

## Senior Pastor Transition

### Frequently Asked Questions

The latest version of this document can be found at [stuartheights.org](http://stuartheights.org).

**Q: If the motions pass, when would this transition take effect?**

A: January 1, 2026. Pastor Gary Jared will serve as Senior Pastor through December 31, 2025. Pastor Brian Smith assumes the Senior Pastor role on January 1, 2026.

**Q: Who would replace Pastor Brian in his current role as Senior Associate Pastor?**

A: The short-term plan is for the Pastoral Staff to fill that role while longer-term plans are made.

**Q: Why is this happening?**

A: Pastor Gary has decided to retire after many years of faithful service to Stuart Heights Baptist Church. This planned transition allows us to honor his legacy while ensuring strong leadership continuity.

**Q: What is a Pastor Emeritus?**

A: Pastor Emeritus is an honorary title recognizing distinguished service. It is not an active ministry position and carries no pastoral authority or administrative responsibilities. Pastor Gary will remain an active church member with this honorary designation.

**Q: How was Pastor Brian selected?**

A: Following our church's Constitution & Bylaws, the Church Officers and Senior Staff formed a Pulpit Committee, which unanimously recommended Pastor Brian.

**Q: Will Pastor Gary still preach?**

A: Pastor Gary will preach his final sermon as Senior Pastor on December 28, 2025. After January 1, preaching and teaching opportunities will be at the invitation of the pastoral staff.

**Q: Can I still meet with Pastor Gary for pastoral care?**

A: Yes. Pastor Gary remains a valued church member and is available for pastoral care and hospital visits.

**Q: What is Pastor Brian's background?**

A: Pastor Brian is a licensed, ordained Baptist minister. He is married, has five children, and has been on staff at Stuart Heights for 15 years. He has a B.S. in Religion and Psychology from Carson-Newman, an M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a D.Min. from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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### **Q: Will there be changes to church programs or ministries?**

A: Pastor Brian will work with church leadership to continue our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. Every pastor brings unique gifts and vision. We trust God to lead us forward.

### **Q: What if I have concerns about this transition?**

A: We welcome your questions and concerns. Please reach out to church leadership or contact the church office to schedule a conversation.

### **Q: How can I support this transition?**

A: Pray for Pastor Gary, Pastor Brian, and their families. Speak positively about this transition. Support Pastor Brian's leadership. Stay engaged in church life. Trust God's faithfulness to our church.

### **Q: What about our other pastoral staff?**

A: The current pastoral staff structure will remain the same, with adjustments to streamline ministry effectiveness.

### **Q: Will we still be affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention?**

A: Yes. Stuart Heights Baptist Church remains committed to our partnership with the Hamilton County Baptist Association, Tennessee Baptist Convention, and Southern Baptist Convention.

### **Q: What are the steps between now and January 1?**

A: A special business meeting has been called for Wednesday, October 29, at 7:30 pm at the Hixson Campus. At this meeting, the Personnel Committee will move to accept Pastor Gary's move to Pastor Emeritus and Pastor Brian's move to Senior Pastor. If those motions carry, a church-wide vote will be scheduled for November 16, where those motions will be voted on by the church.

### **Q: Where can I learn more?**

A: Visit our website at [stuartheights.org](http://stuartheights.org) or contact the church office at 423-877-2643 or [churchoffice@stuartheights.org](mailto:churchoffice@stuartheights.org).