

Brian Robertson

Dr. Robertson is honored, blessed, and thankful to the Lord to serve as the Senior Pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church. He is married to Anne, and they have two children, Emilie and Braden. Dr. Robertson is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, where he holds a Master's of Divinity with Biblical Languages and a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Evangelism. Dr. Robertson has a pastor's heart for people and a passion for people to know Jesus personally and walk with Him through discipleship. As God leads, Dr. Robertson is excited about joining God's work in Tallahassee, Florida, and prays God will do an incredible work in our city, state, nation, and world!

Dr. Robertson enjoys playing golf, watching college sports, going to Disney, and spending time with his family.

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Newly called pastors press on amid pandemic's challenges

By David Moore On Jan 28, 2021

STARKE—You can go online or watch the evening news to find out the latest numbers on the COVID-19 pandemic. What you won't find there are stories about Florida churches continuing to press on and do the work of God during these trying times.

Despite the pandemic which is almost a year old, church life and kingdom work is still going on in Florida's Baptist churches.

In Florida Baptist's north region alone, 10 churches called new pastors during the last half of 2020 despite the ongoing pandemic.

Richard Cason was one of those pastors. He started in July at Madison Street Baptist Church in Starke. The invitation from the church came just before the pandemic lockdown that occurred last spring, while he was pastor at Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Lake City.

"The pandemic hit, Madison Street came calling, and so everything lined up – even through all the challenges that came with COVID," he said. "God had already got in front of it and made a way there for us. It was just an awesome time to see God's sovereignty and his faithfulness to continue to build and grow his church."

This included helping Mount Carmel find a new pastor. Cason reached out to a former member who had moved away. "It really was an awesome thing. I was able to transition out and he was able to come in right behind me. He was interim for about a month and then they called him to be their pastor."

Madison Street had just started meeting back in the church when Cason arrived as pastor. He preached Sunday mornings during July and August. Small groups and Wednesday night activities resumed in September.

"A lot of the challenges were learning the culture and the people and building relationships," he said. "What made the challenge more difficult was because of COVID-19, we weren't able to go into our small groups until we got into the fall. But we were fortunate to be able to still do ministry and get after it."

Cason said he is excited about the year ahead despite a recent setback the church experienced in late December and early January when they had to shut down all church activities due to cases of the coronavirus and contact tracing involved.

The church was preparing to launch a new logo, new mission statement and website, and new service times this month, but had to postpone those things due to the disease.

"Me being new, I was trying to capitalize on a fresh start and fresh vision moving forward, but we've had to hit pause the last few weeks," he said.

To counter discouragement and panic, Cason said he has worked to be positive and reassuring through social media videos and communication to the church to remind them that good things are coming.

“We have a lot that we’re looking forward to,” he said. “We’re doing a big open house in February to try to get people back connected relationally. I think 2020 pushed so many people to the margin, pushed us away from one another. For 2021 there is a huge emphasis on small groups and sort of pulling everybody back in.”

The pandemic also created challenges for **Brian Robertson**, who moved from Louisiana to become pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Tallahassee in August.

When members of the pastor search committee invited him and his wife to visit Tallahassee last spring, they were unable due to Florida’s COVID-19 travel restrictions, which included a mandatory two-week quarantine for residents of Louisiana and other states where cases were on the rise.

Robertson came in view of a call in July, shortly after travel restrictions were lifted, and preached his first service there Aug. 9.

One of the first challenges he encountered was the family life center where the church was meeting and its poor acoustics and lack of technology. The gymnasium seats 1,200 and enabled the church to offer socially distanced worship due to its size.

“It is probably the nicest family life center in all of Tallahassee, but it had zero internet access,” he said. “That inhibited what we could do. Even in our main building there was no internet access except for the offices. We’ve had to spend some money to update things so we’re able to minister in the 21st century.”

With internet access, the church began livestreaming its services, something Robertson felt was critical. And by October it began holding services back in its sanctuary.

“I am very encouraged. The spirit in our church is great,” he said. “The camaraderie is very good. We have people praying constantly in the building and around the city. And so, I am grateful for where God has placed me and my family. We love Immanuel and we love Tallahassee.”

But like Madison Street Baptist in Starke, Immanuel also recently had to cancel all church activities for two weeks due to a COVID-19 outbreak. The church livestreamed services with just Robertson preaching to an empty audience.

Still, he is hopeful for the year ahead.

“I am excited,” he said. “I am praying for revival. I have some creative ideas not only for outreach but for different kinds of communication. But ultimately my prayer is that the Holy Spirit would move.”