

# FIRST *words*

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

## FALL *at* FIRST

With summer rapidly coming to a close and the start of school now just weeks away, we are eager about what the fall will bring for us here at First Baptist. As of right now, we are anticipating having a somewhat normal schedule here at the church. That would include both Sunday and Wednesday schedules.

### ROUND-UP SUNDAY

It will all kick-off with Round-Up Sunday, August 22 when we will have our traditional western themed worship service followed by a complete BBQ meal served in the Family Life Center. The meal will be the same as in year's past, but this year we will not have the inflatable games. This will enable us to spread out serving and eating the meal in both the skating rink and the gym.

### WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Starting on August 25, we also anticipate being able to have the normal schedule on Wednesday nights as well. The meal in the dining room will begin at 5:00 p.m. and then all children, youth, and adult activities will take place from 6:00-7:00 p.m. This is a slight change in the length, but one we feel will allow more families to participate. Plans are also in place for The Wednesday Thing (Senior Adult Bible Study and Programs) to continue to start at 4:00 p.m.

### SUNDAY

This fall, all of the youth and adult Sunday school classes will begin a study of the book of James. The goal is for everyone to "be on the same page" as we study God's Word and make application to our individual lives as well as the church as a whole.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Of course, there will be several special events throughout the fall. 1st Grade Bible presentation, Senior Adult Emphasis highlighting our members for 50+ years, and the retirement celebration for Dr. Christopher on September 26.



# words

## FOR THE JOURNEY

I was talking with Becky about the passage from James for the children's message. I said, "Old James keeps telling us again to 'not to be merely hearers of the Word, but doers.'" He keeps this theme up in chapter two: "What good is it my brothers and sisters if someone claims to have faith, but no deeds?" I remarked James can sound like a broken record. Becky's come back: "Sometimes we need a broken record to tell us over and over again what we miss." We all need such repetition. We learn the alphabet by hearing the letters over and over again. Until we first learn the alphabet, we will never know the joy of reading.

We hear, "I'm into God's Word." Great. The question is: "Has God's Word gotten into us as 'living word?" Tim Hansel said, "All of our theology must eventually become biography." We could paraphrase his challenge: "God's story in the Bible must eventually become part of our story of transformation."

Our defenses can go up when we think of "doing more." Today we fight another virus which takes our breath and energy away. It is the fatigue of doing. But, we aren't talking about doing more and enjoying it less.... It is about doing the "Word" of God which brings abundant life. The "Word" does not burden us, but frees us. Being "doers of the Word" is about divine transformation. Richard Rohr writes: "The trouble is that we have made the Bible into a bunch of ideas - which can be right or wrong - rather than an invitation to a new set of eyes."

Remember James' image of looking at yourself in a mirror and walking away, forgetting what you saw. We can look into the mirror of God's Word and walk away forgetting what we saw and heard. We keep seeing with the old eyes. We fail to see with amazement the words of

life. As the old hymn calls: "Let me more of their beauty to see, wonderful words of life."

As I prepare to retire, I want to help you look in the mirror and see what God says about giving. At the end of September, I will no longer be an employee of the church. I'm not inviting you to consider your giving just to fund my salary. I share this for your spiritual growth and to know the joy of giving. The Word is clear about the handling of our finances. The Bible contains 500 verses on prayer and faith, but well over 2,000 verses on money. Forty percent of Jesus' parables deal with our possessions. Will you hear and see... and become "doers of the Word?"



The "Word" does not burden us, but frees us. Being "doers of the Word" is about divine transformation.

Malachi teaches us how to order our priorities which can free and bless us. God instructs us: "Bring the whole tithe or the first ten-percent into the store house so there may be food in MY storehouse. Test me in this" says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven...." Some might say, "That's Old Testament." Yes, but it is also the very "Word of God." For your sakes, don't just "hear" where those words have no lasting impact.

God's "Word" to give to Him is an incredible journey which will transform us. The tithe, the 10%, is the acknowledgement that everything we have belongs to God, the source of gratitude. As we give, we learn God will provide, even more than we can imagine. As we give and look in the mirror, we start seeing the face of Christ whose very nature is to give.

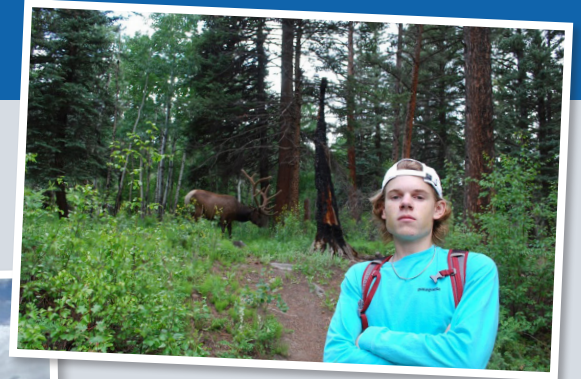
I realize the discussions have started about the next Senior Pastor. What can you do for our church to prepare and prepare for the one who will come? You have a major role to play, even though you are not on the



Continued from page 2.

search committee. You can begin to pray first about what God wants, more than what you want. You can attend the gatherings later this fall to have conversations about the church. You especially can be strong in your giving to God and to His mission. You can prepare for this next exciting chapter by showing whoever comes that you are serious about our missional vision through your financial support. As you take this journey, I pray that even more than a calling a new Pastor, you will see with a new set of eyes God's calling on you and know the joy of being "doers of the Word."

Brave Journey,  
Phil



## HIGH SCHOOL CAMP REFLECTIONS

By Austen Winfrey

We had a great week of camp with our High School students at YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado! It was cool all week (high of 78) with rain showers every day, but that didn't slow us down! We hiked through the beautiful Colorado scenery, showed a lot of team/church spirit in Rec Time, and enjoyed some great Bible study and worship times. Most importantly, our students had a great opportunity to learn more about the great God we serve. We learned that we can "take heart" or take confidence in our God because of the great love God has for each of us! Jesus coming to live among us, teach us, journey with humanity, and choose to die for us gives us the boldness to live out the way Jesus has taught. We "take heart" because Christ has overcome everything we knew about death and defeat when He rose from the dead! The Holy Spirit lives inside and among us today as a constant encouragement to love God and love our neighbor as well.

I'm thankful for such a great week for our students to grow each other's friendships, to deepen our relationships with God, and to learn more about scripture. I am personally grateful to have the opportunity to minister to and journey with these great students and adult sponsors at FBC. I am deeply thankful!

We must remember this though. Life happens after camp.  
Let's take what we learned at camp into our normal lives here in Abilene!



# VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

By Candy Rains & Becky Tucker

What a fabulous summer we had with our 7 Neighborhood Vacation Bible Schools. We reached over 160 children during our multiple events! Our events were held in parks, backyards, front yards, driveways, and inside on occasion (due to rain)!

Every VBS was unique, but all of them carried the theme "Destination Dig." This theme gave the children the opportunity to "dig up" evidence which proves biblical events were not just stories and then explore real-life archaeological finds that have helped to uncover the truths about Jesus!

We could not have had all of these events without our spectacular helpers! Huge thanks to Amy & Rocky McAdams, Erin Poindexter, Lauren Stafford, Katy & Alex Hacopian, Holly & Austen Winfrey, Carrie Cowen, Connie Keaton, Monica Miller, Bridgett Gann, Margaret & Brian Henslee, Katie & Luke Palmer, Jane & Robert Wiggins, Patti & Mike Greenfield, DeAnn & Mark Yeilding, Amy & James Henson, Beverly & John Moore, Melinda Norris, Maura dela Cruz, Vicki Brady, Jan Craig, Jecilly Varghese, Sarah & Hannah Varghese, Katie & Matthew Broyles, Angela Queen, Jennifer Haney, Jersey Diramondi, Martha Brown, Diane & Ken Leggett, Jennifer & London Woodard, Susie Vandever, Britney Tucker, Debby & Phil Brown, Megan Butler, Rachael & Bob Bein, Pam Bingham, Brenda Pringle, Louise Gray, D'Anna Smith, Carrie Mercer, Linda Frizzell, Amanda & Jordan Neal, Linda Neal, Kristian & Marcus Spencer, Susan Preston, Nancy Tallant, & the Priscilla Sunday school class! Also, our wonderful assistant, Jennifer Miller, helped make these events so much easier!

*Thank you for being a church who prays for our children and shows them the example of God's love by providing events such as VBS! We are blessed!!*



## Reflections on VBS from some of our Volunteers!

*"My girls and I had the privilege to help with VBS multiple times over the summer. Some days were gorgeous, some days were hot, some were rainy, but every day we left with joy in our hearts. It was a joy to see the children learn about Jesus, ask questions, and sing songs. They were so proud of learning the Bible memory verse! Doing this in backyards gave us a unique opportunity to get to know these children on a personal level. We knew we were planting seeds. I'm excited to see it grow in the kids that are from our own church. Some of the kids who joined us at VBS may never hear the gospel again. It gave me, as a Christian mother, a chance to show my girls how we can tell people about Jesus right here in our own city. We can plant these seeds and have faith God will make it grow!"* -**Jecilly Varghese**

*"Backyard VBS was a great way for FBC to show our neighbors the love of Christ. We had many parents who were not FBC members bring their children and they each expressed such gratitude that a church would provide this opportunity for their children."* -**Diane Leggett**

*"It was just an honor to be asked to help - and to be around the kids and really great leadership."* -**Bob Bein**

*"I loved that we had non-FBC people see the signs and bring their children and connect with neighbors. Also, thought it was neat for the parents to meet and visit with church members who they didn't already know. SO cool to watch and hear the 'Little Kids' recite scripture. (miss Bible drill from the old days)"* -**Susie Vandever**

*"If I have one word to sum up my feelings after Backyard Kids Club, it would be hopeful. I knew we had good materials and great workers, but I didn't know if we would have kids! After spending our mornings with the kids who attended, I feel very confident that God is working in families in Abilene."* -**Debbly Brown**

*"Watching the children get excited about learning God's truths through various activities."* -**Pam Bingham**

*"Reconnecting with Big A friends through neighborhood VBS was incredible! The sweet kiddos were full of excitement and loved learning more about God (so many questions), making fun crafts (which many gifted to family), and sharing laughs while making memories through group recreation and refreshments around the table. An unexpected bonus was my new braided hairstyle. (which was a work of art in itself) My heart is still overflowing with the joy from that beautiful week."* -**Vicki Brady**

*"It is a blessing to help children "dig for the truth" of God's love - even the youngest of children who attended! And I think we all had a great time!!"* -**D'Anna Smith**

*"Seeing the children's eagerness to learn from God's Word during the Bible Lesson. Seeing how quickly the students learned the theme song and the memory verse;"* -**Louise Gray**

*"Crafts, catchy songs with hand motions, scripture verse practice, snacks, Bible stories, and recreation fun. Community, fellowship, new friends, and friends like family. These are the elements of Backyard VBS and they are also sweet reminders of what our hearts have been aching for: pursuit of the Gospel together. Can you dig it?"* -**Kristian Spencer**





*celebrating* ALL THAT GOD IS DOING AT CITY LIGHT AND FBC ABILENE!

*celebrate*  
**CASE MANAGEMENT!**

Case Management Training has begun!

A volunteer case manager provides guidance and support to a person in crisis through a series of problem-solving conversations. The case manager will help the community member find relief for their immediate crisis and work together to set and achieve goals for a more secure future. We celebrate this new ministry and ask that you please pray for those who have begun the training and will be volunteering their time to help in this endeavor. There is room for you to help and join our team of volunteer case managers.

Maybe God is calling you now!!

***Pray for....***

- Richard Shelburn**
- Carolyn Shelburn**
- Kathy Shackelford**
- Dolores Poynor**
- Barbara Bacon**
- Donna Schnitman**
- Stan Chapman**
- Dawn Chapman**
- Maura dela Cruz**
- John Moore**
- Melinda Norris**

Also pray for Megan Byrd. She has been consulting with City Light in this training and helping with putting all the details in place to make this work. If you are interested, there is still time to become a part of this ministry.

Contact John Moore at 325-675-8114 or Melinda Norris at 325-675-8112.

*celebrate*  
**CITY LIGHT CULINARY ACADEMY!**

City Light Culinary Academy back in session!

Our City Light Culinary Academy has a class in progress and already recruiting for the next class beginning in September! This is a class of 5 students and Chef Kay is so proud of their progress! They are working with preparing and serving the City Light Community lunch on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday along with their classroom and other kitchen training. This program has some great success stories that we will be sharing soon!

This class will graduate on August 20, so if you would continue to pray for them and their success.

***Pray for....***

- Deborah Address**
- Sienna Miller**
- Madelyn Salas**
- Elizabeth Simpson**
- Isabel Petrosky**

If you are interested or know someone interested in the next class, there is an information session Thursday, August 26 at City Light dining room from 9 a.m. to noon.

Contact Chef Kayleen Mills at [Kayleen.mills@fbcabilene.org](mailto:Kayleen.mills@fbcabilene.org) or 325-268-1778 or contact the church office at 325-675-8112.



*celebrate*  
**OUR CITY LIGHT INTERNS!**



We have been blessed this summer and celebrate the work of Hannah Strahan as our summer intern at City Light. She has been a great help in getting our new community data base details in order and helping City Light start the process of moving from paper files to digital files and data management so we can better tell our City Light story of God's movement in our neighbors' lives. Hannah is also actively involved with Case Management training and sharing her ideas which we have implemented and will be a great help as we move forward towards the Hope Center. Please remember to pray for her as she completes her education in Social Work at Abilene Christian University and begins a Fall internship at Hendrick Health System.

City Light celebrates and welcomes Stephanie Stewart to begin a Fall and Spring internship as she completes her field education requirements at City Light. Stephanie is completing her Masters of Social Work and Masters of Divinity dual degree through the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work and the George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas. Stephanie's husband, Dan, is the new Pastor at First Baptist, Stamford which will put her close enough to do her field education requirements here at City Light. We are looking forward to the knowledge and ideas she will bring to City Light. Pray for Stephanie and Dan and their transition to Stamford and Abilene and her time with us doing ministry together.



*celebrate*  
**THE FBC ABILENE  
FRIENDSHIP HOUSE!**



Time to celebrate the FBC Friendship House on North 15th and Orange Street which was gifted to First Baptist this past January for community ministry. City Light and the FBC Missions Committee has been working hard to create a job description, find someone called to begin this new ministry, and prepare this home for a new family moving in at the end of August. We celebrate that Trevor & Gina Allen and their two young sons have answered the call to intentional neighboring in the College Heights neighborhood. Trevor and Gina have a great love for this type of ministry and will be a wonderful partner in FBC's desire to love our city and the College Heights neighborhood. Pray for the Allen's transition into this home and this new ministry together with FBC Abilene.



## *celebrate* SUMMER MEALS FOR ALL AGES!

City Light has joined over 13 other organizations for summer meals for all ages July 26 to August 16. Pray for the City Light staff as they are now open 6 days a week for these 3 weeks.

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Lots to celebrate as God is moving in the life of FBC Abilene (and these are just a few of our ministries). Maybe, even right now, God is calling you to pray, give more to the church budget, and involve yourself in these important ministries. If you have any questions or need additional information on these ministries, please contact John or Melinda at the church office (325-675-8112).

## COME WORSHIP ON THE CW

During the three weeks we were already scheduled to be preempted on KRBC, we partnered with a new station, the CW Channel, and were able to broadcast our services live. We have been very pleased with this partnership and have decided to make it our new home for Sunday Morning Worship. Dr. Christopher said that for us, CW means, Come Worship! So, on Sunday morning from 10:30-11:30 a.m., Come Worship with First Baptist.

**The CW station can be found on Suddenlink Ch 8, Dish Ch 40, Direct TV Ch 13, and digitally on 12.2** Of course, we will continue to stream the services on the church website, Facebook, and YouTube.





# BAPTIST STUDIES CENTER

First Baptist Family,

Thank you so much for your support this year as I started the Baptist Studies Center at Abilene Christian University. Through your support this year, the Center was able to get off to a strong start, and to begin building ways to help support regional churches and to train the next generation of ministers for Baptist churches.

With the closure of Logsdon Seminary, the need remains—now more than ever—for there to be trained ministers in Baptist churches in West Texas and beyond. With that in mind, I, with help from numerous supporters, began the Baptist Studies Center in the ACU Graduate School of Theology. Our mission is two-fold: 1) to provide resources and networking for area congregations, and 2) to provide theological education for Baptist seminarians, to prepare them for ministry. By offering courses in Baptist History, and Baptist Polity and Theology, the Baptist Studies Center offers students, as they are passing through any of ACU's excellent graduate ministry degrees, the ability to be trained in Baptist life and theology.

The task is large, for it includes not only preparing classes and doing normal faculty duties, but fundraising, recruiting students, meeting pastors and church leaders across the area, providing resources for congregations, and more—all in the midst of a pandemic!

That being said, now that the first academic year is closed out, I wanted to tell you about a few of our successes:

--We brought in three new students to the ACU Graduate School of Theology, with more on the way for Fall 2021.

--We hosted four webinars for churches, on the future of Baptist life, on how to deal with church abuse, on pastors and politics, and on college and young adult ministry. We were fortunate to have some great speakers join us, such as our own Meredith Stone, ministers from across the BGCT and CBF, as well as best-selling authors like Scot McKnight and Jemar Tisby.

--I preached at, or visited with, ministers from over 50 churches regionally about the work we're doing, as well as connected with state and national Baptist leaders. Much of the work of this first year was simply about establishing networks and making connections with leaders in Baptist life for future recruiting and ministry.

--With generous support from nine churches, several individuals, and foundations like the Shelton Family Foundation and the C.I.O.S. Foundation, we were able to raise the funds necessary to meet our financial obligations for the 2020-2021 academic year. My position—for the foreseeable future—will be fundraised, making support from churches like FBC all the more important.

--The first course in Baptist History was completed this Spring, with six students on board. It was an excellent introduction for our Baptist students to their own history, with students from other backgrounds mixed in as well. One of the great benefits to Baptists is that it lets them know their own history and theology while learning in the company of other members of the body of Christ.

I'd love your prayers as I continue to make plans for the next academic year. I've got a great expanded slate of programming I'm looking forward to for the 2021-2022 year, and hopefully several students. Here are some ways you can specifically pray for us:

**1) That students would continue to come**

**2) That churches and individuals would continue to financially support the work**

**3) That ministers would be faithfully trained, and that churches would be blessed by our work.**

Thanks again for being our church home, and for being supportive of this new venture. Forty years ago, the line between the Churches of Christ and Baptists was bright. But today, I'm hopeful that what we're doing can not only be a way to train the next generation of ministers, but to help mend divides which plagued Christians for far too long.

I'd love to talk to anyone about what we're doing, and how you can help support the work. My email is [mpw20a@acu.edu](mailto:mpw20a@acu.edu).

See you Sunday,

Myles

# FBC MISSIONS: **ACTING IN** *love*

*A COVID-19 silver lining has been finding and exploring some of Phnom Penh's outdoor hidden gems:*



*Phnom Penh's colonial era train station with two of the newest and biggest skyscrapers just behind it*



*the far end of the riverside which was perfect for a drizzly walk and ferry watching.*



*a picture of the three of us*



*A glimpse of the rice distributions that are continuing to offer relief to families throughout the country.*

## **MISSION BITE: Hello from Phnom Penh!**

When we last wrote to you, COVID-19 cases were still somewhat high, but we were optimistic. We had just been vaccinated, along with most of the adults in Phnom Penh, and there was a small glimmer of possibility we could resume teaching seminars in Kampot Province at the end of June—or at least soon thereafter. Now as July ticks away, churches and schools are still closed, cases are generally higher than before, and the provinces are struggling to contain outbreaks without the resources of the city. Hundreds of Cambodian migrant workers test positive each day at the border as they return home from Thailand or Vietnam, where even bigger outbreaks mean they can no longer find work.

It's hard to know exactly what is happening around us because the government is not releasing information as transparently as before, but COVID-19 is certainly hitting those we know hard. The teenage son of our main Cambodian partner got sick earlier this month, and while caring for him, so did our partner. A friend of a friend in her 30s passed away from COVID-19. A young factory worker at our church is infected and is currently in a state treatment facility. Cases seem to be rising in Kampot Province as well. There is certainly plenty here to keep us praying, and we hope that you can join us in that as well.

What does this mean for life and ministry for us here? We are continuing to work from home and continue to prepare seminars for pastors in Kampot for the day when we are all able to travel and gather again. Using the gifts of many of you to our ministry, we continue to help support our Cambodian Baptist partners as they distribute rice and the gospel message to hungry families throughout the country. Some Zoom preaching opportunities have begun. We were able to do a bit of outdoor hosting at our house, and we are exploring ways to be able to do more of that.

While at times, we grow weary of the restrictions and the unknown and the “here we go again” feelings, we are also thankful for the ways God has continued to show His faithfulness to us and to those with whom we minister. Recently, Chloe has doubled down on her love of classic hymns. To give us a break from singing them repeatedly, we bought an album to put on for her. Many times a day we sing along to “Are You Washed in the Blood.” As we sing the line, “Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?”, we are reminded of what we need to do to get through this season. We are praying this for all of you today, too—that you would trust in God's grace and that His grace would abound in you and in your lives each hour and each day.

With love from here,  
David, Lauren and Chloe



## Prayer Request from Phnom Penh

**We think prayer makes a difference. Here are some ways you can pray for us:**

**Praise God that our partner and his son have now made a full recovery. Please pray for Sokleang**, the young Bible student and factory worker in our church, who is currently being treated for COVID-19. **Also, please pray for the grandma in our church, Grandma Seap.** There are rigid rules around vaccinations here, and her health conditions prevented her from being vaccinated. She is particularly vulnerable, both to getting the disease and fighting it, if she becomes infected.

**Pray for Kampot Province, especially the pastors and churches we work with there.** Pray that God would protect Christians there and help them to be a witness to their neighbors. Pray that seminars would resume in God's timing.

**Pray for us as we ask how God wants to use us during this time.** Since we have to take a step back from being out and about, it can also be helpful to take a figurative step back to think, plan, dream, and ask what God may have for us that we haven't had the eyes to see yet. Pray that we would be open and faithful to God's leading.



## SEEING MORE CLEARLY

Last summer, the confinement was lifted in Spain and S.(name withheld), a refugee, took her daughter to the dentist. Like many children her age, the daughter had small cavities that needed to be addressed. Unfortunately, S's husband lost his job during the confinement and the family did not have the resources to address the dental issues, so they decided to wait. Waiting turned into months as S's husband continued to look for work. It was not until mid-January that he found regular employment. By that time, the family had months of back payments of rent to pay and the daughter's dental issues had grown into issues which had to be addressed immediately.

S. reached out to me to see if we could assist. Thanks to the generous gifts of CBF partners and churches we were able to provide not only the needed dental work, but also provide the glasses the doctor prescribed so that the daughter could see more clearly.

*Matt and Michelle Norman, CBF field personnel in Spain*



## BIG A DIRECTOR POSITION OPEN

FBC is seeking to fill a part-time paid position for Director of Big A, a City Light ministry for elementary kids.

If you are interested in leading this ministry, contact John Moore at [john.moore@fbcabilene.org](mailto:john.moore@fbcabilene.org) or 675-8112.

**FBC FOUNDATION**  
**Grant Request Forms Are Available**

*Forms are available in the office. Deadline to return the form is noon, Friday, September 10.*

*August*

**STAFF ANNIVERSARIES**

**August 2, 20 years**

**Steve Queen**

Counseling & Family Enrichment Director

**August 5, 2 years**

**Dominique Lee**

GLO Teacher

**August 8, 10 years**

**Jennifer Miller**

Ministry Assistant to Pastors  
for Preschool & Children

**August 12, 13 years**

**Rosalinda Garcia**

GLO Teacher

**August 29, 15 years**

**Suzanne Shaw**

Receptionist/Church Clerk

**August 29, 10 years**

**Becky Tucker**

Pastor for Children

**August 31, 22 years**

**Eric Couvion**

Superintendent of Buildings & Grounds

- 1 Goodbye/Hello Party for 5th Graders
- 2 5th Grade Trip to Ft. Worth Zoo
- 3 Kid's Fun Night @ Play Faire Park
- 4 Last Summer Fun Night @ FLC
- 8-12 Pastoral Staff Retreat @ Glorieta
- 11 Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting
- 15 Welcome to Kindergarten Party
- 17 Finance Committee Meeting  
Deacons' Meeting
- 20 Culinary Graduation
- 22 Round-Up Sunday
- 25 Wednesday Activities/  
Meals begin

**STEWARDSHIP UPDATE**

*July 2021*

<b>Budget</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>Year-to-Date</b>
Required	\$266,060	\$1,921,920
Given	\$206,943	\$1,674,807

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



**FIRST BAPTIST**  
**CHURCH • ABILENE**

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