

# FIRSTwords

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

## GIVE HOPE




### GIVE HOPE FIRST REPORT

At the First Baptist Church Annual Thanksgiving Dinner on Sunday, November 24, the co-leaders of the Give Hope Campaign gave the first report about the campaign. After Callie Harris gave a brief recap of the campaign, Evan Harris announced the total pledged to this point. As of the start of the dinner, the total pledged was \$4,374,965. However, there were numerous cards turned in at the dinner and then several more returned to the church office on Monday morning. So, as of Tuesday, November 26 at noon, the update pledge total is \$4,417,685 with 158 cards having been returned.

So, the obvious question is where do we go from here? As Evan reminded us at the dinner, the Give Hope Building Team can now begin planning for the next step in the process. They have had an initial meeting, but will really get busy now. Developing a scope of work will be the first task they will set out to accomplish and will do so with the understanding of where the campaign stands.

We also know that several folks have not had a chance to return their card, as well as some contacts which had been made but it would be after the first of the year before they could talk specifics. So, we are very encouraged about this first report and know that it will continue to grow as others continue to be involved. If you have not had the opportunity to return your card, you may bring/mail it to the church offices, or place in the offering plate on Sunday morning.



**GIVE HOPE**  
FOR OUR CHILDREN  
FOR OUR FAMILIES  
FOR OUR COMMUNITY

### MY COMMITMENT TO GIVE HOPE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We prayerfully commit to step out in faith and pledge the following amount above regular tithes and offerings.

Total Three-Year Pledge Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I/We plan to give accordingly:

\$ _____ Weekly for 156 weeks (3 years)	\$ _____ Annually for 3 years
\$ _____ Monthly for 36 months (3 years)	\$ _____ Other

I/We wish to commit to the Give Hope campaign by means of a gift other than cash.  
Description and Approximate Value: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I/We are unable to make a financial commitment at this time but, I commit to pray that God will guide our church as we seek to implement the Give Hope Project.

Signature (optional): \_\_\_\_\_



# words

## FOR THE JOURNEY

Even though it is almost December, we still can be snacking on Thanksgiving leftovers or perhaps you sadly think Thanksgiving is over. The minister and humorist, Grady Nutt, coined the word, *“Thanksgiving.”* He lived life with that kind of gratitude. I searched for the right word – irony – tragedy – absurdity – to note that he died in the prime of his life in a plane crash on the day before Thanksgiving. For Grady, Thanksgiving never belonged to a day or a meal. It became a life of gratitude for every gift and even how he approached death.

### *“thanksgiving”*

This fall provided so many opportunities for *“Thanksgiving”* with our GIVE HOPE PROJECT. God blessed us with His vision of transforming our city. We became more of a praying and giving congregation. I hope you understand the privilege God gave us in this project. Even with some of the concerns of such a God-sized dream, one leader shared, *“What could God not like about this?”*

On December 12, our church will celebrate 138 years of sharing the love of Jesus Christ. As a pastor friend told me *“God has blessed our church over the years because we have always looked beyond our walls.”* As we continue the journey of GIVE HOPE, trust the words of the spiritual, *“He Never Failed Us Yet.”*

At our Annual Thanksgiving Dinner, we celebrated our *First Report* of GIVE HOPE with gifts and pledges totaling \$4,417,685. What a tremendous and encouraging start to transforming lives. Raising the financial resources necessary for such a significant project is not a three-month process. We are so grateful for the initial response and generosity to the *Congregational Phase* for GIVE HOPE. The next phase to begin in January will be visiting with friends and outside donors who would support this vision of transformation. We also know there are others in the congregation who are still praying about their gift to GIVE HOPE. The finish line...we trust that by May 2020 God will provide all we need to reach the \$6 million goal.

Let me say a pastoral word from my heart to those who for whatever reason have remained on the sidelines in making a commitment to GIVE HOPE. I shared in a recent sermon my passion for you to be a part of GIVE HOPE is not some PITCH to get into your wallet. I am at the point in my ministry and life that I don't have time to make PITCHES. Jesus said, *“Night is coming when no one can work.”* I only have time for Kingdom work. Plus, over my 48 years of ministry, I have seen too much pain and human hurt to accept the excuses of why someone cannot give to change lives. I am not making a PITCH, but an invitation for you to have the privilege of giving. I don't want you to miss out on this opportunity which can change your life and the lives of so many others.

As your pastor, I would be irresponsible in preparing you for when you come before the Lord one day. We will come to Him in His grace, but according to Scripture, we will stand to give an account. Jesus reminds us in Matthew 25, when we fail to take care of the *“least of these”* we missed out on *“taking care of Him.”*

As we look forward to the joyous season of Advent in preparation of the coming Savior at Christmas, let us remember why Jesus came. Jesus came to give hope. He came to *“preach good news to the poor and set free the oppressed.”* As I prepare for Christmas, I have asked myself, *“How does Jesus need to set me free from my chains of self-centeredness?”* The first Sunday of Advent is December 1, which is the Sunday of Hope. God left the throne room of heaven to give us the hope that in Jesus *“God's Kingdom is near.”* I pray you will know the *“Thanksgiving”* blessing and Advent Hope of making this world a little more like heaven for our children, our families, and our city.

Phil

# BREAKING DOWN THE WALL

*When you give your gift to Unified Missions Offering, a portion goes to CBF and through their Global Missions efforts, CBF is transforming the world - engaging and serving the most neglected and least evangelized with Christ-like love as you can see in this story!*

I watched as N. (name not given) entered the Persian church, He was a quiet, older Iranian man, and he was in “church” for the first time. He had one of those “How did I get myself in this situation?” expressions which translates across cultures. He had accepted the invitation and ride from his neighbor—one of the Iranian Christians who attends regularly. N. joined for our small Bible study. The focus that day was the story of Blind Bartimaeus. I introduced the story to them and we read it together in Persian.

N. did not appear to understand. He did not respond. I sensed I was overwhelming him. The wall between us was massive. I served tea to open things up, and at the end of the study things were a little better, but N. still seemed uncomfortable as he headed into the Persian worship service.

After the service I saw N. again. He was a changed person, smiling from ear to ear. He smiled at me and kept repeating to me in Farsi, “Thank you, thank you.” What a transformation. Something had happened in the service and the wall was gone! Blasted away by the Holy Spirit.

This made my day. The Lord Jesus (who asks Bartimaeus in the Bible story. “What do you want me to do for you?”) answered that question for N. His need had been met. I could see it by the light shining in his eyes.

*-CBF field personnel among Persian speakers*

**OUR UNIFIED MISSION  
GOAL IS \$80,000  
AND AS OF TODAY WE  
HAVE MET \$39,426**



FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH • ABILENE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Unified Missions Offering Goal: \$80,000**

**\$** \_\_\_\_\_

Please pray about how you can be involved in reaching our FBC Unified Missions offering goal of \$80,000. These offerings bring together seven different mission offerings which literally reach around the world:

- ♦ Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Global Missions Offering
- ♦ Texas Baptist—Mary Hill Davis Offering
- ♦ Abilene Community Transformation
- ♦ Baptist World Aid
- ♦ Texas Baptist World Hunger Offering
- ♦ Texas Baptist Disaster Relief
- ♦ Lawrence Trott Offering for Associational Missions

**We are encouraging families to choose an envelope with an amount to give toward Unified Missions. Please bring the envelope to the Church Finance Office or place in the offering plate.**

## Congratulations!

Congratulations to our City Light Culinary Academy which graduated their second class of students on November 15! It was a great celebration!

The next class will begin January 13 and is a 12-week program. There are applications at City Light and in the church office.

If you know anyone who is interested in this job training program with our City Light Culinary Academy, please contact Kayleen Mills at [kayleen.mills@fbcabilene.org](mailto:kayleen.mills@fbcabilene.org) or 325-673-6686 ext.103





GAITHER VOCAL BAND  
**GOOD THINGS  
TAKE TIME**  
SPRING 2020 TOUR

**Friday, February 7, at 7 pm | First Baptist Church Abilene**

General admission and church member discount tickets are available in the church office.

Artist Circle, Group, and Senior Adult tickets are available online at [premierproductionstickets.com](http://premierproductionstickets.com).

Wow, what a year for Operation Christmas Child! As a collection center, we were able to collect 8,789 shoeboxes, 969 more than we collected last year! We loaded 580 cartons into the two semi-trailers and they are now on their way to Dallas to the processing center. All of this was made possible because of the generous giving of each person who filled a box, manned the collection center, and by the men and women who helped load the trailer on Monday. Those include: Bob Bein, Steve Clemmer, Sandy Utley, Tom Cunningham, Roy Longacre, Marcus Driggers, Dylan Brown, Kyle Pierce, Bart Craig, Joe Frush, Stephen Williamson, Jennifer Williamson, and Shaeleigh Williamson. Because we had such a great turnout, we were able to load the trailer in just under 19 minutes! However, the whole process would not have worked without the excellent and hard work done by Debra Clemmer, who as always kept everything running smoothly and accurately. We will be taking a group to the Dallas processing center to work an afternoon shift on December 6 if you would be interested in helping with the next phase of the operation. So, thanks again for making Christmas a joyful experience for 8,789 children around the world.

## GLO CHRISTMAS BASKETS AUCTION

GLO will be auctioning off themed Christmas Baskets on Wednesday, December 11. If you would like to contribute items for the baskets, the themes are:

**Christmas, Dog Lovers,  
Spa Day, Baking,  
Coffee/Hot Drinks,  
Game Night, New Baby,  
Car Care, and Camping.**

Proceeds will go toward  
Teacher Christmas Gifts!

## GLO HAS THE FOLLOWING OPENINGS:

- 12-18 months - 3 openings
- 2-2½ yrs. - 2 openings
- 2½-3 yrs. - 2 openings
- 3-3½ yrs. - 3 openings
- 3½-4 yrs. - 3 openings
- 4-5 yrs. - 5 openings





# Christmas Music

## OPTIONS AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

As a church, we feel God has blessed us with a wonderful space to worship as well as host our local school programs.

Here is a list of those groups:

December 8-7:30 p.m.

December 10-7:30 p.m.

December 12-7:00 p.m.

December 16-7:00 p.m.

December 17-9:30 a.m.

December 17-7:00 p.m.

December 19-6:30 p.m.

ACU Vespers

Clack Middle School Choir Concert

Madison Middle School Choir Concert

Abilene High School Choir Concert

First Friends Preschool Christmas Program

Craig Middle School Choir Concert

Clack Middle School Orchestra Concert

All of these programs and concerts are open to the public and so you really have no excuse for not getting into the Christmas spirit with all of the musical options available to you.



## CHRISTMAS EVE GOOD CHEER OFFERING



The Good Cheer Fund of First Baptist Church, Abilene is used by City Light Community Ministries and our pastoral staff to meet special needs (often in crisis situations) of our church and community. Lights stay on in homes, water is not cut off, heat stays on, and senior adults will be able to make that important doctor's appointment because of the gas voucher they received through this Good Cheer ministry of FBC. In addition, rent assistance, utility bill assistance, bus passes, identification cards, birth certificates, and a night or two in a motel on a very cold night and you can see this is a very important ministry. All this is made possible through the generosity of our church members who contribute to the Good Cheer Fund on a regular basis, but especially during the Christmas Eve services. Abilene is a better place to live because of this offering and how FBC Abilene uses these funds. Please pray about how you can give to this important offering at our Christmas Eve Services. Thank you for being a church who loves our city and is willing to help people, even if they never join our church.



# ACTING IN *love*

Please continue to pray for the missionaries you support through your generous gifts to the ministry budget and the unified missions offering, especially as they head into this Christmas Season in their areas of service or as they travel to be with family. They, and their families, sacrifice year round as they respond to God's call to share the love and compassion of Jesus Christ to others around the world.

**David and Lauren Bass**  
Cambodia

**Jeff and Alicia Lee**  
Macedonia

**Hunter and Mary**  
Thailand

**Duane and Sandy Hammack**  
Colorado

**Venantie Uwishyaka**  
Rwanda



## *Parade of Flags - December 8 - Morning Worship Service*

This year, we are excited to have the Basses join us on this special Sunday and they will carry the Cambodian and Thailand Flags as a part of the processional.



# Blessings OF CHRISTMAS

On Sunday afternoon, December 22, we pray you will be participating in our annual Blessings of Christmas visits to persons in our church who are unable to be out and about as much as others. We will have gift bags and cards ready right after worship that morning.

Here is the plan. Come to the welcome center following the morning worship service. Select one or more cards and bags. Take them to the address listed on the card. Leave the gift from the church and enjoy a brief visit with one of our special fellow members. Following your visit, return to your homes knowing you have been a vital part in our church's Christmas outreach.

How about making it a family Christmas event? Bring the entire family and help us deliver approximately 75 gifts. What a wonderful way to invest a portion of your time this Christmas season!



## 2019 CHRISTMAS STORE

Our church has the opportunity to provide Christmas assistance to families who would prefer to provide for themselves at Christmas rather than receive presents from a stranger or stand in the line for a giveaway, but are unable to do so.

We want to encourage families at Martinez Elementary, GLO Daycare, and City Light this holiday season with our City Light Christmas Store!

The store will be open by appointment only on December 4, 5 and 6 and then again December 11, 12 and 13. Donated toys will be priced at 10 to 15 percent of the retail price. The store will only have toy type items, we will not have clothing.

### HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- 1. Purchase a toy or toys and drop them off at the church office before noon Wednesday, November 27 or donate money and we will be happy to purchase the toy on your behalf tax free. If you donate money, please mark your donation as "Christmas Store" and place in the offering plate on Sunday, or mail/bring it to the church offices. You can also purchase items through the Amazon link <http://a.co/89IYFB4>.**
- 2. Volunteer your time.** We will need volunteers to help bring refreshments or help with guests on the days the store is open.

For more information, please contact Melinda Norris at 325-675-8112 or [melinda.norris@fbcabilene.org](mailto:melinda.norris@fbcabilene.org).

# EVENT CALENDAR:

## DECEMBER

- 1 Personnel Committee  
Lighting of the Church  
Winter Light Fest @ Centennial Park
- 2 A Down Home Christmas Rehearsal
- 3 City Sidewalks
- 4-6 City Light Christmas Store
- 5 Healing Hearts
- 6 Parents' Night Out  
A Down Home Christmas Rehearsal
- 7 A Down Home Christmas Performance
- 8 Parade of Flags  
ACU Vespers Concert
- 10 Rockin' Moms  
Clack M. S. Choir Concert
- 11 Buildings & Grounds Committee  
Grant-in-aid Ministry Team
- 11-13 City Light Christmas Store
- 12 Madison M. S. Choir Christmas Program
- 15 Missions Committee  
Children's Choir Christmas Program
- 16 AHS Choir Christmas Concert
- 17 Finance Committee  
Deacons' Christmas Party  
Craig M. S. Choir Concert
- 18 K-5th Missions Caroling Night
- 19 Clack M. S. Orchestra Concert
- 23 Blessings of Christmas
- 24 Family Christmas Eve Service  
Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
- 24-26 Church Offices Closed

## YEAR-END GIVING

In accordance with IRS rulings, all gifts to the church that are intended for 2019 tax purposes must be in the church office by 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, December 31, or postmarked by midnight that day.

## STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

**December 16, 17 years**

**Todd Wilson**

*Pastor for Music & Worship*

**December 21, 27 years**

**Tony Martinez**

*Custodian*

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

*November 2019*

<b>Budget</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>Year-to-Date</b>
Required	\$ 271,058	\$ 2,983,353
Given	\$ 368,610	\$ 2,984,926

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



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

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