



FIRST WORDS

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. There are several events already on the calendar, all of which revolve around the new school year. Just as the kids are excited about starting the new school year and being in the next grade, we are excited about a new senior pastor coming, starting fresh, and getting back into the rhythm of church life.

Here are a few things to be looking forward to:

ROUND-UP/HOWDY SUNDAY

It will all kick-off with Round-Up/Howdy Sunday, August 17 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 and will focus on just having a meal together and not any other activities. This will enable us to spread out serving and eating the meal in both the skating rink and the gym.

This year, we also look forward to saying "Howdy" to the Miller family. Dr. Ray Miller will officially be joining our staff on August 12 and his first Sunday in the pulpit will be August 17. We not only want to say "Howdy" to the Millers, but we look forward to saying "Howdy" to those coming back after a break during the summer.

Continued from cover.

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Starting on August 20, our normal Wednesday night programing will kick off. The meal in the dining room will begin at 4:45 p.m. and then all children, youth, and adult activities will take place from 6:00–7:00 p.m. On August 20, we will also have a time of prayer in the chapel. "Just Focus on Jesus," a concentrated prayer time will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. (come and go) in the chapel. Members are invited to pray silently for our church during this time of transition. Soft music will be the only sound. The rest will be between you and Jesus. You may pray at the altar or in a pew -- just pray! Be looking for more information on adult Bible studies which will begin on August 27.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Of course, there will be several special events throughout the fall. 1st Grade Bible presentation, Prayer Partner Sunday, Senior Adult Emphasis highlighting our members for 50+ years, and a church-wide night at the Zoo event to be shared later. A great fall is in the plans, so start planning now how you will be a part!

SENIOR ADULT **day trip**

RAGTOWN **GOSPEL THEATER** **POST, TX**

PETER THE ROCK

AUGUST 23 – 3:00 p.m.



Join us as we take a day trip to see Peter the Rock. "Peter the Rock" is an insightful and moving portrait of the apostle, Simon Peter, and his relationship with Jesus Christ. Taking place on the day that Peter is to be martyred, the apostle realizes that he will be seeing Jesus face to face within hours. It has been over thirty years since he has seen his Savior and friend, and even facing the agony of crucifixion, Peter is joyous. Ticket prices will be determined on how many attend. \$22 each for less than 12, or \$16.50 each for 12 or more, and Veterans free. To sign up call Jeannie Wesley at 325-675-8107 or email jeannie.wesley@fbcabilene.org.

PREPARING FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

Dear FBC Family,

Our family is transitioning from a long list of goodbyes into the arms of many hellos and howdys. Our children are starting new schools; we are living in a new house in a new town. I am obviously pastoring a new church.

There is a prayer I often pray before going to bed at night that ends, “so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness.” And what is one promise that never changes? Lamentations 3:22–23 beautifully states, ***“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”***

There are a lot of changes happening in my life and in the life of the church. Yet what will not change is God’s steadfast love – it never ceases. God’s mercies never come to an end. In fact they are new every morning.

I am looking forward to experiencing the steadfast love, faithfulness and new mercies each morning in Abilene, Tx. God’s faithfulness truly is great.

Grace and Peace,

DR. RAY MILLER
Senior Pastor



mens MINISTRY

YOUNG MEN’S PRAYER GROUP

For dads with young children in their lives

Contact: Matt Preston
(325)829-8145

Join us for an eight-week time of prayer and fellowship, September – October for either lunch or coffee. We will meet on Thursdays at 11:45 for lunch at Cypress Street Station (cost of lunch will be covered) OR Friday coffee at 6:45 a.m. at The Front Porch on S. 14th Street (you are on your own for coffee!) No need to attend both times.
This is going to be fun!

MCALLEN MISSION TRIP report

I was excited to be a part of the team called for the work/mission trip to McAllen this year. Having participated in three previous mission trips involving construction projects in Mexico, I was somewhat familiar with the labor involved, and I felt like I could contribute to our team.

I rode with Tim Griffin, and we arrived in McAllen in time to gather with the rest of our team to get acquainted and learn about the goals we hoped to accomplish. John Moore also told us about the Hernandez Family, a mother and her two sons, who would become the residents of the home we would be working on during our time in McAllen.

Since the pier and beam foundation was already in place, our team would work to complete the prepping, placing, and connecting sections that created the outside walls. We would also install windows according to the plans. Once the outside walls were done, we would move on to framing the walls to create the different rooms within the house. Then, the team would be responsible for setting and securing the attic trusses and then adding the roof decking so the next volunteer group could roof the house. One last job for our team would be to build a deck or back porch with steps from the deck to the ground. After

John presented our construction goals, our team entered into a time of prayer and then dispersed for the evening so we could get started early the next morning.

Our FBC team partnered with Buckner Ministries to build this house for the Hernandez family. The FBC team consisted of: John Moore, Tim Griffin, Danny Haddox, Shaun McCleese (project foreman), and Myles, Sara, Eliot, and Arthur Werntz. We were joined by Steve Steed (project foreman) of Stephenville, Jorge Flores of Portland, TX, and John Hunt and Ben Milam of Waco. John is a Buckner employee, and he was joined by Pedro Gonzalez, and Xylina (Celina) Rotramel also with Buckner. Shaun parents, Stu and Gail McCleese also from Portland, TX joined us on Saturday and Sunday to lend a hand.

Once we arrived at the site on Friday morning, everyone began to find where they felt they could contribute; there were jobs for everyone. Fortunately, the weather conditions were bearable with the high temperature of 93 degrees on all our workdays with a good breeze present each day. By the end of the first day, the team had three of four walls in place.

On Saturday, the team secured into place all of the inside framing for walls before raising the last wall into place. As the

afternoon closed in, the team not only finished raising the last wall, but also installed scaffolding along the front and back sides of the house so we could then place trusses on top.

On Sunday morning, the trusses were put into place and secured, and by lunch, decking had been nailed into place on one half of the house. By late afternoon, the roof top decking and the back porch decking were both completed. Our team had pulled together and worked hard to complete all of our goals in just three days.

To show their gratitude for our work, the Hernandez family found ways to help as well. The boys worked on the construction, and Mrs. Hernandez, a widow, provided delicious treats and lunches to the team.

Let me take this opportunity to tell the church how impressed the overall team was with John Moore and his excellent preparation for the McAllen mission/work trip. FBC is fortunate to have John leading the mission opportunities in our city, our state, our country, and our world. I hope others will consider joining on future mission projects. You will be blessed more than you can imagine.

DANNY HADDOX



MCALLEN MISSION TRIP report

I had been waiting for my boys to be old enough to participate in a mission trip because I wanted them to experience what I had encountered as a teen, college student, and young adult serving in various parts of the country and world as an ambassador of Christ. Mission trips benefit not only the family, individual, or community that we serve but transform our own hearts and minds in the process. They have the power to expand our understanding and compassion for others, grow gratitude for our own lives and situations, increase our awareness of those around us, and get us out of our comfort zone (something we often avoid as adults)!



I am so thankful that First Baptist Abilene offers a mission trip for families with young children! In years past, there have been opportunities for kids to paint houses and help lead VBS programs – but

I think my boys got the best experience of all, NAIL GUNS! Each time we told someone we were planning to go on the McAllen trip, we received a similar response, “IT’S SO HOT... it’s great, you’ll have a wonderful time...BUT IT’S SO HOT!” Thankfully, this year we had beautiful cloud coverage each day, but far superior were the connections with the members of the FBC construction team, Buckner staff, and the family whose home we worked on. My boys were so fortunate to have a group of men and women that displayed what it means to be the hands and feet of Christ in a hurting world, while also being able to contribute in meaningful, tangible ways themselves. They have both asked to go back and build a new home for another family and want to learn Spanish so that they can talk to the people we meet! They also asked for an air compressor and nail gun, but I think we will wait on that one!!

In a time when we often feel at a loss for being able to make a difference in the world, consider what it could look like for your own family to serve and grow together. “For it is in the giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we are born to eternal life” (St. Francis of Assisi).

SARAH MARTIN-WERNITZ

Like Sarah, I grew up going on various mission trips. From soup kitchens in New York City to building cement slabs in Mexico; participating with my family on mission trips was just part of the deal. One of the things I appreciated about it the most was that it allowed me to get out of my own head and to practically serve someone in need. In serving alongside my parents, I was able to learn what it means to give of not just one's money, but one's time in service to God.



We've been waiting until our kids were old enough to fully participate, and this was finally the year. We'd been hearing about the McAllen trip for years, and it was nothing short of fantastic. Our trip drew folks from Abilene, Stephenville, Waco,

and McAllen together for three full days of construction. And in just three days, our group was able to go from a wooden foundation to a fully-raised house, ready for electrical and plumbing to go in.

While driving back from San Antonio, exhausted from raising rafters and from the McAllen heat, I thought about how long I've wanted these kinds of trips to be a part of my kids' lives. There's nothing glamorous about the drive from Abilene to McAllen; once you get to San Antonio, you're only half way there. But the experience of giving our labor on behalf of someone else as a family, of giving our time for a family in need: these are, I think, signs of the kingdom of God.

Buckner International is a historic Baptist institution which works on behalf of families and children across the globe. The work it does in McAllen—helping families with housing in one of the poorest parts of the border area—is one of the many excellent things it does. It's my hope that next year, many more folks from FBC can come taste and see what God is doing in South Texas.

MYLES WERNITZ

youth SIX FLAGS TRIP

Our students had an amazing day at Six Flags Over Texas on July 23! There is always a mix of joy and fear when a student turns to you right as you sit down and buckle in and says, "This is actually my first ever rollercoaster." Thankfully our first time riders had a blast!

I hope this trip was a highlight of the summer and a much-needed break as our students begin to prepare for the upcoming school year. Some students are already working through band camps, sports training, and studying abroad. The summer feels like it is shrinking, but I am thankful for the time we get to spend with our students having adventures together. What a blessing it is to have the gifts of fun, joy, and fellowship from God!

Thank you to everyone who sponsored a student's way to go on the this trip!

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" – Proverbs 17:22 (NIV)



HUNTER BROWN
Pastor for Youth





A big **thank you** to each of our sponsors for all your hard work and your dedication to serve our church and students:

Dina Griffin
Caleb Irwin
Avery LeCroix
Jay Patterson
Becky Tucker
Britney Tucker



RACER & BAKE SALE

We had a wonderful night of racing and eating homemade goodies on Wednesday, June 19, during Summer Fun Nights at the FLC. There were over 30 cars that were decorated and raced during the 3rd annual Church-Wide Racer event.

Ribbons were given for 1st, 2nd, & 3rd places in both the children's and youth/adult divisions. There were also ribbons given to the most creative car, most unique car, and best design.

We had many delicious homemade treats brought for our annual bake sale. We collected over \$725, and that money will be given to our mission's department. These funds will be used to help with mission trips taken this summer.

This event doesn't happen without a lot of help. A huge thanks to our custodial staff and the FLC staff who help us so much with getting everything set up. Debra Clemmer for stepping in and doing fabulous job running the computer. Steve Clemmer and Jerry Clark for help weighing the cars in, and to Susie Vandever, Marci Cole, & Ali Cole for taking care of the bake sale. Lastly, we want to thank everyone who participated by decorating cars, bringing homemade goodies, and donating money for the treats.

We are so blessed with a supportive and generous church family!

Our Winners:



CHILDREN'S DIVISION

1st place/Luke McGrew
2nd place/Palmer Morgan
3rd place/Ella Spruiell



YOUTH/ADULT DIVISION

1st place/Lauren Kate McGrew
2nd place/Reagan Craig
3rd place/Paige Clark

Most Creative Car/Ghost Rider
Most Unique Car/Arthur Werntz
Best Design/Lydia Draper

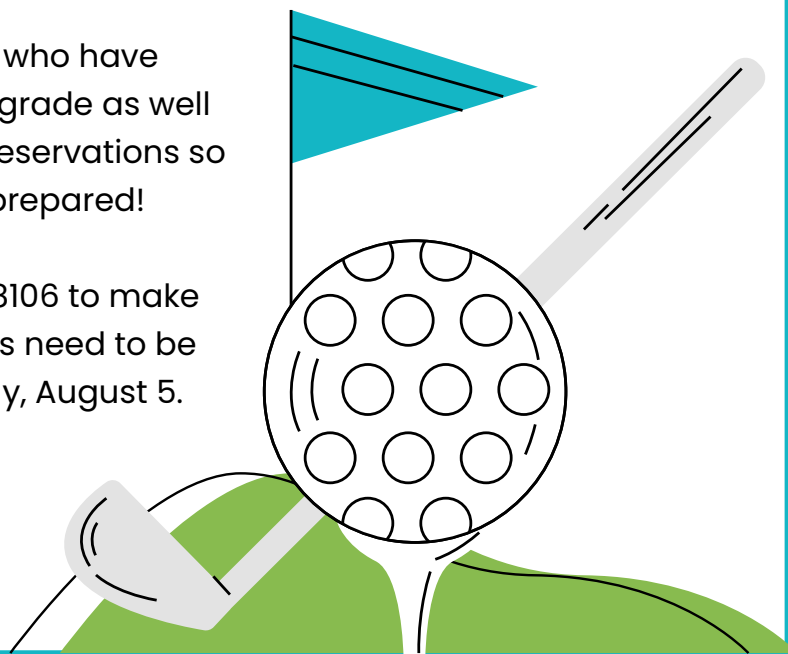
KIDS (& FAMILIES) FUN NIGHT @ PLAY FAIRE PARK

Thursday, August 7 | 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

It is hard to believe that we are winding down our summer activities and getting ready for a new school year! One of our favorite “end of the summer” activities for the children’s ministry is a family night at Play Faire Park. This event will be held on Thursday, August 7, from 6 – 8 p.m. The temperature on this night always seems to be extra hot, but that does not keep our families from enjoying hamburgers, miniature golf, and great fellowship.

This event is for all children who have completed Kindergarten – 5th grade as well as their families. We do ask for reservations so we will have enough food prepared!

Please call Becky at 325-675-8106 to make your reservations. Reservations need to be made by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 5.



fbC FOUNDATION

Grant Request Forms
are Available

Forms are available in the office.
Deadline to return the form is noon Friday, September 5.



MINISTRY OF COUNSELING AND ENRICHMENT

Whether a student entering Kindergarten for the first time, a teacher starting their 43rd first day of school, or someone who has not sat in a classroom in longer than a decade; August evokes a sense of change. Change can be anticipated or greatly feared. One thing is certain, maintaining change can be very difficult.

Our priority at the Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment (MOCE) is three-fold: 1) help people identify the changes they would like to make 2) equip them to make changes and 3) encourage maintenance of desired changes. Pray that our community will have the courage to seek help when needed. Please also pray for people who are seeking help to be able to step into and maintain the changes they are desiring.

THERAPIST SPOTLIGHT: *Jennifer Smothermon*

Changes are happening at the Ministry of Counseling! Jennifer Smothermon has been named MOCE's Clinical Director. As Clinical Director, Jennifer gains the title that matches the work she has been doing for over two decades. This work includes supervision for both clinical students in their graduate programs and LPC (Licensed Professional Counselor) and LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist) Associates who are working toward licensure. She will also provide leadership and wisdom to the Interim Director and to MOCE to ensure clients gain the best access to care as is possible. Jennifer will continue to see clients at MOCE while also serving in other capacities in our therapeutic community.

Jennifer has worked at Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment in various capacities since April of 1998. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Supervisor, Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, Supervisor, and a Registered Play Therapist, Supervisor. Jennifer has also been MOCE's Director of Development since August of 2000. In this capacity, Jennifer has written grants that have helped to provide MOCE's therapeutic playground, the Therapeutic Expressive Family Room, and grant dollars to ensure that Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment can fulfill its mission of reaching those seeking counseling regardless of their background or ability

to pay.

Help me in congratulating Jennifer as her many gifts, contributions, and sacrifices are getting recognized this year.

Earlier this year, Jennifer received the Outstanding Supervisor Award from the Texas Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. In October, Jennifer will be a recipient of Hardin-Simmons University's 2025 Distinguished Alumni Award. There is much more to say about Jennifer's roles on the Texas State Board of Examiners of Marriage and Family Therapists, the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council, and the Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards. She also serves the Abilene community in extensive capacities. However, if you were to ask her, she would tell you that her most important roles include mom to two amazing girls, wife, and child of God.

We are immensely blessed to have Jennifer continue to serve Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment to bring healing and leadership in the Big Country, Texas, and across the country.



BOO-HOO / WOO-HOO

Back to School Coffee

With school starting back, there are all kinds of emotions. So, whether you are sad or super excited that the kiddos are going back to school, we hope you will join us and allow us to buy you a coffee on the first day of school!

We will have two different days and locations since AISD & Wylie do not start on the same day.

**Tuesday, August 12 we will be at
the Front Porch, 3365 S. 14th
Wednesday, August 13 we will be
at the Mad Coffee, 8049 US-83**

We will be there each morning by 7:45, so come and join us after you drop the kids off at school!



BROWN BAG LUNCH

Dining Room at Noon
Thursday, August 21

Bring a lunch
Tea/water provided

Dr. Ray Miller – Speaker

The Sisters' Table



Introducing The Sisters Table:

A New Fellowship Gathering for Women at City Light

City Light is excited to introduce a new program just for women—The Sister's Table. This "come as you are" gathering invites women from all walks of life to join together for a time of encouragement, connection, and spiritual growth.

Each month, women will gather around the table to share meaningful conversation centered on a specific topic. Our theme for August is prayer—talking with God. Together, we'll explore what it means to connect with God through prayer, and we'll each create a personalized prayer journal to take home.

The Sister's Table is a space for women to grow in faith, deepen relationships, and share life in a welcoming, Christian environment. Whether you're a long-time friend of City Light or brand new, we invite you to join the conversation.

**Our first gathering is Monday, August 11,
from 10:15 to 11:00 a.m. in the City Light dining room.**

Pull up a chair—we've saved you a seat at the table.

mexico city MISSION TRIP

Please be in prayer for the Mexico City Mission Trip Team August 5-12:

**Morgan Rains
Britney Tucker
Olga Gaona**

**Barry Moak
Greg Young
John Moore**

Javier Perez

THINGS TO PRAY FOR...

TUESDAY

- Pray for safe travel (Van, Plane, Bus) for the team
- Pray for the team to have happy stomachs the whole week

WEDNESDAY

- Pray for the medical team (lab reports, pediatric visits, and patient exams)

THURSDAY

- Pray for the children's ministry group A team (younger kids)

FRIDAY

- Pray for the children's ministry group B (older kids)
- Pray for safe travel as the team takes the kids bowling

SATURDAY

- Pray for a special project with Kevin and his home and other home visits
- Pray for the teachers and the EduK teaching team to be encouraged by FBC team

SUNDAY

- Pray for our church worship in Mexico City

MONDAY

- Pray for safe travels home (Bus, Plane, Van)



Thank You, Garden Ridge Youth Ministry & St. Paul UMC!

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Garden Ridge Youth Ministry from Lewisville, Texas, and St. Paul United Methodist Church for coming to serve with us at City Light Lunch. Your energy, kindness, and willingness to jump in and help, made a big impact on our guests and staff alike.

We are so grateful for your partnership and the joy you brought into the dining room. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ—your presence was a true blessing!



GRATEFUL HEARTS AND SWEET BLESSINGS

After Leon's recent fall and hospital stay to repair a broken hip, he wanted to express his heartfelt thanks to the City Light staff for their kindness and support. He was deeply touched by those who took the time to visit him, pray with him, and checked on Jody while he was away. As a gesture of gratitude, he and Jody brought a delicious cake for everyone to share—just one more reminder of the love and care that surrounds this community.



I wanted to send my letter out in First Words for those who didn't get a chance to read it through email. Also, I want to say thank you for the recognition on Sunday, July 20, after worship...it was so nice to hug your necks and hear your kind words of encouragement. Thank you for all the phone calls, texts, and letters of gratitude you have sent.

As I reflect on the past 15 years, I am filled with immense gratitude for the journey I have shared with the Pastoral and office staff. Working alongside you has been more than just a professional experience...it has been a truly meaningful part of my life.

Finally, I realize none of this would have been possible without the love, patience, and unwavering support of my family. I am deeply grateful to each of you, and I hope you know how much it has meant to me.

Dear FBC Church Family,

After much prayer and reflection, I want to share that I will be stepping down from my role as Pastor for Preschool at First Baptist Church.

This decision comes as a result of recent personnel restructuring, which has changed my position to part-time. At this stage in my life, I'm not able to continue in a part-time capacity. While this transition was not what I wanted, I trust that God is still faithfully guiding every step forward.

My time on staff at FBC began in 2009 as Assistant to the Missions Pastor, and in 2010, I transitioned into the role of Director of Preschool Ministry. Later, the church chose to affirm my calling by ordaining me as Pastor for Preschool Ministry—an honor I have carried with deep gratitude and humility ever since.

Over the past 15 years, it has been a joy and a sacred privilege to serve the preschool families of this church. Watching your little ones grow in faith—learning their first Bible verses, singing their first songs about Jesus, and praying with such beautiful honesty—has left a lasting imprint on my heart.

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

—Matthew 19:14

I'm also deeply grateful for the relationships I've built with so many of you along the way. To every Sunday School teacher, extended session volunteer, VBS leader, and parent who has supported preschool ministry—thank you. Your partnership and encouragement have

meant more than I can express. The ministry has always been a team effort, and I've been so blessed to serve alongside you.

As I step into this next chapter, I do so with these words on my heart:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

—Joshua 1:9

Thank you for the privilege of serving your families. I leave with deep gratitude, lasting memories, and a heart full of love.

Please feel free to reach out or share your memories and stories with me—I would love to hear them.

With grace,

CANDY RAINS



WEDNESDAY

Prayer Night

**AUG
20** | **5-7
PM**

FBC CHAPEL

COME AND GO

Just focus on JESUS and
pray for our church

AUGUST

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

August 29, 19 years

SUZANNE SHAW

Receptionist/Church Clerk

August 29, 14 years

BECKY TUCKER

*Pastor for Children & Women's
Ministry*

August 31, 26 years

ERIC COUVION

*Superintendent of Buildings &
Grounds*

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

July 2025

| Budget | July | Year-to-Date |
|----------|-----------|--------------|
| Required | \$189,000 | \$1,869,110 |
| Given | \$145,201 | \$1,747,827* |

* Does not include the 4th Sunday

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

1333 North 3rd, Abilene, TX 79601
fbc@fbcabilene.org | 325-673-5031

www.fbcabilene.org

- 3** Personnel Committee Meeting
Goodbye/Hello Party for 5th Grade
- 4** Youth Lunch Bunch/Rosa's North
- 5-12** Mexico City Mission Trip
- 7** Kid's fun Night @ Play Faire Park
- 10** Welcome to Kindergarten
Pool Party
- 11** Youth Lunch Bunch/CiCi's
- 13** Buildings & Grounds
Committee Meeting
- 17** Round-Up/Howdy Sunday
Lunch @ FLC
Missions Committee Meeting
- 19** CLCM Board Meeting
Finance Committee Meeting
Deacons' Meeting
- 20** Wednesday Meal/Activities begin
Night of Prayer in Chapel
J.A.M. Kick-Off Party @ FLC
- 23** Sr. Adult Trip to Post, TX
First Grade Bibles @ Tucker Home
- 24** Lord's Supper
- 24-28** Pastoral Staff Retreat/Glorieta
- 25** MOCE Board Meeting
- 26** GLO Board Meeting
- 27** Church Conference