

# CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE



FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH ♦ ABILENE



JANUARY 2025

“To reach people for  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
and together become  
more like him.”



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FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH • ABILENE

Dear Prospective Senior Pastor,

Thank you for your interest in First Baptist Church in Abilene, Texas. Our church was established in December 1881, only six months after the founding of our city. Since that time, First Baptist has served a major role in shaping the development, character, and soul of Abilene. Over the last 125 years First Baptist has had only eight senior pastors, a clear indication of the stability of the church and the richness of the relationship between pastor and congregation.

Through the years, First Baptist has demonstrated a unique combination of tradition and innovation. Our congregation worships in a beautifully-renovated classical sanctuary and offers traditional programming through Sunday morning Bible classes, Wednesday evening spiritual formation activities, and other weekday ministries. Our gifted choir, full orchestra, and world-class pipe organ, lead the congregation in beautiful arrangements of traditional and modern worship music. Historically, First Baptist is also a congregation who regularly identifies unmet needs in our city and then develops new ways of meeting those needs. As a creative church, we were one of the first to build a family life center, to launch a ministry of counseling, and to pioneer other ministries that have become commonplace in Churches. Recently, we renovated an entire city block that is the location of our new Hope Center, which has dramatically expanded our capacity to minister to people in our community.

The Hope Center is the latest expression of the church's heritage of commitment to missions, going back to 1905 when the congregation sent its first missionary, Blanche Rose Walker, to China. In recent years the church completed a \$5 million campaign for missions to fund a variety of projects, including sending CBF field personnel from our church to five different countries.

Our church is a "big tent" fellowship in the sense of the breadth of theological and social perspectives represented in our congregation. At the same time, we have been historically progressive on several fronts, including the adoption of a policy against racial discrimination in 1963 and the ordination of women as deacons and ministers since 1996. To expand our missional footprint, our congregation connects in ministry with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

At present First Baptist Abilene is in a period of transition, with the resignation of our last pastor, Brandon Hudson, who was with us from January 2023 to April 2024. The church has had multiple conversations,

both formal and informal, to process his departure. Despite the circumstances surrounding his departure, the church remains strong and committed to learning from this period. It has been a time of introspection and prayer for the church, and an opportunity to assess the kinds of structural changes First Baptist needs.

Our church prepared well for the interim that followed, including the election of a nine-member Pastor Search Committee that reflects the breadth of our congregation. The committee engaged the Center for Healthy Churches to assist during this period of transition. Under their leadership, we have completed a self-study, involving a congregational conversation and church-wide survey. This process also drew from three congregation-wide meetings and recent surveys, to give us as clear a picture of our congregation as possible.

This process has provided the search committee with valuable data about the congregation's understanding of our identity and calling now and for the future, as well as a good sense of the expectations that we have for the person who will serve as our spiritual leader in the years ahead. The committee is now involved in the search phase of our work, seeking the individual who will become our next senior pastor.

We are looking for someone who has the gifts and preparation to become one of us, to help us grow in discipleship, and to lead us in faithful service as the body of Christ. Throughout the transition process the committee and congregation have intentionally and consistently sought the leadership of the Holy Spirit, confident that "eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered the heart of anyone the things that God has prepared" for our church as we continue to discover what it means to love God and others in our community and world.

Trusting in God's grace,

### **The Pastor Search Committee of First Baptist Church Abilene**



**Back row:**

*Jerry Hendrix,  
Paul Thames,  
Allan Frizzell,  
Casey Curnutt,  
Myles Wertz*

**Front row:**

*Shelly Utley,  
Debbie Langford,  
Marci Cole,  
& Lisa Lester*

# OUR VALUES & HISTORY

## FBC MISSION STATEMENT

*To Reach People for Jesus Christ and Together Become More Like Him*

### OUR CORE VALUES:

**First Baptist is a welcoming community that values authentic relationships.**

We foster a sense of belonging and we meet the needs within our church family. We are open to a diversity of people and perspectives, and we affirm women in ministry.

**Our church is a missional community that values outwardly focused service.**

We actively respond to needs in our community. We have direct involvement in ministry around the world. We have diverse opportunities for personal participation in service, and we sacrificially support the missional projects undertaken by our congregation.

**We are a spiritual community that values intergenerational lifelong formation.**

We desire to grow in Christ-likeness through the practices of Bible study and prayer, worship and fellowship, service and stewardship. We cultivate age-specific discipleship and intergenerational relationships.

**We are a worshiping community that values depth and reverence in music and worship.**

We celebrate well-balanced, dynamic music. We are dedicated to prayer, scripture and preaching. We encourage our congregation to participate in worship leadership and creative worship opportunities.

**We are a traditional community that values heritage, innovation and progress.**

We affirm biblical principles and practices. Our church has a significant presence in Abilene—historically and in the present. FBC strives to create innovative ministries to meet community needs including GLO Daycare, Family Life Center, Ministry of Counseling, City Light Community Ministries, the Hope Center and others. In all this we still celebrate the traditions of First Baptist Church.

## HISTORY

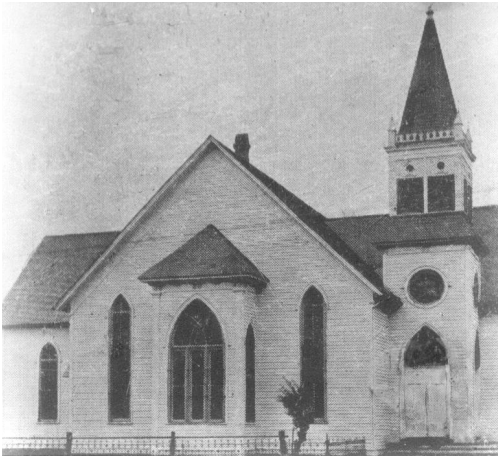
When you view First Baptist Church Abilene on the downtown corner of 2nd and Orange you might think of a strong oak tree with deep roots, a sturdy trunk and branches spreading out in many different directions. These roots took hold in this West Texas town in 1881. Over the years our church has grown strong, offering its gifts and service to our community. Our vision has been and continues to be actively serving others as we meet the physical and spiritual needs of our congregation and our city.



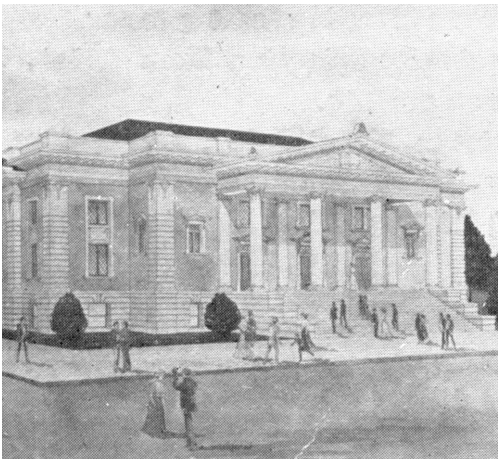
Owen C. Pope, a traveling missionary, came to the newly established town of Abilene on the T&P Railroad line and decided it needed a Baptist church. A few months later 17 original members signed the charter for the new church.

As Abilene grew so did First Baptist church. In 1883 land was purchased and the church built its first building. From the onset FBC members were evangelical and mission-minded, reaching out into the community through Sunday morning worship, socials, and an annual revival.

The late 1800s and early 1900s brought rapid growth and change to First Baptist and Abilene. Faced with the growing number of members, a new larger sanctuary was



constructed and dedicated in 1910. Nine years later the First Sunday School Building was erected. Even though attention was given to expanding buildings and grounds, our church remained dedicated to responding to the needs of the city. First Baptist Church played a significant role in founding three important Abilene institutions. FBC helped establish Hardin-Simmons University, Hendrick Medical Center, and Hendrick Home for Children. These community institutions had a major impact by meeting the educational, spiritual, and physical needs of residents in West Texas.



The concept of service was especially evident in times of crisis. During the World Wars, the Spanish flu, and the Great Depression, FBC offered physical and monetary support to those in need. Special prayer services were also an important contribution during those tumultuous times. As the world evolved from these major events there grew a strong passion for missions in the First Baptist congregation and ministerial staff. Our church was blessed with strong leaders—names such as Elwin Skiles, James Flamming, Bill Bruster, and Phil Christopher. Under their leadership over 15 new mission churches were organized across the city. Though our most recent pastor Brandon Hudson was only with us from 2023–2024, First Baptist has a long tradition of long-tenured ministers who are able to help shape ministry to the downtown area and around the world.



In the early 1950's it became evident that the old sanctuary was not meeting the needs of our large congregation. A third sanctuary was built in 1954 at the location of our present sanctuary. In 2006 this structure underwent major renovations and was dedicated on Palm Sunday of that year. Today the FBC sanctuary is home to our worship services but also opens its doors to host community events.



While continuing the mission efforts locally FBC looks outward to the nation and the world. These global efforts are still a focus of First Baptist Church as we support missionaries in Thailand, Macedonia, and Cambodia. During the late 20th century, First Baptist



pioneered many new ministries benefiting the greater Abilene community. Seeing a need for affordable day care, GLO was established in 1968. Soon to follow in 1974 was the television ministry which began live broadcasting of the entire hour-long Sunday morning service. The Ministry of Counseling opened its doors in 1977. Its mission was to provide services to meet the emotional needs of church members and the Abilene community. It has served as a model for other churches in Texas and the United States. Another new ministry was established in 1981. It would be the Family Life Center which would allow families in the Abilene area to come together for fun community activities. Over the years it became evident that there was a great need to minister to the less fortunate in Abilene. An urban ministry was started and City Light Community Ministries officially opened in 1996.

The dedication to missions continues today. The Hope Center, opened in 2023, is the center for our outreach ministries, allowing for the expansion of City Light, Ministry of Counseling, and GLO daycare. The City Light Culinary Academy is also housed in this new facility, which helps train and place individuals in the food service industry.

Over the past 140 years First Baptist has weathered many seasons of life, yet its roots remain strong. The emphasis on spiritual growth and mission outreach has continued to be our focus, and it has branched out in new and innovative ways. The rich heritage of First Baptist Church is truly a blessing but is also a challenge to seek and fulfill God's call in the future.



# OUR CONGREGATION

First Baptist Church Abilene is a warm and hospitable community. We are a multigenerational church that strives to connect people of all ages. Our church is a tradition-rich community that values its deep-rooted heritage and looks for opportunities for innovation and progress. As a mission-minded congregation, our focus on ministry reaches within our community as well as around the world.

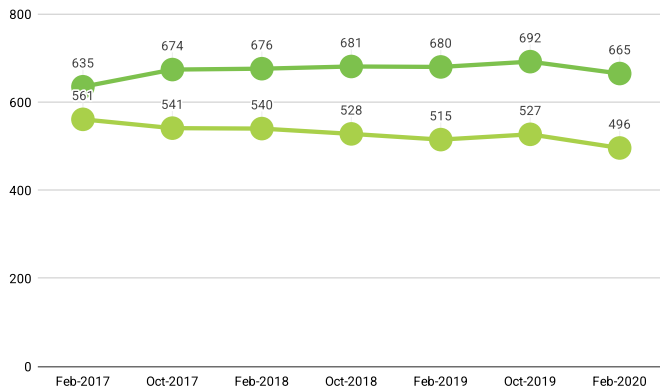
## ENGAGEMENT

Engaging and involving people in the worship and ministries of First Baptist is very important to our congregation. We have a few different ways of thinking about attendance and involvement. A traditional way is by counting the number who participate weekly on a Sunday morning. In light of lifestyles in our current culture, we also recognize that many activities compete with Sunday church attendance, such as the burgeoning number of weekend activities for children that involve Sundays, visits to family in other cities, and weekend get-a-ways for a brief respite from the work week. As a result, an increasing number of congregants at First Baptist are able only to participate in person one, two, or three times a month, yet they consider themselves core members. Therefore, our Pastor for Administration developed a system some years ago for counting how many attend at least once a month, and this metric has provided some helpful insights.

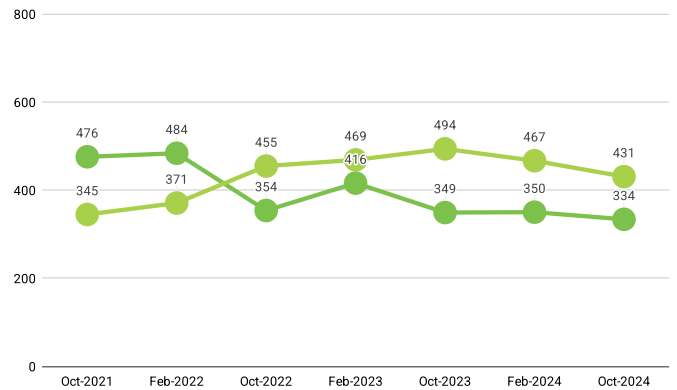


# PARTICIPATION IN SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY

FEBURARY 2017 - FEBRUARY 2020 (PRE COVID)



OCTOBER 2021 - OCTOBER 2024



**1-4 TIMES PER MONTH**

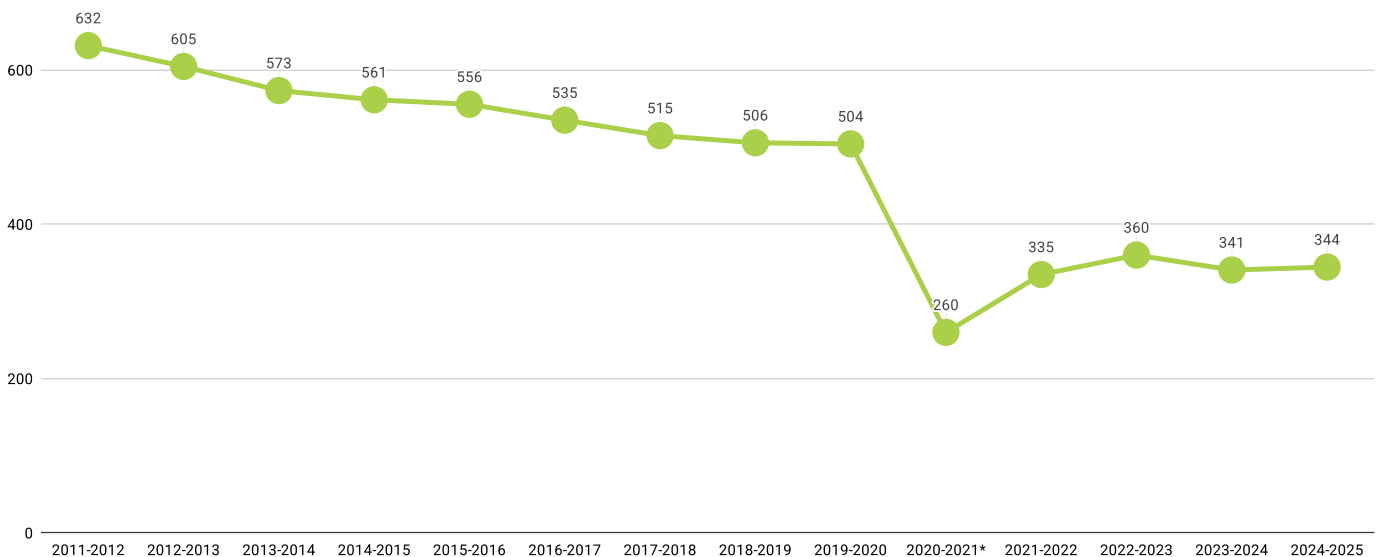
**WEEKLY AVERAGE**

Before the COVID pandemic, our weekly attendance in the representative months of February and October from Oct 2017 through Feb 2020 averaged 530. Over the same years we saw an average of 672 people participating at least once a month. (We use February and October because they are typical fall and spring months.)

Like many congregations, during the months of Covid's impact, we saw a significant decrease in our attendance.

## AVERAGE SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY ATTENDANCE BY YEAR

Church Year for Sunday Bible Study is 3rd week of August to the next year second week of August



We rebounded somewhat from our engagement levels during Covid but not all the way back to the levels we saw prior to the pandemic. While we are aware that is true for many congregations, it remains a point of discussion among our congregation.

## IDENTITY

*First Baptist Church of Abilene's identity can be summed up with four terms:*

### BAPTIST

Being Baptist in the 21st century is tricky, not only because many churches are leaving behind denominational identity, but because Baptist identity involves many different dimensions. For First Baptist Church Abilene, Baptist identity means first and foremost congregationalism, with much of the church's ongoing structure run through lay committees, and the church's bylaws and governance determined by congregational input. We believe in the autonomy of the local church, in its freedom to live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and to partner with other churches in pursuit of our God-given mission.

Baptist partnerships at FBC Abilene exist to facilitate missions, not to define or constrict us. FBC Abilene currently partners with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. We give to the local Baptist association, partner together with churches within and outside Baptist life locally for various events, and welcome opportunities to build our networks for common mission.

### BIBLICAL

We are a congregation which aspires for its preaching, theological identity, mission, and partnerships to be governed by a deep and wide engagement with Scripture. We aspire for the Holy Scriptures to shape all aspects of what it means for us to engage in mission, what it means to be the people of God in the world, and what it means for us to be people called to worship and witness to the triune God.

In this, we seek to be those who love God, and in doing so, seek the riches of the Scripture's vision of God within each person we reach, regardless of age or social status - thus, our Mission Statement "To Reach People for Jesus Christ and Together Become More Like Him". As church members, we do not always agree on all points of interpretation, but what we do agree on is that Scripture constitutes the way in which the living God leads and directs the congregation. In learning to more fully know, pray, and embody the Scriptures, we hope to be a people whose lives reflect the love and mercy of the God of whom the Scriptures speak.

## **CRITICAL CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT**

In its engagements with cultural questions, First Baptist Church Abilene seeks to be both loving and faithful to its mission in the world. Our congregation is, by and large, traditional on questions of sexuality and marriage, while also being the first and only Baptist church in Abilene for nearly 25 years to ordain women as deacons and to a wide range of ministry positions.

Our critical engagements with culture have led us not only to extend mercy to a suffering world, but to seek to mend the wounds of that world. Our missions are thus not only relief ministry to the underserved of Abilene, but also offering job training and counseling.

## **FREEDOM IN DIVERSITY**

First Baptist Church Abilene is a church which expects not only to be challenged in our understanding of Scripture and of God's work in the world, but creates space for that. We look to be led deeper into how Christians have read the Scriptures faithfully, matching what already happens within our Sunday School classes and in our Wednesday night programming. FBC Abilene is a thinking church, meaning that we are seeking to learn more of what it means to read the Scriptures faithfully, but also that we want to leave open space for both old and new members to freely ask questions and to wrestle with Scripture.

First Baptist Church, though politically more conservative on the whole, is a church which embodies diverse political and social positions. In a 2022 survey, the church identified itself as relational conservatives, that on the whole, the church holds conservative political and theological views, but that it did not expect that everyone in the church believe this way. We view this as a strength to be embraced, and not to be shied away from. We are intentionally non-partisan in our political engagements, seeking to work with diverse members of the city of Abilene for the sake of mission to our most vulnerable neighbors, and to draw all persons in Abilene and beyond into the Kingdom of God.

# OUR STEWARDSHIP

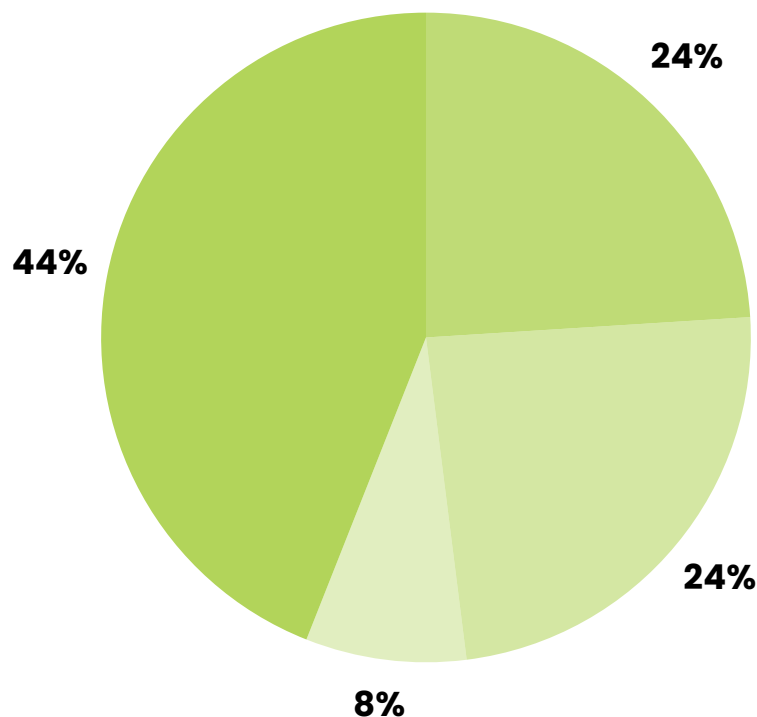
First Baptist has a strong tradition of devoted and benevolent stewardship. For example: Our church budget over the past decade has generally increased.

We were fortunate to maintain a healthy financial position during the COVID pandemic. The church is free of debt and has been for nearly three decades.

First Baptist has also held two capital campaigns in the past twelve years which have raised over \$15 million, including the most recent Hope Center campaign, which raised \$8.8 million in contributions and pledges.

Like many churches, however, we are also watching as current attendance trends affect giving patterns. For the last three years, FBC Abilene has met its financial obligations, but has done so by exercising prudence about its expenses, asking each budgeted area to operate at approximately 85% of budgeted expenses to ensure that we are able to make the most of our resources. For most of 2024, in the wake of our previous pastor's departure, giving lagged behind, but as we closed out the year giving surged, and we are excited to have finished 2024 with a surplus of more than \$100,000.

Below you will see the current percentages of our budget dedicated to various categories.



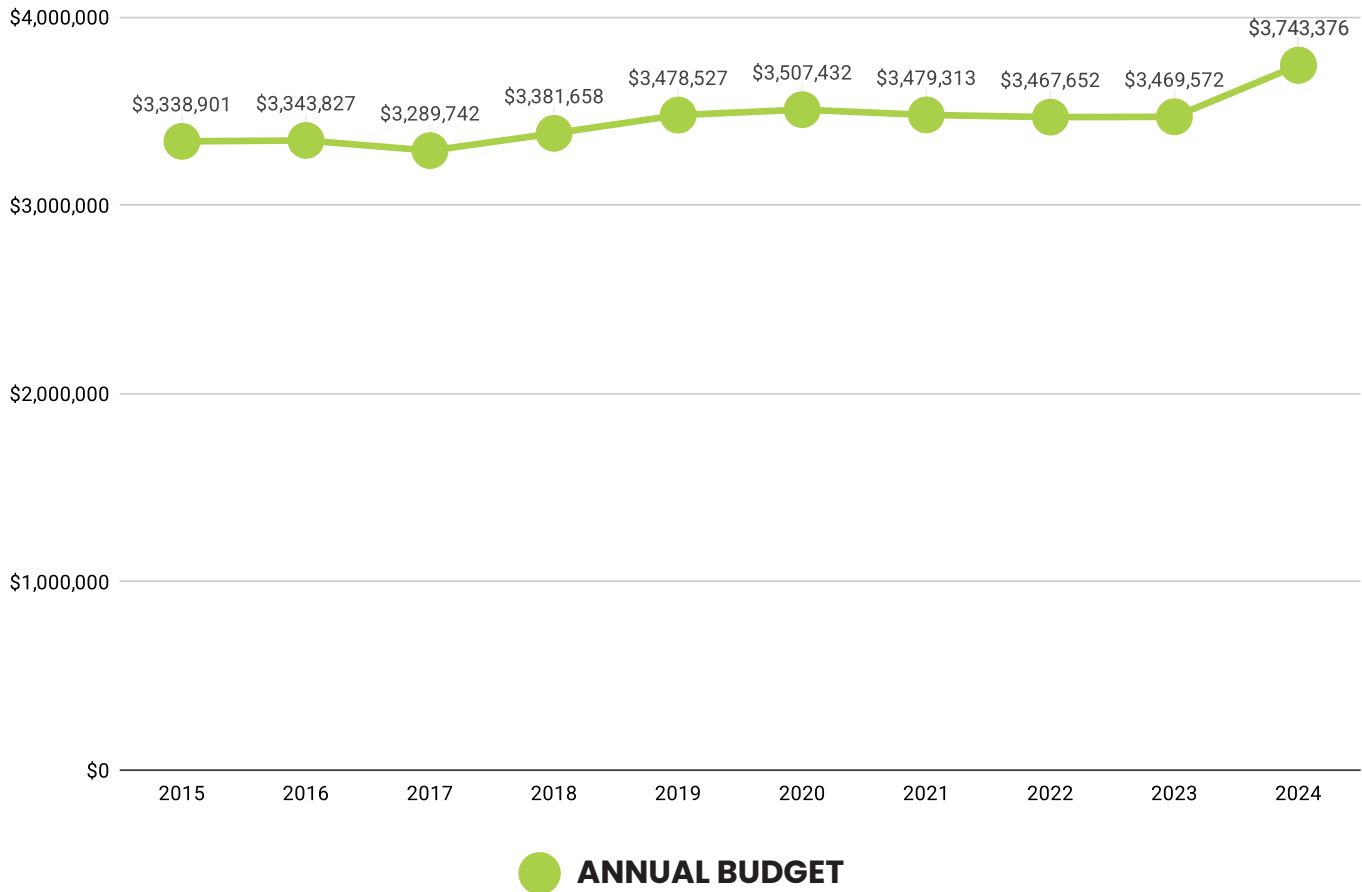
**FACILITIES**

**MISSIONS**

**PROGRAMMING**

**PERSONNEL**

Our church is budgeted to receive just over \$3.8 million in 2025, of which almost 30% supports missions and evangelism activities in the Abilene area and around the world. While our budget year technically begins in January, the Budget Committee meets early in the year to assess the final numbers from the previous year and then makes any necessary adjustments.



We are blessed as a congregation to have a wide and deep set of ministries that we undertake and aspects of mission that we support. We also recognize that this creates complexity in our fiscal management. For instance, the church budget does not include all the expenditures of our related non-profit work that supports Glo Day Care, First Friends Preschool, Ministry of Counseling, Family Life Center, and City Light Community Ministries.

## FIRST BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Former members of First Baptist had the foresight and philanthropic vision to establish a foundation for the church many years ago. This foundation serves as a way to provide financial security for the congregation to fund capital improvements, support mission work, and assist with unexpected facilities expenditures. The foundation currently holds total assets of over \$10 million, not counting funds earmarked for the Hope Center capital campaign.

# OUR LEADERSHIP



## **Mike Greenfield**

Pastor for Administration and Spiritual Development

Mike joined the staff in 1996 as Pastor for Young and Median Adults and then in 2004 moved into the administration role. In addition, Mike oversees technology in the church, including the website, all print publications, and digital publicity.

Prior to joining the staff in 1996, Mike served in Baptist student ministries at San Jacinto College, Texas Wesleyan College, and Baylor University. A native of Snyder, Mike is a graduate of both Texas Tech University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Patti, are the parents

of three children; Katie and her husband, Luke Palmer and sons Liam, Kohen, Jude, and Jones; Blake and his wife, Sarah and son Henry; and Brett.

Mike enjoys playing golf, tennis, throwing darts on the church Dart Baseball Team, and cooking.



## **C.V. Blake**

Pastor for Adults/Senior Adults

C.V. came to Abilene as Pastor for Youth in 1999. He served in that position before he moved into the Young and Median Adult position in 2004. He now gives leadership to adults from the age of 50 through Sr. Adults. He also works with the Men's Ministry and coordinates the small group Bible studies for men.

Before coming to Abilene in 1999, C.V. served in similar ministry positions in Bryan, Lubbock, Shallowater, Slaton, and O'Donnell. C.V. is a graduate of Texas Tech University. He and his wife, Shelly, have two children. Bryan lives and works in the Dallas area with his wife, Marlow, and their children, Walker and Pearson. Lauren lives in Abilene with her husband, Reed Stafford, and their children, Jack and Brynn.





## **Todd Wilson**

Pastor for Worship and Music

Todd is a native Texan and the son of a Baptist pastor. He graduated from Alamogordo (NM) High School and went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in music education from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri in 1982. He completed a Master of Music degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1985.

Before coming to Abilene, Todd served at First Baptist Church, Henderson, Texas, for over six years and has served full-time as Minister of Music in the following churches: First Baptist Church, White Settlement; First Baptist Church, Grapevine; and First Baptist Church, San Marcos. He also served as Music Assistant at Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler. Todd is a member of the Centurymen and the Singing Men of Texas.

Todd met his wife, Michele, while a student at William Jewell. She was also a music education major. Todd and Michele have two children: daughter, Mackenzie, and son, Landon and wife, Katie and daughter, Mary Kate. Todd was ordained to the Gospel Ministry in 1985. Todd enjoys playing golf and computers.



## **John Moore**

Pastor for Missions

John came to First Baptist at the beginning of 2008 to begin his work as Pastor for Missions. John was raised in the Houston area before attending Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as a youth pastor in Lorena, Texas, and for 13 years at Williams Trace Baptist Church in Sugar Land, Texas.

John and his wife, Beverly, have three children Marshall, Collin and wife Libby, and Nathan.



## **Candy Rains**

Pastor for Preschool

Candy graduated from Wylie High School and was an active member of Lytle South Baptist Church for 14 years. She is married to Eddie Rains, an independent agent in automotive training and consulting. They have three children: Kristian and her husband, Marcus and daughter Lily and son Henry; Morgan; and Chance.



## **Becky Tucker**

Pastor for Children and Women's Ministry

Becky joined the staff in the fall of 2011 to lead the children's ministries. A graduate of Hardin-Simmons University with a BBS in recreation, Becky taught in the public school system for 20 years here in Abilene at Jane Long and Thomas Elementary schools. Becky brings a wealth of experience and a deep love for children to this position. She and her husband, Gary, a retired computer technology manager and a member of our television ministry at FBC, have two children, Clayton and his wife, Jordan and daughter Reece; and Britney.



## **Matthew Broyles**

Pastor for College and Young Adults

Matthew Broyles serves as our Pastor for College and Young Adults. Matthew graduated in May 2008 from the University of Texas-Arlington with a Bachelor of Arts in Finance and then from Logsdon Seminary in May 2012 with a Master of Divinity. Before coming to Abilene in 2018, he served as Youth Minister at First Baptist Church, Baird; Youth Minister at First Baptist Church, Hereford, TX; Pastoral Resident at Wilshire Baptist Church, Dallas, TX; and Pastor of ESIC Baptist Church in Edwardsville, Illinois. Matthew is married to Katie, who is a schoolteacher. They are the proud parents of Rosie Kate and Lincoln.



## **Hunter Brown**

Pastor for Youth

Hunter Brown grew up in the metropolis of Clyde, Texas and is the son of Carl and Carla Brown. He is married to Kelsey (Higbee) Brown, and they celebrated 3 years of marriage in June 2023. Fun fact: Hunter and Kelsey celebrated their wedding at FBC Abilene. Hunter attended Hardin-Simmons for his undergrad in ministry and went on to graduate studies at Logsdon Seminary where he and Kelsey met one another. Hunter is currently working on his Doctor of Ministry through Truett Seminary. Before coming to FBC in December 2023, he served in church ministry for just over ten years, working

at churches in Clyde and Abilene before spending the last 3 years in Muleshoe, Tx. In his spare time, Hunter loves to watch movies, play video games, and read. He and Kelsey also love spending time with their two dogs: Burr (Border Collie) and Sam (Corgi). Hunter and Kelsey have one child, Luke Avery Brown, born the end of December 2023.



## **Joe Frush**

Director of Pastoral Care

Joe joined the staff in February 2019 as Director of Pastoral Care. Joe retired in January 2018 after working 45 years in Healthcare and Senior Living. His background includes being a Hospital Administrator, a Licensed Long-Term Care Administrator, and a Certified Assisted/Independent Living Executive. Joe and his wife, Sherry, have been an active part of First Baptist since 1985. They have 3 grown sons and 5 grandchildren.

## LAY LEADERSHIP

On any given day at First Baptist Church you can see lay members serving within the church building and beyond its walls. Lay members serve as deacons, leaders in Bible Study, Wednesday night activities, and as volunteers in various mission projects. There are many ways lay persons are devoting their time, energy, and talents to endeavors of our church.



## DEACONS

The deacon body at First Baptist Abilene consists of sixty active members presided over by a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Recording Secretary, and Attendance Secretary. Twenty deacons are elected each year and serve a three year term. The group of deacons reflect our church's belief in the leadership of women as well as men. This year there are twenty-six women and thirty-four men serving in this role. Monthly meetings are held. Each member of the deacon body is assigned to one of five ministry teams that directly touch our congregation and extended community. A monthly lunch meeting between the senior pastor and the deacon officers provides opportunity for discussing the business and needs of our church and staff.

The purpose of our deacon body is to be servant leaders involved in the ministry and mission of the church. Working in an advisory role on key decisions with the staff allows for feedback and discussion concerning the work and activities of First Baptist, but are not a governing body. The deacons also seek to preserve and promote the spirit of unity and peace within the church and to assist the members in every way possible with physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

# CHURCH COMMITTEES AND MINISTRY TEAMS

Our church is led by eleven committees and five ministry teams. They are charged to carry out the mission of the church.

## COMMITTEES

**Budget & Stewardship**

**Buildings & Grounds**

**City Light Board**

**Constitution, Bylaws & Policies**

**Counseling & Family Enrichment**

**FBC Foundation**

**Finance**

**GLO Day Care Board**

**Missions Committee**

**Personnel**

**Recreation Ministry Board**

## MINISTRY TEAMS

**Bereavement**

**Hospital Visitation**

**Healing Hearts**

**PrayerWorks**

**TV Ministry**



If you add up all these roles and the individuals who are carrying them out, this means there are over 300 laypersons showing God's love through the ministries of our church, into our community each and every week.



## INTERNALLY-FOCUSED MINISTRIES

### WORSHIP

First Baptist Church people meet to worship corporately on Sunday mornings at 10:30. Worship is designed as an intergenerational experience, involving the entire church and guests, from kindergartners through senior adults. We believe this is how a diverse community of faith connecting in a downtown church setting achieves a genuine sense of unity.



The pastors of our church lead us in worship through a typical pattern of welcome and lighting the Christ candle, music, prayers, and preaching. Sermons are biblical, relevant, and dynamic. Alongside our ministers, the children, youth, men, and women of the congregation are intentionally included in worship leadership, demonstrating their gifts and willingness to share them with the church. Prayers, scripture reading, and musical offerings by these lay leaders represent the congregation as a whole participating in worship.

Our beautiful sanctuary, from the stained-glass mosaics of Christ above the choir loft and the exposed pipes of the organ to the rose window facing outward to the north, lends

itself to a holy and reverent atmosphere. While this is very true, it does not overwhelm the sense of fellowship among our congregation. The choir typically wears robes, but other worship leaders and most congregants are rather casual in attire. The presence of a full choir, orchestra, and pipe organ appears quite traditional, but the music of our worship comes from a wide variety of styles, encompassing traditional to contemporary. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are sung and played instrumentally in a manner that appeals to many tastes within an hour of worship.

The congregation celebrates Communion monthly, and baptisms are performed in Sunday morning worship. Special services occur annually in the holy seasons of Advent, Lent, and Easter. At Advent we celebrate with a Parade of Flags Mission Service and two candlelight Christmas Eve services. In the Spring we celebrate the beginning of Lent with Ash Wednesday, and during Holy Week we observe Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday with a climactic celebration of Easter. First Baptist also participates in a week-long series of services involving other churches in the downtown area. Other worship opportunities are offered as part of discipleship activities on Wednesday nights, and youth Bible studies on Sunday and Wednesday nights involve worship led by our youth praise team. The centrality of worship at FBC begins early, as preschoolers and older children incorporate songs about the love of Jesus with their learning of scripture and discipleship.

## TELEVISION MINISTRY

First Baptist is fortunate to have a well-established television ministry that was begun in 1974. The church has a state-of-the-art production studio to provide broadcast of Sunday morning worship each week over cable television. The service is also broadcast over the Internet by Boxcast and through social media. Other special events throughout the year are also live-streamed. Our television ministry serves members who are homebound in Abilene, who are temporarily out of town, and some who have moved to other locations. Additionally, the ministry is externally-focused in the sense that it reaches beyond our membership, as thousands of people participate in our worship digitally every week. Our church is blessed to have a totally volunteer, dedicated staff facilitating this ministry weekly with oversight by the Pastor for Administration and Spiritual Development.



## SPIRITUAL FORMATION

On Sunday mornings, between 9–10:30, there are Sunday school classes available for all ages, from preschool to Senior adults. Frequently, there is a church-wide curriculum adopted, but classes are also encouraged to adopt their own formats as well. Many of the church deacons, past and present, lead these classes, and they continue to be a first point of involvement for those seeking to become more deeply involved at First Baptist.

The Great Commission reminds us that we are to share the gospel and “make disciples” throughout the world. Worship is our primary response to the grace that God shows us through Jesus Christ, and we also understand our responsibility to engage in discipleship. We encourage one another in the journey of growth in holiness and righteousness. Spiritual formation is a two-fold experience at FBC Abilene. Initially it involves a commitment to Christian education rooted in Bible study for all age groups, whereby we learn together how to apply God’s Word to our lives, coming under the guiding authority of the Holy Spirit. Then, with a grounding in Bible Study, we open ourselves to the work of the Spirit of God within us, growing us into Christlikeness, learning obedience, emulating Christ’s character, and loving as He has loved us. We are motivated by the Lord himself as expressed in our church mission statement: “To bring others to Jesus Christ and together become more like Him.”



## FELLOWSHIP

First Baptist Church people have identified the authentic relationships of our community of faith as a core value that we hold tightly. It is expressed in the way we love one another and welcome visitors. Many who are new to First Baptist remark how quickly they have found our church a place of acceptance, encouragement, and incorporation into the community.

Many opportunities are offered to promote genuine fellowship among our people. Bible Study classes on Sunday mornings create small group connections within age groups. Wednesday night suppers allow us to develop closer friendships in a casual atmosphere. There are special annual events like Roundup Sunday followed by a barbeque lunch, the children’s Pancake Supper, and FBC Night at the Zoo with hamburgers and hot dogs. Trunk or Treat and Vacation Bible School engages our congregation with the Abilene community every year. Wednesday evening discipleship and discussion groups encourage the sharing of life experiences with one another. Folks may join morning prayer and Bible/





book study groups such as the Men's Prayer Breakfast. In summer, there are Wednesday evening fellowships in the Family Life Center.

Service is another manner in which fellowship grows. Ministry groups like Healing Hearts deepen relationships as team members crochet or knit blankets, afghans, or prayer shawls for those in nursing facilities or the homebound. Volunteers in the City Light ministry work side by side serving food to the needy and homeless in our community. Teams travel together delivering groceries through Abilene Social Ministries, cooperating with members of other churches in the Abilene Baptist Association. Additionally, the congregation is blessed to meet members of the other downtown churches during the Holy Week luncheons.

## NURTURE

Pastoral care and intercession is foundational to a life in Christ, and First Baptist people recognize the importance of prayer for personal spiritual formation. As we pray for one another, for our church and staff, the bereaved, or the sick, we grow closer to the source of our strength, Jesus Christ. Through prayer we are empowered to comfort, show compassion, and be priests to one another. As we worship, prayer is an integral presence in the service, and a deacon is scheduled to pray throughout each Sunday morning service in the prayer room. The PrayerWorks ministry prays daily in the prayer room, and multiple morning prayer groups intercede weekly.

Our pastors provide personal care for our congregants and the community beyond, and lay leaders initiate pastoral care for those in need in their relational circles. The Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment provides care for interested members of the congregation and community.



*In all things our love for one another is the source of our nurturing ministry at FBC.*

## EXTERNALLY FOCUSED MINISTRIES

The missions ministry of First Baptist, Abilene operates from an “Acts 1:8” philosophy beginning in service to Abilene and the surrounding area (commonly referred to as “the Big Country”) and expanding to our state, nation, and world. Many of our expanded missions efforts are in collaboration with our denominational partners.

## COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

A part of our rich heritage and current innovation as a church has included pioneering Mission Action Program Ministries in our community. These ministries seek to live out the gospel by serving in the development, nurturing, and healing of the body, mind, and soul of people in Abilene and the surrounding area.

## MISSION ACTION, INC.

Three of these ministries have been incorporated into a 501c3 non-profit known as Mission Action Inc. They are God’s Little Ones (GLO) Daycare, Ministry of Counseling & Enrichment (MOCE), and Family Life Center (FLC).



## GOD’S LITTLE ONE’S (GLO) DAYCARE

GLO was established in 1969 to help fill the void of quality, affordable childcare in Abilene for working families from a variety of backgrounds. The children and families reached by GLO are met with care, consideration, and the love of Christ.

GLO is a state licensed child care program that provides affordable childcare and early education by offering a sliding scale fee.

GLO exists to provide a nurturing, high quality, safe and fun learning environment that is fit for the child’s overall growth and development.

Currently GLO serves 55 families with a total of 80 children who are taught daily.

## MINISTRY OF COUNSELING & ENRICHMENT (MOCE)

MOCE was envisioned in 1977 as a response to the growing number of divorces in the community, and FBC Abilene wanted to be at the forefront of providing help and healing to hurting families. What started in a vacant Sunday School room with a phone and a desk has evolved into a truly comprehensive mental health center. The mission of MOCE is to provide Christ-centered services to the people of Abilene and the Big Country regardless of race, religion, or ability to pay. In an effort to fulfill that mission, MOCE provides an income-based scale for those without insurance or ability to meet their current deductible.



MOCE has 9 fully licensed mental health professionals and 3 graduate interns providing counseling and therapy to couples, families, children, adolescents, and adults. Included in those clinicians we have a doctoral level Psychologists providing psychological and neuropsychological assessment.

In 2024, the MOCE provided 7,030 counseling hours with a total of 468 new families served.



## FAMILY LIFE CENTER (FLC)

FLC was established in 1981 and exists to provide a welcoming and secure facility which provides affordable access to a variety of recreational uses for the Abilene area communities. FLC is a place where individuals and families can come together and enjoy the many activities we have to offer (such as skating, bowling, basketball, fitness center, fellowship and games). Many groups (schools, special needs, non-profits and small businesses) in our area also come here to have fun and relieve stress.

In 2024 FLC served approximately 12,500 individuals through 210 building rentals and over 2,00 individuals through party, school, and special needs groups.

## CITY LIGHT COMMUNITY MINISTRY

City Light was established in 1997 out of a desire to provide a more comprehensive ministry to some of the more economically disadvantaged people in Abilene. City Light seeks not only to provide for urgent needs but also to come alongside people to assist them in transformational changes that might help prevent these crises in the future and, in the process, honor the dignity of all served.

City Light serves a hot lunch to all who walk in on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Breakfast is served before a worship service on Sunday mornings. In 2024, City Light served an average of 607 people each week, with a total of 64,712 meals served during the year.

Along with a hot meal our City Light friends have access to City Light Market where they can take home Abilene Food Bank donations of produce, fruit, and other foods on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The City Light Culinary Academy was recently established to assist people in learning a marketable and employable skill with plans to also add training for wait staff in the future.

A case management program has been developed to serve as an access point by meeting those most immediate and critical financial needs (such as rent, utility, fuel, and bus passes) and develop into a more comprehensive service to assist in developing more sustainable habits in the future. These financial needs are mostly supported by the "Good Cheer Fund" which is replenished each year from the offerings given during our Christmas Eve services.

All of these ministries, except for the Family Life Center, are housed fully or in-part through the Hope Center, a renovated ministry space which was purchased from First Christian Church, located across 3rd Street from First Baptist.

The Hope Center, opened in 2023, expanded the community reach of City Light, GLO Daycare, and Ministry of Counseling & Enrichment.

City Light was transformed into a 13,000 square foot facility including (but not limited to) a state-of-the-art Commercial Kitchen for the Culinary Academy and expanded seating to enable a "dining with dignity" approach to serving meals to more people.

GLO Daycare became 17,000 square foot facility which will expand its capacity from 120 to 182 and will include indoor and outdoor play areas for children.

There is space on the 2nd floor of the Hope Center which is available for expanded services, but is currently not in use.

## MISSIONS BEYOND OUR COMMUNITY

First Baptist Abilene is committed to financial support of those called to serve our state, nation, and world. We have an active lay-led Missions Committee that helps in maintaining and expanding our missional reach. In 2006 we affirmed the innovative conviction of one of our congregational leaders to enter into a capital campaign known as “Faces & Places” for the purpose of providing immediate missions funding and establishing an endowment specifically for ongoing missions support. The campaign has raised its initial goal of \$6 million and continues to receive donations. All resources are distributed in accordance with the Acts 1:8 philosophy.

Local support is provided to ministries such as the Eunice-Chambliss House providing lodging for families traveling to visit their loved ones in our local prisons, the establishment of a Friendship House which is strategically located in the downtown neighborhood near our church for intentional relationship and ministry, and partnerships in money and activity with organizations providing low-income and specialized housing.

State-wide support reflects our denominational partnerships including but not limited to additional funding to BGCT ministries like support for Disaster Relief, as well as support for CBF Texas’ border ministry. Annually, FBC sponsors a family mission trip to McAllen, TX where we serve in partnership with Buckner Baptist Benevolences.

National and international support has been provided for those serving in New York, Los Angeles, Colorado, South Africa, and India.



First Baptist, Abilene is committed to a long-term presence in our role as an Encourager Church through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). In this role we support CBF Field Personnel in Macedonia, Southeast Asia, and Cambodia. This support includes not only financial sponsorship, but multiple congregational mission trips to Macedonia and Southeast Asia in support of their work.

# OUR CAMPUS



**MAIN BUILDING** - The current FBC campus involves property on 7 city blocks in downtown Abilene. The main building is made up of three sections and Located on North Third Street. Our original sanctuary was dedicated in 1883 and has been renovated multiple times over the history of the church. The current sanctuary itself and the adjoining choir suite and TV Ministry suite were fully renovated in 2006 with the help of the Heritage and Hope Campaign. The current sanctuary has a seating capacity of 1280, and choir loft can fit up to 100 people. The adjacent four story Sunday School Building to the east comprises over 50 current sunday school classrooms, church offices and the library. This building extends south to encompass the church kitchen and dining hall along with the GLO daycare wing, which was built in 1968 and has been functioning in this building since that time. This area also serves as sunday school class rooms and has a chapel adjoining it on its west end, which seats approximately 150. Current plans for this wing of the building include renovation following the move of GLO to its new facility at the Hope Center, with the transition of the Nursery to this area and conversion of the previous nursery into more accessible sunday school rooms for our senior adults.

**FAMILY LIFE CENTER** - This building is located on North Second west of the main building. In an effort to promote health amongst the congregation and the community, this building was completed in 1981 and renovated in 2012 to better provide for the church and the community. It serves to host numerous events throughout the year for church and non church functions as well as provides exercise facilities, indoor basketball, an indoor jogging track, racquetball, bowling and a skating rink. This facility also includes a full kitchen.



## **CITY LIGHT COMMUNITY MINISTRIES**

**BUILDING** - This ministry was started in 1998 with the original building at the corner of North 4th and Hickory. This building functions to serve some of the most vulnerable in our community in multiple ways and seeks to spread the love and power of Jesus Christ by serving, teaching, and connecting with the various groups common to the downtown Abilene area. The building itself has several classrooms that the church uses for nine different ministries that promote spiritual growth, along with a dining room for daily guests, a kitchen, washer and dryer in the basement, and several offices for part time and full time staff.



## **THE UNIVERSITY PLACE**

- This building was purchased by the church in 1975 with the intention of providing a space for the University students. It has a total of 5 individual classrooms with a large meeting room.



## **HOPE CENTER**

- Formerly First Christian Church, this building was purchased by FBC in 2019, and was opened in 2023 after an 8 million dollar renovation that provides a new home for three of the existing ministries of First Baptist including GLO daycare, City Light Community Ministries and the Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment. It is located directly northwest of the main sanctuary on North third street. There is a two story 18,000 square foot structure which was converted into the new GLO Daycare facility. In addition, the 7,500 square foot Activity building had 6,900 square feet added to house the new Culinary Academy that is part of the current City Light Ministry.



## **MINISTRY OF COUNSELING AND ENRICHMENT (MOCE)**

- Originally built in 1998, this structure is located on north first and Beech. This main building for the MOCE has 8 offices and 3 play therapy rooms along with an outdoor playground that was added in 2004.



## **NORTH AND SOUTH PARKING LOTS -**

Over 200 total parking spaces

**THE BARN** - approximately 6000 square foot storage building located on Hickory directly across from the Sunday school building.

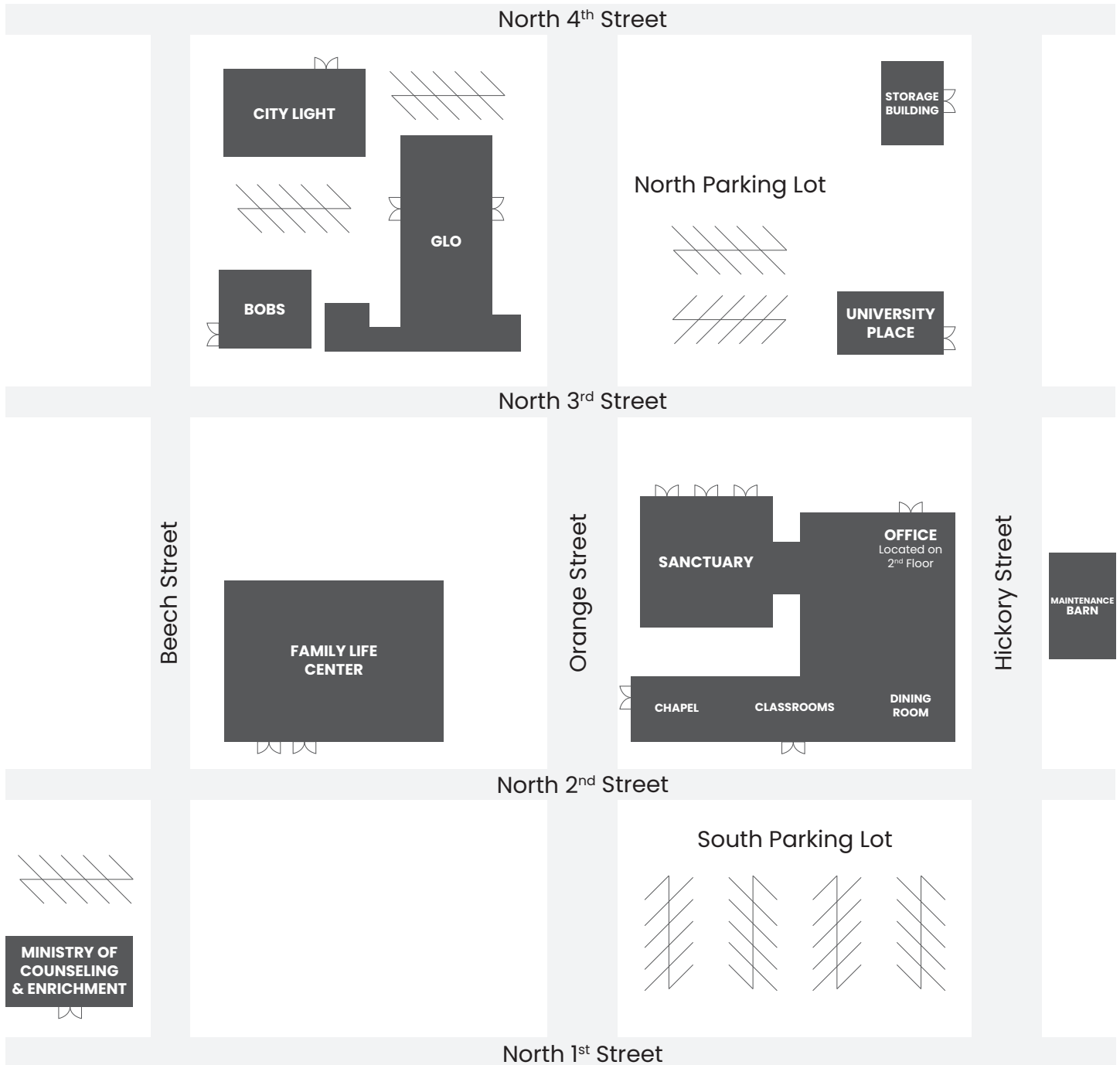
**GLORIETA LODGE** - Originally built in 1952, this building is located in Glorieta, New Mexico. It is used throughout the year for various retreats for the staff, church members and their family members. It has a larger meeting room with a full kitchen, 3 apartment style rooms with individual bathrooms, 7 dormitory style rooms with bunk beds and full beds and shared hall bathrooms; and 3 hotel style rooms with individual bed and bath. This property will no longer belong to First Baptist Church after Summer 2025.



Our location in the downtown area provides us with a unique opportunity to impact the Abilene community. Our core values directly align with this, as we are a missional church body that has a history of seeking out innovative ways to meet the needs of our city. Our congregation has risen to the occasion to provide for the people of the downtown Abilene area through our multiple community ministries including City Light, GLO Daycare, and the Ministry of Counseling. As these ministries have continued to grow, so has our footprint in the surrounding areas around us. This has always been the case for our church, and we have every intention of continuing to pursue a culture of service for our community in this manner.



# CAMPUS MAP



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# OUR BROADER COMMUNITY

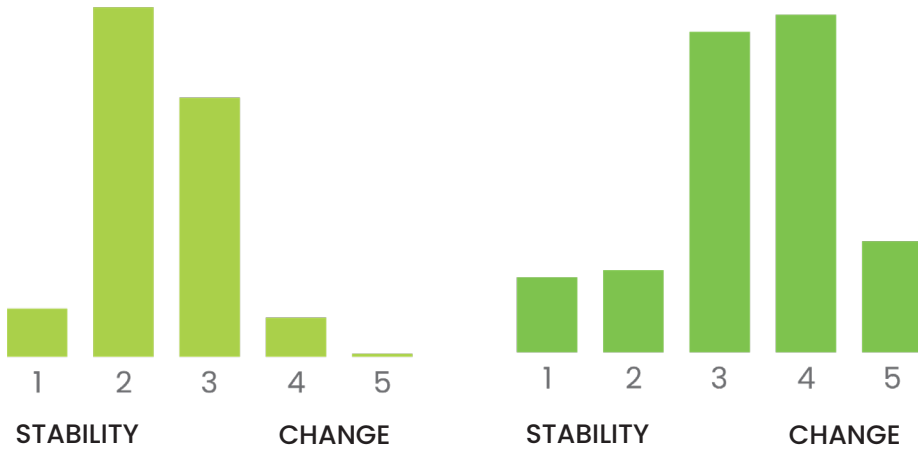
## ABILENE AND BIG COUNTRY

Texas is one of the fastest growing states in the United States. The 2024 projected population for Abilene is 130,721. This projection assumes a 1.3% increase, consistent with the population change from 2022 to 2023 according to the US Census Bureau's 2023 Population Estimates Program. The metro area population of Abilene is 176,579. Abilene is predominately white (non-Hispanic), but is projected to see a slight increase in its Hispanic / Latino community over the next five years. The largest Abilene racial/ethnic groups are White (56.9%) followed by Hispanic (27.6%) and Black (9.9%). The median age of Abilene is 32.2, with one-quarter of Abilene's population is between the ages of 35 and 54 with 51% of the population being 35 and older. FBC Abilene's congregation has an even greater percentage of those 35 and older with 66% of its congregation represented by that age group.

The Abilene and Big Country area is comprised of 56% married households. In the next 10 years, population analysts expect a slight increase in single mother households with a slight decrease in two parents and single father households. In terms of households with children, our community differs from our state in households with children with only 27% of households with children under 18 and 72% of households without children under the age of 18.

The household median income for our community is \$59,254. This is lower than the state median income of \$73,035. In light of this, our community has a higher poverty level than the rest of the state at 15.9% This is compared to a rate at 14% for the state of Texas. In spite of this, the Abilene community outpaces Texas in the percentage of people with at least a high school diploma at 89.5% compared to Texas at 83.6%, which further correlates with Abilene being a primarily white-collar community at 60%. The FBC Abilene congregation is closer to 80% white collar.

In light of this information, we believe our church has the unique opportunity to impact our community and the surrounding areas in some specific ways. While City Light Community Ministries serves a diverse population, we would like for the rest of our congregation to reflect more of the ethnic, economic, and overall diversity of our city. In light of this, because our community has a relatively high number of households made up of singles, adults without children, and single moms, we hope to increase our engagement with these individuals. Finally, the FBC media ministry reaches so many well beyond our church walls and we believe we can provide a springboard for even more creative engagement in this arena.



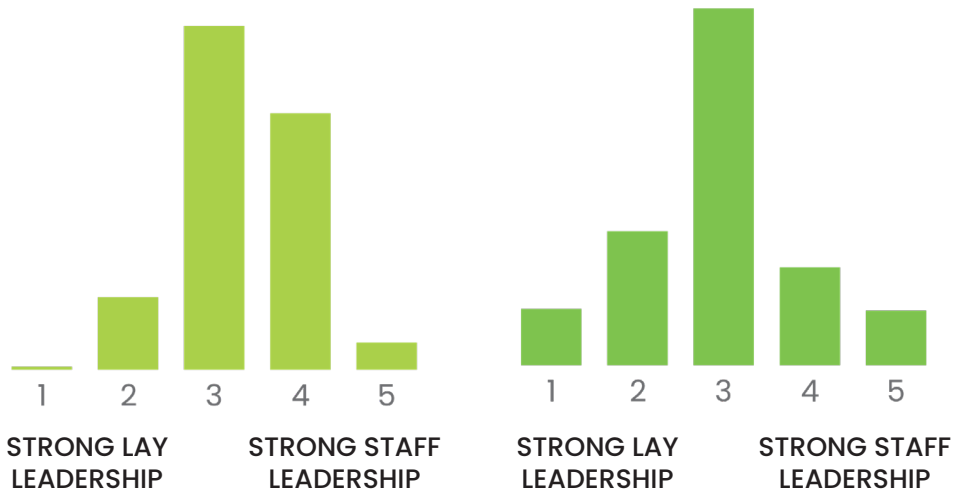
**FBC TODAY**

Average: 2.4



**FBC IN THE FUTURE**

Average: 3.35



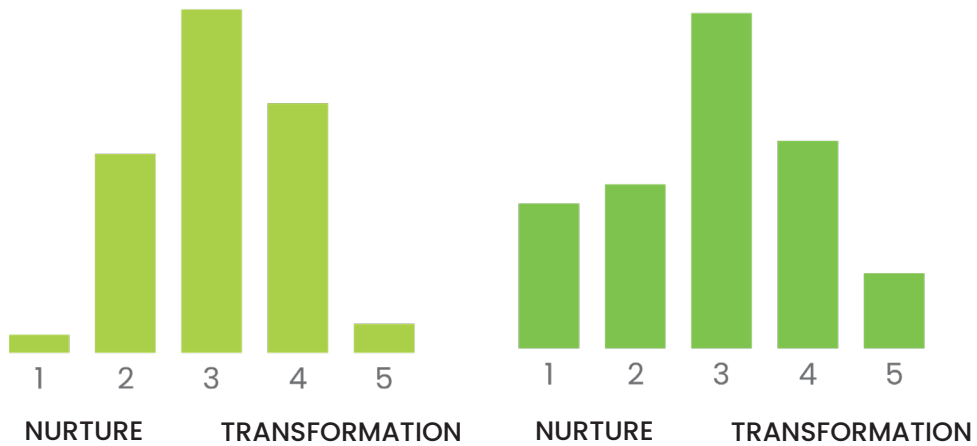
**FBC TODAY**

Average: 3.3



**FBC IN THE FUTURE**

Average: 2.94



**FBC TODAY**

Average: 3.1



**FBC IN THE FUTURE**

Average: 2.9

# FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR FBC ABILENE

In the last four years, our congregation has met multiple times, using both round-table conversations and surveys, to be able to provide as full a picture as possible of who the congregation is, and what the congregation hopes for the future. Much of this has already been summarized in the Church Identity document, but here, we will summarize some of the challenges and hopes we have for the future of our church.

## **DISCIPLESHIP AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Consistently, this has been named by our congregation as both something they participate in personally, and something they want to see more corporate emphasis on in the future. While we continue to offer a variety of Sunday School classes, as well as spiritual formation opportunities during the week through prayer groups, Wednesday night intergenerational groups, participation in service and mission, regular participation in Sunday School and Wednesday night activities is inconsistent. In our recent 2024 survey, this was named as an emphasis which needs more attention in the future.

Our church has identified that, for many years now, worship and missions have been consistently strong. Our Sunday morning worship regularly features robust worship, and our local and international missions work are well-supported. But over 60% of participants in our recent congregational dinner identified discipleship and spiritual formation as an area which needs more emphasis in the future. Like most Baptist churches, there has been a decline in baptisms and emphasis on evangelism, something the congregation has expressed a desire to change in years to come.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

In a November 2024 survey, 70% of respondents indicated that they were and would continue to make consistent contributions to the church finances, with a third of that number indicating they were planning to increase their giving in the next year. Additionally, 85% of respondents indicated that they thought it was necessary to consider changes to how our financial priorities have been organized.

Our ministry activities have increased since 2023's opening of the Hope Center, which will require careful attention to financial priorities in coming years. Repairs to the main building due to flooding, and long-overdue staff raises required raising the budget in the previous year as well. Our congregation has a long track record of faithful giving. Long term thinking about our financial priorities are nonetheless needed to ensure continued faithfulness to God's call on FBC.

## STABILITY AND CHANGE

In recent surveys of the congregation, congregants expressed that First Baptist presently stands in a generally balanced place between looking to preserve past traditions and looking to embrace innovation in the future. As an intergenerational church, it is unsurprising to have this kind of balance represented.

The congregation has expressed desire for change in two ways. First, FBC Abilene has historically had a focus on external missions. But a majority of the congregation has expressed in recent surveys a desire to see more internal focus on discipleship and spiritual formation in coming years. Second, there has been a desire for change in increasing the congregation's ability to invite its neighbors to church, to empower lay leadership, and to deepen its spiritual formation. Third, there is a desire to strengthen its outreach to younger families, building on already strong programs for children and youth.

## PRESENT INVOLVEMENT, PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

In our November 2024 survey, respondents identified three key activities which they participate in regularly: prayer, personal discipleship, and acts of service/missions. One area which the congregation does not identify as something they are frequently involved in, but would like the next pastor to help lead in, is inviting people into God's saving work. As church participation and religious affiliation overall declines across the United States, it becomes more necessary for our church to recover habits of proclaiming God's saving work to those within the church and those who have not yet become followers of Christ.



**In our recent congregational conversation,  
participants identified three key priorities for our next pastor:**

**Preparing and Preaching Effective Sermons.** FBC Abilene has a long history of quality preaching. Participants identified overwhelmingly the desire for future preaching to do two things: invite the congregation into living out the Scriptures more fully in their own lives, and to invite everyone to a continual conversion of their lives by Christ.

**Providing Administrative Leadership.** FBC Abilene has multiple full-time staff, as well as a robust 501(c)3 which contains multiple ministry entities. Our next pastor will need to work alongside our pastor for administration to help supervise, equip and guide our pastoral ministry staff, and to inspire them toward excellent ministry in the future.

**Working With Our Deacons and Committees.** The work of ministry is more than what one person can do, and as a congregationally-driven church, we will look to our next pastor to cast a vision of how to move our whole congregation to participate in the work of the church. We have a regular pool of 60 deacons, and multiple committees ready to help shape the ministry of the church, and part of the pastor's work will be to help empower this structure to live out its ministry more fully.



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# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH ♦ ABILENE

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FBC Abilene



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