee, co-chair of the Faces and Places Campaign, as well as serving on the Missions Committee, City Light Board, and the Ministry of Counseling Board. Bob was privileged to participate in a youth mission trip to Refilwe, South Africa, in 2014.



LIBBY GIBSON

Libby is beginning her 13th year as a teacher and currently teaches 2nd Grade at Austin Elementary School. Born and raised in Clyde, Texas where she graduated high school, she then received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Hardin-Simmons University. She and her husband, Ryan, have two children; Landry is a 4th grader and Cade will be in the 1st grade. She loves to travel as a family and is one shy of visiting all 50 states. She is a part of Difference Maker's Sunday School class, which used to be called the 20-Somethings until they realized they all became 30 and 40 Somethings! Libby volunteers in the nursery, at JAM on Wednesday nights, loves being challenged through Bible Study, and is privileged to have served on the GLO board in the past and currently serves on the Committee on Committees. "I am so honored and humbled to have the opportunity to be considered to serve on the Pastor Search Committee. I truly feel God has something incredible in store for our church family. I pray, throughout this unique journey, we will grow more unified as a church body and diligently strive to deepen our relationship with our Creator."



TIFFANY HAMMER

Tiffany was born in College Station, but moved to McKinney when she was just a year old. It was at First Baptist, McKinney where her love for the Lord began to grow and was nurtured. She was an involved youth and graduated from McKinney High. After high school and moving to Fort Worth, she learned that teaching was her calling. A graduate of Texas Wesleyan College, Tiffany got her first job teaching in Kennedale ISD and during that time she met the love of her life, Rick Hammer, at church in Fort Worth. On June 30 of this year, they celebrated their 20th anniversary. They have one son, Nathan, who will be a senior this year at Abilene High School. They joined FBC 10 years ago and are a part of the Journey Sunday school class. She has worked in children's choir, served on the Budget Committee, and sings in the choir. Tiffany is a 2nd grade teacher at Austin Elementary. "I have been praying about this decision and the opportunity to serve and feel a peace that God has a plan and is in control. I am thankful for the opportunity to be considered for this committee."



EVAN HARRIS

Evan was baptized here at FBC by Dr. Bruster in October 1992 at the age of 8 and in many ways has been involved with the church ever since. He has served as a Deacon, Give Hope Campaign Co-Chair, Finance Committee Chair, Budget Committee Chair and is currently on the Foundation Committee. He has also played for many seasons on the FBC Red Softball Team. A graduate of Wylie High School, Texas Tech University, and the Southwestern Graduate School of Banking at SMU, Evan is Senior Vice President, Commercial Lending/Branch Manager at First Financial Bank. He and his wife, Callie, were married at FBC on July 17, 2010. They have two daughters who both will be attending Austin Elementary School this fall. His parents, Ed and Jill Harris, are active members of FBC as well. Some of his fondest memories at FBC include Caroline being baptized by Dr. Christopher, Kids of the Kingdom, RA's, Choir, Mission Trip to Boston, MA following senior year of high school, Round Up Sundays, Bible Drill, and many more. "One thing about me that I always like to point out is that C.V. Blake has served as my Youth Minister, Young Adult Minister, and he plans to stick around to be my Senior Adult Minister one day."



PAUL IRBY

Paul was raised in Harlingen, TX where he attended FBC, Harlingen and graduated from Harlingen High School. In 1991, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Education from Howard Payne University, in 1994 a Master of Arts in Religion from Logsdon School of Theology, and in 2004 another MA, that time in Family Psychology from Hardin-Simmons University. He had the honor of marrying Laurie Hester from Weinert, TX in 1993 and together they have two grown children. They joined FBC in January 2002 and since 2004 Paul has been teaching the GodSquad Sunday school class. He sings in the choir and is the chair of the Mission Committee. Paul is on staff at the Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment as a Licensed Professional Counselor.



JIM JONES

Jim and his wife of 46 years, Nancy, have two children and 3 grandchildren. He is recently retired from Hardin-Simmons University where he worked in Financial Aid/Enrollment Services. Prior to working at HSU, he worked for Caldwell Music Company and Abilene ISD as a band director. Jim grew up in Fort Worth where he graduated from Brewer High School and then attended and graduated from Hardin-Simmons University in 1975. Jim joined FBC in 1978, has taught Sunday school for 38 years, and served as a deacon, twice as chair. Active in the choir and orchestra, he also served as Interim Music Minister prior to Todd Wilson coming. He chaired the Heritage and Hope Campaign here at FBC as well as serving on the HSU Board of Development, Cowboy Band Foundation, School of Music Foundation, and has been a member of the Abilene Philharmonic Orchestra for 33 seasons.



MARCUS SPENCER

A native of Tyler, Marcus has been involved in FBC since moving to Abilene at age four. He currently teaches Sunday school on the youth floor and was ordained as a deacon in 2018. He married Kristian Rains here at FBC in 2016 and they have one daughter, Lily. Marcus attended Texas A&M University and went on to UT Southwestern Medical School where he earned a Masters in Physician Assistant studies and now works as a Physician Assistant. "It is an honor to be considered for the opportunity to serve FBC in such a way as this. This church is where I was raised, where I made the decision to follow Christ, was baptized, married, and where our family desires to raise our children. It is a true community, and it will mean a great deal to be able to continue to serve the church with your blessing."



JECILLY VARGHESE

Jecilly is a stay-at-home mom, but really a community volunteer! She is involved in Bible Study Fellowship, as a leader since 2015, Big Country County Medical Society Alliance, Manager for the Wylie Destination Imagination Team, and is active in the Wylie PTO. Here at FBC, she is a Wednesday night Preschool Missions Teacher, VBS Bible Story or Missions teacher, Mission Committee member, an extended session volunteer, and member of the Social Lights Sunday school class. Along with her family, she has been on 4 of the McAllen family mission trips. Jecilly was born in Chicago, IL, but grew up and graduated from high school in Coppell, TX. She has a medical degree from PSG Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Coimbatore, India. She and her husband, Joji, have three children, Timothy (16), Sarah (12), and Hannah (11). "I'm thankful for the privilege to serve on this committee. I do not take this responsibility lightly. We covet your prayers for wisdom and guidance only He can provide."



On Sunday, July 18, a called church conference will be held for the purpose of beginning the vote on this slate of nominees. Voting may be done either by written ballot or on-line and all voting will conclude on Wednesday, July 21, at 7:30 p.m.

**First Baptist Church * 1333 North 3rd
Abilene, TX 79601 * 325-673-5031 * fbcabilene.org**