

# FIRST *words*

TO REACH PEOPLE FOR JESUS CHRIST & TOGETHER BECOME MORE LIKE HIM

## EXPERIENCING GOD



In 1976, Henry Blackaby and Claude King first published the book, *EXPERIENCING GOD: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. The popularity of this book led to the development of a 13-week study course by the same title, which was published in 1990. Since that time, millions of lives and countless churches around the world have been radically impacted by the seven realities which are at the heart of this study. In 2000, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of publication, more than three million of the workbooks had been distributed, which is now published in 47 different languages.

In 1999, Lifeway Christian Resources, under the leadership of Mark Blankenship, approached Mr. Blackaby about a musical which could effectively communicate the seven realities within the study. They needed to find someone who could be the lead on this project who had been impacted by the *Experiencing God* study. The search led them to composer, Gary Rhodes, who had served as a college summer missionary at Faith Baptist Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, where Henry Blackaby pastored for 12 years. Rhodes partnered with Claire Cloninger, who was also impacted by the *Experiencing God* study, and together they wrote *EXPERIENCING GOD, THE MUSICAL*, which premiered in 2000.

Since that time, this musical has been used to introduce the study to many people and to reinforce the truths of the study which had already been a part of their lives.

***Sunday morning, April 22, the Sanctuary Choir and Celebration Orchestra  
along with children, youth, soloists, and narration will present  
this wonderful expression of worship.***

APRIL 2018



FIRST BAPTIST  
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# words

## FOR THE JOURNEY

### LEARNING FROM THE DARKNESS...

It is fascinating that Easter and April Fool's Day occur on the same day this year. At least fascinating for a preacher. Even though the women were weeping as they trudged to the tomb, a sermon title could be, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Tomb." How about a skit where the women return from the tomb to tell the disciples, "Jesus is alive." In disbelief, the disciples respond with, "O sure, yeah...and April Fools to you too."

On Friday, the world was laughing as this King of the Jews hung from a cross. But not so fast.... On Easter, God has the last laugh on Caesar, Pilate, the Chief Priests, and even death itself. The joke is on us who doubted how God can take a cross and turn it into Easter hope, or take nails and use those wounds to heal us.

The news that Jesus was headed to Galilee on that first Easter seemed like foolishness, even to His closest followers. There were no "high-fives." Yet, we have always had this foolish and comical God. Frederick Buechner says: "Old Zacchaeus climbs up a sycamore tree a crook and climbs down a saint. The Apostle Paul sets out a hatchet man for the Pharisees and comes back a fool for Christ."

God is the master of the impossible. God takes this Paul, a hard-core legalist, and he becomes the messenger of amazing grace. The Apostle knew this God looked like the "Lord of Fools" as He turns the tables on the Corinthians: "For the message of the cross (and Easter) is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us being saved it is the power of God."

It is Easter, no fooling! Perhaps we have missed the foolish message of the resurrection. Easter is more than a comforting story that everything will work out. John Ortberg says, "The first response to Easter was fear as the women ran from the tomb with their dresses hiked

up to their knees. None of the gospel accounts have Jesus or the angels saying, 'Now you don't have to worry about death anymore.'"

What Jesus does is give His followers a mission. When Jesus tells the disciples to meet Him in Galilee, He is saying there is work to be done in spreading God's movement. He is saying, I need you and will use you, which sounds pretty foolish. In re-examining the message of Easter, Ortberg contends "On that Sunday the disciples lives didn't get safer; their lives got a lot more dangerous. What got released on Sunday was not comfort..., but a calling."

On Easter it was more than the assurance of life after death, but life after birth. Don't make the mistake of making Jesus and Easter only a ticket to the afterlife. What invaded the world on Easter was hope. Ortberg describes this Easter hope as the "Hope that called people to die to self; die to selfishness, greed and fear; to die to the lesser self so a greater self might be born and raised in us."

Garrett Fiddler wrote about the irony of the cross as a piece of jewelry, "Really the cross does not belong on the Christian; the Christian belongs to the cross." The resurrection hope is the hope which lies on the other side of dying. Paul said, "We are a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." Easter is living out this hope as fools for Christ, being His foolish presence in the world.

No Joking,

Phil



# Easter Egg Hunt Success!

Thank you to everyone who helped make our FBC Easter Egg Hunt a success! Together we surpassed our goal and collected 5,263 filled Easter eggs. Thank you to the Wednesday night classes, Sunday school classes and individuals who helped fill the Easter eggs, and the volunteers who helped hide the eggs for the hunt. A special thank you to Janet Mendenhall for helping organize the hunt and bringing cookies for the kids. There were around 80 children who showed up and found all the eggs in less than 10 minutes. It was a great day! THANK YOU!



## FBC WOMEN'S RETREAT

*By Megan Butler*

In February, I had the privilege of gathering with a hundred First Baptist women at the women's retreat. We spent the weekend learning about transitioning with hope led by Mary Stedham and Meredith Stedham Young. We worshiped through song, ate delicious food, competed in games, and laughed all night long. But most importantly, we came together as one group and continued to build a strong community of women. Throughout the conference, I experienced God through the relationships old and new that were forming. Several ladies shared personal stories of their lives and I felt everyone around me nodding along as they related to each of their stories. There is nothing more powerful than hearing the stories full of pain, triumph, hurt, and joy which make you realize you are not alone. God places people and their stories in your path to help you flourish and grow. I left the retreat feeling loved, refreshed, energized, and thankful for new friendships. We hope you join us for our next women's event on April 10 at 7 p.m.







# RA/GA RACER & BAKE SALE

*By Becky Tucker*

“Drivers, Start Your Engines!” Ok, maybe we don’t actually have engines on our cars we make, decorate, and race for the annual RA/GA Racer & Bake Sale, but for those of us who worked on the racers for this event, it is just as exciting as those car races we see on TV. If that is not exciting to you, maybe the smell of the chili we will have with our hotdogs or the aroma of the baked goods in the bake sale will help peak your interest. Whatever it is, I know I am looking forward to Sunday, April 22, when we will gather at the Family Life Center to enjoy watching our RA’s, GA’s, their workers, and the staff as they race their newly made wooden cars.

This night will not merely have races going on, as we will also have a bake sale with all homemade items, where money collected will purchase shoes we will take to McAllen in July. We will sort and distribute the shoes while on the Family Mission Trip to McAllen/Mission Texas. This project is through Buckner’s Shoes for Orphan Souls.

The chili dog supper will start at 5:00 p.m. in the cafe at the Family Life Center and the races will follow at 6:00 p.m. The bake sale will be ongoing through the supper and races.

Following the races, there will be awards for the fastest cars as well as best decorated, most creative, and most unique.

We hope you will join us on Sunday evening, April 22, for this fun night with the FBC community and help us as we support such a wonderful mission project.



# FINDING YOUR PLACE

***RIGHT THINKING*** “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is -- His good, pleasing and perfect will.”  
*Romans 12:2 NIV*

Transformation comes with right thinking about God, about others, and about ourselves. Knowing God through His Word, the Bible, and the indwelling Holy Spirit is how we KNOW God rightly. Meditating on Him and His Gospel Message keeps us THINKING rightly. Loving God with all our heart, mind, and strength is the greatest commandment. The second is this, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There are no greater commandments than these. How has God loved you? The Body of Christ is diverse, but is to live in unity. How can we be unified when we are so diverse? We have all been made wonderfully complex and full of flaws! Until we embrace who we are--loved by God even though He knows our flaws--we cannot make the changes in our lives which bring about true transformation in our life and service.

The Apostle Paul uses the analogy of the human body as the relationship of believers to one another in the Church. Read Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 and 13 to see “There is one body and many parts.” Think about it! What is your and my part in the Body of Christ, the Church?

FBC Abilene has a tool which can help you know how God has gifted you to be a part of His church and impact the community we live in and the world we are a part of. PLACE is that tool. Are you and I thinking rightly about what God has called us and gifted us to do for Him? It’s for His glory, not ours. You can connect with a PLACE team member who will guide you as you think about this question. You may be asking, “Why would I look into this?” and the answer could be “I want to serve.” Or maybe you are serving already, but would like to know of other opportunities to help grow and encourage others in their walk with God and His Church. Or the answer might be that you would like to connect with other members, intergenerationally. Many other responses can come.

As we ponder this right thinking, will you ask God to direct you as you respond to this invitation? The goal is to be transformed in our thinking and our ministry.

PLACE activities for Spring 2018 include:

**April 8 and 15 Students grades 11 and 12--High School Room**

**May 6 New Member Reception and PLACE introduction--Following morning worship**

## MORE WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED

There are numerous ways you can stay connected to what is going on at First Baptist. Of course, by reading this you are already familiar with FirstWords, but we hope you know about the other ways you can find information about the church. The best place to start is the church website, [www.fbcabilene.org](http://www.fbcabilene.org). Here you will find the church calendar, information about upcoming events, and specific things from each ministry area. Facebook, twitter, and Instagram are also social media tools we use to get the word out. Search each site for FBC Abilene and you might be surprised what all you will find.





ACTING IN  
*love*

CITY  
LIGHT

## CITY LIGHT RE-VISIONING

by John Moore

City Light Community Ministries is re-visioning the way we help people at City Light. Looking into the future, we are compelled to create new strategies for ministry, provide improved and new facilities, and add new staff and volunteers. Our goals are focused around five pillars:

- 1 DINING WITH DIGNITY**- To offer hospitality to a stranger as if they were family
- 2 COMMUNITY**- To do life together as family for all who enter our doors
- 3 LEADERSHIP TRAINING & JOB PLACEMENT**- To provide life changes for families through training and opportunity
- 4 CASE MANAGEMENT & PAYEE MANAGEMENT**- To break family cycles of poverty and homelessness together
- 5 EDUCATION/LITERACY/COLLABORATION**- Working together to change poverty's effect on families in our community

Look for these dates to hear more about this re-vision plan and begin praying how God leads you to be a part of this important process. We want to hear your questions and concerns while communicating where God is leading us in this process.

**APRIL 8 - Re-Vision Plan presentation during Bible Study for 3rd floor classes**

**APRIL 15 - Morning Worship service focused on CLCM**

**APRIL 29 - Town Hall meeting to discuss the Re-Vision Plan 5 p.m. (Dining Room)**

**MAY 2 - Town Hall meeting to discuss the Re-Vision Plan 6 p.m. (Dining Room)**

**MAY 6 - Church Vote on Re-Vision Plan**

For more details, please contact John Moore at [john.moore@fbcabilene.org](mailto:john.moore@fbcabilene.org).

Thank you for being a church who cares for our community and willing to prayerfully consider this new direction.



# FBC Abilene Shoes for Orphan Souls Prayer Steps

There are many steps that must be taken before a pair of shoes reaches an orphan or child at risk. You can pray with us for each step along the way.



Pray for individuals to go and buy a pair of shoes. Pray thanksgiving for those who do.



Pray for First Baptist Church as they host a shoe drive to collect shoes during the month of April.



Pray for the team and volunteers who sort, process, and give out the shoes during the McAllen Family Mission Trip.

Pray for protection over the McAllen Family Mission Trip Team as they travel to Hidalgo County and deliver shoes to the Buckner Warehouse and Family Hope Center.



Pray for the staff overseeing all of the details at the Family Hope Center and Buckner Warehouse where the team will be working to get shoes ready for the children.



Pray for God to use the team to minister to the children and to share His love with them through their new shoes.

Pray for the children and their families who live in the Colonias as God begins to prepare them now to receive the shoes.



Pray for the McAllen Family Mission Trip Team as God prepares their hearts as they work to organize the shoes and meet with the children and their families.



Pray for God's peace, love, and protection for the children. Pray that their new shoes are a constant reminder of God's love for them.

 **BUCKNER**  
**SHOES**  
FOR ORPHAN SOULS®  
Hope shines here.®



# PRAYER FOR THE CITY

On Thursday, April 26, we will gather in the dining room for our second Prayer for the City event. Like the last event, we will spend the time praying for our city and will focus on specific concerns and subjects. This will be a guided prayer time, but will also involve sharing with others around the tables. We will start the prayer time at 12:15 p.m. and will end promptly at 12:45 p.m. to allow folks time to return to work. If you want to bring your lunch and eat, you are encouraged to do so. Tea, water, and coffee will be provided.

## GRANT-IN-AID APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Applications are available in the church office, or in The Gap Sunday school room. Deadline to turn in completed forms is Friday, April 27. The committee will meet on Wednesday, May 9.

## STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

**April 1, 22 years**

**Mike Greenfield**

*Pastor for Administration  
and Spiritual Development*

**April 5, 12 years**

**Jeannie Wesley**

*Ministry Assistant to the  
Pastor for Recreation &  
Senior Adults*

**April 9, 11 years**

**Paul Irby**

*Counselor*

**April 17, 1 year**

**Mike Brady**

*Associate Director of FLC*

**April 22, 8 years**

**Candy Rains**

*Pastor for Preschool*

**April 27, 1 year**

**Vallarie Weinkauf**

*GLO Teacher*

## EVENT CALENDAR:

### APRIL

- 1 Easter
- 8 Personnel Committee
- 10 Rockin' Moms  
Women's Spring Fellowship
- 11 Buildings & Grounds Committee  
Vision Coordinating Team
- 15 Missions Committee
- 17 LLL  
Finance Committee  
Deacons' Meeting
- 18 GLO Board Meeting  
Church Conference
- 19 Healing Hearts Meeting
- 22 RA/GA Racer & Bake Sale
- 25 Hospital Visitation Team
- 26 Prayer for the City
- 29 Civic Orchestra of Abilene Concert

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

*March 2018*

| Budget   | March     | Year-to-Date |
|----------|-----------|--------------|
| Required | \$276,990 | \$792,803    |
| Given    | \$262,474 | \$776,633    |



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