

GET TO KNOW PASTOR COLE BARNES

A LETTER TO FIRST BAPTIST

Greetings, First Baptist Hoptown!

My name is Cole Barnes, and we are the Barnes family! My wife, Natalie, and I have been married for nine years, and the Lord has graciously blessed us with three beautiful children: Eden, Bennett, and Quinn. We are overjoyed to be coming to you in just a few short weeks! I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself.

My parents became believers when I was young, and my earliest memories are full of church life: Sunday gatherings, Awana, and Wednesday night fellowships. I made a profession of faith as a child, but it was not until my teenage years that I was born again. Around fifteen, during a Sunday morning service, I was convicted of my sin and knew I needed to turn and trust Christ as my Savior. Praise the Lord for his grace! I was baptized as a believer and began faithfully serving my church. Natalie and I met shortly thereafter, and our relationship grew into adulthood. We ministered together locally, traveled on mission trips across the states, and eventually served together in China. I sensed a call to vocational ministry in my later teenage years, but that desire fully developed after college. Through life in a healthy local church and watching faithful elders shepherd the flock, I became convinced that I wanted to devote my life to serving and leading a local church as a senior pastor.

I have served in my current ministry context for eight years, and it has been a true gift from the Lord. We have built relationships that will extend into eternity, grown, and been challenged. Leaving will be difficult, but our desire is to be sent out to leverage our lives for the sake of Jesus Christ. We believe First Baptist is where the Lord is leading us to serve. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know your search team, staff, and elders over these past months, and what they have shared about First Baptist has encouraged my heart. After more than 200 years of faithful ministry in Hopkinsville, I believe the Lord is still working in and through this church and has much more to do. My desire is to see your love for Christ, for one another, and for his Word fanned into flame. In coming to you, I am committing to preach, pray, love, and stay. By God's grace, I promise to faithfully preach the Word to you, fervently pray for you, genuinely love you, and unwaveringly stay with you, even through difficult times.

If you call me as your next senior pastor, my prayer is that First Baptist would be a biblically healthy church, shaped by the New Testament. I long to see young and old lifting one voice to the Lord each Lord's Day through congregational singing, prayer, Scripture reading, the ordinances of Christ, and the preaching of the Word. I pray we would love God's Word and conform every aspect of our lives to it. I long for Hoptown to be increasingly marked by church planting, church strengthening, and fervent missions—making disciples of every tribe, tongue, and nation, across the street and around the world. I pray our elders would raise up more elders from our own flock, both to shepherd us and to be sent out to shepherd others. Above all, I pray the church would grow in maturity and holiness, being conformed into the image of the bride of Christ, and that the Lord, by his grace, would build his church in breadth and depth, day by day, for decades to come.

I am praying for you as we approach November 8th, and I look forward to meeting you all. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

For your joy and his glory,

Cole D. Barnes