

# David Platt Joins McLean Bible Church as Interim Pastor; Megachurch's Senior Pastor Stepping Down

By Michael Gryboski, Mainline Church Editor (the *Christian Post*)



International Mission Board President David Platt

David Platt, a prominent Southern Baptist, recently began serving as an interim teaching pastor at McLean Bible Church after its senior pastor announced that he was going to step down.

Platt currently serves as president of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board (IMB) but he stepped up to help the Northern Virginia megachurch while it looks for a new senior pastor to succeed Lon Solomon, who announced in February his decision to step down after over 36 years of leading.

IMB spokeswoman Julie McGowan told The Christian Post that "Dr. Platt and IMB trustees mutually agreed that it would be a good, wise, and right use of his time to be a part of leadership in a local Southern Baptist church. IMB trustees are fully aware and fully supportive of Dr. Platt's leadership in this church in this way."

McLean Bible Church was founded as a nondenominational church but according to McGowan, McLean "began cooperating with Southern Baptists in 2016" and is now "the hub for the North American Mission Board's church-planting efforts in the Washington, D.C., area."

McGowan further explained to CP: "In accordance with the SBC Constitution, Article III, McLean Bible Church declared its affirmation of a faith and practice in doctrinal harmony with The Baptist Faith and Message, its commitment to become a cooperating church with the Southern Baptist Convention [April 2016], and has contributed to Convention work through the Cooperative Program Allocation Budget."

The Christian Post asked the megachurch to confirm this but received no response.

The Southern Baptist Convention is the largest Protestant denomination in the country with over 15 million members. The SBC describes its churches as "cooperating" churches, emphasizing that each local church is "fully autonomous and retains its independence" and the denomination "claims no ecclesiastical authority over any local church." According to the Annual Church Profile, there were 46,793 cooperating churches in the U.S. in 2015.

Since taking the interim position at McLean, Platt has preached multiple messages, his first Sunday morning one being the last Sunday in February and another being on the first Sunday in March.

"I just want you to know, I am honored humbled by the opportunity that God has given me and that you've given me to walk alongside, be a part of this journey during these days in this church," said Platt to those gathered at McLean Bible in his Feb. 26 sermon.

"I have no desire whatsoever on the weekends that I preach to just to come in and preach as an outsider totally detached from what God is doing in this church. I don't believe that would serve you well and really I don't believe that would serve me well, either."

Platt was unavailable for comment.

In February, Solomon sent a letter to the congregation announcing that he was stepping down as senior pastor, though he will stay on as senior teaching pastor and a member of the Board of Elders.

"I am tired," he wrote. "Not tired of walking with Christ, not tired of praying and reading God's Word, not tired of sharing Christ with people, and not tired of preaching the Word. I am tired of trying to run the demanding operations of our large and complex church. And I am concerned that, if I am too proud to admit and confront this, I will end up hurting the very church family that I love so much. MBC needs a Senior Pastor who can be fully-engaged in every level of leading our church."

"So, after grieving this, I went to our elders and told them that God had shown me that it was time for MBC to trust God's leading and begin searching for our next God-appointed Senior Pastor."

Solomon, a native of Portsmouth, Virginia, assured the church that they will recommend a new senior pastor who sticks to their foundational tenets — such as "preaching the accurate Word of God" — of being a biblical church.

McLean Bible Pastor Dale Sutherland said in comments emailed to CP that when "a new Senior Pastor has been selected, Pastor Lon's title will change to Pastor Emeritus."

"We have begun engaging the members of McLean around the process of searching for a new senior pastor," explained Sutherland. "That process has started with 40 days of prayer as we seek God regarding how He wants us to move together and forward as a church."

McLean Bible Church began with five families in 1961. Since its founding, McLean has had only four pastors, with Solomon being the fourth.

After Solomon assumed the senior pastor role in 1980, the church grew to over 200 members. He presented changes to the church, such as turning it into a more "seeker friendly" church and decentralizing ministry, which created division among church members. But he stayed on as senior pastor when 85 percent of the congregation voted to keep him.

The church grew rapidly and today, McLean offers services at five different locations.