



February 19th, 2026

Dear First Baptist Church Family,

We are grateful to share an important update from the Pastor Search Committee.

Over the past several months, Vanderbloemen Church Staffing has been actively reviewing candidates on our behalf—screening resumes, conducting initial interviews, and checking references as part of their thorough process. Throughout this time, the FBC Search Committee has continued to spend significant time in prayer and discussion together, seeking the Lord’s direction for our church. We have consistently asked God for unity, clarity, and wisdom—and we are thankful for how He has faithfully guided each step.

The FBC Search Committee met with Pastor Steven Stern for an initial interview via Zoom on Thursday, February 12th. It was a great meeting that gave us the opportunity to hear his heart for ministry and ask important questions. As a result of that conversation, Pastor Steven, his wife Chelsea, and one of their children visited Aledo and First Baptist Church from February 13th–15th so they could get a feel for our community and church family. It was a very positive visit for Pastor Steven and his family, and we are grateful for the encouraging time we shared together. Because of this, we are moving forward in the process.

After much prayer and careful consideration, we are pleased to introduce Pastor Steven Stern as a candidate to preach in view of a call.

Upcoming Dates:

Friday, February 27 – Meet & Greet

6:00–8:00pm at FBC in the Fellowship Hall.

This will be an informal, open house-style meet and greet—come and go as you please. Light refreshments will be served. We warmly encourage you to come and take this opportunity to personally meet Pastor Steven and welcome him. No RSVP is needed.

Sunday, March 1 – Pastor Steven Candidating – One Combined Service at 10:15am

Pastor Steven Stern will be preaching in view of a call on Sunday, March 1. Please note that we will have one combined worship service at 10:15am only (there will not be an 8:00am service on March 1). Sunday School will be offered as usual at 9:00am. During the 10:15am service, children in 2nd–5th grade will remain upstairs in the worship service with their families. Childcare will be provided for nursery age through 1st grade.

Following the March 1st service, a Special Business Meeting will be held at 11:40am for the purpose of voting on Pastor Stern as our next Senior Pastor. Church members ages 15 and older are eligible to vote and are encouraged to attend this important meeting. Please plan to join us at 10:15am as we gather for this significant day in the life of our church family!

Voting Information:

Voting will be open to all official members of First Baptist Church. (Per our church bylaws, members must be at least 15 years of age and in good standing to vote.) Ballots will be distributed at the conclusion of the service and collected during the Special Business Meeting.

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We encourage you to be in prayer in the days ahead—for Pastor Steven and his family, for our church, and for the Lord’s continued guidance and unity.

For those who would like to preview one of Pastor Steven’s sermons here is a link or a QR code to a message titled “The Image of God-More Than Conquerors” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TJg9ZbD0ZM>



Below is a brief overview of Pastor Steven’s background:

Education

- Doctor of Ministry in Ministry Leadership – Liberty University
- Master of Divinity – Lincoln Christian University
- Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration – Augustana College
- Associate in Science – Black Hawk College

Professional Experience

- Senior Pastor – New Hope Christian Church, Bartlett, TN
- Senior Pastor – Walnut Grove Christian Church, Arcola, IL
- Pastor – Franklin Christian Church, Franklin, IL
- Ordained in 2012 by Milan Christian Church
- Church Internship – Elkhart Christian Church, Elkhart, IL
- Assistant Manager – Walgreens, Clinton, IL

Steven has also been actively involved in community ministry. He is the founder of God Will Make A Way Ministries, an organization focused on helping unify churches to provide adoption grants to Christian families.

Family

Steven and Chelsea have been married for just over 16 years and are raising four great kids: Valeri, Samuel, Adriana, and Dulce. Adoption is a big part of their family’s story. They adopted Samuel in 2013 and later welcomed their daughters, an international sibling group from Colombia, in 2018.

Life in their home is busy, loud, and full of laughter. They love movie nights, hiking adventures, crafts at the kitchen table, wrestling in the living room, traveling when they can, and trying fun foods from around the world. With six people under one roof, there is never a dull moment, and they would not have it any other way.

We encourage everyone to be in prayer as the Lord continues to guide First Baptist Church through this important season.

Thank you for your faithful prayers, patience, and encouragement throughout this process. We look forward to what the Lord has in store for First Baptist Church.

In Christ,

Steve Struble - Chair

Crystal Clark, Jon Gochee, Mick Louck, Ron Moffitt, Jon Ricke & Beth Whitenack
The FBC Pastor Search Committee