

FIRSTwords

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

Flowering of the Cross

For many years, we have had a tradition on Easter morning of the children coming forward and Flowering the Cross during the morning service.

This is such a beautiful depiction of the resurrection and the beauty it brings to our lives, and I know we are all grieving this year that we will not be watching that depiction together.

We also had a cross on the front porch of the sanctuary and asked people to come by and flower it for Easter Sunday Morning. However, because of the shelter-in-place restrictions we did not think it would be wise for us to have the cross out front and ask people to venture out when it did not meet the criteria of work or to get essential items for their home.

So, this year we are adopting an idea from one of our members, Molly Yarger, who wrote:

Mike as I was working in my yard yesterday it dawned on me that this year of ALL years I would put my large cross I made of dead vines a few years ago in my front yard and share it with my neighborhood. I will place a sign beside it saying to bring flowers on Easter morning to celebrate our Risen Lord! I got the idea a few years back from the Haddoxs and my neighbors loved it when I did it for our neighborhood that year! None of us will be celebrating Easter in our churches, but we will still celebrate! If our church members would do this in their neighborhoods we could have hundreds of Crosses across our city!! They can be made of whatever kind of materials they have at home - like I said mine is thick vines from English Ivy!!

As we walk through this time and explore ways to continue to worship and provide ways for our church community to continue with “normal” things, we hope that flower your own cross will be a good reminder of the new life we have because of the resurrection.

We hope this is a blessing to those of you who wish to participate and want to remind you to continue to practice social distancing.



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

Tuesday evening, I went outside for a moment, a needed diversion from adjustments at work and to all that is going on. The spring-like weather, the setting sun, and the greening of nature from the *"bleak midwinter"* overwhelmed me with peace. For a moment, I thought of Browning's poem, Pippa Passes, *"God in His heaven - All's right with the world."* For a fleeting moment, everything seemed to be normal, if life can ever be normal. The tranquility of evening signaled new life and the coming of Easter.

Even though we can find moments of relief, *"all is not right with the world."* We now live with the word, "Quarantine." Struggling families and marriages are even more at risk with sheltering in place. We fear a simple sneeze. Who normally washes their hands for twenty seconds or goes to the grocery store with masks? Some wonder how they will make payroll or make ends meet. Others have lost their jobs or retirement. No Little League baseball. This Sunday will be a month since we gathered for worship.

Regardless of how our lives have been interrupted, life has changed. The normal has been replaced by the abnormal. We have lost a sense of routine. When this crisis is over, perhaps we will be grateful for routine and the ordinary things of life we so easily take for granted.... And hear the hope, it will be over one day....

Some have wondered how will we celebrate Easter this month. Even though the sanctuary will be empty this Easter, so is the tomb which tried to keep Him. Jesus has been set free in this world where death cannot contain Him, no virus can stop Him, and no problem can defeat Him.

I wonder if this Easter we might understand the message and miracle of the resurrection in a new way. Each year, we just expect Easter. It's on the calendar, but those first followers had no idea. They thought it was all over. They didn't plan a sunrise service. No trumpets with full sanctuaries - only the empty tomb and Jesus on

the roam, declaring "It's Easter." God isn't just in "His heaven," but in the risen Christ, who will meet you and your fear wherever you are. Happy Easter!

Over these days, I have thought of the movie, "Cast Away" with Tom Hanks, where he ends up marooned on a deserted island after a plane crash and presumed dead. No more normal.... No more time as he understood it. He eventually doubted if he would ever get off that island.

It is painful to watch his isolation. He even finds a friend in a volleyball which drifts ashore, he calls it, "Wilson" from the brand name. Wilson becomes quite a companion. He tries repeatedly in a raft he built to set sail, but the enormous breakers keep preventing his escape. One day, the tide brings in an old metal shed or a port-a-potty - garbage. Yet, this surprising *"gift"* from the tides becomes his sail for his raft. This "junk" gives him the lift to be free of the breaking waves and finally leave the island.

When he is rescued and returns back to Memphis, he learns the devastating news his beloved Kelly, whom he was about to ask to marry him, is now married. The grief, the loss, the regret...his life would never be the same...or did it change over those years on the island where he understood time in a new way.

When his friend Bill asks what he is going to do after all of these changes, Tom Hanks, or his character Chuck, says, *"I know what I have to do NOW... I got to keep breathing because the SUN WILL RISE.... Who knows what the TIDE will bring in...."* That is hope!

For us, now as things have changed...keep breathing and hoping...and looking for the gifts the TIDE of God's grace and love will bring in. Easter Will Come, like a surprise we never expected.

Happy Easter,

Phil

Please continue to pray for our missionaries and their safety!
We have reached out to see if there are specific needs.

A note from David and Lauren Bass in Cambodia: Written March 22, 2020

Thanks for checking in on us!
We had to make a trip to the border early last week as Cambodia has now blocked US citizens from entering (along with a few others including most of Europe) and we needed to get a new temporary visa before the end of the month. Tomorrow we will work on processing our long-term visa--
You could pray that there's no hitch in that. We've found a way to expedite them so we don't have to be without our passports for long, and we are thankful for that. We have a few dozen COVID-19 cases here now, just over 50. They have risen a lot in the last days, but are mostly centered around one large group who traveled abroad. Cambodia seems to still have the situation under control for the moment--please pray that cases would not rise here. The medical system is not set up to handle anything close to an outbreak. We are also praying and keeping our ears to the ground in terms of sheltering in place or trying to get out. Right now, we feel the best thing for us is to wait it out and keep sheltering in place here in Phnom Penh, but as more and more borders close and flights are cancelled we soon may not have a choice in the matter. Please pray for wisdom for us!
Praying the virus doesn't hit the Big Country.

Lauren (and David and Chloe)

The trip to Macedonia to support Jeff and Alicia Lee has been postponed. This is a cautionary response from the Lee's and CBF concerning our current Coronavirus situation. The Lee's are safe as of now with only one case reported in Skopje (although there's not much confidence in how their government is handling the situation and reporting). They do ask for prayers for Ethan, their son, who is stressed about the situation there and for Poraka (home for adults with disabilities...many of whom already have compromised immune systems).

Hunter and Mary in Thailand: Written March 21, 2020
Hello from Macon GA.

I am currently staying with my Aunt in Macon, Caleb is living about an hour south of here so I have been able to see him often. It is good to be so close. We have played disk golf on several occasions. I enjoy the walk and being with him, but I play disk golf about the same way I play regular golf, not so good! I am still scheduled for pre-op meetings and testing on April 9 and surgery on April 15. I am a bit worried that COVID-19 will change all this, but we have to take it as it comes. We, like most of you, are laying low. I am staying busy helping my Aunt with some chores around the house.

An answered prayer is that Mary and Hannah have arrived in Atlanta and are with me now.

I would like to thank each of you for your prayers. Please know that my journey is nothing like Jesus' last days, but His prayers in the garden have taken on new meaning for me. Jesus knew ultimately all things would work out, He had supreme trust in the Father, but Jesus was not looking forward to the journey to get there. My feelings are similar.

I have ultimate faith in Christ and it will all turn out as He sees fit, but I am not looking forward to the journey.

Once again, your prayers are greatly appreciated for me, Mary, Caleb, Hannah and the rest of my family.

In His Love and Care,
Hunter, Mary, Caleb, and Hannah

ACTING IN *love*

Hey Friends, I hope you're doing well during these trying times. Things are moving quickly here at City Light and our staff and limited volunteers are meeting the needs and providing hope to all we encounter. Our staff is putting in the extra time and effort to meet the many needs, while trying to limit exposure both personally and to our friends.

We will remain open, meeting needs as long as we can.

Currently, we are still open MWF 8:30 a.m. until noon for personal assistance and showers (then the building is staffed until 3 p.m.). Our lunch service begins as early as 10:45 a.m.

until 12:30 p.m.ish. I've asked our staff to stay home on Tuesdays and Thursdays and for the most part it is happening. Our Culinary Academy is on hold until we can start again. Some of this may change (even this week), but this gives you an idea of what's happening.

Here is what we are currently doing:

1. To-go lunches out the front door. We served 600 plus meals last week.
2. Personal Assistance by phone.
Over \$3,200 (the most we've done) in assistance and many hours on the phone.
3. Prepared and delivered encouragement bags to all our Big A kids.
4. Delivered over 300 CarePacks in partnership with AISD. This will continue each week.
5. Provided showers to those who are homeless.
We average 10 to 15 showers every day we're open.
6. Provided mail service by appointment.
7. Applied for crisis grants from the Community Foundation and United Way.
We are waiting to hear back from them.
8. Working on "to-go" family meals which will feed a family of 4 beginning in April.

Please continue to pray for us here as we represent the presence of Christ to all who come to City Light and FBC looking for help. Pray for our staff and their health and safety during this time. Also let me know if you have any questions, concerns, or good ministry suggestions. It is a joy to serve and that spirit is so evident here at City Light, even in these difficult days. Thank you for allowing this to happen and how you've prepared City Light for this moment! Attached are some pictures to help give you an idea of all that's been going on.

If you know of someone or a family needing a meal or food assistance, please contact Melinda or John at 325-673-5031.



IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION,

“what you have learned about yourself and your relationship with God during this time of isolation,”

WE RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES FROM SOME OF OUR MEMBERS.

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When I had polio when I was very young,
I remembered Christ's prayer in Gethsemane

*“Father, if it be Thy will,
let this cup pass from me; nevertheless,
not my will, but Thine be done.”*

I prayed for strength to face whatever came my way. I
pray that now, for myself and all who are endangered.

Rose Williams

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My Mom and Dad were Ministers of Music in churches
all my life, so I have known nothing but Church on Sundays.
There was no question, We Were in Church. This continued all
my life as I grew up and followed the examples my parents set
for my brother and I. Jewell and I met in church and served as
a team, even before we married. I had not realized how much
of my life was centered around going to church.

When the services were cancelled, I found myself not knowing
exactly what to expect BUT thanks to the dedication of our
staff, that void has been filled to a degree. We as a family
have enjoyed sitting in our living room and singing along
with the service. (I'm surprised you didn't hear us) LOL! I have
realized how much the TV ministry can mean to those who are
homebound, just as Jewell is now. God has allowed me to give
the Live Stream address to many friends and acquaintances
who normally I would not have the opportunity to do so.

Thank you again for the extra work you have to do to make this happen. This has truly
been a wonderful outreach. We know we will be stronger even when we get back to the
norm. God is Good.

Ron and Jewell Harden

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I have discovered in isolation
how much my life revolves
around the Church—the people
and sometimes the buildings.
Tech-illiterate that I am, I thank
those who are making the Sunday
worship service available on TV.
In my mind's eye, I see the Christ
candle and remember I am in His
presence every day at home.
I am thankful for good memories
of this season of the year—
Ash Wednesday, Lent readings,
Maundy Thursday dramas,
Palm-waving Sunday,
Holy Week luncheons,
Good Friday, and EASTER.

I live ALONE.
Sometimes I feel LONELY.
In ISOLATION, I am very thankful
for Christ's church in the form
of FBC Abilene.

Thankfully,
Nadell Mangum



I believe an appropriate verse for the present time is Philippians 4:11. (I quote it in the MEV version because the wording is so appropriate for our situation.)

Philippians 4:11 Modern English Version (MEV)¹¹ *I do not speak because I have need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content.*

I consider myself very fortunate that in a time of isolation, I can be isolated with my four best friends: my wife, who is the greatest friend I've ever known; my dog Buddy, who follows me everywhere I go, and loudly bangs his tail on the couch at the sound of my voice; my male cat Oliver, who thinks it is his job to tuck me in at night, and wake me up every morning at his set time and keeps me company when I am resting during the day; and my female cat Nala, who also keeps me company when I'm resting and oversees my work at the computer.

Kidding aside, we are very fortunate to be in a time when social media is available to help us stay in contact with family and friends and also with our fellow church members. We certainly do remember those churches who are not as blessed with the ability to reach out with TV, radio, and live streaming. We have all been frustrated in times past with folks who can't seem to put down the

cell phone, even to carry on a necessary conversation with the clerk at the grocery store, but now is the time to use your phone to check in on friends, family, and neighbors.

Many great moments are happening around the country. **I say, God bless all those seamstresses and quilters out there who are busy sewing masks for the medical community.** This perfectly represents the sentiment in another couple of verses:

Ecclesiastes 9:10 King James Version (KJV)¹⁰ *Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. Colossians 3:23 King James Version (KJV)²³ *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;**

We should give a shout-out to Jo-Ann's Fabric Outlet across the country for putting together kits so volunteers can sew these masks.

As for me, I find contentment during this isolation in doing ordinary things. I spend my spare time working in my garden, and as God grants the harvest, I'm sure I will be sharing the produce with my neighbors. I'm also trying to be creative with my wood art and feel blessed to be able to participate in virtual Bible study with our Sunday school group. My hope is that many more will join in this.

Whatever your hands find to do, do it with a passion...and do it for God's glory. This is how we will get through this together.

David Brown



HELLO.

I have found that in an instance, we can be without any control over our lives. So, I guess I am learning that we never have control, only God does; so, we have to learn to totally trust in Him. Very hard for me to do since I am a control freak. Praying for all in this world for healing and patience.

Blessings,

Kim Melnyk



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I always wondered if Phil reads email since he probably gets hundreds a day. I was the pilot who sent the email and here is the text: – Phil, I think your sermon this week is appropriate for the times we find ourselves in. Everyone probably has a story where they overcame fear, here is mine. While attending the Air Force Academy, I can claim I not only received college credits for flying airplanes, a gift I believe God gave to me for a purpose, but to also jump out perfectly good airplanes in their free fall parachuting program. For background, the jump school at the USAF Academy is the only jump school in the nation where every jump you make, I did five to earn my jump wings, is free fall. Each jumper is required to pull their own rip cord to deploy their parachute and float safely to the ground. There are safety backups to prevent accidents and, in their history, I don't believe anyone has been killed or injured. Even though the jumps I made were over 40 years ago, I can still remember my first jump for both the fear and the exhilaration.

The jump training you receive prior to your first jump is several weeks long and several hours a day. What they do is repeatedly make you do what they call the “arch count pull sequence.” It is what you are supposed to do after jumping out of the plane, and the post-chute deployment process where you check that you have a good parachute and perform any number of procedures in the event of a parachute malfunction. This training is based on the theory it typically takes 21 days of repetition for us to change or create a new habit pattern. Those weeks of monotonous repetition helped me to overcome the fear of that first jump. I was the second person out the door that day and the 13 other people behind me said they had never seen someone's face that white with fear, my apprehension was obviously visible to everyone else. The last commands the jump master gives before you jump are “jumper stand in the door” and “go.” These are scripted and you hear them over and over repeatedly during training.

Here is what I remember – the jump master giving me those last two commands and then looking up to see a perfectly good parachute canopy. I don't remember doing the “arch count pull sequence” and actually pulling my own rip cord. I automatically did them without even thinking. I was so conditioned to do those things automatically from the weeks of training I don't even remember doing them. The exhilaration of overcoming my fear of the unknown kicked in and the excitement of moment prevailed.

I think it's natural for us to have fear, a little in our lives I think is healthy. Fear which is paralyzing is unhealthy. Why do first responders run towards danger that most of us fear? Their repetitive training, just like I experienced with my jump training, is what they rely on to overcome their fears. So too with our spiritual training, regular daily prayer, mediation, time alone with God, or whatever you would like to call it, is essential to keep us from getting anxious or fearful of the times we are living through. I will follow the CDC guidelines for washing my hands, social distancing etc., I will only get at the grocery store what I need to cook for the next week (cooking is another one of my favorite skills to practice) and I will try to help and serve others who are less fortunate than me. I will try not to let the fear of getting the virus overcome me and paralyze me.

Happy to share

Tom Tomaras

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City of Light by Bob Fink

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“City of Light.” Words printed in large *Marks-A-Lot* letters on one of the cardboard boxes of cookies, cans of beef stew, and chicken stew fork-lifted off the Food Pantry truck last Friday. Whoever wrote the words got it right. City Light Community Ministries is the City of Light, a lighthouse beacon flashing across the neighborhood, the city: Here Is Your Safe Harbor.

Last May, having retired from Hardin-Simmons University, how could I have known what was waiting for me at City Light: my new friends, their joyful bond, the staff and volunteers, serving; and the patrons, many homeless, queued-up for the sit-down meal MWF noondays, Sunday breakfast, giving and receiving, more than half laughing at their fate, knowing they have each other four meals each week, knowing the other half will be comforted or at least allowed to be sad and hurting together.

Ms. Lynn Martin, Associate Director of City Light, begins each mealtime asking for prayer requests, calling each raised hand by name, shortening the needs to: Jobs, Health Issues, An Apartment, Rent, Chemo, A Child Lost, and lately, anxiety over Coronavirus COVID-19. And praises: A Bus Pass, A Friend Recovering, A Child Returned. The Deacon of the day lifts these petitions and blessings to the Lord.

Here is the salvation of strangers become friends gathered around the tables, filling their bellies, even heaping seconds, and on Wednesdays a sack of selected groceries.

Here is the right place for respite, for laughter and teasing: Big David, preacher of the Word, shouting across the room at me: “Bob, don’t worry; I’ve got connections with Saint Peter. At the Pearly Gates, if he won’t let you in, then I’m not coming either.” Clara and Charmaine who want my Jesus sandals. Tall Wilbur, his voice the thrum of a bass fiddle. Matthew and Tricia, young married couple, caretakers of Fred, Matthew’s friend, his broken neck, the devotion of his small dog Jill. Moses in the Homburg hat. Tiger. Cowboy and Ant and Frank-the-Desperado. Mark with the three-year braided beard. Daniel-the-lion, his dreadlocks. Jerita and Elaine. Cecilia, never enough sugar in her tea. And Lil, her smile.

The staff and volunteers: Maura, Associate Director, and Olga, her son John, his wife Dustin. Monty and Angela. Pearl, Wanda, Deanne, and Louise. Mary. Barbara. Tom, Ronnie, and Dr. Lockhart. Ken and Martha. Katherine. Kayleen. Jessica’s Robert. Wes. And my friend Robert, struck by lightning, an exploded appendix in a wasteland of prickly pear and rattlesnakes, gangrene, weeks in a coma, a derelict with a limp he can’t recall deserving, now a staff member at City Light. All of these companions proclaiming with Jesus, “I have drunk the cup of anguish. I have died and risen from the tomb. Laugh with us. We know the worst. Let go.”

“What if,” the City Light fellowship asks, “we all joined our wildernesses together?” Especially now in the time of COVID-19, the Coronavirus separating us at the door, restrictions for now, no sit-down meals and devotionals, but still, the hot meals, the bread, the vegetables and fruit, the salad, cake or cookies, Coke or bottled water in a grocery bag, handed out at the door by John Moore, Pastor for Missions, the good shepherd, cautious for us, the hour of sorrow and joy conjoined, *Bless You* and *Thank You*, delight and darkness balanced for now, no tipping in that direction we know all too well; but still, joy piled high, carry-out communion, each wilderness tamed as a garden tendered toward blossom. Toward light. City of Light.

“What I have learned about myself is that I do actually like my husband, that I am really tired of TV, and that I’ve never felt more organized. What I’ve learned about my relationship with God is that He does not want me to distance myself from Him!

And He is showing me daily that peace comes when I compare the size of my fear and doubts to the person, presence, and character of the One who has complete, trustworthy control.

Hope to see you soon!!

Jane Todd”

“I have learned I can be just as busy during isolation. I have learned God sometimes forces us to slow down and get some much-needed rest. I have learned God puts opportunities in my path, encouraging me to minister to my students, their families, my co-workers, my family, my neighbors, my friends, and strangers at the grocery store.

I have learned kindness is even more important during times of stress. I have learned constant prayer during this uncertainty helps me hear God’s voice reveal specific ways to share His love. I have learned to feel God’s peace while playing the piano. I have also learned how dangerous it is to be crazy about all things monogrammed, and to be the owner of a Cricut, and to be at home with a little free time!

Vicki Brady

“What I have discovered about myself during this time is that I need to be doing something, and that I want to be able to explain everything. To be honest, I already knew this about myself, but this time of social distancing and home confinement has made me more aware. So, I am “doing stuff.” I teach my classes on-line, I run, I do home improvement projects, and I do things with my family. As far as needing to be able to explain everything, this has been more difficult. There is a sense of “loss” and uncertainty for everyone right now. These feelings take different forms and themes for everyone, but it is pervasive, and I feel it, too. Tiffany shared an article with me by N.T.

Wright from Time Magazine where he says that it is not the Christian’s job to be able to explain what is happening and why, but in trying times we should lament, instead. His statements expressed a lot of my feelings of “inability to solve the problem.” The Psalms have always been one of my favorite sources for personal Bible study. In many of these poems/hymns, the authors cry out to God in a lament and in grief. How these verses provide comfort for us, as Wright further points out, is that we see God’s ever presence with the Psalmist during the struggles and toils. Also, throughout the Bible, we read that God grieves. For me, the encouragement comes knowing that, while I might not have or ever know the answer to my questions, God is lamenting with me. God is not removed from me, and as Wright concludes his article, “As the Spirit laments within us, so we become, even in our self-isolation, small shrines where the presence and healing love of God can dwell. And out of there can emerge new possibilities, new acts of kindness, new scientific understanding, and new hope.”

Rob Fink

“I’ve learned God wants me to be totally dependent upon Him and to listen and He will speak to me. He’s given me several ways to stay connected to my church family and others, but more importantly to Him. I’ve gone back to the Experiencing God study and reviewing what Henry Blackaby said in that study about walking with God. I’ve been allowed and inspired by God to contact a different church member each day with a phone call, a card, or a text to tell them I’m praying for them and I love them. My Sunday school class has gotten on zoom and had a wonderful Sunday school class this morning; it was as if we were sitting in our Sunday school room. God has also shown me what I do have control of: getting up in the morning, my schedule, and my time with Him. For each of these things, I give thanks and I also give thanks for seeing the way the church is the church in our community.

Barbara Bacon”

I'm currently a missionary in Greece with the Greek Bible College in Athens. The country is in lockdown, and will likely be so until May 10. Anytime we go out, we have to text the authorities stating our purpose. They text back and that's our permission to be out. For example, 6 is the one I use most often: walking the dog. Going to the grocery store is 2. These measures have kept coronavirus cases and deaths relatively low, but are hard on the very sociable Greeks.

Sunday, I had the joy of meeting online with FBC's Journey Sunday school class, which I've missed so much in my year here. The last two Sundays, I was able to watch the Sunday service online. I enjoyed seeing pictures of the drive-thru church on Wednesday!

I'm learning how much of my identity is falsely tied to what I'm DOING, rather than my identity in Christ. It's something I'll learn a lot more about in the coming weeks. I'm spending more time than usual reading Scripture, devotionals, and theological literature (N. T. Wright, and Richard Rohr). I'm listening to sermons by Tim Keller, and from Moody Bible Institute's Today in the Word.

I'm so grateful for the internet making it possible for me to stay in touch with friends and family around the world. I think a lot of us have been in closer contact with our more distant friends and family during this time. That's positive.

My prayers are for all who are in lockdown or have restricted movement. Italy and Spain are in desperate situations. I'm especially mindful of those who, like me, are single, and who may struggle with loneliness. Praise God for those in the medical field, like my sister Linda, who works in a nursing home. Prayers for them to have energy and safety. Please pray for the tens of thousands of refugees in overcrowded camps in Greece. It is impossible for them to self-isolate, or even to wash their hands regularly. Several of the Greek Bible College students live and work on Lesbos where the largest refugee camp is.

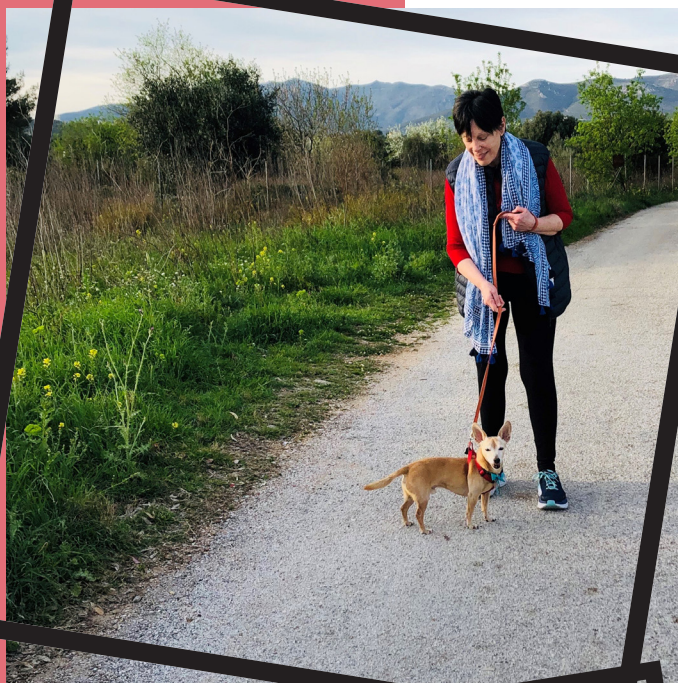
It's hard to watch the situation in the USA from a distance. I would urge everybody to follow even the voluntary rules. Stay home as much as possible. The more you can do this now, the sooner you'll "flatten the curve" and begin to restore normal life. It's a hard time. We don't have to pretend otherwise. But God is with us!

The picture is me out walking my dog. And some daisies next door.

Greetings and love to all at FBC!

Carol Woodfin

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SURPRISED BY TRAINING

It was such a revelation all over again the other day. Miracles come in response to a need. Most often, we see that need as a problem. That's why the Scriptures tell us to count our trials with joy. It is the highest form of training.

I knew it for a long time, but it was in college that I first acknowledged it: My life was unusual. I seemed to have an unusually high rate of incidents in my life. These incidents were generally tragic or nearly tragic in nature, but almost totally turned out alright.

For several years now friends, fellow workers, and acquaintances have remarked on my life, calling it their most favorite on-going "soap-opera." Constantly amazed by the sheer number of different events, they often remark on the amazing faith and strength my family possesses. What most people miss and what God so wonderfully reminded me of the other day is how very BLESSED I am. I have been allowed more miracles in my life than most communities see in a lifetime. It is so like us as humans to focus on the problems, when the real issue is in the Blessings.

We humans focus on the physical aspects of this world. It is what we know the most about. It is where we live and what we see. God knows that. He knows He must draw us, train us and most of all be patient with us. Just as my 15-month-old granddaughter knows very little if anything about social graces now, but it will come, with lots of patience. God deals mostly in the Spiritual realm. How do I know that? Well, it is where His promises are found.

God never promised every baby would be born whole, without afflictions, but He does promise everyone who comes to Him in repentance will be born anew in perfection. God does not promise to stop every pain and heal every illness that is brought to Him in this world, but He does promise to forgive every sin brought to Him. God does not promise you won't suffer financial problems in this world, but He does promise He will provide that which is more valuable than jewels, if we seek Him. God does not promise on this earth we won't suffer separation of our loved ones by death, but He does promise not even death can separate us from Him.

What am I saying? It is this: God uses the physical things of this world to train us in spiritual matters. I do not know of any bodybuilders who hate or get mad at the weights on the bar in the gym they make use of to achieve their goals. We must apply this to the trials or problems which God makes use of to train us spiritually. Notice I did not say God causes problems, but He makes use of them. It has taken me awhile to understand this. I now endeavor to ask God, what in all of this, are You doing? What are You wanting to do in me? Show me how to walk with You in whatever You are doing.

I am really getting very attached to miracles and the One from Whom they come!

Gail Thompson



STAY HOME STAY *connected*



#fbcabilene

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Remember to join us live for worship each week at 10:30 a.m. on KRBC
or stream the service by going to the church website:

www.fbcabilene.org

STAFF ANNIVERSARIES

April 1, 24 years

Mike Greenfield

*Pastor for Administration
& Spiritual Development*

April 5, 14 years

Jeannie Wesley

*M. A. to Pastor for Adults &
Director of Pastoral Care*

April 9, 13 years

Paul Irby

Counselor

April 17, 3 years

Mike Brady

Director of FLC

April 22, 10 years

Candy Rains

Pastor for Preschool

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

March 2020

Budget	March	Year-to-Date
Required	\$ 255,870	\$ 895,309
Given	\$ 235,721	\$ 918,314

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



FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH • ABILENE

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