

Cooperation in Church Revitalization

THE *next chapter* IS
partnership, mentoring, cooperation,
and *teamwork*.

First Baptist Church, Monroe, Virginia, is a typical rural church steeped in a rich history. It has a warm fellowship and a community presence. Like many churches, it sought to turn the page on the next chapter of its history. However, with the changing realities facing many churches, moving into the future with vitality is not always a clear path.

The story of First Baptist Church, Monroe, shows the power of cooperation. In 2022, Brian Clabough was the pastor of the church. Pastor Brian not only attempted to lead First Baptist Monroe but also joined the church revitalization cohort of the SBCV. Pastor Brian cared for the church and attempted to devise plans during his pastorate. After a season of pastoring First Baptist Monroe, it became clear that Pastor Brian had been led to another place of ministry.

After joining the church revitalization cohort, Pastor Brian met its co-leader Pastor Michael Fitzgerald. In late 2022, Michael Fitzgerald, Pastor Emeritus at **Clifford Baptist Church** in Amherst, Virginia, committed to be the interim pastor of First Baptist Monroe for one year. The information that had been collected and the plans that had been devised by

Pastor Brian were known and evaluated by Pastor Fitzgerald. This unique partnership experience and smooth transition is a testament to cooperation within the SBCV.

Pastor Fitzgerald guided the church through a process of discovery and evaluation. Plans were made, and ideas for outreach were developed, all while the church searched for a full-time pastor. In God's timing, Kent Maitland was chosen as the next pastor. However, in the spirit of partnership, Pastor Kent was willing to allow Pastor Fitzgerald to stay on and guide him to become acclimated to his new role for six months. The plans that had been devised for years were coming to fruition during the early days of Pastor Kent's pastorate due to the power of partnership and cooperation. On June 2, 2024, Pastor Kent officially began pastoring the church without the assistance of Pastor Fitzgerald.

First Baptist Monroe has now turned the page on their next chapter. This next chapter tells the story of partnership, mentoring, cooperation, and teamwork. First Baptist Monroe serves as an example that we can do more together than we can alone! ■

