

CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Lexington, Kentucky

PASTOR PROFILE

2026

Who We Are

Central Baptist Church is a loving, welcoming gathering of Christians located at 110 Wilson Downing Road in Lexington, Kentucky. Founded in 1953 on a deep commitment to Scripture, we practice an open, welcoming theology and describe ourselves as a “progressive family of faith.” We gather for Sunday school and worship each Sunday.

We are a member congregation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), CBF of Kentucky, and the Alliance of Baptists—dual affiliations that reflect our identity as a congregation grounded in Baptist heritage while embracing a broad, justice- and mercy-oriented expression of the Christian faith. We also partner with the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists. Our former senior pastor, Rev. Dr. Mark Johnson, served as our leader for 19 years and shaped our church as a voice for progressive change within the interfaith community of Lexington.

Central holds a distinctive place among Lexington’s faith communities. In a city where evangelical Christianity represents the largest share of religious affiliation and where Baptists are among the most numerous denominational family, Central stands as a congregation that is theologically rooted yet non-dogmatic—a community willing to ask hard questions and sit with honest tension.

Our City: Lexington, Kentucky

The second-largest city in Kentucky, Lexington is multi-religious and multi-cultural, with a 2026 projected population of approximately 325,000 residents in Fayette County. The city is home to the University of Kentucky and a growing research and health care sector, which contributes to a relatively young and highly educated population.

Key Demographics of Lexington/Fayette County

2026 Projected Population	~325,000
Median Age	35.3 years
Median Household Income	\$69,479
Poverty Rate	9.1% of families
White (Non-Hispanic)	66.7%
Black or African American	14.4%
Hispanic or Latino	9.5%
Asian	~4.4%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (2024 5-Year Estimates); Cubit Planning 2026 Population Projections.

Lexington’s religious landscape is heavily Protestant Christian, with a particularly strong Baptist presence (combining Southern Baptist, National Baptist, and National Missionary Baptist congregations). Catholicism is the largest single denomination. The area also reflects a growing non-denominational evangelical movement. Non-Christian religions (Islam being the most represented) make up a small but notable share, consistent with Lexington’s status as a diverse university city.

This context matters for our calling. We are not a congregation competing for the largest share of a shrinking evangelical market. We are a progressive, inclusive congregation seeking a pastor who understands the spiritual hunger of people who have left rigid religion yet remain drawn to genuine community, thoughtful proclamation, and lives shaped by justice and compassion.

Our Congregational Identity

In preparation for this pastoral search, our Transition Team facilitated a comprehensive process of congregational discernment. Through identity surveys, missions surveys, open-ended questionnaires, and a community poster voting exercise, our members articulated what they value, who they are, and what they need from pastoral leadership.

Several themes emerged with clarity:

- We are a theologically progressive congregation that takes Scripture seriously. We engage the biblical narrative as a living word, one that raises urgent questions about who we are and what we are called to do in the world.
- We are deeply committed to inclusion, diversity, and social justice in everything we do. This is not a peripheral commitment or a feel-good tagline; it is the very heart of our identity as followers of Christ. The full involvement of women, our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters, and other traditionally marginalized people is valued and essential in every aspect of our church life, from the pew to the pulpit.
- We value collaborative leadership. We are looking for a servant leader who is able to build consensus, who honors the gifts of our staff and congregation, and who is able to share authority gracefully.
- We are a congregation that cares deeply for one another. Pastoral care—the ministry of presence with those who grieve, struggle, and heal—is a hallmark of what Central has been at its best.
- We are an intergenerational community. We value people at every stage of life and maintain a robust children's and youth ministry, even as we recognize that those ministries are currently served by existing staff.
- We love worship that is both traditional and eclectic. The Sanctuary Choir leads in worship most Sundays. We cherish the hymns and the anthems. We are not a congregation looking to replicate a contemporary Christian music model.
- We value intellectual rigor. We want sermons that make us think: scholarship in the pulpit, intellectual acumen, and a voice that is both hopeful and justice-aware.
- We are community-engaged and committed to interfaith relationships. We do not see the walls of this building as the limits of our calling.

The Pastor We Are Seeking

Based on the collective voice of our congregation—expressed through surveys, questionnaires, and the community discernment process—Central Baptist Church is seeking a pastor who embodies the following characteristics. These are listed in order of the priority our congregation expressed through the transition process.

Top Congregational Priorities (by member vote)

- Deeply committed to inclusion, diversity, and social justice
- Strong, thoughtful preacher with a hopeful, justice-aware voice
- Skilled in organizational structure
- Capable with organizational and financial realities
- Skilled in pastoral care and creating a healing, safe space
- Theologically progressive, rooted in Scripture, non-dogmatic
- Respectful of traditional/liturgical worship; non-CCM-leaning
- Passionate about youth, children, and intergenerational ministry
- Pro-interfaith and community-engaged
- Humble, warm, emotionally mature, and spiritually grounded
- Future-minded and vision-casting
- Scholarly: intellectual religious acumen evident in preaching and ministry

Character and Calling

We are seeking a pastor who will serve as the Spiritual leader of the congregation and who, while shepherding God's people, will model the self-giving love, mercy, and grace of Christ. Additionally, we seek a person who is:

- Theologically progressive and rooted in Scripture: someone who engages the biblical text with intellectual honesty, spiritual depth, and a willingness to ask questions that matter.
- A preacher whose sermons make the congregation think: intellectually alive, academically informed, and accessible to ordinary people wrestling with real life.
- A servant leader, not a sovereign one: someone who leads and works collaboratively, seeks consensus, and trusts the congregation's gifts and wisdom.
- Deeply committed to the full inclusion of all people regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or background.
- Emotionally mature and spiritually grounded: a pastor who can sit with grief, engage conflict without anxiety, and model the kind of humility that creates safe community.
- Skilled in pastoral care and committed to nurturing a support structure, including the board of Deacons and lay ministry, that extends the congregation's capacity to care for one another.

- A visionary who can help Central discern and articulate its next chapter without abandoning the best of its history.

Ministry Experience

We welcome candidates from a range of backgrounds and trajectories. Formal theological education (a minimum of M.Div.) is expected. We value:

- Experience in congregation-led pastoral ministry: preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and community leadership.
- Familiarity with CBF and Alliance of Baptists polity, theology, and culture, or demonstrated alignment with progressive Baptist values.
- Experience working with diverse communities.
- Experience or a demonstrated capacity for financial and organizational stewardship.
- Comfort with both in-person and digital/online worship and community.

What Central Offers

Central Baptist Church is a congregation in healthy transition, energized by its discernment process and ready to move forward with clarity and hope. We offer:

- A 37,250-square-foot modern and accessible building, custom-built for us and dedicated in 2005. Our building sits on a prime nine-acre parcel of land located along one of Lexington's most traveled streets, in the heart of shopping, dining, and residential life, and is accessible by public transportation. Central Baptist Church has no debt.
- A congregation with a long history of progressive, justice-oriented ministry and a genuine desire to grow in fidelity to that calling.
- A context of collegial, collaborative leadership; our staff and lay leaders are capable, committed, and ready to partner with a new pastor.
- A rich worship tradition anchored in sacred music, thoughtful liturgy, and serious engagement with Scripture.
- Denominational partners with Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Kentucky, the Alliance of Baptists, and the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, networks of like-minded congregations, clergy, and theological resources.
- A location in Lexington, Kentucky, a mid-sized city with a university culture, growing diversity, and significant need for communities of prophetic, welcoming faith.
- A congregation that has done the hard work of self-examination and is ready to receive and support new pastoral leadership with generosity and grace.

Central's Community Involvement

One of the greatest assets of Central Baptist Church is its building and property. We open our doors and outdoor space to many different groups to help beautify and fulfill our mission to the city of Lexington.

With most church activities happening during the weekend, the weekday use of the building is occupied by non-CBC groups. Monday through Friday sees OLLI (life-long learning groups for older adults) using the gym and classroom space. We also have evening groups, including PFLAG, Girl Scouts, volleyball, pickleball, and dance groups using the space weekly and monthly.

The outdoor property has seen a resurgence of life in recent years. The vegetable garden is maintained by volunteers who plant seasonal items to share with the congregation. An orchard of 24 fruit trees was planted last fall for the benefit of the community. We also have a dedicated Peace Garden.

Education is a high priority for CBC. To help support the education of future ministers, Central is renting space to BSK Theological Seminary (bsk.edu), offering office and meeting room space.

CBC is also committed to non-profit social services. We currently offer free space to CARAT (a non-profit organization that rehabs and donates medical equipment) and an organization that furnishes apartments for young adults leaving the foster care system.

Central Baptist Church is also a proud partner with the American Red Cross as a designated shelter and resource center during emergencies, and with the Fayette County Health Department in their efforts to provide free vaccination clinics throughout the year.

Year	Annual Avg Sunday Worship Attendance
2026	120
2025	115
2024	120
2023	*125
2022	*96
2021	*95
2020	*104
2019	126
2018	137
2017	144
2016	145
2015	139
2014	139
2013	129
2012	130
2011	128
2010	128

*Averages during the COVID era may be skewed due to inconsistent data records.

How to Express Interest

Inquiries and applications should be directed to the Pastoral Search Committee of Central Baptist Church.

Central Baptist Church

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Lexington, KY 40517

(859) 278-2331

www.lexcentral.com

Central Baptist Church is an equal opportunity community of faith. We welcome candidates of all backgrounds and identities.

Sources: Central Baptist Church Website (lexcentral.com); CBC Transition Team Survey Data and March 30, 2026 Meeting Summary; U.S. Census Bureau 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Cubit Planning 2026 Population Projections (kentucky-demographics.com); Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study — Kentucky (pewresearch.org); Alliance of Baptists Congregations Directory (allianceofbaptists.org); Baptist News Global (baptistnews.com).