

# FIRST *words*

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

## CHRISTMAS *at* FIRST

When Advent falls on the last Sunday of November, it just seems a bit odd to be thinking about Christmas when the Thanksgiving meal has finally settled! But, this is one of those years, so on Sunday, November 28, we will have the sanctuary decorated for Christmas and the children will hang the Chrismons on the trees as a part of the morning worship service. That evening, we will have our 4th Annual Lighting of the Church beginning at 5:45 p.m. This has become a wonderful church family event where we gather to witness the lights, share some hot chocolate or cider, eat a few homemade cookies and sing a carol to start the season off. Again this year, we are blessed to be able to offer free tickets that night to the Winter Light Fest because of a generous donation by one of our church members.

On the 2nd Sunday of Advent, December 5, we will celebrate with one of the favorite annual traditions where our children and adults sing "Carry the Light" and we witness the parade of flags, which reminds us of the Kingdom of God made up of all nations. We are excited to have David and Lauren Bass, missionaries to Cambodia, in the service that morning and David will be preaching in the service.

The 3rd Sunday of Advent will feature our Sanctuary Choir and Celebration Orchestra presenting "Hope Has a Name."

On Wednesday, December 15, our preschool choir will present their Christmas program in the chapel. This is one of the best concerts of the season as the 2, 3, & 4-year-old children sing with such joy and expression.

Of course, the highlight of the season are the Christmas Eve services on December 24. The family service starts at 6 p.m. which is designed to be a bit more kid friendly and Becky Tucker loves having all the children present for the children's sermon. Then at 11 p.m. we will have the 53rd Annual Candlelight Christmas Eve Service. This service is broadcast live on CW channel.

***Christmas is coming! Are you ready?***



FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH • ABILENE

DECEMBER 2021

[FBCABILENE.ORG](http://FBCABILENE.ORG)



## MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

Most journeys have milestone moments, markers of significant progress or of meaningful experiences. In our church's current journey of pastoral transition, we had a milestone moment on November 7 with our first Congregational Conversation. The gym was filled with people and rich conversations. Thank you, First Baptist Church, for participating so generously in the evening's discussion.

The Pastor Search Committee has collected the huge amount of data we received from the 260 or so participants that night. We are examining, categorizing, and analyzing the information in order to identify the four or five most important values for our church, as indicated by our conversation. Once we've arrived at those key values, we will move to describing the distinctive ways in which our church lives out those values. When the task is complete, we will be reporting back to the congregation what we have found, and that data will help to shape the Church Profile we are developing. The Church Profile will in turn inform what sort of senior pastor we are looking for in the future.

**We will have two more Congregational Conversations in the new year, following the same schedule of an evening meal together and conversation around tables in the FLC. The dates for these next two sessions are:**

- **Second Congregational Conversation on January 23, 2022**
- **Third Congregational Conversation on February 27, 2022**

In the second conversation, we will be talking about the focus on our church – what we think the focus is now and what we imagine focusing on over the next few years. The discussion will go in a different direction from the first conversation, as we carefully consider demographic data about our church and our ministry contexts, with a view to understanding how the Spirit of God is leading us now and in the future. Please plan to be involved in the important dialogue we will have together. Your input is essential and irreplaceable.

Thank you for your continued support of the work of the Pastor Search Committee and your ongoing commitment to serve Christ through First Baptist Church. We are on an exciting journey together.



## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Operation Christmas Child had another great year! As a collection center, we were able to collect 7,208 shoeboxes. That translated into 599 cartons which were loaded 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 who helped load the trailer on Monday. Those included: Sherry Frush, Joe Frush, D'Anna Smith, Pam Bingham, Barbara Bacon, Zachery Gustafson, Nyki Richardson, Maddy Richardson, Britney Tucker, Bob Bein, Dylan Fink, Tyson Moore, Timothy Varghese, Jaxon Craig, Austen Winfrey, Steve Clemmer, and Taylor Richardson. 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. A special thank you goes to Eric Couvion, who did many behind the scene tasks which made everything else work. We are scheduled to take a group to the Dallas processing center to work an afternoon shift on December 10. If you would be interested in helping with the next phase of the operation, let Debra know (675-8116). So, thanks again for making Christmas a joyful experience for 7,208 children around the world.



## Christmas Eve GOOD CHEER OFFERING

The Good Cheer Fund of First Baptist Church of 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. Add to that, 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'll 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 and also during the Christmas Eve services. Our city 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.*

*Christmas Worship @ First*

# HOPE HAS A NAME

*emmanuel*

*Sanctuary Choir, Youth Choir,  
& Celebration Orchestra*

***Sunday, December 12, 10:30 am***

# UNIFIED MISSIONS OFFERING 2021

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

SEVEN MISSION OFFERINGS COMBINED INTO ONE

**WE HAVE MET \$27,493 OF OUR 2021 GOAL OF \$75,000**

**CBF • BGCT WORLD HUNGER • COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION • BAPTIST WORLD AID  
MARY HILL DAVIS OFFERING FOR TEXAS MISSIONS • BGCT DISASTER RELIEF  
LAWRENCE TROTT OFFERING FOR ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS**

## COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

When you give to the Unified Missions Offering at FBC a portion goes to Community Transformation, which provides resources for responding to specific ministry needs right here in Abilene, Texas.

These resources help to transform families, neighborhoods, and ministry partners within the Big Country area. Funding has been used for housing projects, wheelchair ramps, and leaky roofs which need to be fixed. Ministry partners have been assisted and family crisis situations have been averted because of FBC's ability to meet specific needs. Your gifts and prayers to our Unified Missions Offering make it possible to meet more of these physical and spiritual needs of our Abilene residents, some of which are our church members. Please pray about this offering and what God is calling you to give to our Unified Missions Offering.

*Your gifts to the FBC Unified Missions Offering create eternal changes in people's lives.*

## LAWRENCE TROTT OFFERING FOR ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONS

When you give to the Unified Missions Offering of our church, 3% goes to the Lawrence Trott Offering for Associational Missions. Did you know this offering is in honor of a former member of First Baptist Church? As a member of FBC, Dr. Lawrence L. Trott was very involved in the Senior Adult Ministry and leadership at FBC Abilene. He also served as the first Director of Senior Adult Activities of the Abilene Baptist Association from 1983 to 1988. Dr. Trott and his wife, Ruth, were honored at the Leuders Baptist Assembly with the dedication of the Ruth and Lawrence Trott Memorial Dining Hall due to his involvement since 1932. This offering is distributed to several ministries in the Abilene community through the Abilene-Callahan Baptist Area.

Dr. Trott served our Association and believed in cooperatively working together in missions. This Baptist tradition continues on today and makes a difference in the city of Abilene through this offering.

## BAPTIST WORLD AID

When you give to the Unified Missions Offering of our church, 10% goes to Baptist World Aid through our connection with the Baptist World Alliance. BWAid was formed to provide aid following World War I. Over the years, it has provided relief and developmental aid, training and networking. From its beginning, BWAid relief has been for all who are in need, regardless of race or religion. BWAid seeks to alleviate poverty and work for sustainable community development. When Baptists around the world pool their resources together to help fight hunger and poverty, miracles happen.

***Please help FBC Abilene reach its \$75,000 goal by giving through the Unified Missions Offering by placing your envelope in the offering plate or to the church office.***

# Christmas at First

December 5	7:30 pm	ACU Vespers
December 7	7:00 pm	Abilene Christian School Band & Choir Christmas Concert
December 9	7:00 pm	Abilene Christian School Elementary Choir Christmas Musical
December 10	7:00 pm	Madison Middle School Choir Christmas Concert
December 12	10:30 am	Hope Has a Name-Emmanuel Sanctuary & Youth Choir, Celebration Orchestra
December 13	7:00 pm	Abilene High School Choir Christmas Concert
December 14	7:00 pm	Craig Middle School Choir Christmas Concert
December 16	7:00 pm	Madison Middle School Orchestra Christmas Concert

***All concerts will be held in the Sanctuary***



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

We are still working with CarePack for Kids because of your generosity! We help pack and deliver over 150 care packs to Martinez Elementary each month to help with some of the students who struggle with very little food over the weekend.

If you would like to help volunteer during the school year to pack CarePacks (every other Tuesday for one hour) or help deliver the packs (every other Thursday for a little over an hour) we would love to have you!

Contact Melinda in the church office at 325-675-8112 for more information.



## **SHARE THE WARMTH**

City Light needs clean used jackets and blankets to share with our homeless friends and neighbors during the cold weather. If you have items you can donate, please bring them to City Light or call 325-673-6686 or 325-675-8112. ***Thank you!***

## **CITY LIGHT CHRISTMAS STORE 2021**

Once again, our church has the opportunity to provide Christmas assistance to families who would prefer to help provide for themselves at Christmas rather than receive presents from a stranger or stand in the line for a giveaway, but they 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 7, 8 and 9 and then again December 14, 15 and 16. Donated toys will be priced at 10 to 15 percent of the retail price. It is a great joy to be able to help these families! If you know a family who could benefit from the store, please contact Melinda at the church office.



### **HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:**

1. Purchase a toy or toys and drop them off at the church office by Monday, December 6 or donate money and we will be happy to purchase the toys tax free on your behalf. If you donate money, please mark your donation as "Christmas Store." Also, you can use the Amazon link below. The items will ship to the church from Amazon.
2. Volunteer your time. We will need a few volunteers to help set-up toys and help each day while the family shops. If you would like to help, contact Melinda in the Missions' Office at 325-675-8112 or [melinda.norris@fbcabilene.org](mailto:melinda.norris@fbcabilene.org).

### **Amazon.com Christmas Store Link**

The Amazon link is just a suggestion of toys we would like, but of course you are welcome to purchase what you would like to give. It may ask you to choose a shipping address.

If so, the address is **First Baptist Church, Melinda Norris, 1333 N. 3rd, Abilene, Texas 79601**

Thank you all for making this blessing happen for so many!



# UNIVERSITY UPDATE

by Matthew Broyles

Each year, the college ministry takes a fall retreat. Because we are together for a weekend, I like to study more complex topics which require deeper study and discussion. This year, our topic of focus was “Reclaiming Ownership Over Our Technology.” We live in a world where technology is a necessity to engage with others, stay informed, and do business. It can be great...until it isn’t.

We watched a documentary on Netflix titled, “The Social Dilemma.” If you have kids or grandkids, I encourage you to watch it WITH them and set aside some time afterward to discuss it. It gives great information on how social media works, the good of it, and also some dangers and warnings. If we don’t have boundaries in place, our digital media will take ownership of our lives.

**The students came up with several pragmatic ideas to help not be on our phones and other technology as much. A few examples:**

- Turn off all notifications other than calls and texts.
- Use the Do Not Disturb function on the phone, especially at night.
- Set timers for how long each day you can use an app.
- Charge phone in another room at night.

Why are smart phones and other digital media platforms so enticing? They feed our deepest longings. We want to be included. We want to know what’s going on with our friends. We want to feel valued and validated. We want to belong. Although digital media seems to fulfill these desires, they do quite the opposite. They cause us to compare ourselves to others. They cause us to place our value in the number of “likes” we get on our posts. Our opinions are validated because we seclude ourselves to pages of echo chambers which confirm what I believe rather than allowing ourselves to be challenged to think critically. When this happens, we subconsciously end up believing what we see on digital media is reality rather than the version of reality someone else wants us to see.

To help keep from becoming entranced with digital media, we turned to scripture and looked at several scriptures which remind us that our value comes not from “likes,” but from being made in the image of God and being worthy of love. Our belonging doesn’t come from scrolling through pictures or the political party we belong to. It comes from the community we build in the physical presence of other humans which requires compassion and humility.

There’s a WHOLE lot more that could be said. As I always tell my students, these are the beginnings of the conversations, not the end. I would love to talk more about this with you if you’d like. Technology isn’t going anywhere, but we must learn how to use it as we seek to make earth look more like heaven each day.





# December

## Friendship House Christmas Parade Sunday, December 19, 2021

The parade will be in the  
Friendship House neighborhood.  
1518 Orange Street

*Watch for more details about the parade or  
contact the church office at 325-675-8112 if  
you would like to be a part!*

## STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

December 16, 19 years  
**Todd Wilson**  
Pastor for Music & Worship

December 21, 29 years  
**Tony Martinez**  
Custodian

- 5 Personnel Committee
- ACU Vespers Concert
- 7 Abilene Christian Band & Choir Concert
- 8 Buildings & Grounds Committee
- Grant-in-Aid Ministry Team
- 9 First Friends Preschool  
Christmas Program
- Abilene Christian Elementary Musical
- 10 Madison Middle School Choir Concert
- 13 Abilene High Christmas Concert
- 14 CLCM Board Meeting
- Deacons' Christmas Party
- Craig Middle School Choir Concert
- Rockin' Moms
- 15 Preschool Choir Program
- 16 Madison Middle School Orchestra Concert
- 19 Mission Committee
- Christmas Parade at Friendship House
- 21 Finance Committee
- 22 No Wednesday Night Activities
- 24 Church Offices Closed
- Family Christmas Eve Service
- Annual Christmas Eve Service/  
Lord's Supper

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

November 2021

Budget	November	Year-to-Date
Required	\$193,000	\$2,970,100
Given	\$156,892	\$2,580,093

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



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