

# FIRST *words*

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



## MISSIONS

### NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Your faithful giving to the FBC Abilene church budget is allowing missions to happen all around the world. Just this week, the Missions Committee voted to partially fund two vehicle fundraising requests.

The **first one** is in Matamoros, Mexico and Marv Know, CBF Field Coordinator of Fellowship Southwest. Your funds will help Pastor Eleuterio Gonzalez minister to immigrants in large government-run shelters. Pastor Gonzalez will have a dependable way to move immigrants around the city working on their asylum process, safe from the cartels and the dangers of traveling by foot. Other CBF Texas churches are joining in with this effort to provide Pastor Gonzalez with a newer more dependable van as he demonstrates the Gospel in action through transportation.

The **second** approved vehicle request which came to the Missions Committee is from our very own church members, Alicia and Jeff Lee. The Lee's work in Skopje, Macedonia has increased significantly over the past 3 months due to the pandemic and a delivery truck is desperately needed at this time. This delivery truck will allow food boxes to be delivered from the Macedonia Food Bank (which FBC helped to start), fresh milk and dairy products (from our FBC milk cows) to be delivered to struggling families, food and supplies to be delivered to Poraka (a ministry home to adults with disabilities), and then available for disaster relief coordination through the Lee's ministry. Other CBF churches financial gifts will be added to our gift to complete this request and make this happen.

Again, **your gifts to the FBC Abilene church budget** allow requests like these to be fulfilled. New opportunities to help spread the gospel in our world today happen because of your faithfulness in giving to the church budget. **Thank you for being a church who supports and cares for our world and these powerful ministries!**



# words

## FOR THE JOURNEY

What do we do when there doesn't seem to be an ending and the pattern is unpredictable...? I received an article from Teresa Ellis written by Patrick Mead, pastor of Fourth Avenue Church of Christ in Franklin, Tennessee, who posed such a dilemma using the analogy of movies and books. When he watches a movie, he checks how long it will last. Even though the suspense remains, it allows him to understand the pattern and when to anticipate the resolution of the crisis. When he reads a book, he looks at the number of pages. Let's say it has 400 pages. He trusts that even though the plot gets really dark with insurmountable problems on page 200, Patrick knows the writer still has 150 pages "to sort everything out."

I know personally from watching Disney movies some patterns are predicable. After spending two weeks with my granddaughter, I can quote dialogue from *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, and *Frozen I and II*. For a Disney movie according to Jeffrey Katzenberg, a great story has a hero, a crisis, a great enemy or villain, and the final resolution. Even though the plot goes from bad to worse, the pattern is predictable - all will end well - happily ever after.

Patrick Mead suggests, as we live through this time, we are characters in a movie which we sure didn't write. This isn't like a predictable Disney movie, but we do face a great enemy in our movie...by the way it is a virus called COVID-19...it is not each other, or people who wear masks, or those who don't wear masks.

The story-line of our movie has all kinds of unexpected twists. The difficult decision of when to reopen school has found its way into the plot. We also face racial conflict and growing division. We wonder how it will be resolved. Throw in an election year and the plot grows more complex.

When we know the Disney pattern, we understand that even if the plot thickens in 30 minutes left in *Frozen II*,

the crisis will be resolved and the town of Arendelle will be saved. Yet, in our movie we aren't sure what page we are on or how much time is left as we stumble over new twists to the plot.

Do you remember when all of this started way back on March 15 with the decision to suspend in-person worship. The two-weeks to flatten the curve has become 134 days. How much time is left in this movie. You mean I'm only on page 120 of this 400-page book. Patrick Mead says, "*We have no idea where we are in this story...and that makes it so very hard to be strong.*"

A definition of stress is not knowing there is an end to a certain situation or problem - it is ongoing. We think we have a finish line; yet, it keeps getting moved. We thought we were running the mile, but discover we entered a marathon. Whether we think all of this has been a hoax, much to do about nothing, or wearing a mask from day one, we have all grown weary. We wonder when it will end. We also wonder how life will have changed when this movie rolls the final credits.

Here is a jubilant word of hope for the weary. The prophet Isaiah said to Israel when they were demoralized after 60 years in captivity: "*The Lord is the everlasting God.... He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. ...those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.*"

This past Sunday, we sang a timely song, "*Way Maker.*" The words: "*You are here moving in our midst... You are, Way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness my God.... Even when I don't feel it, You're working.*" As we go through these days, trust "*God works for good in all things.*" This "*movie*" belongs to God and the Lord is the Hero...just wait and you will find out.

Seen any good movies lately?

Phil

# PRESCHOOL AND CHILDREN'S UPDATE

As we continue to figure out ways to be church while not meeting as we regularly do, we wanted to give you another update as to how we are trying to creatively minister to the preschoolers and children of our church. It continues to be a challenge, but we are still trying very hard to keep in touch with the kiddos, especially through videos and mail-outs.

While we are still not having Sunday school, nor any activities on Wednesday nights, we continue to diligently try and keep everyone informed of what is happening. At various times we have sent crafts, Sunday school lessons, puzzles/games, cards, and each week we send the Sunday morning Children's Bulletins via mail to the children. However, the best method we have found to keep in touch is through Facebook. We have used both the main church Facebook page as well as the Children & Preschool page (which is a private group). Each Saturday evening, we are posting a Bible lesson on the Children & Preschool page. If you would like to be included in that page, you need to send a request on FB to the First Baptist Abilene Children & Preschool Ministries page and we would be more than happy to have you join us.

We know it has been disappointing this summer as we were unable to provide activities for the preschoolers & children such as VBS, movies, Splash Kingdom, Prime Time, and various other activities. However, we have adapted our Vacation Bible School which normally meets at church and usually is in June, to be a Virtual VBS. We videoed some of our staff doing skits, leading Bible Study, and demonstrating crafts for the children to enjoy. By the time you read this our Virtual VBS will have already been shown, but you can always go back to our main Facebook page and watch those videos.

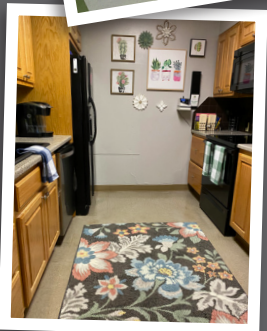
We continue to miss seeing everyone on a regular basis and look forward to the time when we can gather, at least in a semi-normal setting, but until that time we will continue to reach out and minister to the best of our abilities.

Blessings to each of you!

Candy & Becky



## LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING IN PRESCHOOL!



Wow! I don't know about you, but if any good has come from COVID-19 it's the time to do some spring cleaning! That is exactly what has been happening in the preschool department here at church. Over the last couple of months, we have been putting a fresh coat of paint in each room in the nursery along with the kitchen. It's amazing what paint can do to freshen things up and just make it feel clean and new again. Along with adding some new décor for the kids and teachers, it's starting to look so nice and I can't wait for everyone to be back to enjoy their new surroundings. The preschool resource room received a good cleaning out and reorganization, so it is definitely a much happier place to be in. I hope you are finding projects to do at home like we are at the church and you can feel rejuvenated and refreshed!

HEY  
EVERYONE!

Because of the rise of COVID-19 cases in Abilene, our youth ministry has gone back to Zoom meetings instead of meeting in person.

We are still having a Wednesday Bible Study at 7 p.m. every Wednesday night via Zoom. Most weeks we have a Game Night via Zoom on Tuesday nights. Other activities are planned on a week-by-week basis.

We post on social media all of our events (Instagram, Facebook, and Remind). Joining our group on Remind is very easy and very beneficial. We post on Remind many times a week!

**Here is all of our social media information:**



**FACEBOOK:**

<https://www.facebook.com/First-Baptist-Abilene-Student-Ministry-124522004260267/>



**INSTAGRAM:** you can find us at **@fbcabi**

We post about all our major events there as well.



**REMINDE:**

<https://www.remind.com/join/fbcabi>

We miss our students very much, but we care for their safety and well-being! We will continue to grow together through this tough experience. We will continue building our entire lives on the love of Jesus. We will continue to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Grace and Peace,

Austen



**Dr. Emmanuel  
McCall**

Racial Justice and  
Leadership Initiative

Your faithful giving to the FBC Abilene church budget has allowed the Mission Committee to vote to be a Foundation donor to this fund.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is committed to long-term racial justice and repair work. They have launched a fund to support the current and long-term racial justice and inclusion work of the Fellowship.

The fund is named after the Rev. Dr Emmanuel McCall, a trailblazer who has spent much of his life working for racial justice—as a student, denominational leader, pastor, author, and scholar.

If you would like to find out more about the fund, please visit  
**[www.cbf.net/racialequity](http://www.cbf.net/racialequity)**



# WORSHIP AND MUSIC

During COVID-19, the ministry of worship and music has been busy with much needed technical upgrades, purchase of new music for worship, ongoing activities to maintain connection to those within the ministry, and virtual meetings which discuss emerging technologies for ministry, coping with the temporary loss of choirs, and trends which can be anticipated as we look toward emergence from this season of ministry.

First, as travel restrictions lifted, we have been able to complete a much-needed upgrade to our monitoring system which is used by instrumentalists in worship. We have installed a new in-ear monitoring system made by AVIOM which will allow instrumentalists to better hear what is being said, sung, and played while not adding sound to the platform area. This reduction in platform sound will actually allow members of the congregation to hear all that is sung and spoken with greater clarity. Additionally, when the full orchestra is playing, their sound will be richer and fuller as a result of this upgrade. As the 'digital church' has advanced rapidly during this pandemic, we have also made substantive improvements to the television and streaming broadcasts of weekly services.

Second, plans continue to move forward by purchasing new music for use by the orchestra, choir, and congregation. These additions will continue the rich musical heritage that has been a part of Worship@FBC for many years.

Third, members of the worship and music ministry have regularly met in virtual ZOOM rehearsals. These rehearsals have featured times of sharing together, prayer, spiritual growth, and information. We have had the opportunity to be joined in these rehearsals by composers, arrangers, orchestrators, and leaders in church music from across the country. These meetings have given us insight into these gifted musicians allowing us to better understand their music, and to inform us as we commit to pray for them and the ministry the Lord has given them.

Finally, virtual meetings with those outside the church have included times of enrichment with ministers of music from across the state and nation. We have gathered to share insights into the new normal of online worship, but look forward to the time when we can return to weekly worship with full choirs and instruments. While many may find discouragement in these days, many of us are looking to the future with great anticipation with seeking and trusting hearts. Seeking God's direction in the days and trusting He is at work and has a great new work for us in the days ahead.

## YOUNG ADULTS

What strange times we are living in. COVID-19 has disrupted our world. I still forget to grab my mask as I'm leaving my car, but the bright side is I've gotten more steps in having to go back and get it! It can be a nuisance, but I really like what Dr. Christopher said about wearing the mask. It makes us more aware of our breath, which reminds us of the ever-present Spirit of God. My hope is we don't take that lightly but instead, allow it to help us move through this chaotic time with faith, hope, and love trusting God is with us as we live in the unknown.

I've been thankful that coffee shops and restaurants have remained open. It's where a lot of my good conversations with students and young adults happen. Meeting with them during COVID-19 has been uplifting and encouraging as I listen to their stories of how they have spent their time and what has helped them move through it. I've had great conversations ranging from "where's God in all this?" to "How do I live with my parents again when I've experienced freedom at college?" I've also had those conversations with some parents. This is what we do. It's how we love one another. It's how we stay connected to one another.

COVID-19 has created some questions for all churches and how we move forward. One new venture I'm attempting is starting a new small group for post-grad young adults. This group will meet in someone's home (with proper physical distancing of course) once a week. We'll start with some young adults who are already members of First Baptist and then hope to create a space where young adults with questions about God, church, or faith in general would feel comfortable coming to discuss those hard questions. I invite you to be praying for this new ministry within the young adult group as FBC continues our efforts to make the city of Abilene look more like heaven each and every day.

Press on,

Matthew

# ACTING IN *love*

## UNIFIED MISSION OFFERING

*We can change the world one community at a time!*

SEVEN MISSION OFFERINGS COMBINED INTO ONE

**GOAL: \$80,000**

### **Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Global Missions - 50%**

Promotes leadership, ministry, and development of the local church among the least evangelized. Provides Bible translations and digital resources to reach international refugees, immigrants, and students. Seeks justice/reconciliation for the most marginalized and works to end extreme poverty through development and transforming communities to restore natural environments.

### **BGCT World Hunger - 15%**

Supports projects across the world which feed the hungry and help the hungry help themselves in the context of holistic Christian ministry.

### **Community Transformation - 12%**

Provides resources for responding to specific ministry opportunities and needs right here in Abilene, Texas. These resources help to transform families, neighborhoods, and ministry partners within the Big Country.

### **Baptist World Aid - 10%**

The compassionate arm of the Baptist World Alliance provides help for persons in need globally through disaster relief, alleviation of hunger, medical assistance to those affected by HIV/AIDS, and community development.

### **Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions - 7%**

Designed by Women's Missionary Union of Texas, this offering provides funding for the Texas Baptists' missionaries including: language ministries, work with international students, camp scholarships, African-American ministries, church ministries, bi-vocational/smaller church ministries, and associational missions.

### **BGCT Disaster Relief - 3%**

Serves as an information network working directly with Baptist churches and associations to assess needs, disburse resources for those affected by disaster, and facilitate connections with Baptist Partners.

### **Lawrence Trott Offering for Associational Missions - 3%**

Provides support for the Abilene Baptist Association including: Hope Camp for at-risk teens, Social Ministries - food and clothing for the needy, Hospitality House - lodging for families of incarcerated loved ones, strengthening churches, Big Country Baptist Assembly, and Christian Women's Job Corps.



# ADULT MINISTRY

When the leadership at FBC decided not to have in-person worship on March 15, I thought it might be for a few weeks and then we would be back to normal with a full schedule. Now, five months later, we are still trying to figure things out. I have now taught eighteen Bible Studies in front of a TV camera and a green screen. I have been interested to hear from people from FBC Abilene as well as places far away. I believe this is something I will continue to do after we return to a full schedule.

I have been leading a Bible Study at Christian Homes and Family Services every Monday since September of 2019. This is the agency where we have served as foster parents since 2009. We are very close to the staff there and this opportunity has added new life to our relationship.

In these days we have learned together how to have Sunday school, staff meetings, premarital counseling, denominational planning meetings, small group Bible studies, and DicorCare/GriefShare training via Zoom Conferencing.

I have found I am just about as busy as always, but it has taken on some new characteristics. I have had new opportunities to be involved with married couples, Sr. Adults, and young dads. I think I can say with all the staff we are missing you and we look forward to being back together as a church at 1333 N. 3rd in Abilene, Texas. Until then, please know we are available and ready to help. There is one way you can help me: I have played golf exactly 1 time this year. Give me a call.

Grace and peace,

C.V. Blake

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*by Mike Greenfield*

As we continue to live through and try to understand how to safely do ministry in the midst of the pandemic, I have been asked several questions, several times, so I thought I might try to answer some of them. So, here goes:

### **When will we start having Sunday school again?**

My answer is also two-fold; we have not stopped having Sunday school, just not like we were used to, and I am not sure! The first half of the answer is easy because of the great work folks have done to have a time of Bible study with their class. Now, not all of the classes are meeting at the normal 9:00 a.m. on Sunday morning, but rather when it works best for the class members. I know there are a couple of classes who have not been meeting by Zoom, but plan to start in the next week or so. As well, C.V. Blake has been recording a Bible study lesson each week and we have been posting it on Facebook and emailing a link to it on Fridays. As far as the latter part of my answer, no definite date has been set, but it will be later in September at the earliest. We are wanting to see how the start of school affects the virus numbers.

### **What is happening with the Hope Center?**

The Hope Center Building Team met recently to look over some initial drawings prepared by the architect. They were able to narrow down the focus as far as direction of how the two main projects (City Light and GLO) would lay on the Hope Center property. Financially, we are encouraged with how funding continues to come in and look forward to seeing some of the work begin. Chair Larry Smith continues to meet with the various ministries to garner ideas and ministry plans.

### **How is the church doing financially?**

As you can see on the back page, we are just a shy of \$91,000 under collected through July. In a normal summer, that would be fairly normal. So, in the midst of these crazy times when for the most part folks have not been able to come since March, it is somewhat encouraging. In addition, because of the lack of programming, we are underspent in light of the giving and so we are in a strong financial position to go into the fall.

Those are the most often asked questions, but if you have others which I did not cover here, please let me know and I will do my best to answer them.



## STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

**August 1, 1 year**  
**Christy Biebighauser**  
FFP Director

**August 2, 19 years**  
**Steve Queen**  
Counseling and Family Enrichment Director

**August 8, 9 years**  
**Jennifer Miller**  
M. A. to Pastors for Preschool & Children

**August 12, 12 years**  
**Rosalinda Garcia**  
GLO Teacher

**August 24, 5 years**  
**Kim Cummings**  
M. A. to FLC Director

**August 29, 14 years**  
**Suzanne Shaw**  
Receptionist/Church Clerk

**August 29, 9 years**  
**Becky Tucker**  
Pastor for Children

**August 31, 21 years**  
**Eric Couvion**  
Superintendent of Buildings & Grounds

## FBC FOUNDATION GRANT REQUEST FORMS ARE AVAILABLE

Forms are available in the office.  
Deadline to return the form is noon,  
Friday, September 4.

## STAY *connected*

Remember to join us live for worship each week at 10:30 a.m. on KRBC or stream the service by going to the church website:

[www.fbcabilene.org](http://www.fbcabilene.org)



#fbcabilene

<https://www.instagram.com/fbcabilene/>



@fbcabilene

<https://twitter.com/fbcabilene>



**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,  
ABILENE, TX**

<https://www.facebook.com/FirstBaptistChurchAbileneTx/>

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

*July 2020*

Budget	July	Year-to-Date
Required	\$ 260,870	\$ 1,916,789
Given	\$ 240,861	\$ 1,826,097

*God continues to bless our faithfulness through the tithes and offerings given to His Kingdom work.*



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CHURCH • ABILENE**

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