

CHURCH PROFILE

2021



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH SARATOGA

7474 Birch Street

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Introduction

In the past year and a half, change has brought the opportunity for a renewed sense of purpose and ministry for FBC Saratoga Texas. Upon the retirement in Dec. 2019 of Pastor Frank Aragon, who served our church and community for 31 years, the church determined that it would be of utmost importance to call a transitional pastor to guide the congregation through a process that allowed for rediscovering of our purpose, vision and values. The transition work has been essential for the future and mission of our congregation.

The church called Bro. David Williams as the transitional pastor. The church elected a transition team of five members (Kevin Vanya, Tyson McMahon, Glenodean Thomas, Lesa Guedry, and Charlene Zwahr) to lead the congregation through this transitional phase.

The following pages of this church profile elaborate on where we've been, where we are now, and most importantly, where we are going. We are grateful for the response and participation of the staff and congregation and for the Holy Spirit's guidance as we affirm together God's call to be disciples and disciple-makers that impact our community and whomever we come in contact with. With excitement and anticipation, we seek the person whom God calls to lead us as we move into the next chapter of our journey.

Our Mission Statement is:

***A Family of Believers, Growing and Sharing
the Love of Christ***

First Baptist Church of Saratoga is affiliated with the Trinity River Baptist Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the Southern Baptist Convention

Our Church Staff

David Williams-Transitional Pastor



Etna Cotten



Secretary

Elena Kelley



Secretary

Vicky Daily



Custodian

Deacons

Harry Brown



Brent Campbell



Bunky McMahon



Tyson McMahon



James Dean Moore



Kevin Vanya



Steve Zwahr



J.B. Farr (Inactive)



Where We Are and Where We've Been

Our History- Those who laid the foundation

In our rich 137-year history, we have been blessed with many wonderful pastors.

First Baptist Church Saratoga, was founded in 1884. The first building location was in front of the present oil field cemetery. The first pastor was Rev. J.C. Johnson.

In 1901 oil was discovered and the church building became surrounded by noisy equipment. The building was moved to town. It served as a school and worship center.

In 1904 a lovely two story building was completed at the new location. The Rev. J.W. Teel and Rev. C.C. Swearingen were co-pastors.

One of the greatest revivals came in May of 1922. A tent was erected and Rev. R.E. Day and Bro. Johnie Cohen were the evangelists. It lasted three weeks with 186 additions. More space was needed so two spacious wings were added to each side of the auditorium and Rev. M.H.Smith was called as pastor.

In 1924, M.F. Kelly came as pastor. Two more lots were purchased and a home to be used as a parsonage. In 1927, E.W. Wright became pastor. Rev. Wright remained until 1929. At this time Rev. S.W. Cowles was called. The church prospered under Rev. Cowles' leadership. It was he who introduced the budget plan and systematic giving.

Once again the church was left without a shepherd, but not for long. Rev. O.H. Corley was called about the time the supply of oil began to abate, and many of our members moved on to other churches where they could find employment.

With financial conditions poor and with much prayer and consideration Pastor J.S. Henderson came to our rescue. It was during his administration that the church withdrew from the Hardin County Association and became a part of the South East Texas Association. Rev. Henderson retired and the beginning of a new era was in the making for the First Baptist Church of Saratoga.

Rev. O.T. Barnes came to lead the church in one of its greatest undertakings. Under his direction in 1940 a new auditorium was built. By 1941, the church was debt free. The first baptismal service in this new building was held the night of Mar. 9, 1941. There were five immersions and the auditorium was packed to overflowing.

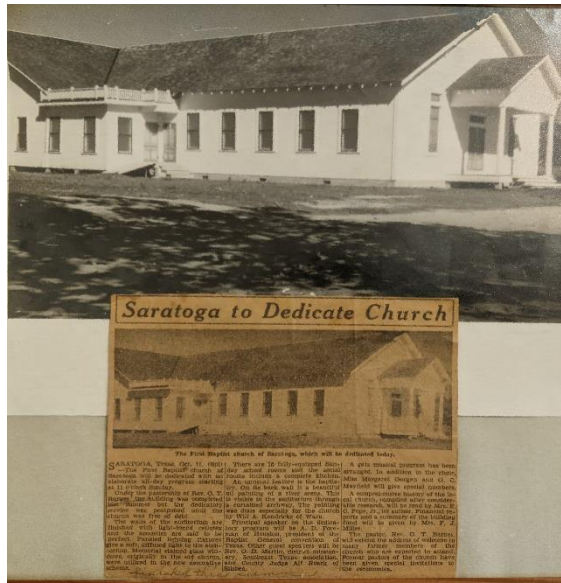
From 1940 until present First Baptist Church was led by many pastors. They were J.W. Joiner Jr., Earl Burkes, B.P. Humble, O.T. Bolton, J.N. Crouch, Alvin Strother, C.W. Watson, Raymond Keel, Philmore Worley, Travis Crutchfield, Alvin Tomlinson, and Frank Aragon who retired after 31 years and is currently the longest serving pastor in the church's 137-year history.

On October 26, 1984, First Baptist Church celebrated its 100th anniversary. In 1983 God gave His people a vision of a new educational building. By November 1984, a beautiful two story building was completed.

In 1988 the auditorium received a facelift as new windows, doors, vinyl siding, and brick were added. A steeple was added to the church in the early 1990s.

In April of 2015 the Family Life Center began construction. A ground breaking ceremony was held at this time. At this present time the inside of the building is still awaiting completion. Updates to the church parsonage are also in progress at this time.

OUR CHURCH THROUGH THE YEARS







Courtesy photo

Pastor Frank Aragon kept his promise to preach from the roof top of First Baptist Church in Saratoga recently.

Pastor makes promise; keeps it

SARATOGA — Pastor Frank Aragon promised to preach from the roof top if Sunday School attendance Oct. 27 surpassed totals for the same time period in 1995.

The members of First Baptist Church in Saratoga took up his challenge and exceeded their own goals of 161 people, with 186 actually attending during the Sunday services.

In October 1995, Sunday school attendance averaged 85.

Prior to Oct. 27 of this year, attendance averaged 100.

Sunday School Superintendent Bro. Billy Martin called a strategy meeting of the congregation.

Classes sent cards, letters and made phone calls. A newsletter was also sent to the West Hardin area.

A festival was hosted with a drawing for gifts being conducted during services. Winners were required to be present.



OTHER FACILITIES

Family
Life Center
&
Parsonage



Our Home-Where We Serve

Welcome to Saratoga and the West Hardin Community

Saratoga is in an area of Hardin County referred to as West Hardin. West Hardin is made up of four small communities, Saratoga, Batson, Thicket and Votaw. Saratoga and Batson were both once thriving oilfield towns with Saratoga once having 5,000 residents and Batson having 10,000. Today both communities have approximately 1,000 residents each. Thicket and Votaw were both sawmill towns. Votaw also once had a large rail depot where timber was shipped and local farmers would come sell their crops. The populations of Thicket and Votaw has remained fairly constant over the years, with each town having a few hundred people.

The communities of Thicket, Votaw, Batson and Saratoga each had their own schools, but in 1963 the schools all consolidated to form West Hardin County Consolidated School District. A lot of the teachers are hometown folks that grew up in this community. Without a lot of local activities, the school is the hub of this area.

West Hardin is the quintessential small, Southeast Texas, Bible belt community. One thing that sets us apart from other communities is the willingness of the different denominations to join together to share the love of Christ and spread the Gospel.



Statistical Data

FIRST BAPTIST SARATOGA CHURCH PROFILE 2011 THRU 2020															
						Weekly	Sunday	Sunday					Total		Total
		Total	Resident	Total	Other	Worship	School	School	VBS	Mission	Undesig.	Total	Mission	Cooperative	Associational
	Congregation	Memb.	Memb.	Baptisms	Additions	Attendance	Enroll.	Avg. Att.	Enroll.	Projects	Receipts	Receipts	Expenditures	Program	Missions
2020	First Saratoga	490	346		2	65	63	30			\$153,499	\$169,748	\$17,826	\$3,034	\$4,506
2019	First Saratoga	491		2	3	65	69	35	97	1	\$163,086	\$163,586	\$8,400	\$3,263	\$4,522
2018	First Saratoga	492		7	2	75	75	44	37	10	\$183,888	\$282,223	\$13,303	\$3,678	\$5,516
2017	First Saratoga	492		2		120	87	44	117	7	\$169,303	\$189,306	\$7,575	\$3,386	\$5,079
2016	First Saratoga	495		4		135	94	53	54	17	\$174,704	\$198,844	\$9,744	\$3,494	\$5,241
2015	First Saratoga	496		8	3	135	127	56	56	10	\$160,103	\$161,462	\$9,391	\$3,229	\$4,803
2014	First Saratoga	491		5	5	135	138	58	88	10	\$175,670	\$176,884	\$15,998	\$3,514	\$5,270
2013	First Saratoga	484		9	6	135	148	61	141		\$160,554	\$160,654	\$13,491	\$3,211	\$3,211
2012	First Saratoga	478		17	7	135	159	65	141	1	\$155,470	\$160,316	\$13,512	\$3,105	\$3,105
2011	First Saratoga	460		13	8	100	144	61	79		\$146,793	\$146,998	\$5,875	\$2,936	\$2,936

Me & My Church Survey Results

In December the transition team distributed “Me and My Church Surveys” to the people of First Baptist Saratoga and 60 were returned. The survey results were as follows:

Celebrating Our Past

I serve or have served in my church in the following way(s):

22 have taught Sunday School or led other studies

21 have served in children or youth ministries

15 have served in the music ministry, choir, praise team, playing instruments, or operating the sound system

12 have served on a committee

6 are serving as deacons

3 are attending and would like to start serving if needed

One of the happiest times I remember in my church was:

People were accepting Christ and being baptized

There was a sense of unity, family, togetherness, fellowship

A Christ-filled church, families raising their families in the church

Big emphasis on children’s and youth ministries

Great outreach through ladies’ retreats, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, pre-teen camp and youth camp

One of the saddest times I remember in my church was:

40% — Bro. Frank retiring

35% — elderly members passing away

20% — the church split

I miss this about the way our church used to be:

The buildings were full during Sunday School and worship

We had a large children's ministry and large youth ministry

Families that moved away, people who passed away

The praise and worship team and choir

Being able to fellowship as we did before the pandemic

One of the funniest times I remember in my church was:

Bro. Frank preaching from the roof

Kissing the pig, pie in the face

The wisdom and humor of the older ladies

Some of the best things about my church right now are:

We have a strong foundation

A strong church functions like a body, loves like a family, is faithful.

Other best things about our church right now: a sense of unity, Bro. David's leadership and sermons, active deacons, family bond.

Looking to Our Future

I would like to see my church improve in these areas:

Growing our youth and children's programs

Community outreach and activities

Growing the church

I believe God's unique purpose for our church is:

Winning souls for Christ

Being a light in the community

Serving both in our church and community

These results show that we have a church that (1) loves God, (2) loves the church, (3) loves the lost, and (4) loves the community.

I hope that five years from now our church is:

Having a Spirit-filled pastor, a wonderful shepherd

Reaching people

Leading people to Christ and baptizing them

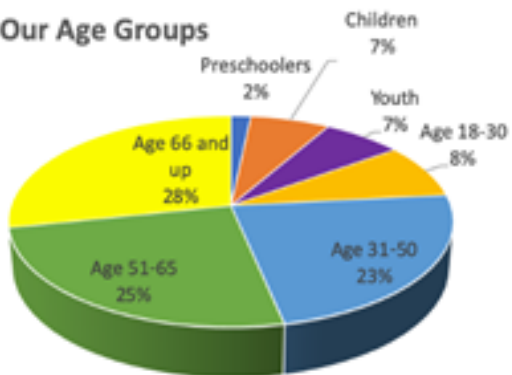
Growing spiritually, thriving, united, renewed

Here is what I personally am willing to do to help our church become all that God designed us to be, desires us to be, and deserves us to be:

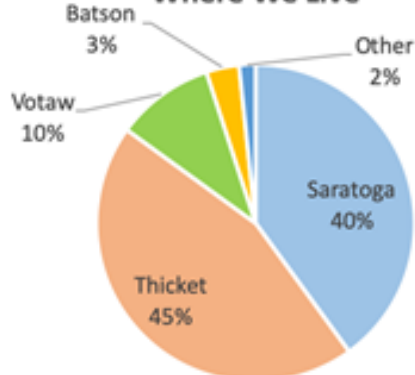
Pray, remain faithful in attendance, become more active, serve as God leads, faithfully tithe and support the church

Demographics

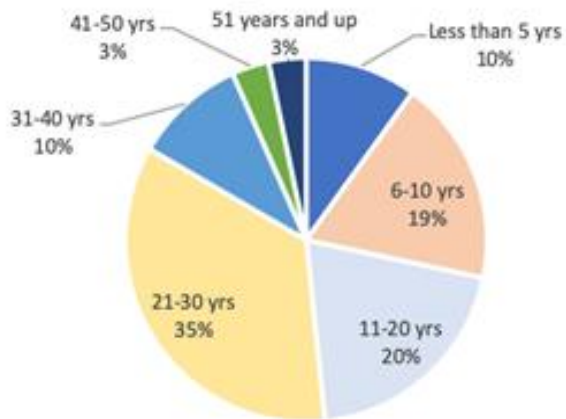
Our Age Groups



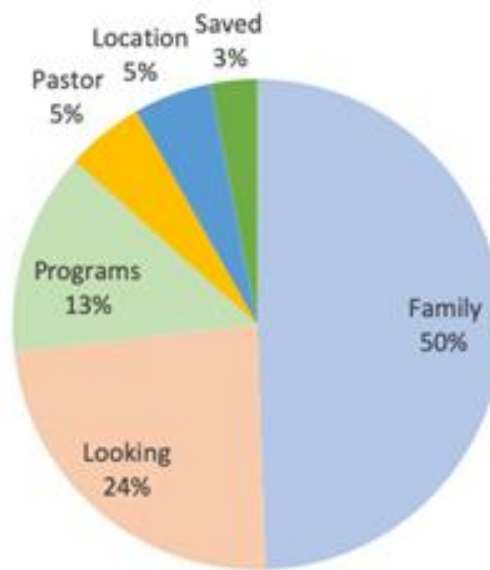
Where We Live



How Long Been a Member



Why Joined

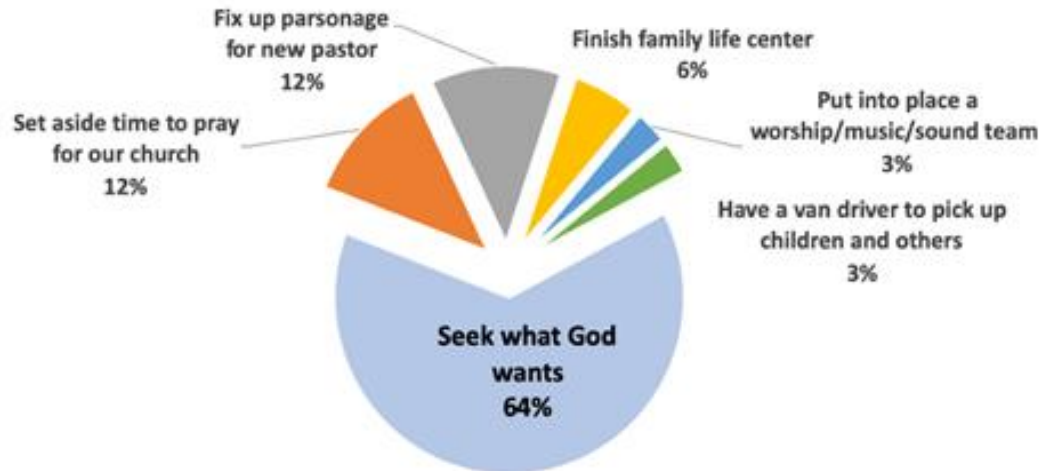


Of the 60 surveys . . .

- 20% were born
- 22% grew up
- 25% were baptized
- 25% were married
- 38% raised familiesat **First Saratoga** while Bro. Frank was pastor

Me and My Church Day

Town hall report



What we chose as our top priorities (and the percentage of people who included it in their top)

1. Seek what God wants (75%)
2. Fix up parsonage for new pastor (47%)
3. Set aside time to pray for our church (44%)
4. Have a van driver to pick up children and others (36%)
5. Have a standard that leaders are held to (33%)
6. (tie) Find ways for community involvement (31%)
6. (tie) Finish family life center (31%)

What are some unique things about our church? Activities building constructed for ministry, (sports, meetings, shelter, etc.); Musically talented people; Been here since 1884; Van; Financially strong, able to support staff

What could make us better?

- Evangelism
- Prayer meetings in homes, pray for the lost
- A prayer-evangelism emphasis
- Short-term small groups with a purpose
- Communication – prayer chain
- Give-away booth at community events
- Reach out to young people
- Sports in family life center
- Spirit-filled leader for youth, children
- Fix up gym
- Praise and worship team, choir; someone to coordinate
- Members to take leadership roles that are vacant
- Van ministry

How we prioritized the items within each category

Personal Priorities

1. Seek what God wants
2. Set aside time to pray for our church
3. Stay faithful, get our hearts ready
4. Attend as often as possible
5. Keep positive attitudes
6. Don't get attached to pastor we have now

Outreach Priorities

1. Know what our mission and vision are
2. Find ways for community involvement
3. Start a newsletter and send it to all in the community

Leadership Priorities

1. Get people active to serve alongside new pastor
2. Have a standard that leaders are held to
3. Have a van driver to pick up children and others
4. Put into place a worship/music/sound team

Fellowship Priorities

1. Send cards, make phone calls
2. Really talk and communicate with each other
3. Be honest about issues and the way we feel in our hearts
4. Have weekly cottage prayer meetings
5. Analyze any division and lack of communication

Facilities Priorities

1. Fix up parsonage for new pastor
2. Finish family life center
3. Work on curb appeal for exterior, new landscaping
4. Update interior: sanctuary, classrooms, fellowship area

Administrative Priorities

1. Set up a membership database
2. Review and update constitution and bylaws
3. Approve job descriptions for staff, lay leaders
4. Conduct a financial audit

Who Will Lead Us

Pastor Survey report

The Transition Team listed some possible requirements, preferences, and expectations for our next pastor. A total of 50 surveys were returned. This report tells what percentage of respondents felt each item was important for a pastor search committee to consider.

Requirements

(these must be met for the man to be considered)

- 96% Man of God, ordained as a Gospel Minister by a Baptist church, Southern Baptist, supports Baptist Faith and Message
- 100% Christian character as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9
- 76% Committed to supporting Southern Baptist work through the Cooperative Program, associational missions giving, and special missions offerings
- 98% Believes God is calling him to serve in a church like ours as described in our church profile
- 96% Will be involved in the West Hardin community
- 76% Has some experience as a pastor or as a ministerial staff member of a Southern Baptist church
- 76% Is endorsed by several trustworthy professional and personal references
- 90% Submits to and passes a background check

Preferences

(these are things we would like to see in our pastor)

- 56% Has some theological education in a Southern Baptist seminary or college and shows commitment to learning and growing as a minister
- 44% At least three years' experience as a senior pastor in a Southern Baptist church or five years' experience as a ministerial staff member of a Southern Baptist church
- 74% Will live in West Hardin

Expectations

(these describe the job we expect the pastor to fulfill)

- 100% Preaches and teaches the Bible, making it clear to both believers and unbelievers
- 98% Spends time daily in prayer and Bible study
- 100% Shares his faith in Christ with others, leads others to trust Jesus
- 98% Demonstrates love for the people of the church and those outside the church
- 96% Balances well the demands of ministry, family and self
- 98% Leads the church in outreach and ministry to the church members and the community
- 94% Uses his spiritual gifts for building up the Body of Christ and encourages other members to do so also
- 96% Leads the church to discern God's will and follow it
- 80% Participates in the local ministerial alliance and local Baptist association



What Is a First Saratoga Baptist?

*from a sermon preached by
David Williams, Intentional Interim Pastor
July 25, 2021*

The surveys, conversations and observations conducted by your Transition Team during the past year have resulted in a Church Profile that tells us much about First Baptist Church, Saratoga. What kind of church is this?

A church that is Baptist. You believe in freedom of religion and you have Christian love for all believers but you are convinced that, of all the expressions of Christianity in the world today, Baptist is the most biblical.

A church that is connected. You are connected by fellowship, prayer and giving to the 42 churches of the Trinity River Baptist Association, the 5,300 churches of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the 47,000 churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

A church with a history and a future. You've been around for a long time and God is not through with you yet.

A church that is unique. You are one-of-a-kind in many ways, distinctives that God intends to use to fulfill His purposes.

A church in a mission field. West Hardin County is your well-defined mission field, an area in which at least a fourth of the people are not involved in any church.

A church with a purpose. Together you have adopted a mission statement: "A family of believers, growing and sharing the love of Christ."

A church without a pastor. Right now you are in-between, experiencing what is probably the longest interim between pastors in your history. But it is also likely the most productive interim period as you have come together to discover who you are as a church and how God wants to work through you.

What is a First Saratoga Baptist?

A First Saratoga Baptist is a believer God placed in the Body of Christ right here to be part of His plan for reaching the people throughout this area. You are saved, called, gifted, empowered, and enabled to do everything God wants you to do to further His Kingdom purposes.