

FIRST words

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

When I think of Easter I am reminded of a picture my mom took of me when I was about 1 or 2 years old. I'm standing in the backyard on two pudgy legs holding an Easter egg high in the air. The expression on my face is that of pure joy and euphoria. It is these emotions that surround Easter, making it a beautiful day of thanks and celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. My life is different because of Easter because it gives me the ability to feel the same way I did when I found that egg. Moreover, I get to feel that way every other day knowing that I serve a God that is stronger than death. - Kaylie Angello

Because of Easter, I have new life. Eternal life, yes, but also freedom, joy and fullness in my life here and now. Easter also gives me a calling which has led to a new life in the bustling, dusty, wonderful city of Phnom Penh, Cambodia where I get to see firsthand the way Easter is changing the life of Cambodian people. - Lauren Bass

I have a real and intimate relationship with a living Savior and Lord because of Easter. He has never left me, let me down and loves me beyond human understanding. - Gail Thompson

Because of Easter, I do not have to bear the unbearable weight of guilt, but can accept God's love and grace through Jesus. - Gayle Gray

*I was saved!! Forgiveness of my sins!!
- John C. (written at City Light lunch)*

In preparing for the April edition of First Words, the idea was presented in staff that we ask you, the church, to answer the question, "How is my life different because of Easter?" We really did not know what kind of response we would get. The response has been incredible! Both in quantity and in quality. So much so, we could not fit all of the responses in the actual edition, but have a plan for utilizing them during Holy Week. A small number of the responses are below. During Holy Week, you will receive an email with four or five of the responses each day. Because they are all so good, we wanted you to have time to read a few, reflect on them, and not be overwhelmed by trying to read 75 plus responses at one time.

Our prayer is that as you read each response, you will take a moment to reflect on what has been said and then ask God to speak to you and see what you can learn from what someone else has learned. He is Risen, He is Risen Indeed!

Easter confirms my faith and proves God's love. Without Easter Jesus would be just like any other dead person. But, Jesus did rise and walk out of that tomb. He proved God's plan for my salvation and that proves my faith. - Mark Yeilding

The birth of Jesus brought us the Son Of God who grew to manhood and set an example for us to live by. The Resurrection of Jesus brought Him to our everyday lives and He resides with us, lifting us from despair and bringing us hope forever. - Martha Boggs

Easter has made my life different because there is the promise of eternal life with my creator. He loved ME enough to give his son for ME! Easter means that there is always hope. - Laura Grametbaur

I have comfort in knowing I am forgiven of my sins. That HE died for me. - Jo Smith

Because of Easter, I am free. I don't have to be a slave to sin because Christ chose to face suffering and death to free me. Because of Easter I have no fear of tomorrow! - Bonnie Turney

Easter is like the Master Eraser; there is nothing I can do on my own that would warrant a place for me in Heaven. Jesus took care of that when he died for my many sins and errors in life and gave me a chance. - John Hodgson



My life is different because Christ's resurrection, in this time of year I am reminded that I have been given a new beginning because the debt Christ paid. I look around and see new life blooming all around me the flowers, green grass, and all the young born around this time. It gives me hope that though I fail him I may become like new in his forgiveness. - Rachel Ramos

Before the Easter event my life was all about me, my family, my responsibilities. Now those same issues are important, but life is centered in Jesus. Now my life has purpose beyond me. - Mickey Patrick

Easter is relevant and has changed my life in that it gives me hope in this fallen world that we live in. It means that new life will come from death and salvation will rise from sin. The risen Christ reminds me that nothing is impossible for God and that His suffering for me will not be in vain. Easter for me is a reminder of faith when I doubt, gives me peace to replace my fear, shows me encouragement when I am overwhelmed and gives me restoration when I am broken. - Mark Edwards

Resurrection is the one difference in our Christian belief from other religions. Because HE lives, our life is renewed and full of hope and promise. It is a Happy time. - Kaye Spalding

My life is different because of Easter. When I sin being a husband, father, son, or friend, Christ gives me forgiveness and another chance. I need a lot of forgiveness. - Chad Carter

HOLY WEEK LUNCHEON

APRIL 10-14

Lunch will be served beginning at 11:30 a.m. each day.
Cost \$7.00 per person
Childcare is provided each day at host church.

MONDAY

at Highland
Church of Christ
"Secret Motives"
John 12:1-11

Don Wilson, speaker Minister,
First Christian Church

TUESDAY

at First Baptist Church
"The Glory & the Shame"
John 12:23-26

Jonathan Storment, speaker
Minister, Highland
Church of Christ

WEDNESDAY

at St. Paul United Methodist
"Betrayal"
John 13:21-32

Cliff Stewart, speaker
Minister, First Central
Presbyterian

THURSDAY

at First Christian Church
"Do You Know
What I Have Done?"
John 13:1-17

Felicia Hopkins, speaker
Minister, St. Paul United
Methodist

FRIDAY

at First Central Presbyterian
"Out In the Dark"
John 18:12-18

Phil Christopher, speaker
Minister, First Baptist Church

My life is different because my after-life is different. Easter is the part of the year we reflect upon the sacrifice Jesus made (His life), but also the victory God manifested, as The Holy Father established the core of salvation when He resurrected His Son on the third day. Because of this, we are offered truth, freedom from sin, eternal life, admittance into Heaven and infinite Peace as we worship His Glory. And so, my life has divine purpose now - because I will be granted entrance into the Kingdom of The Almighty Creator. As will all who call upon His name. - C. L. Harris

My first memory verses, as a young adult, were John 10:28-29, Jesus' promise; "I give you eternal life and no one can snatch you out of my hand. My Father, who is greater than all, has given you to Me and no one can snatch you out of my Father's hand." With passing years and losses on this side of life, Easter validates that promise for me and gives me hope without limits. - Allan Frizzell

My life is filled with Hope because of what Christ accomplished on the cross. My Hope is made secure in the promises the Lord has made for my life and the promise of an Eternity spent in His presence. Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior because of the work that was accomplished at Calvary 2,000 years ago. He Is Risen, He Is Risen Indeed. - Amy Smith

No matter how difficult my circumstances may have been at times over the years, I know the presence and love of God, so I'm never alone. As I get older I realize I'm not afraid of death but look forward to seeing Jesus face to face!! - Lynn King

words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Dr. Phil Christopher
Senior Pastor

BLESSED, NOT BITTER - *An Easter Story*

As we approach the celebration of Easter, we naturally think of the way Christ conquered death and gave us the hope of eternal life. I share at graveside services, on Easter Sunday the women were trudging through the darkness on their way to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, which was their version of bringing flowers. They thought it was over. Jesus was cold, gray, and dead as a door-nail. They even asked, "Who will roll away the stone?" Yet, when they arrived at the tomb, they heard the words that changed such moments from despair into hope and death into life: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is risen."

As much as that moment in history opens up all of paradise and changes everything, it reminds us that Jesus is alive. The living Christ is set free in the world to encounter us anywhere and in any circumstance. The gospel of Mark tells of the young man dressed in white telling the women, "Jesus is going ahead of them into Galilee. There you will see Him, just like He told you."

Why Galilee? It is the place of real life and even problems. It is the place where they fished all night and sometimes caught nothing. Galilee is the place where they cleaned smelly fish, washed down the boats, and mended nets. The risen Christ meets us in the everydayness of life.

The hope of Easter is more than life-everlasting. It is the hope that Christ is present with us, no matter what we face. Here is a story of the way Easter hope makes a difference in the "here-in-now." I pray you know this hope which Bill and Marsha Jeffries know. For them, every day is filled with Easter hope.

We can say, "It isn't fair." Bill Jeffries had reasons to feel that way when he was diagnosed with lung cancer in October

2015. He had never smoked and ran 5K races. Bill confessed he never would have volunteered for this assignment. Yet, he would not trade it because of what he has learned and the overwhelming support he has received. When asked about his testimony through four brutal rounds of treatment, he simply said, "Blessed!" As he looks at his life in coaching, family, friends, and faith, Bill says, "How could I be bitter?"

What enables him to walk through this valley and not be bitter? His son, Scott, shares the lessons he learned from his father's philosophy of life: "Love much, laugh often, and pray each step of the way." Bill doesn't spend his energy in being impatient or critical of people, but living life as a gift and "making the most of every opportunity." Bill lives in hope and gratitude, whatever the outcome of cancer. A hope of seeing two of his grandchildren graduate from high school motivated Bill not to give up.

Scott has seen his father live with the hope and perspective of the Serenity Prayer: "Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Bill's life reminds us that the risen Christ is not just waiting for us in heaven. The Lord gives us strength and new life now. Christ is risen not just so we will live forever, but so we can live with peace, hope, and gratitude in the present. Whatever you are facing, remember, He will meet you in your Galilee, where Easter happens 365 days a year.

Brave Journey,

Phil

SENIOR ADULT DAY TRIP

WAXAHACHIE'S
Old Fashioned Singing
at the Historic Chautauqua Auditorium

**Saturday,
May 20, 2017
3:00 p.m.**

**Lunch at
Oma's Jiffy Burger**

**Call 675-8107
to sign up**

\$15/ticket
Meals are Dutch Treat



BEHIND THE SCENES

Every organization has those folks who work day in and day out behind the scenes to make sure that everything runs smoothly. Here at First Baptist, we have several of those folks and one of them is retiring. Valentin Rodriguez has announced his retirement and will be leaving us in late April. Val, as he is known around here, started to work at FBC on April 16, 1984. For the past 33 years, he has changed more lights, fixed about everything, and kept the grass and shrubs growing and looking nice. Most of you probably have never seen Val, but I know you have benefited from his work. His quiet demeanor and solid work ethic has enabled him to serve those 33 years with grace and dignity.

As a way of saying thanks for a job well done, the church is going to be given the opportunity to participate in a love offering to be given to Val at a reception in his honor in late April. If you would like to contribute to this offering, simply mark your contribution as "Val" and we will know exactly what you mean.

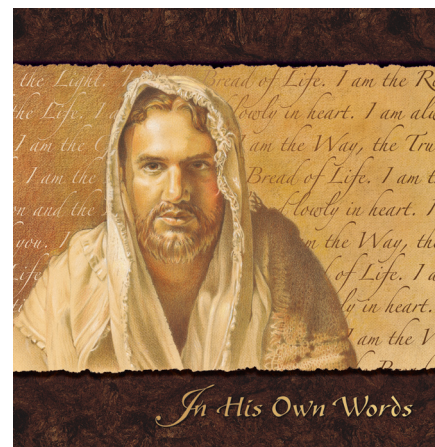


LLL will be starting again on Tuesday, April 18. We will meet at noon in the Dining Room. Cost for the meal is \$5 (pay at the door). The speaker will be Juanell Isaac, PhD. Her topic will be "The Challenges and Blessings of a Caregiver." All are welcome to attend. Also, we need permanent volunteers to help reorganize LLL and to choose officers. Contact Jeannie (675-8107) or Keith (675-8113).

Coming up - The following month's LLL meeting will be Tuesday, May 16. The speaker will be Keith Post. His topic will be "Recreation for Senior Adults."

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Sunday, April 23, the Sanctuary Choir and Celebration Orchestra will present a musical service with song lyrics taken directly from the words of Jesus. Texts include: God So Loved the World, I Am the Good Shepherd, I Am the Way, I Am the Light, I Am the Resurrection, Seek First the Kingdom, Follow Me, Come to Me, and The Great Commission. The composer, Dan Goeller, along with his wife, Heidi, partnered together to write this wonderful presentation. The composer writes, "IN HIS OWN WORDS began as an idea to draw believers' attention back to Christ's powerful words...I couldn't get any of the print music companies in Nashville I'd been working with (for a decade) interested in it, so we decided to move our family to South Dakota and started our own company. As you can imagine, this required a great deal of sacrifice. There were many times, during those two and a half years I worked on IHOW, when clients unexpectedly cancelled jobs (unrelated to IHOW) that were expected to pay our bills. Instead of worrying about it, I committed to use those times of temporary unemployment to work on IHOW. Without that step of faith, IHOW would never have been finished. I would have continued to put it off as unrealistic, just like the publishers and the other "experts" kept telling me. Instead, God faithfully provided just what we needed for our daily bread."



SUPER SUMMER SOCIALS

It is hard to believe that it is already April and plans are starting to be made for the summer. Hopefully, those plans include signing up to be a part of our third annual Super Summer Socials. Super Summer Socials is a time when a few individuals and/or families are grouped together and they meet for lunch, dinner, coffee, desserts, etc. Everyone is welcome to sign up, whether you are single, married, have several children, or have no children. The more people to sign up, the better it is!

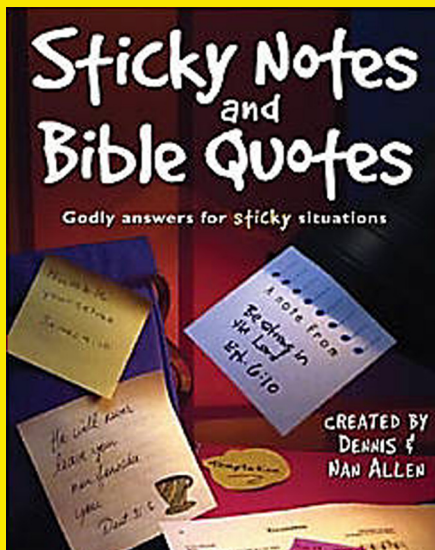
After sign-ups are complete, we will assign groups and designate a leader for each group. Once assignments are made, it is up to the individual group to determine how often they will meet and where they will meet. Some groups try to meet at least once a month, but there are absolutely no rules for these gatherings. Over the last two summers, groups have met at restaurants, coffee shops, homes, backyards, even during Wednesday Night Fun Nights at the Family Life Center.

These groups help us as a church to continue in our Growing Authentic Community. These gatherings provide opportunities to get to know other people and families who we might not even realize are a part of our FBC community.

Cards will be available throughout April to sign you and/or your family up for this event, or you may call Debra at 675-8116. So check your schedules and get signed up!



STICKY NOTES AND BIBLE QUOTES



Sunday night, May 7, our graded children's choirs will present a musical based on scripture, STICKY NOTES AND BIBLE QUOTES. This musical is a delightful discovery of how scripture can help us in our daily lives, no matter what circumstances we may face. By learning this musical, each child will be able to hide God's word in their heart. Join us, Sunday evening, May 7, at 6:00 p.m. as our children lead us in worship.

RA/GA RACER & BAKE SALE

I can already smell the rubber burning from the tires of the racers as they go down the track at the annual RA/GA Racer & Bake Sale! Ok, well maybe our cars don't go fast enough to burn rubber. Maybe I'm actually envisioning the smell of the chili that we will have with our hotdogs or the aroma of the baked goods which will be in the bake sale. Whatever it is, I know I am looking forward to Sunday, April 30, 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, but will also have a bake sale (all homemade items), where all of the money collected will go to Unified Missions. There will also be a chili dog supper which will start at 5:30 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.

There will be awards following the races which will be given to the fastest cars as well as best decorated, most creative, and most unique cars.

We hope you will join us on Sunday evening, April 30, for this fun night with the FBC community and help us as we support such a wonderful mission project.



ACTING IN
Love



OPEN HOUSE & THANK YOU SUNDAYS, APRIL 23 & APRIL 30

*(immediately following the
morning worship service)*

You're invited to "eat dessert first" April 23 or April 30 at our City Light Community Ministries dining room immediately following the morning worship service. We'd like to say thank you to all of our volunteers, and introduce all that City Light does to love our great city of Abilene. If you've never been in our building, then now is the time to explore every room, closet, and even our basement to see all FBC does through CLCM.

Because of First Baptist Church and your gifts through our church budget, CLCM has nine different ministries which allow us to be the presence of Christ with our downtown community. Community Meals, Personal Assistance, Big A Club, Shower/Laundry Ministry, Rockin' Moms, International Bible Study, Sunday Morning Worship, Winners Circle, and Prayer Ministry make up the ways FBC and CLCM provide an answer to those who are homeless, nearly homeless, and the working poor in downtown Abilene and all over our city. Please join us on one of these dates to find out more!

FBC EASTER EGG HUNT

Saturday, April 8
at 10:00 am | Cobb Park

Ages 1 - 12 (preschool and elementary)
Sponsored by FBC and the Friendship House



SHORT TERM MISSION TRIPS FOR 2017

June

Habitat for Humanity
Abilene, Texas

Please pray about the organization and construction of our 2017 Habitat House. If you are interested in being a crew leader, please contact John Moore.

July 23-28

Family Mission Trip
McAllen, Texas

Would you be willing to participate in the second Family Mission Trip along the Texas border? FBC has another opportunity to partner and encourage Buckner's Family Hope Center just outside of McAllen, Texas. Please begin to pray about this mission project and how your family can be involved.

If you are interested, or have questions, please contact the Missions' office (675-8112) or John Moore at john.moore@fbcabilene.org.

THANK YOU!

The Missions' Office received a thank you note and report from Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) about our gifts which provide safety and security to refugees through Jeff and Alicia Lee in Skopje, Macedonia.

We wanted to pass this information along to the church, and show how your gifts are put to work in just one day in Macedonia:

9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. – You are helping adults with developmental disabilities.

Alicia Lee, CBF field personnel, provides therapeutic activities to build fine motor skills and boost eye/hand coordination for the residents at Poraka Group Home.

Jeff, Alicia's husband, teaches English and consults with Poraka on the farm he helped them develop. They grow potatoes, peppers, cabbage, tomatoes, and more to provide food. They sell any extra food at the market to support their farm. They raise chickens for eggs and goats for milk. Soon they will receive cows from the "cow bank" the Lees started, thanks to you.

Ryse, a resident at Poraka, lights up when he talks about the animals. He said his "life started" when he came to live at Poraka. You are helping them experience life more fully!

12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m. – You are creating community and connections.

Jeff has Macedonian language class to continue to improve his ability to communicate effectively. Local people see that the Lees are committed to life in Macedonia for many years.

12:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m. - You offer counseling and support.

Kids at an international school receive counseling and therapeutic services from Alicia. There are very few resources for counseling in Macedonia.

2:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m. - You open doors, so more people in poverty can have access to food.

Jeff often has coffee meetings with local partners like the Food Bank of Macedonia and AYA farm (between picking up their son Ethan from school and getting him to after-school activities!). Macedonia is very relationship based. You have to sit, have coffee, and talk with people over time to develop relationships. These relationships expand ministry to more people.

6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. - You share the Bible.

Adults and children from the Lee's church come to their home for weekly Bible study. They eat a meal together, then the Lees lead a discussion while the kids play. The Bible study gives everyone an opportunity to be with other believers and to challenge and learn from one another.

Thank you for being a church who cares and faithfully gives to CBF. Please pray for the team leaving in May to work with the Lees in Skopje, Macedonia.



CELEBRATION ORCHESTRA *by Jennifer Schweigert*

While my commitment to the Celebration Orchestra and music ministry started out as a way for me to earn a scholarship that would be matched by my school, it quickly came to mean so much more to me than just the scholarship. Over the past ten or eleven years, I've built relationships with many other members of the orchestra, choir, and congregation. Relationships which have gotten each of us through health problems, loss of family members, and sharing in joyous times over these years as well. These are some of the things that have kept me here beyond the fulfillment of my obligation for the scholarship. The personal sense of worth and belonging that comes from being able to serve the church family in the music ministry and see the impact of not only the music itself in the worship hour, but of the sense of family in the great people who serve with me; that's not a feeling matched by anything else in the world.

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

April 1, 21 years

Mike Greenfield

*Pastor for Administration
& Spiritual Development*

April 9, 10 years

Paul Irby

Counselor

April 1, 8 years

Sally Carillo

GLO Teacher

April 16, 33 years

Valentin Rodriguez

Custodian

April 5, 11 years

Jeannie Wesley

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

April 22, 7 years

Candy Rains

Director of Preschool Ministries

WEDNESDAY NIGHT MENU

April 5 Baked Potato & Salad Bar

April 12 Holy Week
No Wednesday Night Activities

April 19 Fried Chicken

April 26 Tacos

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

March 2017

Budget	March	Year-to-Date
Required	\$272,000	\$786,311
Given	\$221,846	\$756,355

EVENT CALENDAR:

APRIL

10-14	Holy Week
11	FBC Hosting Lunch
13	Maundy Thursday Service
16	Easter
23	Sanctuary Choir Program
24-30	Week of the Young Child
30	RA/GA Racer/Bake Sale

MAY

4	National Day of Prayer
7	H.S. Senior Recognition (am) Children's Choir Program (pm)
29	Church Office Closed
30 - 6/2	Vacation Bible School



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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