

FIRST words

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

When I think of all the many blessings I am grateful for, I count First Friends at First Baptist Church as one them! Several years ago when I began looking at different preschool programs to enroll my kids in, I found that the best fit for our family was First Friends. I am thankful my son and I get to come to school together. He gets to learn and have fun with all of his friends, and I get the opportunity to teach the children. We are blessed to be in a Christian learning environment with different enrichment opportunities for each child. Another reason I am so thankful for First Friends Preschool is the wonderful people I get to work with. I am so thankful to be surrounded by wonderful people who want to help shepherd and guide each child to not only learn and be the best they can be, but most importantly to know Jesus and share His love with the little ones we teach! I am thankful for all the wonderful teachers and all that they do to help make First Friends the best preschool. First Friends truly is a great place to be! I am very blessed and oh so thankful to be a part of the First Friends family!

- Amy Brazell
First Friends Preschool Teacher

I am grateful for First Friends Preschool which gives me the opportunity to spend time rocking, snuggling, and playing with some of God's youngest little blessings. When I applied last October, I was hoping and praying that I could be in the babies room and God answered my prayers beautifully. I love seeing all the exciting changes that take place during the first year of life. They come in September not even able to roll over yet, and then in May, walk out the door. It is always such a blessing to rejoice with them as they grow and change. At the same time, I remember how long and tiring those days were when my two boys (now 13 and 11) were that age and I know it is a blessing to the parents to get a little break as well.

I am also grateful for the First Baptist Church televised services each Sunday. I spend one weekend a month doing senior companion care and though I miss being with my own church family on those weekends, I am blessed to spend time with a sweet Christian lady and we enjoy worshipping and learning together with you through the televised service.

- Amanda Weems

Thankful
&
Grateful



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

NOVEMBER 2017

FBCABILENE.ORG

words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Dr. Phil Christopher
Senior Pastor

GIVING THANKS IN THE HARD PLACES...

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ.
-1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

It is one thing to give thanks around a table spilling over with a Thanksgiving feast and every chair filled with family. It is another thing to give thanks in the hard places when grief and illness show up as unwelcomed intruders, or life does not turn out as we had planned for ourselves or our children.

During my Thursday Bible Study, we prayed for Chuck Rodgers who has moved back to Abilene after the death of his spouse Cindy. Chuck gives thanks for the ways Cindy so valiantly fought the good fight against cancer and for the remarkable legacy she leaves. But, this will be the first Thanksgiving for Chuck, Taylor, and Molly to be without Cindy. How do we give thanks in the hard places?

We find encouragement in the stories of fellow-strugglers who have walked through the hard places. I find hope in the music of Thomas Dorsey. Dorsey had the gift to combine gospel music with blues and jazz. In 1932 during the height of his ministry, he was the featured soloist in a revival meeting. After sharing the gospel, he received a Western Union Message: "Your wife and newborn child just died."

He fell apart. He says, "I felt God had done me an injustice. I didn't want to serve Him any longer." Yet, one night lost in grief, he sat down at the piano. As his hands browsed over the keys, a song emerged. Many of you know the song. It was Precious Lord. The lyrics: "Take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light: Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home."

Dorsey wasn't singing the Doxology, but in hope, he was hanging on. He was finding a way to give thanks in the hard places...in all circumstances. As the book of Job says, "God giveth songs in the night."

Perhaps gospel music is not your choice. I know of one of our members who, after the tragic death of his son, found gratitude in the Casting Crowns song, Praise You In This Storm. He said the only thing which helped him survive, were the lyrics: "I'll praise you in this storm for you are who you are no matter where I am. And every tear I've cried you hold my hand." Giving thanks in the hard places.

We can find another way to give thanks in the hard places. We find the power and perspective to give thanks in the community of the church. Chuck Poole says, "As flawed as the church can be, there are wonders of grace that happen only in the community of the church." A wife said to her husband about her love for the church, "Buddy, if we woke up Sunday morning and discovered the atheists were right, we'd still get dressed and go to church because we need those people that much."

The preacher, William Sloane Coffin, who tragically lost a son said to the accusation that the church was only a crutch: "Yes. Right. The church is a crutch. And what makes you think you aren't limping?" When you are limping and having trouble giving thanks in the hard places, the church can walk with you and lead you to light and hope.

The church in the hard places,

Phil

Thankful & Grateful

After moving from Denver in April, we were hoping to find a good community of friends to provide nurturing and stability for us and especially our girls (4, 2.5 and 1.5), and we've found that in FBC. We are so very thankful for all the ways in which the church has welcomed us and allowed us to become part of the family. Our Sunday school class not only challenges us in our walks, but is full of wonderful friends that have so graciously included us in their lives, and that has made this transition to Abilene so easy and fun. The church has enriched our family by cultivating those moments of community, from Wednesday evening programming to the litany of outreach activities that are hosted; they all serve to create the environment for us to spend time as a family in a Godly setting.

The purposeful way in which FBC uses the vast pool of talent to craft such a welcoming and cohesive environment is evidenced in how natural and easy the church works to foster community, which is a testament to the resources of everyone involved that give their time and talents. From Candy and everyone in the Children's Church being so wonderful, to the special music during service which is such a great worship moment, and no less important the presence of C.V., Mike, Phil, and others whenever the church doors are open. These individuals and others are all huge contributors to the welcoming nature of the church.

FBC has been an answered prayer and we could not be any happier. The church is rich with life due especially to the amazing people here that are an integral part of this church body. Combined with the deliberate designing of community moments in utilizing these resources and talents, FBC is a place we are happy to call home and are eager to have our girls grow up in the Lord with such a great family of believers.

- Blake Garrett

As we begin the month of November, our thoughts naturally turn toward Thanksgiving. This encourages us to reflect on the year and God's provision. We love Thanksgiving because it is a time when we have the correct perspective. During this season, we purposefully take the time to stop and focus on the good we have experienced, rather than the bad. The Bible is full of verses on thanksgiving, and we find an excellent reminder in 1 Thess. 5:16-18 (NASB):

(16) Rejoice always;

(17) pray without ceasing;

(18) in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

At Thanksgiving we don't hesitate to consider all we have to be thankful for, even if we are struggling in one way or another. These verses show us the attitude we should have every day, not just one day, or even one month out of the year. Obviously, practicing this every day is easier said, than done. In verse 18, God reminds us to keep a proper perspective, because we will always have something we can thank God for, even if we have to look a little harder.

Enjoy Thanksgiving and celebrate God's goodness. As you do, remember to continue that thankful spirit each day, knowing it is God's will for you in Christ Jesus!

- Jan Craig

As Thanksgiving looms ahead, it seems only fitting that our minds shift to a perspective of gratitude. When I contemplate the blessings in my life, I find myself taking a journey through the last few years in my walk. This fall, 3 years ago, I found myself the recipient of a letter informing me I was not to be accepted into the graduate school of my choice. The letter went on to describe the many reasons this career choice was not the right one for me and recommended I change course immediately, possibly into something not so challenging. I spent that season pleading with the Lord for a path to be made clear. This fall, 2 years ago, I felt the Lord calling me to a very different path than the one I had been trying my very best to travel along. This path would lead me to a classroom, one filled with Junior High students whose lives define my purpose each day. As I struggled to find my place, my family spent their time conspiring with my future husband on our engagement, a day I was praying incessantly for. This fall, 1 year ago, Marcus and I were preparing to begin a new phase of our journey: marriage. I was in the midst of chaos, praying for a community Marcus and I could call our own as we built a life together, while also beginning a very new career. This fall, in the present year, I am in a season of utmost gratitude. I am thankful for a Jesus who answers my prayers in HIS way, in HIS time. I look back on my journey thus far and I see the times of "yes" and the times of "no." I see how the Lord has walked alongside me to bring me to this place, a place of promises fulfilled. My husband (still love saying that!) and I are coming upon 1 year of marriage, we are surrounded by excellent community in the Ten-25 class at FBC and I have found my purpose in the faces of Junior High students crying out to be loved. I know seasons of fear and doubt will rise once more, but for now I am going to rest in a season of thankfulness provided by the One who is oh-so-thankful for me!

- Kristian Spencer

FIRST BAPTIST ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER

*Sunday, November 19
Expo Center
Display Building
Serving lines open
at 5:30 p.m.*

The church's Annual Thanksgiving Dinner will be held once again this year at the Expo Center on November 19. This year, we wanted to focus on the idea of being thankful and to hear from one of our own. Sharon Wartes will be our featured speaker and will be sharing her journey in light of her battle with cancer. Sharon and Alan have been a part of First Baptist since 2000 and are extremely involved in many different areas of the church.

We will enjoy a buffet dinner served this year by Chicken Express and will then share the Lord's Supper together around the tables. You should have received an invitation by mail, but if for some reason you have not, please contact Debra

(675-8116 or
debra.clemmer@fbcabilene.org)
and make your reservation.



HABITAT HOUSE:

Thank you to our volunteers for your hard work on the Habitat project! Future build days are November 11 and 18 starting at 8:00 a.m. at 4317 Congress Street. Please contact Rebecca Hunt in the missions' office at (325) 675-8112 or rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org if you would like to sign up.

BLESSINGS OF CHRISTMAS *a family affair*

Sunday, December 3, is our annual Blessings of Christmas where we have the opportunity to visit people in our church who are unable to be out and about as much as others. Here is the plan: come to the welcome center following the morning worship service. Select one or more cards and baskets. 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 people. Following your visit, return to your homes knowing you have been a vital part in our church's Christmas outreach.

Make it a family thing. Bring the entire family and help us deliver approximately 70 baskets. What a wonderful way to invest a portion of your time this season!



Big A can use your help. We are currently accepting donations for our December 6 Big A Store. The children earn Big A "bucks" throughout the year that they will use to Christmas shop for themselves, parents, siblings, family, and friends. Any and all gifts will be greatly appreciated. Please take your donation to City Light before November 29. Thank you all so much for your generosity and assistance to Big A.

CITY LIGHT CHRISTMAS STORE

Encourage local families this holiday season by helping with our City Light Christmas Store!

First Baptist Church has the opportunity to provide Christmas Assistance in a different way again this year with one simple belief – families would prefer to provide for themselves at Christmas rather than receive presents from a stranger or stand in line for a giveaway. For many of these families, the holiday season brings about feelings of shame and disappointment because they are unable to provide Christmas for their families. Even if a family has limited means to do so, a mom, dad, aunt, uncle, or grandparent wants to buy gifts for their families around the holidays. Our desire is to move toward a ministry designed to provide the families at Martinez Elementary, GLO, and City Light the opportunity to shop for their families at a reduced rate at the City Light Christmas Store.

The store will be open by appointment December 7-9, and 12-14, at our City Light building. Donated toys will be priced at 10% to 15% of retail, so \$100.00 worth of toys can be purchased for \$10.00 to \$15.00. Each family will have the opportunity to purchase three gifts (1 expensive, 2 inexpensive) for each child in their family. Martinez Elementary, GLO, and City Light families become eligible to shop by participating in events at City Light, volunteering at Martinez Elementary, and participating with GLO Daycare. We hope this opportunity will allow as many families as possible to enjoy the dignity of providing and celebrating Christmas time with those they love.

New, unwrapped items from the list below can be dropped off at the church office until Thursday, November 30.

- Bikes (All Ages)
- Razor Scooters
- CD players/Radios/Electronic Accessories (Headphones)
- Appropriate cosmetics for young women
- Board Games (all ages)
- Table-top games (all ages)
- Sports games/sets (all ages)
- Sports equipment, i.e. balls, gloves, etc.
- Battery Operated Cars/Hot Wheels
- Action Figures/Barbie & Princess Dolls
- Toddler Toys of any kind (Legos, Megablocks, Trains, Puzzles)
- Toddler crafts
- Interactive toys for babies
- Assorted stocking stuffers & novelties

Volunteers are needed as well to setup the store, provide refreshments, help shoppers, and donate gifts. We hope you can contribute as an individual, class, or small group to this effort.

Please contact Rebecca Hunt (rebecca.hunt@fbcabilene.org)

or John Moore (john.moore@fbcabilene.org)

for more information or if you would like to volunteer.



ACTING IN *love*

MUD-OUT MISSION

By Roy A. Jones II

Willingness and flexibility.

That's all it took to be a volunteer Mud-out Missionary to help the flood victims of Hurricane Harvey in Houston Sept. 18-22. The five of us who went on the first of several planned trips led by John Moore didn't do what we went expecting to do, but we received much more than we gave.

FBC Abilene is working through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and our hosts, Butch and Nell Green, former CBF missionaries to Senegal, have flexibility down to a fine art.

We expected to spend the week shoveling mud out of churches, but found that had already been accomplished by some of the more than 40,000 volunteers who have registered through Houston's Second Baptist Church, according to Sherry Curnutt, a former member of FBC.

Butch had arranged excellent accommodations for us at Willow Meadows Baptist Church. With the mud gone, Butch moved us to the next important need: mold remediation in a large Hispanic church, Templo Bautista South Houston. It had received about two feet of mud and water throughout.

During our stay, we removed all of the drywall and insulation up to four feet, and bleached the wood framing until our eyes burned. Our eyes also burned with tears as we drove through neighborhoods where the furniture, mattresses and other ruined household items were stacked so deep we could barely see the houses.

We also spent a day in the Cambodian neighborhood

of Rosharon. Most residents made their living growing produce, so Harvey gave them a double whammy, washing away some of the homes as well as the crops, and damaging greenhouses. One woman told of putting her invalid husband on an air mattress and pulling him through waist-deep water until they were rescued.

The Cambodians were living outside while their homes -- if they were still standing -- were drying out. The best we could do for now was erect about two dozen tents donated by FBC and CBF and putting enough air mattresses inside for that particular family.

Butch had one last surprise for us. He took us to a Buddhist temple compound that was the gathering place for the displaced Cambodians. There we were invited to share in the delicious Asian meal that was prepared and served by volunteers from a Vietnamese church in New Orleans.

Think of it: Vietnamese victims of Katrina serving Cambodian victims of Harvey. Can we do less?





OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

For over ten years now, as a church, we have participated in Operation Christmas Child. Operation Christmas Child, or OCC, is led by Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham and has as its purpose the desire to give children across the world a Christmas present along with a Gospel tract. Literally millions of shoeboxes have been filled and delivered over the past years.

First Baptist Church will continue as the central drop off. Being the central drop off means that we will not only collect our own boxes, but we will collect boxes for all the towns within about 100 miles like Brownwood, Coleman, Sweetwater, and Albany just to name a few.

The week of November 13-20 is known as collection week in OCC terminology. Here at First Baptist it means that we will have our collection center open every day during that time frame. The hours vary some, but each day we will have someone here to collect the shoeboxes that come in. After the boxes come in, they will all be put into larger shipping boxes and then finally loaded on to a semi-trailer to be shipped to the sorting center in Dallas.

Once again this year, we will need people to sit at University Place, greet and collect shoeboxes from folks in our community who want to participate, people to help crate up all of the collected shoeboxes and prepare them for shipping, and finally people (probably young strong men) to help load all of the crates into the trailer for final shipping.

Of course we are going to participate in the actual filling of shoeboxes and in fact we already have some of the OCC shoeboxes available for you to take. Look on the OCC table located just outside of the Library for supplies and for sign-up sheets for hours that you might could come and volunteer to work the collection center.

Hopefully this year will be a record year for us as a church in the number of boxes that we fill, but I know it will be a great year as we have the opportunity to serve as the collection center. If you have other questions about OCC and your involvement, let Debra or Mike know and we will gladly fill you in on how you can help. You can call or email either of us at: 325-675-8116 or debra.clemmer@fbcabilene.org or mike.greenfield@fbcabilene.org.

ANNUAL (Day Before) THANKSGIVING BREAKFAST WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22 AT 9 A.M. CITY LIGHT BUILDING

Thinking of how to spend your Thanksgiving this year? No one to spend it with?

We have a great suggestion... come and show up at City Light!

Surprise yourself with wonderful opportunities and see how you can help those around you and also help yourself!

We will need your help again this year by providing casseroles, conversations, and care on Wednesday, November 22. We need people to cook, serve, start up conversations, and eat with our good friends around the tables.

If you are interested, please contact City Light:
325-673-6686 or
maura.delacruz@fbcabilene.org.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



On October 27, 2017 at the Hardin-Simmons Alumni Awards Banquet, Carlene Spicer and her late husband, Charles, received the John J. Keeter, Jr. Alumni Award for their service and commitment to the betterment of HSU. This Service Award is the highest honor that can be bestowed on HSU alumni.



The Community Foundation of Abilene has generously awarded the Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment a \$7,500 grant which allows for the continued funding of the Kid's Place Scholarship program. This program ensures that children, regardless of their family's income or insurance status, will have access to professional counseling, play therapy, and psychological evaluation services. We are grateful for the opportunity to once again partner with the Community Foundation of Abilene to provide these much-needed services to children and families in our community.

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

November 22, 24 years
Marilyn Henderson
GLO Ministry Assistant

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

October 2017

Budget	September	Year-to-Date
Required	\$266,000	\$2,551,311
Given	\$250,481	\$2,499,689

EVENT CALENDAR:

NOVEMBER

- 2-4 Legacy Grandparent Summit/
Rockwall
- 5 Personnel Committee
- Baylor's Men Choir in Worship
- 8 Buildings & Grounds Committee
- 9 GLO Thanksgiving Lunch
- 12 Missions Committee
- 13-20 Operation Christmas Child
Collection Week
- 19 Children's Missions Fundraiser
Annual Thanksgiving Dinner
- 21 Finance Committee
- 22 No Wednesday Night Activities
- 23-24 Church Offices Closed
- 28 City Sidewalks



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