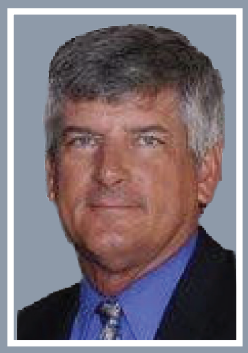
MEET THE DEACON NOMINEES

2025 Deacon Election: May 4



Jeff Ball

Jeff has been married 35 years to Dr Susan Victoria Ball. They have 2 children Abbie and Chandler. All are graduates of Liberty University. Jeff is retired from the Golf Course industry and his wife; Vicki is a retired USAF Lt Col and is Dean of Nursing at Charleston Southern University. He has served as deacon and Deacon Chairman at FBC. He is a Southern Baptist preacher's kid: "like many I was a cultural Christian. At the age of 21, Jesus moved into my heart and made me his."

Claire Bowman

Claire grew up in Lake City FBC with lots of family who placed an emphasis on being an active part of the church. That consistency and participation helped her grow in her faith. She made the decision to follow Christ and was baptized while a member of the youth group, the same age that her son, Blake, is now. After college, Claire and her husband,, Aaron, lived in the upstate of SC in Greenville/Easley, where they found a church family at Earle Street Baptist. Claire was able to grow and mature in her faith there. Earle Street Baptist showed God's love by the care given for their family when Blake was hospitalized shortly after he was born with a severe heart defect. At one day old, he was sent to MUSC. After Blake's heart transplant, the Bowmans permanently relocated to Charleston for his continued care. They visited First Baptist and began attending regularly when Blake was medically cleared. "We knew that we were truly shown the love of God by our church family in Greenville when Blake was in care, and understood how important being nurtured by God's love in a family of faith is, so we sought out a church home and found First Baptist." Claire has served on the Long Range Planning Committee, and the Preschool Ministry Team, in Preschool Praise, and Mission Friends. She is currently serving on the Personnel Committee and on Wednesday nights with the Sparks at Awana.

Lisa Collins

Lisa was raised in a Christian home, in a little town in Southern Indiana, where her Father was an elder in their home church for many years, and was a great example of servanthood. At a very young age she was taught how to love big and serve others. She accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior at age 12 while attending church camp. While raising her Sons, she became the Sunday School teacher, VBS teacher, youth leader, church pianist, Christmas program director. Shortly after both of her children went to college, God called her to use her gifts to play piano on Sunday mornings for a few churches in her county. In 2001, Lisa and Denny began their life together, involved in a life group, and they actively served in The Dayspring Emmaus community of Southern Indiana. Lisa also served in prison ministry for the Dayspring Residents Encounter Christ of Southern Indiana. The church they attended called Lisa and Denny to be ministry leaders for the care/ benevolence ministry until they moved to SC. Both have been members of FBC since the summer of 2018, and are active in the Teaching Friends Class, Lisa has served on the WEM team, attends women's Bible study, serves in the children's ministry, VBS and most recently the Gardens of Grace devotion gathering. Lisa feels it is a big blessing to be part of this body of believers.

Terrell Cook

Terrell was born in Anderson SC, raised in Charlotte, and graduated from Clemson University. He grew up at First Baptist Church of Matthews and has fond memories of his SS teachers who played a large part in his development as a Christian, along with summer youth camps at Ridgecrest & Ft. Caswell. His ancestors were involved in the SBC as pastors, missionaries, and even a former Executive Secretary. Terrell has been heavily involved in men's Bible study groups developed by Search Ministries & Priority Associates (part of Cru, formerly known as Campus Crusade for Christ), both business-outreach Marketplace ministries. Terrell's past men's groups were a catalyst in his interest in Christian Apologetics. Terrell is a Business Solutions Strategist with Truist. He and his wife, Lisa, have a son, Parker. Terrell has served as Vice-Chair FBC Deaconate, Vice-Chair FBS School Board, Chair of FBS Foundation Board, Chair of the FBC Finance Committee and currently serves at-large on the Finance Committee.

Kevin Dougherty

Kevin was raised in a Christian home with a strong sense of right and wrong and adherence to a strict moral code, but he was not born again until he was 19. Since then his pilgrim's progress has largely been one of relinquishing pride and control, and learning to trust God. "While I think my spiritual gifts involve discernment and leadership, God has also taught me that in applying those gifts I need to leave plenty of room for Him to interrupt and redirect my plans according to His perfect purposes." Kevin had the honor of serving as a Deacon once before and consider it to have been one of the greatest periods of Christian growth in his life. He and his wife, Rhonda, moved to Charleston in 2010 and joined First Baptist shortly afterwards. They have two adult children who also live in the Charleston area and an adult foster child who lives in Florida.

Robin Easterlin

Robin accepted Christ as a youth while attending First Baptist School. Since then, First Baptist Church has been a key part of her life and her family's — "God has continued to bless me with His love." Robin has grown in faith with each opportunity provided to serve Him. She has taught Sunday School, Children in Action, AWANA, and has held leadership roles on the Children's, Nominating, Personnel, Foundation Board, and Finance Committees over the years. She and her husband, Dean, have three children: Jared, Megan, and her husband, Kellen.

Debbie Mack

Debbie grew up in Gaffney, SC where she made a profession of faith at the age of seven. Her parents were living examples of the importance of a strong faith and active Christian service. While in college in 1972, she became a member of First Baptist and met her husband Tom Mack, when he was a Citadel cadet. They have been married 48 years and have four children and five grandchildren. Debbie has been a member of the music ministry and currently serves as the assistant to the Minister of Music, member of the Sanctuary Choir, director of the Young Musician's choir, and has led and assisted in various choirs throughout the years. She feels that God uses her love of music as a way to assist in leading in worship. She has served as a Deacon. Debbie is currently employed as the Director of Enrollment Management for First Baptist School where she feels God uses her daily as part of a mission that ministers to hundreds of families each year.

Hayden McDowell

Hayden was born and raised in downtown Charleston, in a loving Christian home. Growing up, he discovered a love for Jesus at a young age, which led to his public profession of faith and subsequent baptism in 1999. This marked the beginning of his lifelong devotion to Christ. In 2016, he married Kristi, and in 2017, joined First Baptist Church. Throughout his spiritual journey, Hayden has had the opportunity to serve in several churches, contributing in various roles such as deacon, youth leader, and men's Bible study leader. Currently, he is an active member of several church ministries, including our Sunday School class, men's Bible study, the Safety Team, and The Prayer Room Ministry Team. Each of these roles has deepened his faith and strengthened his bond with the church community. "I am eager to continue my journey of faith, supporting and uplifting our congregation while embodying the teachings of Christ. It would be an honor to serve as a deacon."

Carl Piland

Carl grew up in Raleigh, NC and after graduating from NC State he moved to Charleston for work. He married his wife, Heather, in 2018, and in 2023 they welcomed their beautiful baby boy, Ellis, into the world. Their family began attending First Baptist Church in 2022 and officially became members shortly after in April of 2023. Carl is a regular attendee of the Wednesday evening men's Bible study and recently began serving on the Safety Team. Carl and Heather feel they have truly found a home at FBC and he would be honored to serve FBC as a Deacon.

Paul Pinkston

Paul's Christian life started with his profession of faith and baptism at Hillcrest Baptist in Augusta Georgia, at the age of ten. He graduated from Mars Hill College and married his bride of fifty-four years, Judy. They have two children and three grandchildren. Over the years, Paul has been a Sunday school teacher, nursery volunteer, Deacon, team leader of youth ministry and facilitator of a youth minister search team. Since joining First Baptist, he has continued his call to serve on the Safety Team, Men's Ministry, a member of the Acts 1:8 committee, as well as the College Leadership Team. "Judy and I believe wholeheartedly that it was a blessing from God that we were led to First Baptist."

Demitri Rickman

Demitri came to know Christ during his sophomore year at The Citadel, a life-changing moment that has shaped his walk with the Lord ever since. During his time in college, he met "my beautiful wife," Sarah Rickman, and they were married at First Baptist Church on May 20, 2017. Since then, they have been attending First Baptist regularly, and Demitri became a member in 2021. "It has been a joy to grow in faith alongside this church family, and I've had the privilege of serving through the church's men's ministry."

Sarah Rickman

Sarah grew up at First Baptist Church and graduated from First Baptist School. After graduating from Clemson University, she moved back to Charleston to pursue a career in wedding planning. She and her husband, Demitri, have been attending First Baptist regularly since 2017. Over the last few years, Sarah has been able to serve on the Women's Enrichment Ministry team and is currently the WEM team coordinator. "I have enjoyed getting to fellowship and grow alongside the women of our church through weekly Bible study and WEM events." Sarah and Demitri welcomed Annie Grace into our family in January 2022. "Parenthood has been such an exciting journey and we are so grateful for all of the encouragement and support we have found within our church family."

Justin Dale Whaley

Justin was raised in Givhan's, South Carolina along the Edisto River, and grew up as a member at Summerville Baptist Church with his family. "Faith and religion was always centered in my life growing up with my parents and my grandparents. However, I truly came to Faith in the spring of 1994 while attending a church retreat in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina with my youth group and pastor." Since then, Justin has strived to stay on the path of the Lord. He and his wife, Amber, also attended Summerville Baptist Church with their boys until moving back to his wife's hometown of James Island in 2015. They have been members of First Baptist with their two boys, Jackson 15, and Rhett 13, since 2017. Both boys have enjoyed attending First Baptist School for pre-K, middle school, and high school. During the past 10 years as part of the First Baptist Church family, Justin has served as a Parking Team volunteer, Safety Team volunteer, Long Range Planning Committee member, and has been on the Board of Directors for First Baptist School, with the last two years serving as Chairman. "Our family feels very blessed to be a part of the First Baptist family, and we look forward to helping our church and schools shared faith grow locally and globally."

Ashley Wood Wiland

Ashley grew up in Spartanburg, SC and with each passing year is increasingly grateful to have been raised within a large extended family in which a Christian life was modeled. At age 11, she was baptized at First Baptist of Spartanburg. While living in New York City she and her husband, Kenneth, attended Tim Keller's Redeemer Presbyterian Church. Upon moving to Charleston, they found a similar preaching style and welcoming church family at FBC which they joined in 2014. Over the years, Ashley has been privileged to serve in the Children's Ministry as a Sunday School and VBS teacher as well as on the Church Foundation and the Finance Committee, of which she is currently the chairman. "It is an honor now to be considered for the important discipleship and service work of a Deacon. My career experience includes positions in management consulting, corporate strategy and financial planning." Ashley and Kenneth have two sons, Hank, age 10, and Jones, age 7.

Shawn Willis

Shawn and his wife, Elizabeth, have been members of First Baptist since 2012. They live in Mount Pleasant with their four young children who are all students at First Baptist School: Mary Frances, Maggie, Cothran and Miles. Both from Lexington, SC, they moved to Charleston in 2011. "We have always felt that one of the reasons God led us to Charleston was to find our family's church home, which we found here at First Baptist. We continue to be blessed watching His plan for our family unfold here." Shawn works as an attorney and Elizabeth is a speech therapist and assists in the church office. Shawn has previously served as a deacon and on various committees, as well as on the board of the Church Foundation. He looks forward to continuing to serve in any way possible.