

FIRST *words*

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

VIRTUAL VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Make plans now to tune in to our Virtual VBS on July 27 – July 31. We will post videos each morning at 10 a.m. on the main First Baptist Church, Abilene Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/FirstBaptistChurchAbileneTx>). Each day our staff will provide a skit, Bible story, and a craft. We are doing our best to choose crafts your kids will be able to make with supplies you probably have on hand. If you happen to need help with the supplies, call Jennifer at 675-8105 and we will help you.

Please be in prayer for this unique VBS and for those who are preparing for the event.



 www.facebook.com/FirstBaptistChurchAbileneTx



words

FOR THE JOURNEY

I recently returned to the ophthalmologist for a check up on my eye surgery. As I waited for Dr. McAdams, I observed the chart on the wall of the human eye. That tiny organ is incredible in how it works.

The surgery went well on my right eye. However, there was another concern – the pressure in my left eye was high. It is called optic hypertension which leads to glaucoma. The fluid in the back of the eye does not drain properly. This pressure builds up, pressing in on the optic nerve which will eventually damage it, resulting in blindness. The good news is that drops can usually mitigate the problem with the pressure.

Jesus lived before the amazing discoveries about the magnificence of the eye. He did know Psalm 139 which declares, *“For you created my inmost being...I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful.”*

Dr. Jesus connected our senses to our spiritual health. He talked about having ears to hear His Word. He used the gift of smell as a picture of generosity when Mary anointed Him with the costly perfume. The scent filled the room with love. He used taste to drink in the sweetness of His forgiveness in the bread and cup. He used touch to heal. He talked about the purity of heart as the lens of seeing God.

Dr. Jesus said, *“The eye is the lamp of the human body. If your eyes are healthy your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be filled with darkness.”* His diagnosis – we can suffer from spiritual glaucoma.

Seeing is tricky business. What causes people to see a mask as a threat to freedom while others see it as a way of loving their neighbor? I offer that as a question with no judgment. What causes one to see a flag in a

certain way? Today we have become divided as we “see” in such different ways.

As we celebrate the glorious 4th of July and all that it means, let us look for a common vision which can unite us. We are *“...one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.”* Indivisible means *“incapable of being divided.”*

In our country’s history, we faced the dark hour when our country was being torn apart during the Civil War. Abraham Lincoln took on the challenge to unite and make us one indivisible nation once again in his

“Second Inaugural Address.” The speech was delivered on March 4, 1865 before a crowd of 35,000, a month before he would be assassinated. The war had claimed 620,000 lives of brothers against brothers. The address was only 7 minutes long and consisted of 701 words. The crowd came hoping Lincoln would give voice to their hate and anger. Yet, instead of demonizing the South, Lincoln asked how could we bring the South back into the Union? (*Abraham Lincoln’s Sermon on the Mount*, Dr. Ronald White, July 2, 2006, The National Presbyterian Church, Washington D.C.).

**...let us
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In the background of Lincoln’s speech and life we “see” freedom comes in releasing our grudges and loving our enemies. Freedom comes in seeing through the eyes of Jesus. Unity will come in seeing through the eyes of the Savior: *“You have heard it said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven...”*

Dr. Allen McSween has written, *“Lincoln refused to divide the country – or human beings in general – into those who are good and those who are evil. He knew that the line between good and evil runs, not between contending parties or nations, but through the dark*

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hearts of every one of us.” Could we add, “good and evil runs” through the way we see each other.

This is the year 2020...oh, 20/20, I get it. We can think of 20/20 vision which sees clearly, loves Him and others more dearly, and follows Him more nearly. Instead of this year being marked by division, let us believe 2020 will be a year when we prayed and worked as “...one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” Let our healthy eyes with the 20/20 vision of Jesus fill us and our nation with light.

Pledging Allegiance,

Phil



First Baptist Church will be participating in the Hope Camp Golf Tournament again this year. The tournament is held over three days, July 16-18 at Maxwell Golf Course.

The Hope Camp Golf Tournament, helps pay for “at risk” 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in Abilene and the surrounding communities to attend camp at no cost to them. This year’s camp is scheduled for July 24-26 at Big Country Baptist Assembly in Lueders, Texas.

Entry fee is \$35, which includes a \$17.50 donation to Hope Camp, cart fee (\$12) is extra.

So, gather three of your best golfing friends, or three people who could care less about golf but want to help support the camp, and call Maxwell to schedule your tee time. When you sign in, mention that you are playing in the Hope Tournament and they will give you a sheet with the format on it. Play your round, record your team score, then turn in your scorecard in the pro shop and then “hope” you win!



BUCKNER®
Hope shines here.®

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of this glory in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:19

Even though our church will not be able to be there in person this year to help with the home-build along with Buckner in McAllen,
the work still goes on!

Because of your generosity and giving, Buckner will still be building a home for the Martinez family this summer.

We will be receiving updates from Buckner since we are not there to share in the joy of the actual building and will pass those along to you!



HELLO
my name is

Bekah Estrada

 **InterVarsity**
EVERY CORNER, EVERY CAMPUS

This is Bekah Estrada! She has been helping here at City Light and will soon be working with the Christian Fellowships at the University of Southern California. Working alongside the university's administration, the Christian Life Team supports missional efforts on campus through building bridges and partnerships amongst the diverse Christian community at USC. We are excited to help support Bekah and will look forward to keeping you updated on this ministry!

Greetings from New York City!

My name is Lesley-Ann, and I serve as field personnel here with CBF. My closest partner here is Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries and Metro Baptist Church. Together we run 13 social service ministries throughout the year, and all of our programs fall under the categories of food justice, youth programming, and homelessness support.

I run our homelessness support programs, including a life-skills empowerment program called Living Well. Living Well is a trauma-informed support group for women who have experienced both domestic violence and homelessness. Together we, a small group of women participants and our leadership team, work through the empowerment curriculum—learning about trauma, what happens to our brains when we experience trauma, how to cope with flashbacks and triggers, healthy communication strategies, and setting smart boundaries. We work with the women through speaking their truth—telling their stories as a significant part of the healing journey. And with a team of volunteer mentors, we set goals, looking to the future with hope. Each spring and fall, we graduate a group of women from the program and celebrate

HELLO
my name is

*Lesley-Ann
Hix Tommey*



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the transformation they have nurtured in themselves. So, we have a decent alumni network, and because we want to continue to hold each other, because the healing journey is not constantly up and up, because we continue to need each other, we keep checking in on our alumni, offering continuing education groups, sharing resources, and refusing to let them go alone—kind of how God refuses to let any of us go.

Right now, with COVID spreading to more than 208,000 people here in New York City, including several confirmed cases in our community at Metro, we have been responding for a few months in new ways of serving our community.

Service organizations across the city closed their doors, so we have done our best to remain open and at least offer a place of resource for our most vulnerable neighbors. Our weekly food pantry, which normally serves about 80 people, is running at a huge increase, averaging 170 visitors each Saturday. A team of staff and volunteers have been cooking individually-packed meals for people living in affordable housing in our neighborhood. We have been giving out snack bags and toiletry kits at the door in huge quantities. Our in-person relationship-building programs, including the Living Well program, have moved to meeting virtually. But not everyone is able to participate with us online, so we're also making sure to check-in over the phone regularly with our community of survivors, listening to their worries, and working to respond to any needs they want us to help with. Because of the heaviness of shame and lack of trust which comes with traumatic experiences, our community already has a tendency to self-isolate. So, our leadership team is especially focused on keeping everyone connected and progressing with their healing, even in the midst of this season of prescribed isolation. I am spending a lot of time on video calls and over the phone, sending texts, and offering email reflections. We have hosted a virtual baby shower, gotten technology supplies to families needing help with virtual schooling, and shipped medicine and cleaning supplies to those who have been sick. We are continuing to connect our network with the resources they need.

Our creativity and openness will continue to be vital in navigating ministry during this very different season. My hope continues to be in the truth that God is alive and working. Even when we have to stay away, God is connecting and healing and guiding. This is the only

work I have had the privilege of stepping into for a while. This work of belonging, love, and transformation is God's work, and God continues to redeem our world even while we're shut down.

I'm especially astounded at the power of community—of the immense work we are able to do together, which is so much more than we can ever do alone. And so, I'm grateful and excited to be entering into an Encourager Church relationship with you. I'm excited to work together and learn from you. This Encourager Church process is CBF's way of formally recognizing what churches have been doing with their missionaries for years. There's a powerful relationship between churches and field personnel, not just in all we can help each other do together, but because of the ways we end up helping each other see God and God's movements in our world more profoundly. Since arriving in New York in 2017, I have spent lots of days learning, laughing, crying, and trying my best to be the presence of Christ in New York, and it's not always easy. Knowing there are church communities all over this country praying for and believing in me and my husband, Blake, is a giant sustaining energy boost for us. Just knowing you are with us in this makes all the difference when we're feeling tired.

In the sermon on the mount, when Jesus calls the poor and oppressed and hungry blessed, I hear Him inviting us to the poor places of our world. When you partner with CBF, and me specifically in New York City, you are answering that call. We know, through Jesus' own suffering, that God is with us in our brokenness and in our pain. And so, in New York, we are standing with the broken and forgotten, pointing to the God who is right beside them.

This covenant recognizes we are standing in those poor places, pointing to God's relentlessly creative presence there, together. Thank you for being in this life-transforming work with me.

**FBC is excited to support
Lesley-Ann through CBF**



ACTING IN *love*



On January 13, I was flagged down in my old neighborhood.

Mrs. Akowa asked me, “My children want to know if Christmas has already passed.” As I was trying to understand what she was saying, she continued, “We did not see the Togo House Truck and Papa Noël pass by so we were thinking that Christmas had not come yet.”

It then struck me that last year the kids from Togo House wanted to share Christmas balloons throughout the neighborhood, so one dressed as Santa and off we went. This year, living in a different area we did not pass by Mrs. Akowa’s place.

It had been the only Christmas she and her children had ever known. As I shared this with our kids at Togo House, they insisted we gather gifts, decorate the truck, find a Papa Noel, and go straight back. We did!

Horns blowing, drums beating, candy flying...Christmas was back. The four kids came running out the field where they were working...all shouting together, “Its Christmas! Its Christmas.”

The love of Christ being born can be applied any time of the year we choose, not just December 25.

It is time once again for the July Flour & Sugar Drive. The need is growing as the strain of meeting the needs of those less fortunate increases. Our goal is 7,800 lbs. of flour and 6,200 lbs. of sugar. The funds donated to this drive should be designated for the ABA Social Ministries Flour and Sugar Drive. Donations can be made in church office, or in the boxes located at the church entrances. Funds are preferred as they enable Social Ministries to purchase on an as needed basis over the next six months.





Upon the recommendations of the City of Abilene Health Department and Childcare Licensing of the State of Texas, and to continue to provide a safe environment for the children, parents, families, and workers, GLO Day Care will be closed until July 13 due to exposure of the COVID-19 virus. One of our GLO parents tested positive, and then two of our teachers who worked in that room tested positive as well.

During this time, the entire facility will be cleaned and disinfected. We would also ask that you please do not try to enter the GLO hall during this time frame. We would also ask for you to pray for the children, parents, families, and staff as they deal with this disruption in programming.

RANDOM THOUGHTS

by Mike Greenfield

I have not written about some of my random thoughts in a long time, so I have lots of them floating around and thought I would share some of them with you.

PARKING LOTS—not a very exciting thing to think about, but one that I have been for the past few days. Here at the church, we are resurfacing/resealing and striping all of the parking lots. It has been 6+ years since we have done any work to the lots and if we do not consistently take care of them, we would end up with major issues down the road. Some of the work is completed (FLC lot) and the rest will be done in the next week or so.

HOPE CENTER—work on the Hope Center is happening, just not where you can see much of it. Both representatives of City Light and GLO met this past week with the architects to begin narrowing down the layout design so preliminary drawings can be developed. Because of the COVID-19 virus restrictions, things have been slowed down, but not stopped. Giving to the Give Hope Campaign has remained steady and we look forward to being able to put the funds to work when the plans are finalized.

WORSHIP—with the restrictions put in place by government officials and our understanding of what is prudent for us as a church, we are still going to have in-person worship for the time being. However, we will abide by the Governor's order that all counties with 20 or more cases wear masks and Taylor County falls into that category; therefore, we will require masks on Sunday. Of course, we will continue to have a live broadcast of the service and I would like to once again say thanks to all of our folks who are a part of the TV Ministry and make the broadcast available for us to be able to participate together in worship.

TECHNOLOGY—another subject that puts some of you to sleep, but one that has occupied my mind for the past several weeks. The phone system at the church was what you might call, antiquated. It still functioned, but the last time a part went out, we had to resort to eBay to find a used one to get us back up and running. So, the finance committee approved expenditure of some of the end-year funds to purchase a new phone system. We looked at several options (cloud vs. local) as well as how the new systems tie into the current computer systems and decided to go with a local company who already provide us with networking help. The new system will come online next week and assuming there are no problems, you will never know we made a change. The win-win for the church is that we were able to connect the Hope Center and the Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment to the main church network and now all of the church will be on one network eliminating separate billing to those locations. Of course, until the Hope Center is complete, it will not be totally online, but the infrastructure is now in place.

I could probably go on with some other very random ideas, but then you might think this isolation thing has really taken a toll on me! Let me just simply add, as a staff, we appreciate your continued support as we all try to figure out how to navigate these troubled waters we find ourselves in. Your patience, encouragement, and trust in us does not go unnoticed.



STAY *connected*

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

T.V. BROADCAST UPDATES

On Sundays, July 12 and 26, due to the coverage of an Indy car race and soccer respectively, our morning broadcast will not be aired on KRBC. In the past, the station has been able to switch us over to KTAB, however that time slot has now become unavailable and so they cannot move us. What that means is the only way for folks to join us live is through the internet. That can be done on a computer, tablet, notebook, or smart phone. To watch the live broadcast, simply go to the church website www.fbcabilene.org

and then click on the "Watch Live" button at the top of the page, or go to the media tab, then watch live. This will direct you to our streaming site where you can click on the viewer and join the live service. At this site you can also watch past services which are archived here. You may also watch the service live on Facebook by going to the First Baptist Church, Abilene Facebook Page.

We are sorry for this interruption; however, it is out of our control and simply something we will have to live with for now.



#fbcabilene

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ABILENE, TX

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STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

June 2020

Budget	June	Year-to-Date
Required	\$ 222,870	\$ 1,655,919
Given	\$ 181,679	\$ 1,585,221

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



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